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The Clock, or Happiness is Not Ready Made

CAITLIN WESTGATE

I want to write about how I got better, but I'll never be better. The task of writing this essay was at times so overwhelming that I was unable to write at all. I'm trying to string together moments of my life into an account of how and why I am still standing here today, how I haven't given in to the dark motivations of my mental illness. This endeavor reminds me of toxic moments in my life and how happiness still doesn't come easily to me, but at the same time I feel an intense need to share my experiences in the hopes that someone out there feels a little less alone, has a little more hope. Because people tear us down, but people can build us back up—and we can build ourselves back up.

Myself

I was in the third grade. We were studying grammar, struggling to spell words like 'receive' or 'thief,' when I absent-mindedly brushed my fingers across my mouth.

"Turn the page to 91."

I felt like I had accidentally swallowed a hard candy. My pulse was in my esophagus. Mrs. Levesque continued to discuss the grammar rules described on the following page, the page I could not turn to because I had just used my hands to touch my mouth. Who knew what kind of germs I could pass on to the next person who used that book? I positioned my elbow on the corner of the page. Maybe I could get it to turn without using my hands.

"Caitlin? What is the exception for the rule 'I' before 'E'?"

Mrs. Levesque's brown bob shook expectantly. I looked down at my book searching for an answer on the wrong page. The words blurred as I tried to conceal my panic.

"Who can help her out?" She addressed the room as a whole. My face flushed with embarrassment.

Later, Mrs. Levesque sat across from me while I completed a set of math problems, counting on my fingers underneath the beige desk. Without warning this time, the familiar feeling of just having inhaled a butterscotch candy returned, and I thought about the germs that were crawling around me like invisible fire ants. I needed to wash my hands. The deep metal sink in the back of the classroom had become my closest friend. Its rusted knobs reading hot and cold were welcoming arms; the smell of wet metal became a comfort.

"What are you doing? You haven't finished the problem we're working on."

I hovered awkwardly over my seat and looked at Mrs. Levesque with something like fear.

"I need to wash my hands." Mrs. Levesque seemed to study my face for a moment.

"How would you feel about talking to the nice lady down the hall about why you need to wash your hands so often?"

Instead of answering, I held my hands over my face and cried, watching my tears fall onto my unfinished equations. My head was a hot air balloon inflating over a small flame. I wasn't crying for embarrassment or shame, I was crying because I couldn't wash my hands.

The symptoms of my anxiety and depression made themselves known at a very young age. I began seeing a counselor in the third grade. Eventually, I was able to get past my obsession with germs. Whether it was the techniques of the counselor or the social pressures of making friends and being "normal," I was able to finish elementary and middle school without giving much agency to my mental illness. Unsurprisingly, my teenage years brought new struggles.

Luke

My heartbeat vibrated my upper body; my stomach full on adrenaline alone. I opened up my phone to reread his text; I've got a fire burning for you, urging me to the front door. At the top of the stairs, I paused,

listening very carefully to the snores of my parents, listening for the rustling of sheets. Down the stairs cautiously, one step at a time. Five seconds between each step to make sure I wasn't heard.

Downstairs I picked my Converse up and carried them to the door. I waited another 30 seconds before twisting the knob very slowly, opening the door one inch at a time until my body could just fit. I made sure to pull the door closed until it rested on the doorframe but did not latch. I needed easy re-entry.

I glide down the porch stairs quietly, still barefoot. The air is thick with moisture and the smell of wet pine needles. Each step is painful, mud and rocks coating the soft underbelly of my feet. I rubbed the dirt off on my jeans before slipping them inside my shoes. I paced in the darkness, fighting the urge to run home at every rustle of briars.

"Hey you," he greeted me, putting the SUV in gear.

"Hi. I made you this." I handed him a CD with the word "autumn" scrawled across in pink Sharpie. He slid it into the radio and a song by Seether began to play. Let me stick my needles in / And let me hurt you again. Neither of us spoke for the rest of the ride to his house.

Our relationship was a secret. He was eight years older than me and convinced that our family and friends would not be accepting if we went public. So, in his shed, we lay on the hard cement floor with a couple of thin blankets beneath us, a small fire burning in his wood stove. I felt his fingers on me, felt like that was what I wanted, what I needed, because I hated myself more than any other person could. I had been living in a haze of depression and self-loathing for so long that I thought letting Luke use me was the kind of thing I was good for.

I didn't feel happy or complete when I stood outside of my front door rubbing spit on the brass hinges, my makeshift WD-40, so that maybe it wouldn't scream when I slipped back inside. I thought it was love when I crawled into bed afterwards smelling like sex and his cologne because I thought that the kind of love I deserved was a dull throbbing pain inside my chest. I thought it was love that made me want to hurt myself, punish myself with sharp objects.

For two years, we conducted a relationship through text messages and the occasional visit in the dead of night. He would tell me just enough to keep me hooked, to keep my young mind fantasizing and hopeful, without making any promises. We had a cyclical banter; every few weeks he would tell me he was no good for me, that I deserved better. I was too young to understand that he was not being self-deprecating or mysterious; he was just being honest. Yet, even when I would take his advice and stop responding to his advances, the messages would come in the late hours of the night,

Do you hate me

Hey

Come over

While watching *Forrest Gump*, I cried over my phone, fighting the urge to text him about how I was watching his favorite movie. Instead, my phone lit up with a text from him, What are you doing? Moments like those made me feel like we were meant to be, made me believe it when he said we could be together when I turned 18. Moments like those were cataracts; I couldn't see Luke clearly in the midst of all the small interactions I romanticized in my head.

One bright winter day I ran through the woods behind my house in a light jacket and my Converse. Each stride was fueled by anxiety and the hope that maybe I could escape the unhappiness that sat in my room next to my razorblade.

I sat down on a stump and cried over my phone, waiting for a text that was hours overdue. I had asked Luke, Will you come get me? It was a vain attempt, I knew; we never met up when the sun was out. Pretending we had a real relationship was the only way I knew how to escape my own instability. My feet became numb with cold and the winter air had penetrated my light layers. I considered what it would be like to freeze to death, waiting for his response.

Luke finally answered my text as I trudged through the snow-blanketed trails back to my house. His only response, For? I stared at the message for several moments before continuing on the path. My thumb stung with the pain of poor circulation as I held it down over the power button of my phone. As the screen powered off, I came to terms with the fact that Luke and I were both just using

each other. Only one of us was getting what he wanted.

I had become void of self-esteem, and I gave him the only thing I had left to give, my virginity. We stopped interacting completely and almost immediately after.

Myself

Do you know that feeling when you're swimming and you try to touch the bottom of the pool after forgetting that you're in the deep end? That split second of panic when your feet don't touch the composite floor when you thought they would? Having an anxiety attack is like having that sensation repeatedly—only that sense of relief when you remember you're in the deep end never comes. Instead, negative thoughts circle behind your eyes and around the back of your skull like a whirlpool you can't escape.

It takes 20 minutes for me to run one and a half miles, 20 minutes to bleach my hair, 20 minutes to eat dinner. When I believed the thoughts my anxiety told me, I decided to spend 20 minutes dismantling a bright pink razor.

I had become so desperate to hurt myself that I searched how to get the blades out of a razor on YouTube (There were 55,500 results.) I waved a lighter back and forth beneath the plastic around the blades and pried and pried with tweezers before I could hold the sharp metal, about a centimeter wide and an inch long, in my palm.

It only took five minutes after I made the first cut for the guilt and shame to set in. Injuring my body was not a solution, but part of the harmful cycle of mental illness.

Mr. Lee

After this particularly desperate moment, I reached out to my ex-boyfriend, Nathan, whom I knew had a good relationship with Mr. Lee, the adjustment counselor at our high school. He told me that all I had to do to get an appointment was stop by his office—a simple enough task that felt incredibly daunting. Maybe if I didn't show, it would mean my illness wasn't as serious as I thought. Nathan stopped me in a busy hallway one day a week later.

He held out a piece of paper, the corner torn off of a larger sheet.

"What is this?"

"Mr. Lee wanted me to give it to you."

I read the words, Tuesday 2 pm, scrawled in pencil. Mr. Lee had made an appointment for me, since I had failed to stop by his office.

Mr. Lee encouraged his students to express themselves on the walls of his office with black Sharpie. There were a hundred different styles of handwriting, drawings, and signatures. Somewhere amongst all of the writing were the signatures of my aunt and a close family friend whom Mr. Lee had helped decades before I started high school. There was a history of love and respect in that room. One day he told me about how they would paint over all of the writing after he retired. He did so with a quiet voice.

Mr. Lee gave me the inspiration for my first tattoo, a clock with one hand at 12 and the other at six. He had drawn the same image for me during one of our sessions.

"Life is like a clock," he told me. "One hand can be up at 12, and everything is really good and you're happy, or it can be down at six, and you're having a really tough time of it, but you just have to remember that the hands on a clock are always moving. You'll never be in one place forever. One day you'll be back up at 12."

Mom

"Nathan's dad told me that you've been going to see Mr. Lee at school."

"Yeah," I responded curtly.

"Well, why?" My mother's tone was accusatory.

"I don't know. Just to talk."

"I don't understand. The troublemakers go to see him, the ones who cut class and do drugs. You shouldn't be going there."

Hurt that my mother urged me to destroy the relationship that had been so hard for me to build, I went to my room and shut the door. Most of our conversations ended this way.

My mother's lack of understanding during my struggles became the voice of my depression. You don't have the right to be depressed. You have a good life. Just suck it up. You make a big deal

out of everything. She never said any of this to me, but my own insecurity caused me to shy away from her questions and interpret her misunderstanding as disdain. I cut myself as punishment for not being better, and I wrote about it.

I was sitting in a black canvas chair writing in my red composition notebook. My parents sat at the picnic table in front of our pop-up camper while my brother chased around a football by himself.

“Why don’t you two go up to the lodge and see what there is to do up there?” my mother suggested. My brother and I looked at each other. We were both very bored. I abandoned my notebook on the seat of my chair and we walked up to the lodge where we entertained ourselves with pool and Ping-Pong for about an hour.

When we returned, my parents were inside the camper sitting at the flimsy pull-out table with my red notebook like a wounded cardinal between them.

“Roger, will you please wait outside for a second. We need to talk to Caitie.”

The skin around my eyes was red and painful as my mother tried to explain why they had invaded my privacy by reading my most personal writing. Of course, they had read the part about the cutting, the blood pulsing in globs out of open red lines in my skin. The tears wouldn’t stop as my parents expressed their concern for me.

“We never would have guessed that you were feeling like this,” my dad said. It hurt to hear him talk. I always strived to make my father proud, and knowing that he had discovered darkness in me filled me with great shame.

Looking back now, I wonder if, subconsciously, I left that notebook out in the open on purpose. I was like a Russian Nesting Doll of depression; deep inside the layers of defense mechanisms and secrecy, I was calling out for help. After reading my journal, my mother was finally able to poke a hole in the wall of negativity I had erected. She contacted Mr. Lee and discussed my progress. He suggested a female therapist that could help me on a more intimate level than he was able to at school.

My mother began checking my wrists for scars, and

she would determine the latest based on what shade of pink the raised skin was. She was abrasive, invasive, and annoying, but she protected me from myself. She was the one driving me to all of my appointments and sitting in stuffy waiting rooms while I spoke with my therapists. She was always outside the door.

June

June and I rode in the backseat of my mom’s Ford Taurus. She handed me a small blue box.

“It’s a best friend necklace,” she smiled without showing her teeth. I pulled off the small cardboard cover to find a metal dream catcher pendant on a long silver chain.

“Aw, thanks!”

She looked at me strangely. Her eyes kept sliding toward the box in my hand and suddenly she wasn’t the generous best friend, she was Queen Ulterior Motives, your royal manipulator.

“Look underneath,” she said below the music. Her long brown hair fell perfectly around her face; she had strongly expressed how horrible it looked before we left the house. I couldn’t find one imperfection. I wanted what she had. She stretched her arm over to my side of the car, took the box, pinched the thin Styrofoam base that the necklace was resting on. She flashed the empty box in my direction, and the light caught on the corner of a shiny metal razorblade. I didn’t know what to do, so I laughed nervously and took the box back. This was her true gift to me.

I never wore that dream catcher necklace. Instead, June and I bought shiny metal razorblade necklaces from Hot Topic. They were our version of those glittery hearts that split in half, one half reading “best” and the other “friend.” Our necklaces did have a heart on them, cut right out of the middle of the blade like a terrible smile.

We would stay up all night eating Domino’s mushroom pizza, cultivating our basic Tumblr blogs, laughing and taking goofy webcam photos. There were other moments: when she asked me to help her cover up the scabbed cuts on her legs with Cover Girl liquid foundation before we went to the beach or her telling me, “You can tear off the serrated edge of a box of saran wrap and use that until I

can get you a razorblade. I mean, I'm not telling you to cut yourself, but that's what I would do."

Sitting next to June on the way to the movies one afternoon, I felt the smooth stroke of a cool finger on my upper thigh. I looked at her with a confused smile.

"What are you doing?"

"Your scar. What did you make that with?" She had dragged her finger down the length of a rosy scar that I usually hid with my shorts. I pulled the edge of my shorts back down and shrugged, avoiding the question. "I wish mine looked like that," she said quietly.

I understood then why June hadn't felt any moral hesitation when she gifted me the razorblade. She was only treating me as she would want to be treated.

At the movie theatre, she nudged me with an elbow.

"Come to the bathroom with me." I followed her into the public bathroom smelling of stale cleaning products. I pushed open the red door of the stall next to the one June entered.

"No," she made a gesture for me to join her.

"You want me to come into the same stall with you?"

"Yeah, just come on." I joined her in the stall. She laughed. June was like that. She made the strangest requests seem fun and adventurous. I was always so quiet, so timid. She pushed me out of my comfort zone in ways that were exciting and dangerous.

Once in the stall, she pulled down her jeans to show me a slew of fresh cuts covering her thighs.

"You shouldn't do that," I said more out of obligation than the thought that it would change her actions. How could I tell her not to do something so harmful if I was doing it, too?

I don't know why she decided to show me her scabs and scars that day in the movie theatre bathroom. That was the way with much of our friendship. Perhaps she was trying to prove to me how much we were alike, despite how differently we each reacted to the triggers of our relationship.

Our friendship was like a seesaw. Neither of us felt balanced except when someone equally insecure was sitting on the other side. Whenever one of us pushed up off the ground, the other would fall

fast. There was no way either of us would get better if we remained friends, so I jumped off.

Dr. X

Even though I don't remember what the building looked like, I can tell you that it was old and had a lot of stairs, like every counseling center in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Dr. X had deep blue eyes like my own and told me that she could see my sadness when we spoke. I told her about my experiences with June, and she pulled out a piece of blank copy paper and drew for me the Drama Triangle: At one corner, The Victim, "Poor me!" At another, The Rescuer, "Let me help you"; and, finally, The Persecutor, "It's all your fault."

June was always the victim, and I was always the one trying to rescue her from her various persecutors: her parents, numerous love interests, herself. With a simple geometric shape, Dr. X showed me that I was perpetuating June's negativity while deflecting my own darkness.

"Now, let's see if we can get you a bottle of Prozac for your birthday." I left her office buzzed with new hope.

My feelings of elation deflated into despair when my attempts to schedule another appointment led only to answering machines and receptionists. I remember my mother's disdain, How could she just abandon someone who is trying so hard to get help, she would say to me. I had been avoiding the question myself. Maybe Dr. X didn't think I was quite sad enough. Alternatively, maybe I was too far gone for help, fallen past the rectification medication or therapy could provide. If it were not for the involvement of my mother, I would have given up on getting help once again, and this time there wouldn't be anyone passing me a note in the hallway. I would be entering college soon.

I eventually learned that Dr. X had neglected to tell me she would be on vacation the following two weeks, but my mother had already hurried me off to another therapist.

Dr. C

Dr. C was a small woman who wore a matching pantsuit every day and played nature soundtracks outside of her office door. One session while my mother waited outside amongst the brays of seagulls and the crashing of ocean waves, I tried to talk to Dr. C about my distorted self-image.

“I just look in the mirror, and I hate what I see. I’ve tried losing weight, but I can’t keep myself motivated enough to go to the gym.”

“Have you tried looking at different styles of clothing that will make you feel better about the way you look?” She reached behind her to a stack of magazines on her desk. “Wearing the right clothes can really benefit your self-esteem.”

I wondered what I was supposed to do when I was in the shower with a pair of scissors ready to punish my skin for stretching so far. While my counseling sessions provided me with a great deal of insight about my condition, it only worked when I was completely committed to making an effort for myself.

After spilling my relationship with Luke onto the floral patterned rug, Dr. C instructed me to close my eyes and breathe deeply.

“Picture a TV. Now imagine that what happened between you and Luke is playing out on the screen.” I tucked my hands underneath my thighs. “You’re standing in front of the TV. I want you to start taking slow steps backward, away from the TV. Don’t stop until you can’t make out what’s playing on the screen anymore.”

We were both silent as I let the scene play out in my head. With each imaginary step I took backwards, I felt lighter.

They call this Guided Imagery Therapy. It is a mind-body experience considered a form of hypnosis. During this process, the patient reacts to the imagined scene as though it were really happening. By taking steps away from my experiences with Luke, Dr. C helped me to create a reality where I was able to move on from that trauma.

Every therapist I’ve met with has fallen short in some way, but they have also helped me in ways that I could never have helped myself. You have to be ready to accept the help you need.

Dr. S

Her office was on the first floor. I can’t remember her name, but I can remember her eyes. They were very round and wet; it always looked like she had been crying when I would enter her office packed with too much furniture.

Sitting down on her couch with my mother in the armchair adjacent to me, I would tell her pretty much nothing at all. I was afraid of her eyes and the way that they seemed to feel more than the rest of her did.

“How have you been feeling?”

“Fine. I think the medication is helping.”

“She’s been sleeping a lot,” my mother chimed in. I just looked at her. “And she gets really defensive about things lately.”

After conversations like this, Dr. S would fill me another prescription for Lexapro or Celexa or Zoloft or Prozac.

The SSRIs

Sometimes I wonder if the plethora of possible side effects is worth the possibility of subduing my depression and anxiety. I would cross my fingers that they’d work, and contacted my doctor if I experienced nausea, nervousness, agitation or restlessness, dizziness, reduced sexual desire, drowsiness, insomnia, weight gain or loss, headache, dry mouth, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Antidepressants are like people, I guess. Sometimes they make you feel happy and healthy, others give you diarrhea.

Trying to find the right medication is like playing back-to-back games of Guess Who™ with my doctors.

“Do they have a beard?”

“Nope.”

“Glasses?”

“I don’t know. Sometimes?”

“Do they look sad?”

At the end of the game, you’ve tried five different medications but all of your cards are still up, and you feel like you want to die.

I saw a new doctor after returning from college who

prescribed me the controlled substance Ativan after one meeting and a questionnaire:

Do you feel tired often? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel like hurting yourself or others?
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>
How often do you think about suicide?
Always <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How often do you have feelings of anxiety?
Always <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/>

I wonder if he had an answer key on the clipboard he held on his lap. (If they answer No to question one, send them home with some antibiotics. If they answer Yes to question two, leave immediately and lock the door behind you. If they answer Always to question three, refer back to question two. If they answer Always to question four, give them the good stuff.)

Josh

One warm August morning I received the news of my cousin's suicide. My mother's words on the phone, "Josh hung himself," bounced around my head as I drove home from work.

I sat cross-legged on the hardwood floor of my dining room with the bottom drawer of the chifffonier opened haphazardly. I sifted through the various photo albums and scrapbooks trying to find a picture of Josh, some piece of him that I could hold in my hands.

I came across a faded photograph from one of my early birthday parties. In the picture, I am standing on a chair wearing a Pokémon nightgown, hands held high in the air with a huge smile spread across my face. In the center of the photo, a little boy with dark hair sits in a chair next to me. He is turned toward the photographer, mouth

overflowing with party snacks.

During our childhood, Josh and I stumbled along the paths of our lives side by side, but as we grew into adulthood, our paths diverged. I was applying to colleges and trying to decide what I was going to do with the rest of my life. Josh was skateboarding to work at the local 7-Eleven trying to pay for a life for his daughter, born shortly after he turned 17.

"Josh got held up at the convenience store last night," my mom told me. "I saw his post about it on Facebook."

"Oh my god. With a gun?" My forehead crinkled with the disturbing image of my cousin held at gunpoint.

"I guess so," my mom replied. The idea that something so traumatizing could happen to a member of my family stunned me, but I never even asked him about it. And I never asked him about the statuses he posted that alluded to suicide. Now I ask myself why.

We were both carrying around the same dangerous pain, linked at the hip by a red string of depression, growing longer as life's gnarled fingers pulled the rift between us until suddenly the string snapped.

Now, I drag the string along my path alone, through mud and moss. The end is frayed, but I'm still pulling it.

Scar Tissue

"What did that scar come from? Did you cut yourself or something?" My coworker laughed as she gestured to the thick scar on my forearm.

"Yeah, actually." I smiled awkwardly. There was a time when I would have told some transparent lie. My boyfriend's cat scratched me. My arm got caught when I was climbing over a chain link fence. For once, I decided to just be honest. Lying would protect my coworker from the embarrassment, but someone had to be embarrassed, and this time it wasn't going to be me.

Her eyebrows rose. "Really?" I nodded. "Oh, crap. I'm really sorry. I didn't know."

"It's fine, I promise."

"You know, I take medication for my anxiety. And I stayed

in a mental hospital once.”

By being honest about my own mental illness, I was able to connect with my coworker on a level that wouldn't have been available to me if I had just lied and directed the shame inward. I used to try my best to hide my scars. I used to tell people, “I'm fine,” when they asked me if I was okay; yet, what helped me the most during my recovery was reading blogs like *To Write Love On Her Arms*. Reading about other people's experiences with mental illness made me feel less alone and gave me hope for recovery.

Hiding my illness had only ever brought me guilt and shame. It's still difficult to be completely honest, but being open about my mental illness has helped my recovery as well as the recovery of others. We don't need to keep quiet any more; social media and personal blogs have given those suffering from mental illness a platform from which to speak truthfully and compassionately about their struggles. Since becoming more open about my struggles, people praise me for my courage. I don't feel so weak anymore. If people see my scars and recognize them as symptoms of mental illness, I know that I don't have to be ashamed.

You have a favorite pair of jeans. By continuing to wear them, you cause the fabric to rip and tear. You don't want to throw them away, so you just keep sewing the fabric back together. The jeans are covered with the small seams where you have repaired the breaks. You still wear them because, otherwise, you'd have wasted a lot of time and string.

I don't hide my scars anymore. If I were ashamed of them, that wouldn't be progress. My scars are the remnants of the physical pain I caused myself; they are proof that I have healed. They are reminders of moments of weakness; they are evidence of my strength. They shout mental illness to everyone I meet; they tell you I am a survivor.

Myself

After months spent wallowing in guilt and grief after my cousin's death, I decided to schedule an appointment with a new therapist in New Bedford.

As I was getting in the car to go see her, my mother's Jeep pulled into the driveway. She rolled down her window.

“Hey, where are you going?”

“I'm actually going to a counseling appointment.” She smiled.

“That's good. See you when you get back.”

At the counseling center, I met a stout Portuguese woman in her 50's wearing cheetah print heels and drinking water out of a plastic Dunkin Donuts cup. After a few sessions, she helped me to accept Josh's death for what it was: his decision. At the same time, it became clear that I had decided to live. Mr. Lee once told me that he saw a fire in my eyes. I like to think I have preserved that fire, my will to live a healthy life.

I wish that I could tell you I haven't cut myself since that night with the tweezers and the razor, but it wouldn't be true. I wish that I could tell you, though, that I didn't go off my medication this week, but that just isn't honest. I can tell you that I am now in a loving, healthy relationship, that I lost 20 pounds through diet and exercise, and that I was able to finally kick my addiction to cigarettes. I have learned a great deal about the complex nature of progress.

My experiences have shaped who I am today. My struggles with anxiety and depression are at once debilitating and strength giving. Looking back, the accuracy of Mr. Lee's analogy strikes me once again. I have traveled back and forth between dark and light times, but I've never remained in any of those places. Instead of letting my illness dictate where I will stay, now I am deciding where I want to go. I'm learning how to move the hands of the clock closer to 12.

About the Author



Caitlin Westgate is a graduating senior majoring in English and Writing Studies. Her research project was completed in the Fall 2015 semester under the mentorship of Dr. Lee Torda (English) and made possible with funding provided by a Semester Grant from the BSU Office of Undergraduate Research. Caitlin works as an editor for *The Bridge*, the fine arts journal on campus, and as a writer for the news/media website *The Odyssey*.