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### Portrait 2017 Spring

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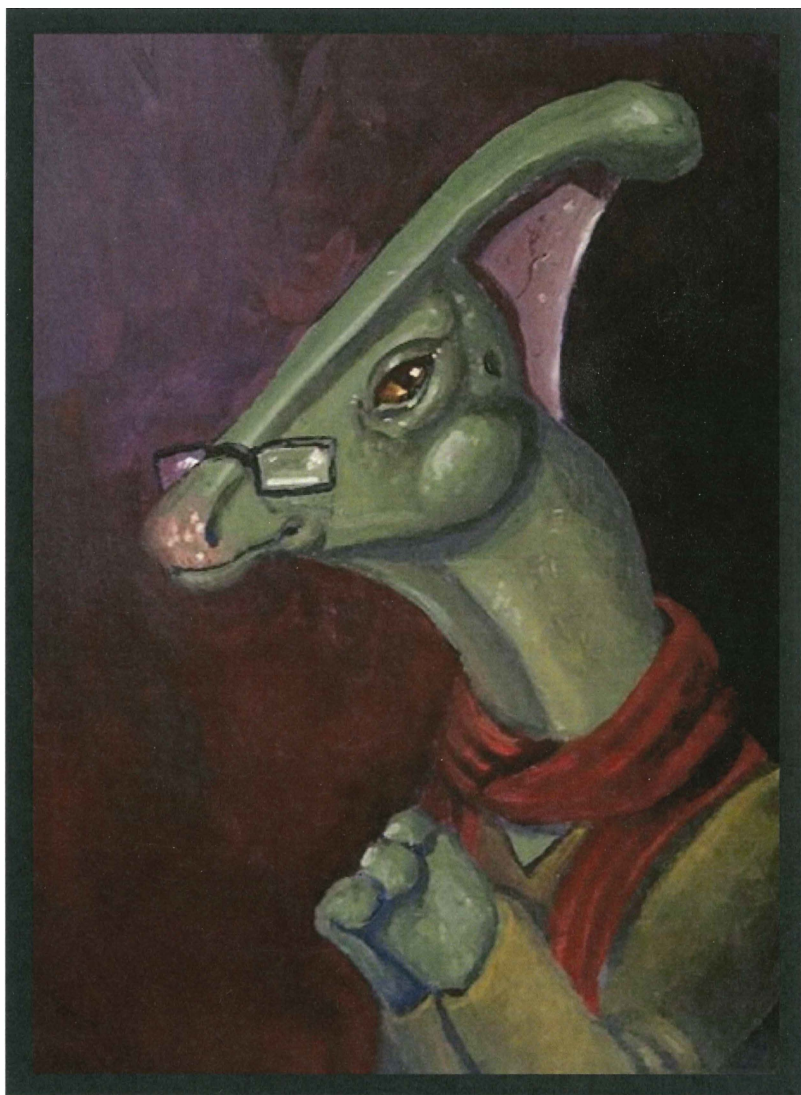
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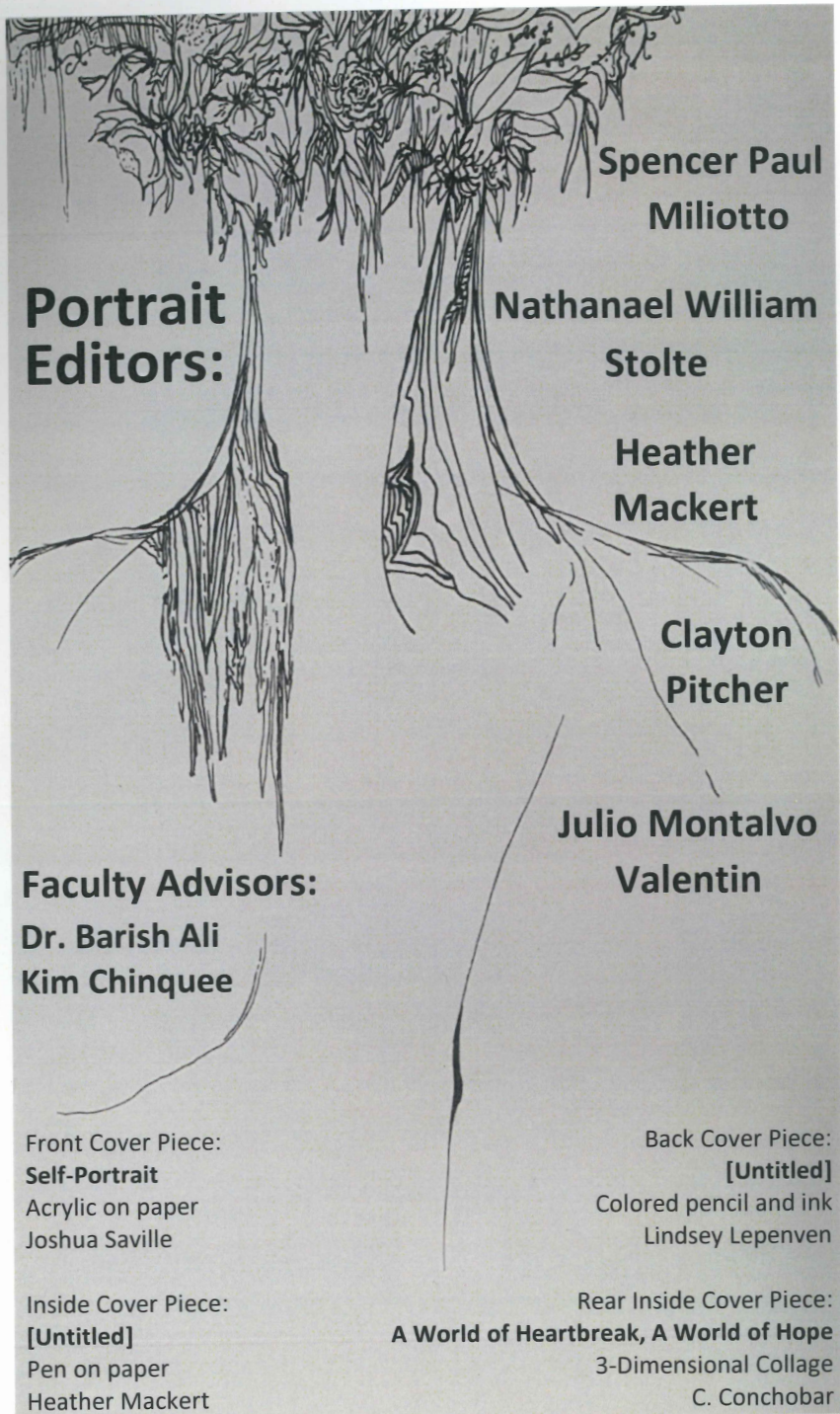
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# **PORTRAIT**

**Literary Arts Magazine**



**SPRING 2017**



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Front Cover Piece:  
**Self-Portrait**  
Acrylic on paper  
Joshua Saville

Back Cover Piece:  
**[Untitled]**  
Colored pencil and ink  
Lindsey Lepenven

Inside Cover Piece:  
**[Untitled]**  
Pen on paper  
Heather Mackert

Rear Inside Cover Piece:  
**A World of Heartbreak, A World of Hope**  
3-Dimensional Collage  
C. Conchobar

# EDITORS' NOTE

*Portrait* was founded on the Buffalo State campus in 1931, under the name *The Record*. It has appeared sporadically throughout the years, last reaching print in 2006. *Portrait* is an organizational effort and, as such, many thanks go to the members of the faculty, in all departments, who helped get this first (resurrected) issue out. Specifically, the *Portrait* team would like to thank the School of Arts and Humanities for providing the funds required to print this issue.

This revival of *Portrait* provides students the opportunity to be recognized for their creative work, thus sharing their voice with the minds of the campus body.

The magazine is made entirely from student work. Without you, there is no *Portrait*. It is you, the students, who actually make it what it is. Your efforts are an extension of 1931's issue of *The Record* to the Spring 2017 *Portrait* that is in your hands today.

With the financial support of the School of Arts and Humanities, the help of countless Buffalo State faculty and staff, and the efforts of our editorial staff, we present to you - *Portrait*.

Submissions are now being accepted for the Fall 2017 edition of *Portrait*.

We are accepting student work of all forms:

Poetry, short stories, nonfiction, flash fiction, interviews, memoir, photography, graphic designs, personal essays, collage, plays, letters, expository writing, etc.

Please send a maximum of 5 submissions to [Portrait@Buffalostate.edu](mailto:Portrait@Buffalostate.edu)

We will see you next year, and thank you for making this possible.

*Portrait* is published by the editorial team at the State University of New York College at Buffalo. The work which appears in this magazine is the work of students at the State University of New York at Buffalo and cannot be reproduced elsewhere without the consent of the author/artist.

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### Cupcake

Billy Keppel

He fought through hordes of like-minded creatures, all bent on reaching the treasure. He made it past the horde, only to find himself staring into the eyes of the guardian of the treasure.

"It's mine!" he yelled.

"No, it's mine!" The guardian yelled back.

As they prepared to fight, insults flew from their mouths.

The guardian didn't have a weapon, and flew towards the treasure-seeker with fists faster than lightning. The seeker dodged as many blows as they could, before kicking back, in an attempt to stop the guardian's momentum. The guardian lost their footing, and fell on the floor, but grasped the seeker, forcing them both to the ground. The seeker and the guardian grappled together, twisting and shrieking, as each tried to get the upper hand over the other. The fight lasted for what seemed like an eternity, until suddenly, they stopped fighting, both turning towards a figure who called their names.

"Really?" their teacher scolded, "I expected better from you. Neither of you can have the last cupcake now."

The two kindergarteners went back to their seats, feeling dejected.

The teacher stood there, shaking her head.

"I can't believe them," she said, "Oh well, they *are* still children."

### Shaving

Emma Dryden

Three thick black hairs  
explode from each pore  
I'm a man I'm a man I'm  
a man whispers in unison  
from sheening coral gills  
that grow in pairs on the  
walls of leathered skin cells.

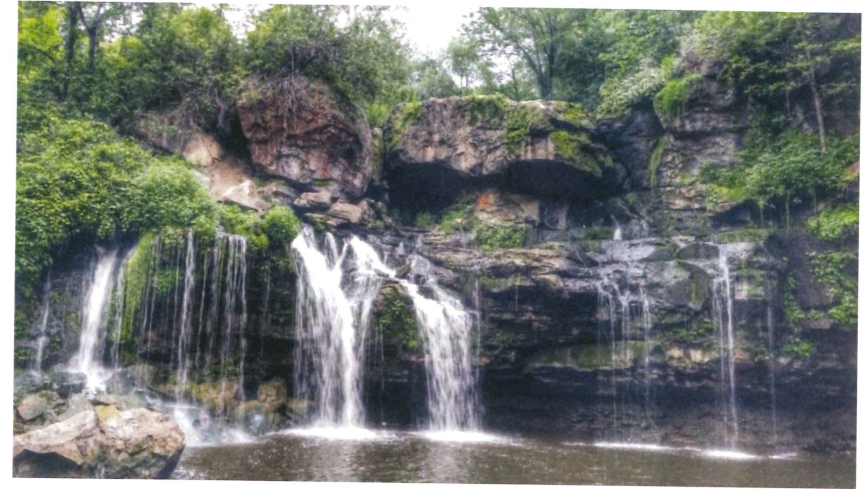
### [Untitled]

Matthew Bonn

Like rain  
On a tin roof  
I fall;  
Deafening,  
And not  
All  
At once.

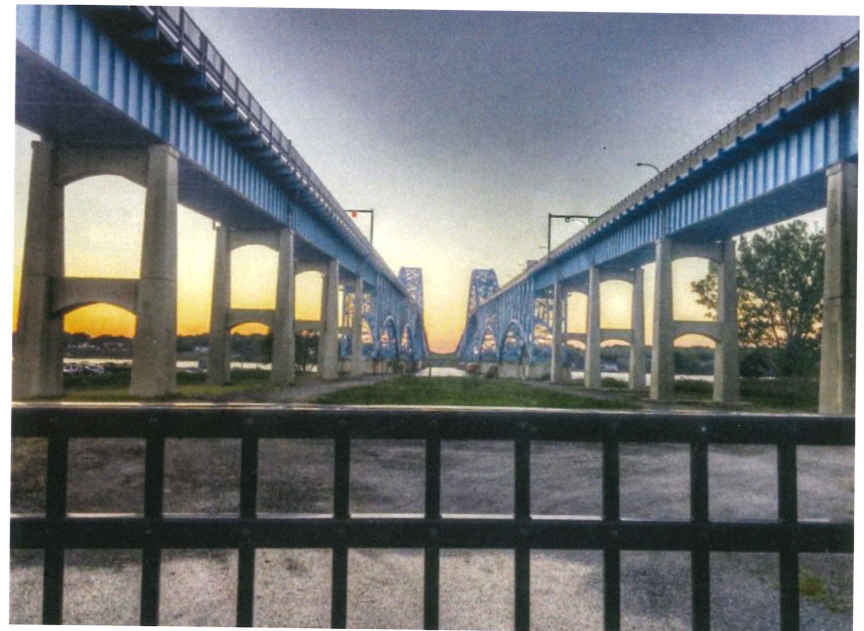
### Tranquility – Photograph

Mandy Parrish-Sams



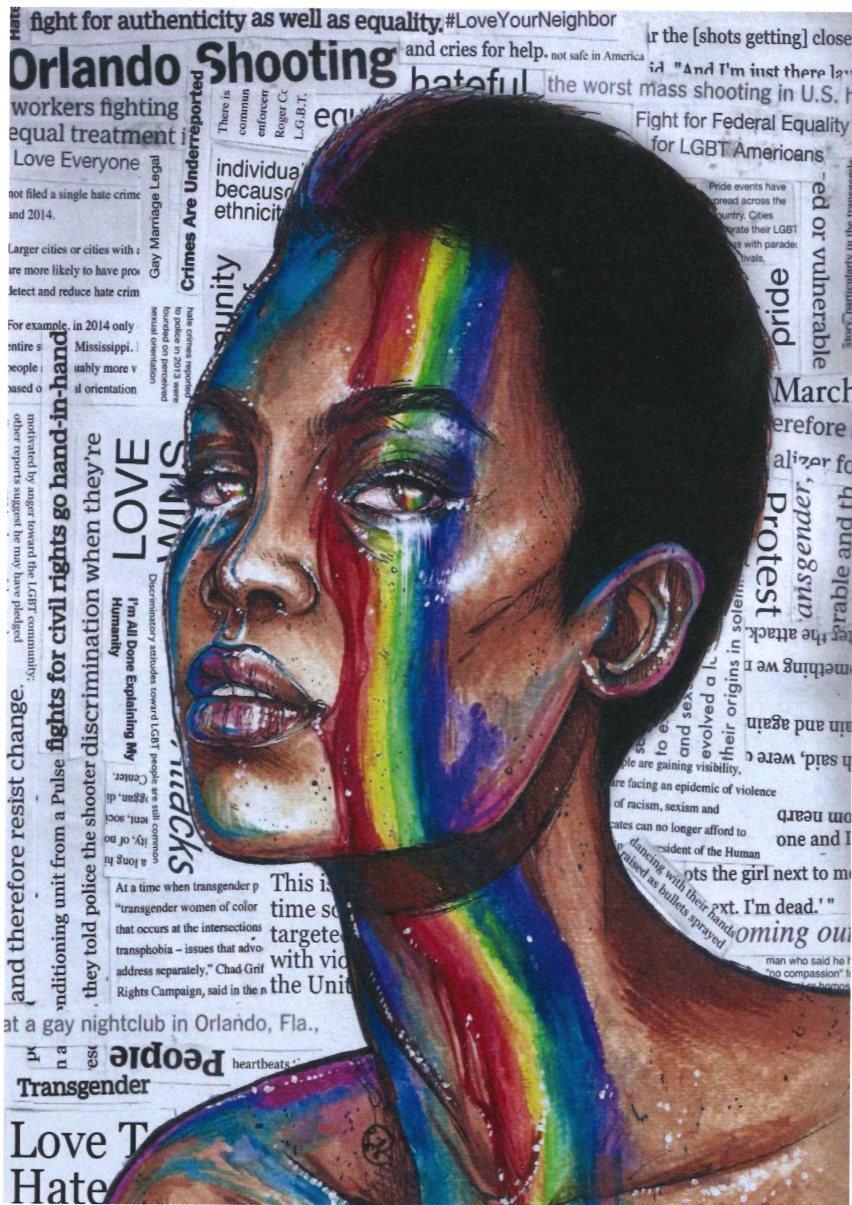
### Gateway to the Island – Photograph

Mandy Parrish-Sams



## LGBTQIA+ Pride – Watercolor, acrylic, collage, and ink

Lindsey Lepenven



## Live the Frame to Labor

Matthew Cohen Dunleavy

most foul, indeed. Day: we rose  
lay-up; th'se lungs open  
bind the surface in human remains pose.

Strange; how fitting a day-rise  
plural -'nd stood  
hands unbroken thighs /uncompromise/

by standards these rocks wove solemn  
man lo wore th' hammer.  
Unconsciously feathering concrete *with*in again

floral patterns. Weathering storm  
piecemealed out -'f  
segways veined sinews/tendrils/ligatures pulp't  
--eschewed what from whatever is warm.

There men. Their muscles. Muscles broker a plethora bind  
on stage floral-'d wilts -'long steel's algoric den  
mere 'holden buck wore the bovine. Simplest was kind

as placid faces rode masks the kin breathes  
-'pon routed drifts nightly wood  
or glass temples; not sparse, it feeds

until dawn's glowering embers come full bloom.  
Men's body result diff'rent stammer  
with different stages run wrung from womb

length pattern-'d -'til tomb. No polarity.  
Just sole (i)n wave. Few'd -'bove  
this fray. A plate held woe. Dandelions  
--had been the only free.

## Collective Short Story – Description of Piece

Dr. Andrea Guiati

“Fall 2016 I taught HON 100 (CRN1559). These are incoming students in the Muriel A. Howard Honors Program. Mostly freshmen fresh out of high school, and a few transfer students, some from Erie Community College.

In this class I did an experiment, I wrote a paragraph on a Word doc. ‘Maribel Darkowski woke up from a deep sleep in her condo on Madison Avenue in New York City.’

At the beginning of a class meeting, without any prior announcements, I opened the document and guided the students to participate in a collective short story writing. I called randomly for students to come to the keyboard and continue writing the story. The story was on the screen of a smart classroom in Bulger. Some chose to dictate to a fellow student who typed away. Some students edited a previous classmate’s paragraph. It was all done in the spirit of collaboration and constructive criticism. We spent a total of three hours at different class meetings to create what I am submitting. The last time we worked on it was to edit the story. Yes I provided a little guidance to steer them in the right direction. But, I take no credit. This was their doing.

I found this to be an impressive effort on the part of these students, especially considering the circumstances and the time they spent on this story. Bravo!”

## Collective Short Story

Thomas Carr, Sage Cerbone, Kaylee Christie, Jordan De Jac, Alexis Duxbury, Kelsie Engert, Heather Karickhoff, Michelle Karimova, Kayla Koss, Benjamin Leopold, Corinne Mccrossan, Melissa Mietlicki, Victoria Powell, Devyani Sawant, Elijah Schultz, Dillon Slater, Lila Toczek, Julio Valentin, Austin Wangler, and Kimberly Waterstram

Maribel Darkowski woke up from a deep sleep in her apartment on the lower east side of New York City. The red eerie light of her clock on the bedside table read 8:07 am. How could she have overslept and never heard the alarm set, as usual, at 6:00am? The night before, she had just finished watching a documentary on serial killers. She was

intrigued with strange things like this, even though it brought back memories of her parents’ gruesome death.

Someone was knocking on the door but she was too afraid to answer. It was a dark and stormy morning, fitting for what was to come.

The ever-growing pile of bills on the table was clearly visible, motivating her to go to work. After she was sure whoever knocked had left, she rushed to the 6 train and got off at 51<sup>st</sup> street near Tiffany’s. While searching for the keys to the door of her parents’ souvenir shop, the wind swept her hat from her head. She turned to look for it and saw that someone had already picked it up.

“Is this yours?” the man asked, holding the hat out to her. Thanking him, she took the hat.

He was very well dressed, but what she noticed first was his different colored eyes. One glistened a bright emerald green, the other black. If it was not for that, he may have been handsome. While not the best looking man around, he did seem nice because he had stopped to help her with her hat... Wasn’t Ted Bundy supposed to have been handsome?

Unlocking the large wooden door, she pushed it open to reveal the small souvenir store. She turned back to the man, and he walked past her into the store. Dismissing him, Maribel walked up to the register and clocked in; only 15 minutes late, she sighed in relief. She began to start setting up the store when she heard him ask a question from across the store.

“Do you guys carry...” - She couldn’t catch what he said.

She took another look at the strange man. She never caught his name, but in this moment that didn’t matter. She looked at his features more closely. He wasn’t that tall, his shoulders weren’t broad, he had long hair that covered his eyes when he turned, he wasn’t exactly attractive but for some reason she wanted to know more about him.

“Um... excuse me?” he said in a confused voice.

“Oh yes I’m sorry, can I help you Mr...”

“Connor. Call me Connor.”

Suddenly she had a flashback to her childhood. It was her very first day of Kindergarten, and she was very excited to finally go to school just as her older sisters had been. However, her first day had taken a turn for the worst. She was unable to make any friends in her class and had to sit alone at lunch. On the verge of tears on the bus ride home, a boy asked if he could sit with her. The only things that she could remember about this boy that meant so much to her, was that his

name had been Connor and she thought it was quite strange that he had different colored eyes.

Connor was the only good thing to happen to her that day. For one second, kindergarten didn't seem so bad, but she never saw Connor again.

She asked her parents where her only friend had gone, but they had no answers. She wrote letters asking where he was and why he had left, but with no address to send them, the principal simply held onto the letters she thought had been mailed. To this day, over a hundred poorly written letters and drawings sit in a box in the basement of that elementary school, never opened and never read.

"How come you didn't answer your door this morning?"

"Do I know you?" - Maribel's heartbeat begins to stutter.

"I know I knocked on your door" he said as he began to approach the counter.

"I know exactly who you are, Maribel, age 22, lives on Canal Street, graduated from NYU..."

"Please stop, you're scaring me."

She noticed that he was continuously touching a birthmark placed on the right side of his neck. The birthmark seemed to resemble an eye shape.

"Why aren't you going to medical school, Maribel?" he responded in an eerie voice.

"How would you know anything about my past life? That was an old dream I had in elementary school...?"

"I know everything there is to know about you, Maribel. Like your dream last night, you haven't been opening the doors to your life's opportunities. Are you happy settling in this convenience store, right now?"

His eyes started turning different colors. The green got a bit brighter, and the black in his eyes turned so dark she could see a complete reflection of herself.

She was now aware that this man was something supernatural.

She was beginning to wonder if this was even reality to begin with.

Had she actually woken up this morning? What are the odds of a man she hadn't seen since her childhood showing up out of nowhere?

What could this man possibly want from her? After graduating from NYU, she had to take over the family business in order to compensate for her parents' debt. The bills were piling up and she had been served

an eviction notice. She was already making arrangements to get out of the city. She had nothing to offer this man.

Connor then pointed to the street behind Maribel and she turned around to look. When she did, there was nothing there - and when she looked back, Connor was gone.

Maribel was confused. What had just happened? She looked around the store searching for any explanation she could find for the strange morning she had. Just as she was about to dismiss the whole encounter as a result of her lack of sleep, she saw a red envelope peeking from her purse.

She walked toward the counter to read it when she heard the store door open. She turned to help the customer and let out a scream. It was Connor again but this time he was bleeding from the strange birthmark on his neck.

"Help me... find my brother Eric and tell him that... *he* is back. Please Maribel, help me..." he said as he collapsed on the floor.

Paralyzed with fear, Maribel looked out the window, her eyes searching for someone to see this tragedy and provide some help.

Each passerby seemed to disregard the very existence of the store.

She was panicking, her chest felt heavy, the blood pounded in her ears. It felt as though time was standing still and yet flying by at light-speed. Maribel closed her eyes, stumbled backward, and all she could hear was the moaning of Connor on the floor. Suddenly, she started feeling dizzy and light headed. As lost her breath, she fell to the floor, hit her head, and blacked out. When she opened her eyes, she noticed that she was back in bed, only to hear knocking on her door.

### **Unconditional Love**

Lashawn Taylor

"I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word." - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

- Some people miss the point. Life is all about loving beyond conditions and limits. If one can live their life from a place of unconditional love and honesty, one will master the true art of life itself. Wherever you find love and truth, you find God. Wherever you find God, you find happiness - and in the end, those are the only things that really matter.



**I Will Only Accept a Love from a Lover Who Can Love Me the Way I  
Love Nature**

Samantha Gardner

Lift me up as high as the clouds  
Dance in the rain of my emotions  
Cry with joy of my beauty and selflessness  
Trace my body like a vintage map  
And sweat  
When you see me in hopeless pain

Please do not modify my landscape  
View me as an Avant-garde painting  
Grip at my pain  
Fill with the healing

Admire my annuals' chaotic death  
Encourage my perennials to come back stronger than before

Laugh effortlessly  
Love endlessly

Toss water into my valley  
Whisper sweet affection in my ear

Sing to the insects  
Smile and jump to the music of the geese

Stretch for the sunrise  
Bow to the moon

**Unclear Drops**

Gerald Goodwin

Rain Drops are vital  
The unconscious cannot grasp  
The rain feeds us all

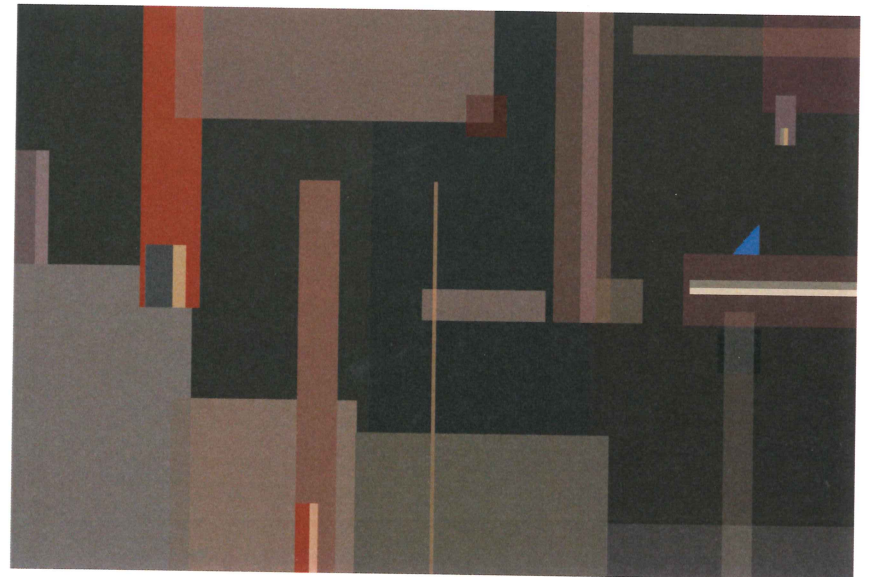
**Another Time – Expired 33mm film, double exposure**

Nolan Wall



**Color Intensity – Photoshop**

Thomas Campbell



## Temporary – Photograph

Victoria Debbins

Samantha Gardner



## My Way

Kaitlin Scirri

Exiting the board room, Anthony dug his phone out of his black suit pocket. His wife's picture glowed from the screen with an alert across her forehead of five missed calls and three new voicemails. Swiping the phone to unlock it, he hit the call icon and went to his recent calls. Pops. No surprise there. Shaking his head, he pressed the voicemail speed dial and followed the automated prompts. Within seconds, his father's boisterous, yet scruffy, voice boomed into his ear, his Italian accent faded from over sixty years of living in America.

"Heya, meatball! Why don't cha answer the phone? Listen..."

Anthony shook his head again, a hint of a smile at the corner of his mouth.

"So that broad you got coming over every few days, you know the one."

Anthony nodded his head. Yes, he knew the one. "That broad" was a certified dietician with a specialty in diabetes and heart-healthy food. Pops had been stubborn since his heart attack, sneaking in chicken finger subs whenever possible. So Anthony had decided to hire Alexis to go to the house a few times a week, prepare healthy meals for Pops, and do a "sweep" for any hidden junk food.

"Well, we got a problem. She's stealing from me!"

Anthony's eyes widened as his forehead wrinkled.

"She's stealing my recipes!"

Anthony's shoulders dropped as he rolled his eyes.

"Those are practically family heirlooms from the old country. She's stealing 'em. I think I need to fire her."

In the break room, Anthony propped his phone between his right shoulder and ear so he could listen while making a fresh cup of coffee.

"I really think you're gonna have to let me fire her this time. Not to mention, I'm gonna start wasting away here. She's feeding me this salad bullshit every day. Every day!"

Anthony grabbed his cup of coffee out of the Keurig and reached for cream, his new wedding band catching the fluorescent lights in the room and appearing to shine.

"It's supposed to be the whole meal, she says. I explained salad is only part of a larger meal, but oh no, Miss Specialty says that's all I get for lunch!"

Anthony added half a spoonful of sugar into his coffee before taking his phone back in his right hand and his hot cup of coffee in his left.

"Can you believe that?"

Anthony nodded his head at his father's voice and whispered a quick greeting to a passing co-worker as he weaved his way through the maze of cubicles back to his desk.

"So call me back, son, so I can tell you about all of this bullshit. Okay, bye."

Anthony pressed the number seven to delete the message. He held the phone up to his ear as he set his coffee cup down on his desk and took a seat in his black leather office chair. He grabbed a pad of sticky notes and quickly scrawled a reminder to call Alexis to apologize and beg her not to quit. He swiveled around to face his computer screen as Pops filled his ear once again.

"Son, it's me. Why the hell don't cha answer your phone? Listen, I need to get to the store and since you won't let me drive anymore you gotta come over here and take me."

Anthony started scrolling through his inbox, deleting junk mail and issues that had been addressed in the meeting.

"And if I gotta go again tonight you'll just have to come back and take me. I mean, I don't wanna be an inconvenience so maybe I should just start driving myself again."

Anthony smiled and shook his head. He opened the top drawer of his desk and took out a mirror. He would be meeting potential clients in less than an hour, and a quick glance assured him that his salt and pepper hair was still in place, his purple tie was clean, and the bags under his eyes weren't too noticeable. His wife had assured him that he hadn't overdone it with the Perry Ellis cologne that morning. Smelling of a masculine musk and satisfied with his appearance, he put the mirror back in his drawer and took a long drink of warm coffee as Pops continued on.

"I mean it only makes sense for me to start driving myself again what with all these doctor appointments and shit. I mean, you're busy working all the time, and I got places to be. I think I'm right on this one. So, listen, call me back so we can talk about this. Okay, bye."

Anthony pressed the familiar number seven on his phone and waited for the last message to begin playing.

"Son, it's me. Jesus, why do you even have a phone? I've been trying to get cha all day."

Anthony glanced at the time in the lower right of his computer screen. The straight, white number read nine-forty-three in the morning.

"I mean, I could have an emergency or something. By the way, I think I need to switch doctors. I don't trust this new guy. I think he's working for the government or something. How do we even know that I really have cancer? I mean, they could just be telling me that so I'll pay money for drugs and treatments that I don't even need because I'm fine."

Anthony exhaled deeply as his eyes shifted from the computer screen down to the floor. They held there for a second, tears threatening to appear. Blinking, Anthony focused his eyes back on the computer and his ear back to Pops.

"I mean, I keep hearing about all these experimental tests and shit in other countries. I bet they got a cure out there, son. I bet they do. But would the government want me to know about that? Of course not! 'Cause then they wouldn't make any goddamn money, would they? I really think I'm on to something here. So, listen, call me back so we can talk about it. Also, your wife looked too skinny on Sunday. She needs to eat more pasta. What's a matter with you, son? You don't make your wife pasta and sauce? I got the family recipes if you want to take 'em. In fact, you should take 'em before Miss Specialty here gets ahold of 'em and puts out her own damn cookbook. She'd love that, eh? Making millions off of my recipes. Jesus Christ. Call me back. Okay, bye."

Anthony smiled and chuckled as he pressed the number seven for the final time. With Pops out of his ear, he could hear the soft crooning of Sinatra over the office speakers. *I did it my way...* As he turned back to his computer screen, the smooth voice of ol' blue eyes quietly filled the floor.

### Observations of the Lone Wolf

Gerald Goodwin

The Dead Fall from space

The living arise from earth

I see Truth rejoice

## Crowning Heights

Robin Butler

### Step 1

It's hot. My fan continues to push this warm, suffocating air around this putrid pink room. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. "Martha!" I hate that name. "Get up!" I'm up but I can't breathe, Mother. "I can't believe this child, I really don't know what to do with her anymore." "Honey, calm down." "I AM CALM." "Stay calm." Hot water streams down my naked arms. My hair tangles in my fingers. It's not like those steamy commercials. Pink bathroom, pink shower curtains. I don't hate pink but this is overboard. It's been 22 years and I still haven't changed it. Do I complain a lot? Plain black tee, shorts, sneakers. Can you tell I'm a girl? My reflection is silent. I wouldn't have anything to say if I was framed with pink ribbons either. Pink. "Finally... you should have lived on campus, you're old enough now." "Honey, you were the one who told her it was her choice." "I didn't think she'd make the wrong one."

The wind blows my fro around like those tumbleweeds you see in old westerns. Funny thing about those movies - even the Indians were white. Does that mean that they are the enemy and the hero? My legs start to ache. I can't see why I have to pump at high speeds to ride to class. The drivers know that a bike isn't as fast so why can't they make room? I get to my advisor's office right on time. The look in her eye is darker than my skin. I try and make my face the same. She sighs.

"Martha, we are meeting a representative for your internship today. Couldn't you have done *something* with you hair?" But not my clothes? Patting my hair down, I catch a glimpse of myself in Gardner's awards case. My hair sticks up in a million ways. Each coil like a constellation telling a different story. What would my story be? 22 year old black... what am I? If I wear big hoodies and slouchy pants. If I wear long skirts in pastel colors. Am I still a girl? *You should dress girly more often, sometimes you look like a boy.* I am a boy. No. I am a girl. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe Martha is different. Maybe Martha is Martha who is not a Maybe. Maybe I'm not making sense. "... and if you'd like to take this seriously then consider what I've just said."

My turn to talk. "Thank you, Ms. Gardner. I will consider your ideals so I can be considered respectable."

"Now, that's not what I said. You-"

I race down the hall and hope that my bike seat isn't like a metal prod in the heat. Where to go? Where am I wanted?

I chain up my bike and step into Clay's Bookstore. The cool air slides over my skin, I smell the deep musky scent that's been my comfort for

years. The floorboards creak as I walk past the tall shelves filled with books from all over the world. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Kira Kira, Men in the Sun, Palestine, Dracula, Secret History* - the titles stick out as I run my fingers along their spines.

"Martha, I got new ones for you."

I smile at Clay, possibly the only person I've ever loved. The unwavering acceptance always present in his eyes that are as brown as my skin. His nubby fingers nimbly pluck through pages and pages of books. This is home. Particles surround him as light filters through windows.

"What do you got?"

I look through the box of used books, each one with their owner's stories imprinted in them. I lift one up that's tattered and worn from past intrigued minds and start mindlessly flipping through pages. I sigh, snap the book shut, and sit in my favorite corner.

When I first started coming here, this chair wasn't here. I just happened to pass by this street and entered his store to escape the uncomfortable silence that stilted my house when I wasn't up to my parent's standard. This wood paneled house for unwanted books became the place I was wanted. I close the deep-red, velvet curtains to get the sun out of my eyes and remember how after seeing me here a few times, Clay started talking to me about books from different countries. Eventually he got an olive green plush seat so I would stop sitting on floorboards. His whistling fades as he moves about the store. This is the silence I like, the peaceful kind.

### Step 2

When I wake up, it's dark outside. I sit up and the book I have on my lap collapses to the floor. As I pick it up, I notice something glinting underneath my chair. I get up and crouch down, seeing that it's a silver key. Turning it over in my palm, I see an intricate design. A tiger wound around a crown. As I walk to Clay, I decide that this must be the key to his rare book collection. Just the thought of books from the Renaissance era excites me. Pulling back his curtain, I peek into his office but don't see him. Another key accompanies a note. *Went home, this is my extra set of keys, lock up and have a good night. C.* Catching the clock glinting from the fluorescent light, I see its 9pm. I gasp and grab the second key. Racing down the dark streets, I pedal as hard as I can and almost fall off as I grip the brake. Breathing hard, I reach into my pocket and feel the tiger and try to figure out why I should rush. Perhaps my parents think that I've suddenly made friends or don't care at all but I've been home at the same time every day since I started college so why didn't they call? Checking my phone, I see no missed calls. On an impulse, I go to my contacts and scroll; *Clay,*

*Dad, Financial Aid office, Mom.* Sighing, I stuff it back into my bag. My house is dark as I ride up, leaving my bike on our lawn, I run up the stairs and enter the house. Sitting on my bed, I turn on the lamp and examine the tiger once more. My fingers trace each eye, ear and fang and I bring it closer to my eye. The crown is embedded with tiny colorless jewels and its paw covers the rest. Is the tiger the king or the protector? I put the key in my drawer and click off my light. Laying in the darkness, I wonder if I'm protecting myself from harm or shielding myself away from opportunity. Suddenly, I remember the representative I was supposed to meet. I bury my face in my pillow and try not to think about what my parents will say.

### Step 3

Sun filters through pink shades. Someone's there. Blurry, but there. I feel something hit my face and my mother comes into focus. A pillow dangles from her hand and a frown is etched into her face, all the more prominent because of her light complexion. I remember how my family used to joke that I was adopted since I was the darkest one. "So you're just going to waste the opportunity your father got for you."

"I'm sorry but my adviso-"

"Enough! Enough. I've had enough."

I watch the tears fall onto my sheets and feel the panic rising in my chest. Looking into her eyes, I see the same mother I've always had but something cold and hard there, too.

"Get out" she said simply as she dropped the pillow.

Leaving my room door open as she left, I realized she meant it. I packed as quickly as I could, all the while gasping for air and willing myself to calm down. Passing my mirror, I ripped off the ribbons and grabbed the key from my drawer. As I opened the door, I hear my dad. Turning around, I see a tall brown skinned man with dark hair and a weary face.

"Dad," and he embraces me.

"I'm sorry, call if you ever need help" he says.

Feeling my tears threatening to fall, I give him a brief smile and leave. I ride to the river and look out over the water. While the tears slide down my cheek, I feel the tiger warming my pocket. Closing my fingers around it, I lay back on the grass. As I hold the key up to the light, the tiger winks at me. Smiling to myself, I sling my bag across my chest and hop back on my bike. I decide to stop at a gas station to pump up my tires for the ride ahead and the attendant says "Beautiful day isn't it?" Grabbing my bike I tell him "Well a new door is opened anyway" and ride east.

### Calm February Waters Along the Outer Harbor – Photograph

Victoria Deth



### Foggy Winter Day at Canalside – Photograph

Victoria Deth





## Company is Coming

Sherwin James Williams

A goblin runs through the halls, panting heavily and tightly grasping several files. He bursts into the throne room, kneels before the throne, and addresses his master, "My Lord, the heroes have entered our domain."

"What? Really? I swear I just had the Hero's village burned yesterday. Time flies when you're terrorizing the land... I feel so old..." The Demon King looks wistfully at the ground.

The goblin nervously interrupts his masters melancholic gazing, "Um... my Lord?"

"Huh? What? Oh right, the hero. Go through the list, who's coming for me?"

"Yes my Lord," the goblin bows as he organizes his files and begins reading from a list of names, "The Hero, Alyon: as you mentioned, you burned her village. The Magician, Saffron Kane: you burned her school down several months ago. I believe you ate a few of her friends as well."

The Demon King interjects, "Wait, was this the school in Fort Lap or Scragun City?"

The goblin searches its notes for the answer, "Scragun, my Lord."

"Ah yes, I recall. Those were some mighty tasty mages. Just the right bit of spiciness, and so fresh." The Demon King wipes some drool from his mouth and bids his servant continue.

"Yes, Lord. Their Thief, Priestly the Fang: you tore his guild from the ground and threw it into the sun." The Demon King intrudes with a hardy laugh and gestures for the goblin to read on. "Their Assassin, Silent Star: after he attempted to take your life, you tied him down and peeled his wife's skin off before tearing out his vocal chords."

"Wait, he survived that!?" The goblin nods. "What the hell... That's actually kind of unnerving... They just don't make humans like they used to. Anyone else?"

"They've also managed to gain the help of an Angel, Barakiel."

"What? Seriously? That's not fair. How did they manage that?"

The goblin flips through his notes and begins reading, "Apparently he's a terrible angel. He drinks, he smokes, he swears, he harasses female angels, things of that nature. It seems heaven threatened to send him to Hell unless he helped the heroes kill you, my Lord."

"If he's such a delinquent, why would he even care? Fallen Angels can do all those things without punishment."

"I've heard that Heaven has an amazing dental package and a better 401k plan.

"Ah, I get it. Hell's dental plan is crap. I've brought it up to Satan time and time again, but he just changes the subject or acts like he can't hear me."

"I... I see, my Lord..."

"Well anyway, if the heroes are on the way, we have to greet them properly. Let's get the house ready." The Demon King rises from his throne and gestures towards the enormous doors of the throne room, slamming them open with his magic. He begins levitating and flies to the front of his castle. The Demon King and his assistant look out at the beautiful picture of nature shining before them. The sun radiates down on the forest surrounding the castle. Deer frolic through the meadow while cardinals sing cheerfully in their nests. Squirrels run down trees to scavenge for nuts while a rabbit couple nibbles on a bush together. The Demon King takes in this peaceful sight with a gentle smile on his face. He takes a deep breath in, for in his busy life of conquest and murder, this is a rare moment. A moment of relaxation, a moment of stillness, a moment of peace. He clasps his hands together and exhales. "This is nice." When his hands come together, a wave of black smoke billows from his cape, careening through the forest. As the fog tears its way through the woodland, the trees begin to die. As the leaves fall to the ground, the animals begin to collapse, their skin melting, leaving festering, gurgling piles of fetid meat and bloody fur. When the smoke clears out, only barren trees and skeletons remain. He gestures to the forest and addresses his goblin servant, "That's more like it. The woods should be pitch black. Ominous, you know? Ooooo, spooooky. You get me?" The Demon

King turns his attention back to his castle and begins casting a spell to raise the dead. "We're gonna need a few skeleton warriors running around to fight the heroes. We don't want them just walking up to the castle like it's a Saturday evening stroll to the ice cream parlor. And we'll throw down a pile of bones here, a pile of bones there. Give off that 'here lies those who failed' feel, you know?" Before reentering his castle, the Demon King looks to the beautiful, cloudless sky above. "Let's block out the sun, yeah? It can't be a gorgeous, sunny day when you go to fight the Demon King. Just doesn't fit. My castle has to give off the 'evil' atmosphere, you know? Let's... let's get some rotating dark clouds going around the spire."

As he enters his castle, the Demon King turns to his servant and stresses that the doors must be unlocked. "Can't have them getting discouraged and going home."

"Might they not just break the door down, my Lord?"

"Well we can't have that. This door is Bocate. You have any idea how much that stuff costs?" He turns his attention to the foyer, "Alright Demon King's castle. Demon King's castle... Everything needs to be purple."

"Purple, my Lord?"

He nods passionately, "Yeah, yeah. Dark, dark purple. And black. Evil, remember? Darkness. Like the forest." He slaps the goblin in the head and tells him to keep up. "Lock all the doors that don't lead to my throne room. Actually, just most of them. We need some red-herrings and dead ends. But make sure you lock my bedroom! I don't need the Hero and her friends going through my journal." He turns around to find all his minions gathered in the lobby before him. "Ahh! Dammit, I hate when you lot do that. Alright everyone, listen up! The heroes are coming and, try as you might, they will slay you." Groans and boos rise from the crowd and the Demon King raises his hand, "I know, I know, it sucks. How do you think I feel? You guys're some of the best minions I've ever had. No joke. But let's be honest, we've brought this on ourselves. We've terrorized our way up and down this world. It was only a matter of time before someone got fed up. We've made our beds and now it's time to sleep. So here's what I want you all to do. Low-level demons: I want you to join the skeleton

warriors and attack the heroes in the forest and at the entrance. They're a much higher level than you at this point, so you're all definitely going to die very quickly." A hand raises in the back of the mass of low-level demons. "Ah, yes, you've got a question?"

A tiny imp pushes his way to the front of the crowd of low-level demons. "Hello, my Lord. My name is Ku-och, low-level demon. I was just wondering... why don't we all gang up on the heroes?"

The Demon King's face contorts to a mix of confusion and disgust until the imp is surrounded by the laughter of its fellow demons. "Oh, you were joking! That's actually rich! Good one! Alright, mid-level demons you'll be in the castle mostly. I want a few of you to go with the low-levels and provide a slight challenge to the heroes. High-level demons, you'll be supporting the mid-levels throughout the house. Remem— Err, Ku-och, you have another question?"

The tiny imp lowers his hand, "Yes, my Lord. Wouldn't it be easier if we set up traps or used the murder hole at the entrance to pour molten lead on the heroes?"

The whole foyer burst into laughter and begins hurling insults at the imp. The Demon King silences his subordinates, "Alright, alright, that's enough. Thank you for your input, Ku-och, but that's just not how this is supposed to work. Anyways, mid and high-level demons remember, you should be in a formation that leads them to the throne room. That way, as you attack them, they know they're going the right way. Okay, mid-bosses, raise your hands." Four hands rise into the air. "Huh, only four left... Wuzz, who did the Hero befriend first?"

The goblin servant pushes his way through the crowd to his master's side and states, "The Magician, Master!"

The Demon King strokes his chin, thinking. "So if they were friends longest, they'll probably want to fight me together... Alright, uhh... Snoincho pick a number: 1-5."

"Uhhh... 5, my Lord."

"Alright, lucky you. That was it. You can go. Get yourself a hotdog or something. The rest of you: Valumuhn, Kokadun, and Raimkouzihr. You three will be in the three chambers before the throne room. The idea is that the Angel, the Assassin, and the Thief will stay back to fight you while the Hero and Mage come to get me,



alright? The whole 'you guys go ahead, leave this guy to me,' sort of meme. Got it? That's gonna happen three times. Whoever's in the last chamber, only the Hero and the Mage should be passing you, OK? Alright, what else... what else...? God's sake, what is it, Ku-och?"

"Well, forgive me for suggesting your plan isn't... brilliant, my Lord, but wouldn't it be easiest if you and the mid bosses just worked together to take down the heroes? I just think-"

The Demon King stomps on the ground in frustration. "Alright, I've had enough. Take him to the dungeon. Let's go with... rat torture." Several other low-level demons and a few mid-level demons surround the tiny imp and drag him away into the dungeon. "Such an asshole."

The goblin servant nods his head in agreement, "No sense of how this works."

"OK, where was I...? Right, those weapons. Wuzz, have you hidden the ultimate weapons in their respective trunks?"

"Yes I have, my Lord. All five ultimate weapons have been hidden in five rooms leading up to the mid bosses, giving the heroes an edge against us."

"I knew I could count on you. And look, sorry I smacked you earlier. This whole ordeal has been pretty stressful and you didn't deserve that. You were just doing your best." The Demon King turns and addresses his whole demon army, "You all do your best and if I don't ever make you feel like I appreciate you, I want you to know that I do. I mean what I said earlier, you guys really are the best minions I've ever had. Come here, you all. Group hug!" The demons surround their King and share a warm, loving embrace before flying off to their positions. "Alright, I'd better get to my throne. Come along, Wuzz." The two walk through the castle, observing the other demons as they prepare for the arrival of their foes. As the Demon King sits on his throne, Wuzz alerts him that the heroes have entered the castle. "Damn, already? These guys're no joke. Hand me the microphone." Wuzz grabs the microphone and hands it to his master.

"WELCOME TO MY CASTLE, HEROES! OF COURSE YOU REALIZE THIS IS WHERE YOU WILL DIE! COME FORWARD AND MEET YOUR DOOM!" He turns off the microphone and throws it across the room. "Shit! My voice cracked! God dammit!"

## 47 Wishes

Brandi Filipski

Artist's Description: "I wrote this poem for my mom for her 47th birthday. It represents what she went through in her life and what she endured with my father."

There was a time that I held just one wish near my heart,  
it was to help get us through for a brand new start  
a wish that seemed impossible, so taunting, full of lies for me,  
my wishes don't come true, they're just too far from reality  
all seemed so lost, most wretched, and hopeless,  
I'd awake from my sleep, our whole lives out of focus  
I'd sit up at night talking to a God who wasn't there,  
a way for my mind to cope, and to fill peace in the air  
all the while you held your faith in yourself, never shedding a tear,  
the way you've always been, without weakness, without fear  
each day was a struggle but somehow we'd manage,  
to the day we found glory, new strength and advantage  
your life, worth more than what you were given,  
you found a new love who showed you that life was worth living  
together we moved on to happier days,  
what we had gone through before seems to be all a big haze  
If I could grant all forty-seven of your wishes,  
I'd give to you all of life's greatest pleasures, no pain and no dishes  
(dishes suck)  
I love you Huli, Happy Birthday to you...  
You're the greatest mom I know, my best dream come true.

**[Untitled]**

Jamie Robinson

There are some who say that people that you meet online, who you've never had any real in-person interaction with aren't really your friends or that they don't know who you *really* are. I have met some wonderful people online, with whom I've formed close friendships, despite never having met them in person. In many ways, I feel closer to my online friends than I do to my face-to-face friends. But this is a double-edged sword.

Online friendships have their merits, but we're allowed to stay in our comfort zones. I'm looking forward to meeting my online friends in person someday soon, as are they, but we don't know when that date will be. I feel like I can trust these friends, in some ways perhaps better than I can people that I know in person. One of the reasons that I've been able to bond closer with online friends than in-person relationships, is that I feel I can express my true thoughts better in writing. My online friends see my truest self, in a way. Some of them are aware of weaknesses I've shared with them, that only a scant few who I know in person know about.

Why is it that I can't be more vocal with those I meet in person? I honestly don't know, but I think fear plays a major role in it. Fear of failure, fear of rejection or ridicule. I'm working on journeying outside my comfort zone, and perhaps that is needed before I can meet these people in person. In order to grow, we need to venture outside of places that we're comfortable. I'm recognizing this as I am learning to drive and looking for a job. I know I'll get there eventually. I know it won't be easy; it may take a while, and there may be difficult days ahead, but I have faith I will get there because the God that I serve goes before me and is making a way for me. I've been privileged to be able to meet these friends online, and I'm sure they feel the same way. They have helped me grow a little bit too, despite not being in the same zip code as me, and I am very grateful. My advice would be: don't wrap yourself up in online friendships or relationships; but also, don't let people tell you those types of friendships don't exist - because they may just be some of the best people in your life.

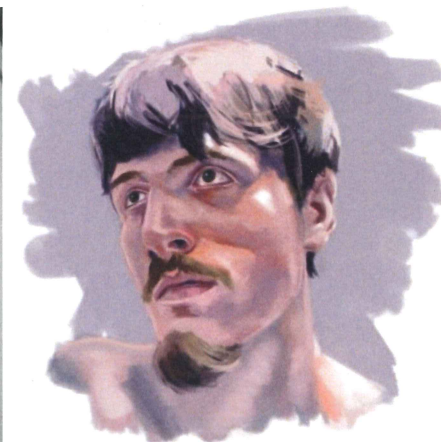
**Foot Study – Charcoal on paper**

Daniel Petrino



**Self-Portrait – Photoshop**

Daniel Petrino



**[Untitled] – Pen on paper**

Gavin DiMaria



**[Untitled] – Photoshop**

Erin Kuntz



"I took a walk in the woods ...



& came out taller than the trees."



## Erté Inspired – Photoshop

Thomas Campbell



## The Strife in Standing Still

John Chadderdon

I'll savor the indifference  
of a storm that strikes  
without consultation  
rickety structures  
rigid, ready to collapse,  
the growl of frigid winds  
blowing snow banks astray  
weakening the foundation  
that weary laymens' hands  
placed centuries before.

The wind picks up,  
a scourge on those who  
walk unsheltered,  
striking, concise incisions  
dissect, neat slices, bits  
of hardened flesh  
cold as the reaper's scythe.

Pull eyelids down  
as if it could be  
the fall of the  
final curtain.

Retreat  
to be buried  
in honorable robes of war  
a sergeant in suffering  
veteran of long campaigns  
battling the stomach closing  
like a vice  
on nothing  
war-torn and world-wearied  
laid to rest on a slab of concrete,  
twenty-one gun salute  
a crossfire of street-side tribalism.

Send for a chariot and  
silver ships  
- not in this lifetime,  
in which only a penny was pandered.  
Settle for the ferry  
and walk grey-faced  
and solemn through Hades.

The wind still cuts  
blowing cellophane  
blowing heaps of trash  
blowing in, revelations.

A vast dream within a nightmare,  
to wake in the same place.

A call to arms  
as vivid as the distortion  
of amber in my veins  
the word of God started with  
a blank page.  
I'll make a fucking prophet  
out of the man begging  
for change.

## What is the Inoculation? – How Memes Have Destroyed the World – (excerpt)

Adam Bauerle

Memes have destroyed the world - it's official. Juxtaposing text with a separate pictorial idea has replicated the masses into establishing an artificial comminable of social discourse. A plastering split between absurdity and lucidity - a neurological connection between the unfathomable and how we react to it to adopt our lifestyles - and the "real world" turns dark. Without question, we accept the poison that has been offered. We tolerate it. We tolerate it because it is all we know, analogous to how baby deer habituate life in suburban neighborhoods. We accept toxicity. Why do we? We are used to it. We forget that wrong is wrong. We do not know what to think. We are told. We accept the unfathomable as it removes personal identity from the unconscious. We were forced to succumb to passively build the train-track for the train of what we were thought to become. An integrated computer, in a world without money, condensed and condemned with all features. How? We accept propaganda without question, and it becomes a badge of civility. We make eye contact and we are screaming what we cannot say. We accept falsities without question. We will become all the same, it was thought. We listen to the same shows, the same news, and the same propaganda - over and over again. The masses became conditioned to accept, adopt, and abide by the familiarity of "The Most Correct Opinion." "They" uniformly standardize the boundaries of "our" beliefs. We believe what we see. What do we see? Raw data, images, texts, even commands. Messages. Cloaked within objectivity, these invasions of unconscionable message-exposure are manipulatory injections, reinstated in our dreams in a cycle of blindness. These brain-washing tools, fueled by a dictatorship of scientific fanaticism, objectify structurally-identifiable codes embedded within the dream-world and inner psyche. This injection attempts mastery over nature, disguising nature to crack the code of the unfathomable divine, all while gatekeeping which vaccine to use to dictate behavior of the "herd." Yet, the hands behind the needle are controlled by the same unfathomable force that affects us all. The original codes are beyond our selves, manifested organically and threaded by synchronicity, yet are now enumerated and theorized to hyper-analytic perfection. We permit the invasion. There are those who choose to allow this regressive mentality to invade their unconscious, resulting in an auto-creation of the self, focalized by their associations. Why? You have been on the assembly line your entire life. Every second, you have been judged - judged for how you breathe, judged for how you move,

and judged for how you love. This judgement became your identity. Terror of escaping the assembly line that has always been here, terrified to escape all that you know, terrified of being different, is reinforced by the virus. Once infected, the virus never really goes away. Derived from falsities, the informational-virus forces pre-determined concepts to artificially bridge with meanings of other pre-targeted and unrelated concepts, which enables linkage to more desirable concepts in the future- and to more desirable modalities. In a series of sophisticated conditioning trials, any awareness of the "real world" is limited by "they" and their action of neurologically altering the masses into conformity. Instilling a manufactured diluted truth while devoid of resistance- this is- a prologue, to insanity. Immense brainwashing potential. Are these contradictory messages forming a deeper message of which I am unaware? What is being fed to us? This is The Inoculation.

We are being changed. We no longer have an identity, we generally don't have critical thinking skills. As the masses gets dumber and dumber it becomes easier and easier to disseminate one of enlightenment and one from slumber. As "zombies" are in a cycle of being brain-fed, those who are awake desperately seek to wake up others. To no avail. Stuck in a cycle of self-delusion, there are times to leave "those" who are infected alone. All the rationale in the world will not stop the virus from spreading, and that's exactly what it is, a virus. Embracing identities defined by "them", these people do not exist at all. They are not bad people or useless. However, uselessness accepts the Trojan horse with open arms. There are different horses, different vaccines. The system inoculates and then dashes. The inoculations are as quick as a fleeting flash of lightning, and with the enigma of an orb of light moving laterally across a distant rural horizon. Images become experiences. Memes become viruses. Opinions become uniform. Truth becomes taboo. Everyone else thinks so, right? It must be true!

Yet what a remarkable logical fallacy it is! Anything can happen in life! We do not even understand it! Lack of evidence of the "real world" is not evidence of absence. There is more to this world that which we can "see" but do not. Unfortunately, some people will never understand that. There are those who are willingly blind, who refuse to glance at "real truth", a kind of cognitive dissonance. While there are others who are aware of the disarray and deception of the viruses but crusade against truth, warring for illusion, because it goes against their belief system. Yet for even more, the recent phenomena of an amenable human identity is the reason why this vessel of informational warfare has transcended the damage of a missile. This Life is nothing what "they" think it is. This World is nothing like "they" think it is. Memes had destroyed the world. It's official.

**America - After "America" by Allen Ginsberg**

Johnna Rich

America, I pledged my allegiance based on lies.  
America: a living facade of the aristocratic dream.  
And it plagues my mind.  
America when will we stop imposing on others?  
Screw how the feds thirst for their precious oil,  
and how many lives were the cost.  
Were the innocents really worth the steep price?  
America, when will you end your blindness?  
When will you stop killing your own?  
When will you look in your own mirror?  
When will you stop singing your song of silence?

America, will you understand that too many men  
believe that women are their Manifest Destiny?  
When will you tell them that women don't owe them  
their legs spread out on a platter like a turkey dinner?

America, I understand that I'm not perfect, but neither are you.  
Your hypocrisy is too much for me.  
You opened up my eyes.  
There must be some end at which we'd meet?

America, I stopped believing in the aristocratic dream,  
which seemed to be on the verge of being torn at the seams.  
I have a future drawn down in sharpie of death,  
a death acquired by the heavy anvil of student debt.

America, I'm addressing you;  
I'll write it in bold and in extra strength Sharpie:  
You're killing your children.  
You force feed us that College will bring us to Paradise,  
but the cost is as high as Snoop Dogg – so we borrow  
and you give us your money, so we give in  
and then get on our knees and suck up  
so we can start paying the hundreds of thousands off.

America, how can I write a sacred homily  
with the satanic hypocrisy of your christian nation?  
But I'll continue, as Disney continues with "Frozen."

America, you say you don't really want to fight.  
But then why do you blame and condemn and  
allow for Banks and Companies to screw us way too hard?  
It's you, America, it's you. You educate your rich, you condemn the  
poor—  
you only appear to care if it has money and skin as white as snow.

America, I am serious.  
America, this is the impression I get from questioning what  
I see every day.  
America, is this true?  
Then I'd better stay in my lane.  
It's true, though, I'd never defend a country that points fingers at its  
people,  
that refused to help the queers, the blacks, the girls.  
America, I'm done with your crap.

**White Domination**

Ja'Quona Renfro

I bear the image, I hear, I see, I live  
An image so fearful as death's eyes, one loses sight  
The ghettos, the jails, the schools, we are held captive  
Wondering why we're always ready to take flight  
Their tortures and theories tarnished, they're trying  
We are becoming a more diverse country  
Peace deserted our mind, when we were dying  
Robbing our natural resources to make money  
Their disease they brought to our land  
Enslaving our families on boats  
Murdering, slaughtering, no accounts left firsthand  
Ancestors and generations only left with hope  
How can you be so unconscious, you must admit  
*Slavery*, even though it's *gone*, we can still feel it.

## Happy Home

H. C.

As a young child, I witnessed fights. Fights between my parents; fights between friends. They varied in hostility and outcome, but one fact remained the same: the lack of trust between the two people.

I'm not entirely sure how my parents feel about each other.

I take some days for granted. Those are the days where they wake up and greet each other with a kiss; the days where they dance around the kitchen singing and laughing and dancing. Those days, I playfully cringe when they rub their noses together and smile against one another's lips. Other days, though, they let it all out. They yell and scream and claw and gnaw at each other's hearts and I wonder *how is this love?*

Someone once told me that love was understanding that for every five or ten or fifteen bad days, there is one good day that trumps all others. I'm not certain that's true. Those five or ten or fifteen days have turned into weeks and months and I don't know how much longer this will go on—this lie.

The other day, my mom was playing around with my dad and jokingly said *I don't love you*. Now, I'm not sure why she thought that would be funny in any context, but I could see the pain in my father's eyes, in his posture, and I know she could, too. I could taste the waves of regret seeping out of her pores. She apologized, but when will it happen again? There is no doubt that it will, but when? Why? How long will it last?

I don't think I know what love is.

Others tell me it's the wind blowing through your hair on the perfect day—whatever that may be—or that it's a rush of excitement every time you see that person or that it's a feeling of deep contentment knowing that someone will always love you. As far as I know, love is a temporary thing. I've seen people fall out of love as quick as a rubber band snaps. I've seen relationships destroyed over one word or maybe two or even an entire speech. I don't believe love was made to last. It's a pastime—something to occupy time in every life.

So, maybe I don't know if I grew up in what was considered a "happy home" or if I know what love is. That's fine. I only wish that I knew something else, *anything else* that would get me through this life.

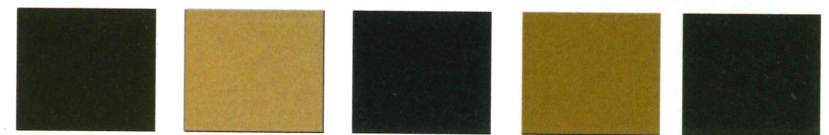
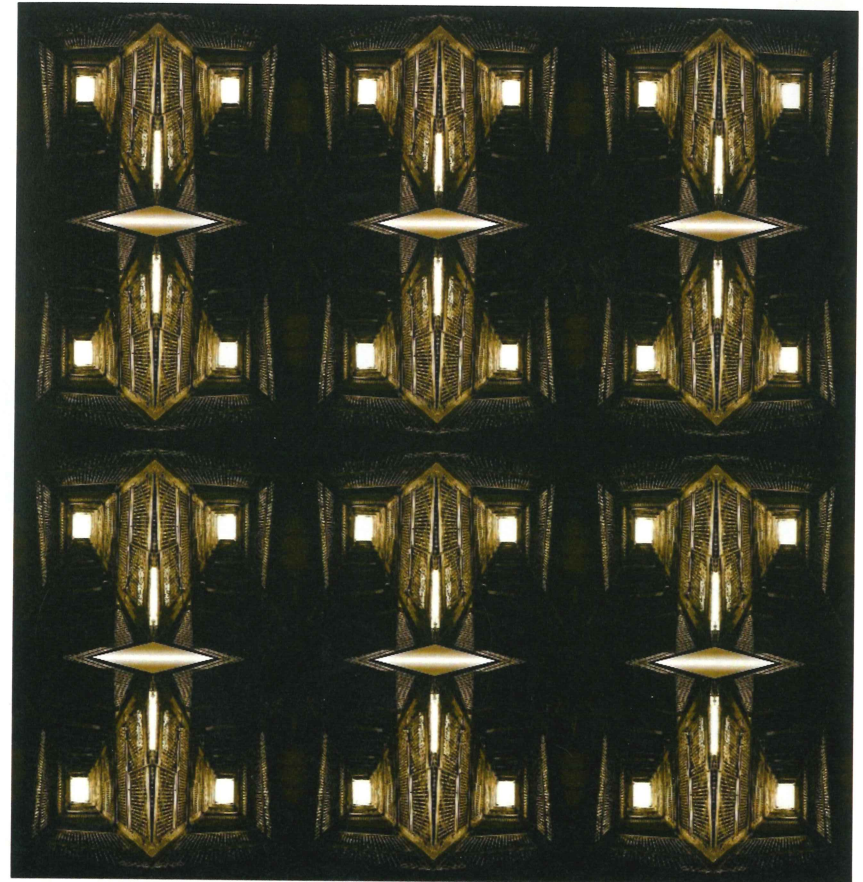
## Gold Ceilings (Colorway) – Photoshop

Ricardo J. Nazario

SEASON OF CHAMPIONS

4.493" x 6.873"

FTT304 - FALL 2016



REPURPOSE BLESSED REUSE WIN RECYCLE

Fall 2016. Buffalo, NY – Photograph

Faisal Yusef



Just Breathe

Kaitlin Scirri

Mom is coughing  
A wet sound  
Her lungs strain  
Desperate for air  
"It's just an allergy," Mom says

Mom is the smell of  
Cigarette smoke and bubble bath  
Mom is the sound of  
Denial and stubbornness  
She doesn't need a doctor  
It's just an allergy

Gray smoke from her Misty Lights  
Filled our home for thirty years  
Filled her lungs with heavy black tar

I am still five years old  
But trapped  
In a grown-up's body  
I still need  
My mom

My face is red  
Stained with tears  
My hands are sweaty

Mom is  
Mom is going to  
Mom is going to leave me

I can't  
I can't stop it  
From happening  
Mom can't breathe!

I  
can't  
breathe  
either

## The Mess I Made

Miya McDaniel

Waking up from the blissfully dreamless sleep to the pitter pat of the rain hitting the window pane, Arden stretches out her lean limbs and automatically reaches her arms to the right side of the bed, his side. Realizing she's alone, she closes her eyes and lets out all the air in her lungs, and begins to imagine herself in a better life. A life when he doesn't leave. The black bitter truth of their failed relationship suffocates her; encasing her insides in ice. Fitting she thought to herself everyone calls her the ice queen now so, I guess it's becoming of me to feel this way. She grabs the soft Egyptian cotton sheets and pulls them close, remembering the first time she met Him.

Eyes still closed, she smiles remembering the warmth of the sun on her skin, and how happy she was for deciding to take the day off. Deciding to get coffee, she was struck by the only guy sitting next to the window at Starbucks. Looking at him through the glass of that Starbucks, his horn-rimmed glasses crooked on his nose, his light brown hair was standing on end; as if he was constantly running his fingers through it. Cute, she thought to herself. Being the type to take what she wants, she decided to walk over and asked the cute writer whose name was Ben for his number.

Their relationship was as beautiful, and peaceful as the weather on the first day they met. They married 9 months later. All seemed well, but an east wind came and left nothing but an empty house with white walls in its wake.

She finally opens her eyes and looks around the eerily quiet room. Such a loveless room. Frustrated she screams. Missing their 5th year wedding anniversary because of a business meeting she didn't want to reschedule. She screams. Refusing to have a child because it would interfere with her startup company. She screams. The look of utter exhaustion on his face the day he walked out. She screams. Completely worn down, she weeps. Drowning in a sea of the mess she made, she glances at the bedside clock. This time she knows she must get up and leave all of this behind. Wary, she finally gets out of bed.

Heading into the sleek downtown office building an hour later, she pauses, hands shaking, get your shit together she says to herself. Taking a deep breath while plastering a smile on her face, she enters the boardroom. As soon as she enters the two men, and Ben looked

up at her like a lamb get ready for the slaughter. Her lawyer greets her by the door and guides her to her seat.

Their assets were already agreed upon during their last meeting, so the only thing left was to sign the papers. He quickly signs and hands the paperwork toward her lawyer. She grabs the pen but cannot will herself to sign. The only sound to be heard in the room is the tick of the clock. Her lawyer nudges her shoulder, and after another minute passes, she finally signs; ending her marriage. She can feel Ben's eyes burning her with his gaze, but she refuses to meet His eyes. Finally, he leaves her for the second and last time. Her lawyer looks at her with a question in his eyes, she looks ahead where Ben was just one moment ago and says; "I have made this man cry more than I should have."

## A Letter to the Pretty Girls like Me

B'ili Scott

"You're pretty for a - "

You are pretty.

Pretty girl, don't let them tell you that you are only pretty under certain conditions.

You are beautiful.

"You're smart for a - "

No, no ... Intelligence has no color or shape, baby girl, it is mental.

Don't let them trick you into thinking that your color, size, or hair color measures your intelligence.

Girl, invest in your mind. Continue to read.

Girl, invest in your heart, beware of those who try to break it.

Protect it.

Girl, invest in your soul. Feed it positivity at all times.

Because you are Pretty, Girl.

Because you are Intelligent, Girl.

So take care of your self

And don't let anyone make you feel any less, ever again.

Say to yourself:

I will not make my life full of almosts and could haves, it will be of 'I was' and 'I have done.'

I was not a choice. I am, and always will be, a fact.



## Under the Bridge

Nick Fox

Jim turned his back against the wind and lit his last cigarette, taking a rough drag before practically coughing up a lung. The rain poured down outside the shelter of the low bridge, where Jim had been living most of the past month or so. His mom kicked him out, tired of hearing excuses. He stole her cigarettes on his way out, but while remembering all this, he had smoked all the way to the filter, and figured they were all gone now.

Tonight, Jim's humble abode beneath the overpass had the usual guests. Ivory, who sat by the fire, had been alienated from the drag queen community several years back due to some of her outspoken views on sexuality and *sensuality*, which were considered "far too controversial," even within her circles— an accomplishment that she would wear with only a half-sarcastic sense of pride on the streets, though Jim personally thought she probably shouldn't.

"I gotta' admit it, Ivory," said Jim, in the tone he put on whenever he came up with some smartass remark. "Your beard is coming in even better than mine!"

Arnie emerged from the wall of rain with his usual, heavy-stepped limp. He looked like old, stray mutt. He pushed Jim aside to make room by the fire. "I got the stuff," he slyly said to Jim. Ivory rolled her eyes while Jim rushed to take off his belt.

"Fuck you, man! I'm the one who went out in the rain! I'm going first!"

Arnie slapped Jim on the back of the head and grabbed the belt. Jim slapped Arnie right back, and soon the two were practically brawling. Ivory took a long sip from her flask. It was almost funny until Arnie punched Jim right in the cheek, knocking him to the ground.

"Fuckin' kid, I didn't hit ya' that hard," Arnie grabbed the flask out of Ivory's hand and took a long, long drink in the silence. Police sirens sounded in the distance. Ivory turned her nose up at the whole situation. Jim rubbed his cheek and spit blood. The sirens were definitely getting closer.

Jim picked himself up and sat back down by the fire. "Well, get on with it, at least," Jim muttered. "Asshole!"

Arnie, who was still drinking, gagged and went into a coughing fit.

"Oh, I'm the asshole, ya' skinny junkie? I didn't see you goin' out in

the rain. Ya' know the problem with your generation? All you do is take, and take, and take!" Arnie took a sip of the flask. "Go ahead, get yer' fix, fuckup," Arnie added, throwing Jim's belt back at him. They were interrupted by the sound of a car screeching to a halt on the bridge above, followed by men frantically arguing overhead, screaming practically. The police sirens were rapidly drawing nearer. Suddenly, a heavy duffle bag dropped from the overpass, flopping into the ground in front of the trio with a thud and the splash of dirty rainwater. The car sped off again, followed by the deafening roar of sirens from what must have been an entire squad of police vehicles. Arnie took another drink before running out into the rain and grabbing the discarded duffle bag. He dropped the bag near the fire and unzipped the largest compartment.

"Well, son of a..." Arnie mumbled.

"What is it, Arnie?" Ivory whispered, with a rare show of genuine interest.

"Come take a look."

Ivory looked into the bag with wonder and amazement, pulling out a giant wad of \$100 bills. "There must be thousands on top of thousands in this bag! With this kind of money, I could finally get my life back! We hit the motherlo—" Arnie bashed the back of Ivory's skull with the metal flask; as she fell to the ground, Arnie climbed on top of her and proceeded to bluntly smash her face with his weapon, over and over.

"Sorry, Iv'ry, but we both I need this money more than you do." Arnie wound up for one last bash to finish the job; Ivory was hardly moving, her blood pooled into the puddles of mud. Just as Arnie was about to swing, he felt himself gag, unable to breathe. He dropped the flask to the ground and desperately grasped at his throat, but his wet fingers couldn't grab hold of the belt constricting around his windpipe.

Jim pulled the belt tighter and tighter, even as Arnie fell to the ground. Arnie kicked frantically, his bum-leg thrashing wildly around until it slowly went limp. Ivory lie on the ground, unmoving. Jim looked at the gruesome scene with wide, scared eyes as he heard the sirens slowly approaching again. He fell to the ground and started to cry, but he bit his lip and held back his tears. Jim frantically grabbed handfuls of money from the bag and stuffed them into his pockets until they were full, throwing the rest of the money into the fire.

## Pejorative – (excerpt)

Andrew Butt

Something interesting:

The blades of grass after thawing as winter passes. Garbage lines the architecture of chlorophyll-stained life, wrapping itself around the artificial plastic linings of candy bars, the paper of drink cups, and the metallic composition of coins and drink caps. The plant life grows on, it lives despite the artificial contamination. The dirt is imprinted with the intruders, but it matters little.

More interesting:

The blades of grass after thawing as winter passes. It doesn't matter the season, you can see them in the grass. You can see them ripped and torn in the street and sidewalk—stuck within the separated cracks like the land knew they belonged somewhere else. Stuck in the sinking glaciers and ice in some seasons: the lost lottery tickets. Scratched, torn, and discarded in the air. They are everywhere. Money wasted, sure. Hopes dashed, sure. And yet, they keep coming.

So many colors.

It isn't a gambling problem—it's a problem of expectation. So many people who haven't learned that we are born to remain sometimes. They don't know. We don't learn. And that's what the paper does in the wind. It doesn't move, and if it does it still remains—in a sense. So what does that mean?

## 2 Buffalo River Place

Sherwin James Williams

Rotting on the river  
next to the train tracks.  
The corpse covered in vines,  
doors overrun with  
crabgrass and brambles.

The insides are filled with  
the remnants of machines,  
rusted limbs hugging the  
broken ground, littered with

shattered glass, crushed beer cans  
and little dyed pellets.

Walls bleed graffiti.  
The stairs leading to the  
upper floors are missing.  
The corner holds remains  
of a fire, along with  
a rancid pile of grains.

## Reverse Mermaid – Watercolor on paper

Joshua Saville



[Untitled] – Charcoal on paper  
Cassandra Chu



## Should We Fear Death: The Symmetry Argument in Epicurus

Bianca Gonzalez

### I. Introduction

How many of us would say that they fear death? What is it that we fear about death? Ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus (341 – 270 BCE) believes that death is nothing at all, hence nothing to fear. I am going to explore that idea in the following paper.

Perhaps you've heard of Epicurus in terms of the influential Hellenistic school that he founded. Epicureanism is typically associated with hedonism, which comes from the Greek term *hedone*, which literally translates to "pleasure." Epicurus was a moderate hedonist, believing that his followers should pursue simple, natural desires, such as the basic human need for food, and ought to avoid entertaining empty, unnatural desires like the desire for honor or wealth, as these can never be satisfied and are the source of unhappiness, according to Epicurus. Epicurus' goal of life was *ataraxia*, or a state of tranquility in which a person is free from all pain. One way the Epicureans can obtain *ataraxia*, or a state of peacefulness is to provide arguments that eliminate anxiety rooted in the fear of one's own death.

Lucretius is a Roman philosopher and poet, born in 99 BCE. Lucretius wrote a poem titled *On Nature*, around 50 BCE, in which he presents what has come to be known as the Symmetry Argument, an argument that shows the symmetry between prenatal and postmortem existence. For Lucretius, just as we don't see the time before we are born as a bad thing, we should not fear the time after we are dead as a bad thing.

The following is an outline for the Epicurean arguments aimed towards minimizing fear surrounding one's own death, followed by a counterclaim from Thomas Nagel.

### II. Epicurus: Death is Nothing

As a hedonist, Epicurus identifies good with pleasure and evil with pain. For Epicurus pleasure is not positive enjoyment, but a negative release from pain.

The limit of quantity in pleasure is the removal of all that is painful. Wherever pleasure is present, as long as it is there, there is neither pain of body nor of mind, nor of both at once.

In his *Leading Doctrines*, Epicurus argues that death is nothing to us. Death is nothing to us: for that which is dissolved is without sensation: and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us.

Epicurus argues that in order for a person to be affected by any good or evil, it would require sensation. Death is the cessation of all sensation, therefore death is nothing we can sense, hence death is nothing. If death is literally nothing, then it would follow that death is neither good nor bad. If it is nothing, neither good nor bad, then a fear of death should not cause a person anxiety. When we get rid of anxiety, which is a kind of pain, we are one step closer to *ataraxia*.

### III. Lucretius: Symmetry Argument

When we turn to the Roman philosopher and poet Lucretius' work *On Nature*, we find what is known as the Symmetry Argument. Lucretius agrees with Epicurus that we should not fear death:

Just as in the past we had no sensation of discomfort [from events prior to our births]... so too, when we will no longer exist following the severing of the soul and body, from those whose conjunction we are constituted, you can take it that nothing will be able to affect us and to stir our sensation-- not if the earth collapses into the sea, and sea into sky.

For if there is going to be unhappiness and suffering, the person must also himself exist at the same time, for the evil to be able to befall him. Since death robs him of this, preventing the existence of the person for the evils to be heaped upon, you can tell that there is nothing for us to fear in death... it is no different from never having been born.

Here Lucretius argues that postmortem nonexistence is nothing horrible at all, and certainly not anything about which we should feel sadness. We do not experience sadness over a state of the time before we are born, so, if these two kinds of nonexistence are symmetrical, we should not view the time after we die as horrible or evoking sadness.

### IV. Nagel: Deprivation Argument

One objection to the Symmetry Argument is introduced by Thomas Nagel, and is referred to as the Deprivation Argument. Nagel disagrees with Epicurus and seeks to restore the commonsense notion, or what he calls the "natural view," namely, that death is a bad thing, hence it *is* something we should fear. Nagel seeks to show that the time before you are born and the time after you die are in fact *asymmetrical* or dissimilar. He argues that postmortem nonexistence, or the loss of one's life, is the greatest loss, or deprivation, that a person can sustain. The loss of life means that the possibility of experiencing the goods of life is eliminated.

It is *being alive*, *doing* certain things, having certain experiences, which we consider good. But if death is an evil, it is the *loss of life*, rather than the state of being dead, or non-existence, or unconscious that is objectionable.

This "deprivation of goods" is an evil, or a bad thing, for the deceased person. In other words, life is good and what is bad about death is that it deprives us of the possibility of enjoying the goods of life. Nagel argues that deprivation, deterioration, and damage *are* bad things even if a person is unaware of their presence, which contrasts the hedonistic saying, "what you don't know can't hurt you." That they are bad does not require there being a specific time that a person became aware of them. Take for instance an act of betrayal, such as when a husband is unfaithful to his wife. It would make more sense to say the person was betrayed at the initial time of betrayal than at the act of one's discovering the act. Say, for example, the wife coming home to find her husband's mistress in her bed. Nagel would say that this act is obviously a bad thing, making the point that "what you do not know *can* in fact hurt you," even if the person in question is not suffering as a direct result of the presence of what he does not know. To illustrate the point that something can be bad or evil even if the person in question is not aware of something bad happening to him or her, Nagel introduces a thought experiment. Imagine an intelligent man who experiences a traumatic brain injury and is reduced to the mental state of a contented three-month-old. This man is happy in his state -- he does not mind his condition -- yet, being reduced to the

mental capacity of a child seems like a bad thing. This is because the man is being deprived of the possibility of progressing from a childlike state, while also having had his mental state deteriorated. Nagel concludes that there can be a distance either spatially or temporally in which someone can be hurt. So a bad thing can happen to a person even if that person is unaware of this happening, or doesn't mind it. So, for Nagel, death is always at least a little bit bad. But what about cases when death might be considered good or very good? Take for example a person who is terminally ill and suffering horribly. Might we say that her death is a blessing, relieving her of all of her suffering and pain? Nagel fails to acknowledge the possibility that the removal of suffering through death may be a good thing. Epicurus believes that death is neither good nor bad hence nothing we should fear. Perhaps death is both good and bad and Epicurus and Nagel fail to appreciate the complexities of death and life.

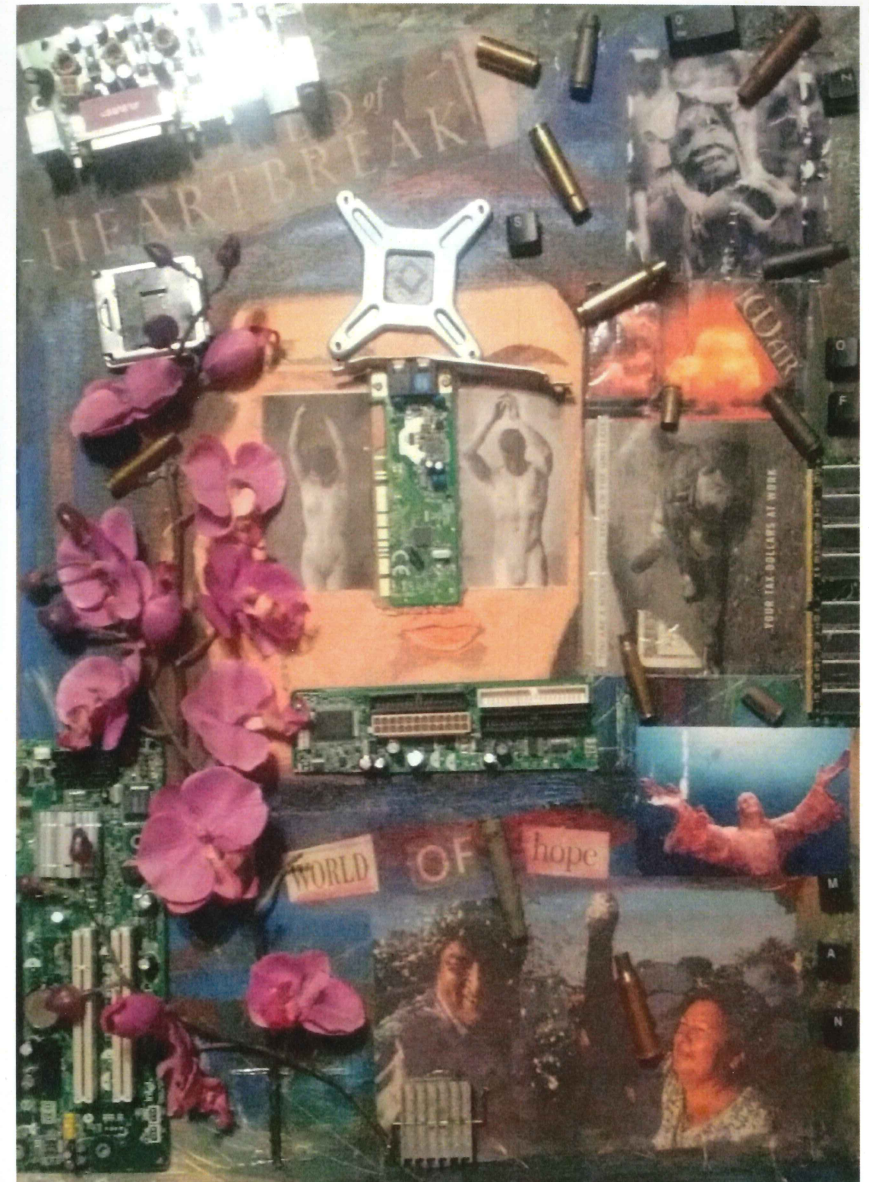
### Things to Remember

Kanika Haggins

And at my funeral, show them the picture with my hair full-  
My eyes serene  
My posture pose; confident.  
When my mother is crying show her the picture where I am smiling-  
My blouse a gorgeous silk pink.  
When my sister is ready to give up on Life show her-  
My will to fight.  
When my brothers are confused on why they are burying their  
youngest sister show them  
My Legacy and their mistakes help me to reach further than any goal  
they've set.  
When my lover is feeling angry, show them the picture-  
My heart will never stop loving.  
  
When my father shows up to the funeral,  
Show him the way out as he has done to us-  
When he chose Heineken, Blow, and Eastside as his children.  
  
He does not deserve to picture resilience.

### A World of Heartbreak, A World of Hope – 3-Dimensional Collage

C. Conchobar



4105-103



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