

THE INDIGO

LITERARY JOURNAL OF WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY

2021

Department of Language and Literature



The Flower Maker Laurinda Diane Johnson

THE INDIGO
2021

WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY

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Editor's Notes

C. S. Lewis said, "Miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see." (Who knows what that means?) Every other *Indigo* starts with a quote and I do not want to break tradition. If you read the Editor's notes from previous editions, each year contained a new obstacle. This year is the same, with trials which we advance through, for the university, as a country, and, perhaps, the modern world. I feel like *The Indigo* reflects the gamut of emotion, faith, imagination, and humanity during those trials where every moment becomes important. It takes bravery to share a part of oneself with others, in any medium. It is the intrepidity we anticipate in the writings of the Carey family, each person writing miracles in small letters, sharing common stories that are a different echo in the retelling. We encourage looking for a reflection of yourself within the pieces.

Sincerely,

Kimberly DeLorenze, Graduate Student Editor

What a year. Few normal things have continued but writing and creativity are two of the few things that always continue. In fact, writing and creativity often flourish in times of hardship, creating poets and writers out of people who would not usually have the time or desire to sit and create. The talents of William Carey's students, alumni, faculty, and staff are inspiring. I hope you enjoy reading *The Indigo* as much as we have enjoyed editing it.

Sincerely,

Emily Branan, Undergraduate Student Editor

Acknowledgements

It is with much appreciation that we express gratitude to all persons who contributed to *The Indigo*. There were many insightful submissions, making the production of this edition a joyful process. We have been energized and challenged by the exceptional talent of students, faculty, staff, and alumni. *The Indigo* staff offers special thanks to Dr. Ed Ford for lending his expertise in design and layout. We also thank Mrs. Barbara Tillery for printing copies of *The Indigo* for those who wished to have a tangible version. It has been a great honor working with and having the support of so many, particularly the Department of Language and Literature. Within that department, Mrs. Dolores O'Mary was our lifeline when we had questions and Dr. Tom Richardson, our department chair, was our foundation. Now, it is with great enthusiasm and consideration that we present this edition of *The Indigo* to our readers, and we hope you find something relatable and enjoyable inside.

Sincerely,

The Indigo Editors

Kimberly DeLorenze, Co-Editor

Emily Branan, Co-Editor

Allison Chestnut, Faculty Sponsor

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Font Cover: Laurinda Diane Johnson, *The Flower Maker*,
Back Cover: Rebecca Lauren Thompson, *Life's Replacement*

TO MR. FROST
(AN OPEN LETTER AFTER READING "PEA BRUSH,"
"PUTTING IN THE SEED," "A TIME TO TALK," AND "THE
COW IN APPLE TIME")

by Grant Guthrie

I confess my affection for you
Though in time, geography, and creed
We are most aptly described as separate
As two poets, both farmers, can be.

We two are in love with the small things
Of the earth, the unnoticed event
That shoulders its way to the surface
Amid those of more anxious intent.

In your lines the mundane is awakened
As a seed, after rain in its season,
Finds its strength in the quickening sun
And lends mystery to the gardener's reason.

Cautious friends will admonish my kinship
With you, I do so myself.
More canonical pundits are present
Taking rest in their homes on my shelf.

But when senses are hungry for pricking
Your thin volume I take from its place
To hold nature's delight to my bosom,
Her creator's purpose to trace.

Ceramic Totem
Jessie Parker



Untitled-Charcoal Jacob Havard

FOR MY MAMMAW, TOSHIKO PIGFORD,
WHO HAS GONE HOME.

by Meagan Smith

I don't know if I truly understood my Mammaw (grandmother, for those not fluent in Southern) until last year. All the little pieces of her, the memories I have and the stories I was told all fell together as I learned about the Japanese artform "Gaman."

The word "Gaman" means "to endure the seemingly unbearable with patience and dignity." This verb turned into the name of an art form and was a huge piece of the Mammaw puzzle for me. But, to help you reading, I'll briefly explain how Japanese Americans practiced Gaman internment campus during WWII.

After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Americans, government and citizens alike, were scared. So, the government gathered Japanese Americans and forced them to live in internment camps from 1942-1945. They were not comfortable places. They were not home. The people there were expected to press pause, idle their lives, until the government decided to let them go.

A large number of internees were children, and the adults in the camps were determined to help them keep their innocence and to prepare them for when they could live free. So, they organized themselves: doctors, teachers, seamstresses, artists, dance instructors, athletes,

engineers, drafters of architecture... they made a community.

Dana's grandparents met in an internment camp and one of Dana's most prized possessions is an umbrella, 6 inches in diameter, made from toothpicks, a broken chopstick, and cigarette papers. It's beautiful. Dana found a book called *The Art of Gaman* by Delphine Hirasuna where she discovered that internees planted gardens, made broaches, painted masterpieces, created dolls, formed delicate miniature flower arrangements, and more—all out of things they found. Trash discarded, bottles and jars all used up.

The Japanese-Americans used creativity to endure the seemingly unbearable with patience and dignity during this unfathomable experience. I believe my Mammaw did the same. She was not in America during WWII. She met my grandfather in Japan after graduating from a prestigious college in Japan, which was very strange because women in Japan did not normally go to college then. She worked as an English translator at a hospital, and my American soldier grandfather was there to fix the morgue refrigerators. He didn't have the proper paperwork and Mammaw wouldn't let him in—thus began the Tsukasaki/Shumock romance.

She was disowned twice—once when she married my grandfather and once again after the war was over and her family had a chance to invite her back in. They didn't. Her brother did give her his first name to use as a last name, though. That had to have been so painful, and yet, she was part of the foundation of a beautiful family.

When they returned to America, they came back to nothing. She not only had to adjust to Southern culture and to the scorn of Americans who did not like Japanese people, but she and her husband also had to build a life from the ground up with her first child on her hip. And yet, they built a beautiful life anyway. She found Christ, she made friends, she opened the eyes and hearts of a community as she endeared herself to them.

She was a wonderful seamstress, making clothes for her 4 children including gorgeous couture dresses for her two daughters. (She made an Easter dress or two for me, too, I just remembered.)

She laughed fully with her whole body, nothing held back, and she loved with her whole soul. Her life wasn't all bad experiences she had to repurpose, but she always took the trash, the leftovers, and made beautiful things you could hold in your hands and beautiful things you could hold in your heart. *Gaman*.

My cousin Amy told me a story that I think epitomized how my Mammaw lived her life: every year my grandfather would buy a cow, and my grandmother would love it. At the end of the year, they would butcher it, and my grandmother would cry for the cow.

That is how I want to love, repetitively without the anticipation of loss. That is how I want to live, boldly without the anticipation of failure. Though Mammaw was inhibited by a stroke for years and years, all the way until the end, she still chose Christ and *Gaman*.

Her art was living well.
Her craft was love.



Untitled
Rebecca Ann Mowdy

RELEVANCE

by Loretta Fairley

the meeting drags on
about something
irrelevant

my eyes fall on a map
of Afghanistan
and I wonder
how many soldiers died
while I sat here

is this what they're
fighting to protect?

ARSON

by Murph Little

Arson was a word reserved for fiction
until the fire swept up
and called us from our home
to watch a second die.

TEACHERS

by Lauren Ashley Jones

Students vienen, entonces they go,
Pero the bonds siempre they grow.
Cuando se gradúan
Y no los veo anymore,
Still, them I will remember
Y estuve feliz
Porque they will tener éxito
Y I will haré hecho
todo lo que pude.



Wagon Wheel
Rebecca Ann Mowdy

REQUIEM FOR A WHEEL

by Dr. Garry Breland

Nice as this is, I wonder what it would be like
To have pictures of the whole wagon
Instead of just this one wheel. After all,
We take more pictures of weddings than of funerals.

In an earlier picture, a young man
Might be urging a mule along a sandy track,
Wagon stacked high with watermelons,
Bound for town on market day.

The shot could capture this one wheel
And the furrow creasing the farmer's brow
While he calculated earnings after the rent
On land, shack, wagon, and mule.

Another image could show the wagon
At rest by a moon-dappled chinaberry tree,
The window in the sharecroppers' shack
Glowing feebly with their hopes and dreams.

But as happens to us all, this wheel's days
For freighting either sorrow or joy
Lie well in the earth's past revolutions—
An antique implement, come to rest in reverie.

This picture probably had to wait until students
In photography class were assigned a project
Showing mastery of the principles
Of light, line, shape, texture, and perspective.

And on the day they all went forth
This one wheel was all that remained—
The sole survivor of its fellows.
Maybe it was squeaky and got all the grease.



Depths
Deanna Roberts

DELUGE

by Kimberly DeLorenze

Treetops refract daylight
Ankles brushing dewed grass
I dust sand from notched letters
Sliding fingers across granite
Thunder pounds
Rain trickles around an angel statuette
Wilting a fresh arrangement
Gladiolus were your favorite
Mud pools at my feet, knees, throat, mouth
Until my vision blurs

PRIMROSE MNEMOSYNE

by Jessica Pulivarthi and Janie Wiggins
Flowers bloom and flowers grow;
Mountains rise and rivers flow.
From child to youth, the bitter trance
Drifts about Time's endless dance

Pervading through breaths and sighs,
Life begins through air-struck cries.
It then continues, in mother's arms-
Carefree, innocent, and unalarmed

From bairn to child in few short years,
Strollers, diapers disappear,
Replaced instead by mermaid's tails,
Faerie rings and wishing wells.

Life then halts, or so it'd seem:
Clear and bright, an endless dream.
The days go by in princesses' towers,
With boisterous pirates and superpowers.

The stars are yours to command;
You hold the earth within your hand.
All the world is at your feet;
The very sun is in your reach.

But life cannot remain or stay,
And, too soon, youth floats away.
Just as you reach for the sky,
As age must come, then youth must die.

The towers begin to crack and fade;
The pirates raise anchor and sail away.
The war-torn child falls to her knees,
Patching her wounds with memories.

But her wounds will not remain
Nor her tears forever stain,
For life goes on in lands anew,
And where there's war, peace comes too.



Girl with Bandage
Jessica Pulivarthi



Nocturnal
Jessie Parker

HER

by Leanna Grace Blakeslee

Girl. She was born into the world at a disadvantage; not of the monetary kind or of physical deformity and certainly not in status. Instead, her disability lingered when least expected. In her education when her teachers offered no challenge or help, saving their breath for those assumed to have more strength, more courage, more independence. For those with more *machismo*. It was in those unforeseen moments of public solitude when predators lingered; when she could feel their eyes stray a little too long, waiting for their opportunity to pounce. Her disease was in the very essence of what was expected of her - how her life was assumed to take place, with its specific compilation of events all planned out before she was even born and far before she had become to exist. It was even in simple conversation, when her

voice was taken over by those not affected by this ever so innocent handicap, being forgotten with nothing else to give.

Warrioress. Although she was considered a liability to some, she never let her deformity restrain her from what she knew she wanted. In a world of bias, it was a constant battle to simply keep standing, to keep herself aloft in a society constantly straining to keep her from her dreams. Sick of her affliction, she began to fight; not on bloodthirsty battlefields but within the streets of her own town. With fire in her veins, she roared her battle cry, declaring she would not be forgotten, she would not play victim to the destructive tendencies of others, under no circumstances would she be trampled into dust by oppression. She was not alone in the fight, and when she joined the ranks, she led the surge of army against army, unstoppable in the face of tyranny. With admiration in their eyes, others plagued by her disease began to call her courageous; inspirational, they murmured among one another, rising again with renewed strength. Despite her disadvantages, her prowess engulfed her enemy's ideologies which once ravished those suffering from the same restraint she suddenly found herself living for.

Queen. Marred by battle scars and memories of comrades ousted by liars and cowards, she rose above her deformity. Her reputation spread, and soon she could be found in the hearts and minds of little victims growing up into the same disease. To them, she was ethereal; a celestial icon brought down from the heavens, sent to lead them to freedom. She was in no way what society wanted - not quite as placid as they had deemed fit, not as attentive

to what they wanted her to be, and not as empathetic to their own predestined state of mind. Instead, her call to action pierced the ears of her critics, encouraging others to persevere. The way she attended to society's outcasts offended anyone still conforming to age old expectancies. Her altruistic customs motivated women and men alike to follow the path she had spent a lifetime forging through the haze of traditions long set in place against the wills of innocent-minded people. She was in every way what society knew they needed - someone radical enough to challenge what had come before and build a new society entirely focused on building up one another in love, no matter their predisposition.

Heroine. She had spent all she had defending her cause. Years had passed and she had done so much for her world; made such an insurmountable impact that her legacy could not be lost or forgotten. But still, there was something wrong in the way she herself viewed her own position. To her it was still a disease. She looked inward and saw the corruption, the black infection of the world's hate had inevitably conquered a piece of her mind. This she could not accept. Suddenly - this girl, this warrioress, this queen - had to save herself from the disease she had spent so long saving others from; she knew it was up to her, and her alone, to rescue herself and change her own perspective. Perhaps it was not a disease. What if what *she* had advocated was not a disadvantage or a disability or even a liability? What if it was her strength?

Woman. Finally, she had come into her own. She continued to grow and understand in every situation she encountered. But

now, she understood her womanhood was her most powerful ally. It was what gave her strength, courage, and her own independence to continue on in a world craving equality. It was in her the world realized what it had been searching for: from her ability to aid others, to the way she challenged innumerable foes with her

vast amounts of hope and determination. It was in her persistent way of steadfast resistance in every conflict which failed to tear her down, and in how she offered forgiveness and peace to those who were only now beginning to realize the shortcomings of their past. This is where she found her femininity.

NOTRE DAME

by Chloe Wicker

see the flickering chandeliers
lighting these hallowed halls

many pilgrims walked their length
the last have gone—i never will

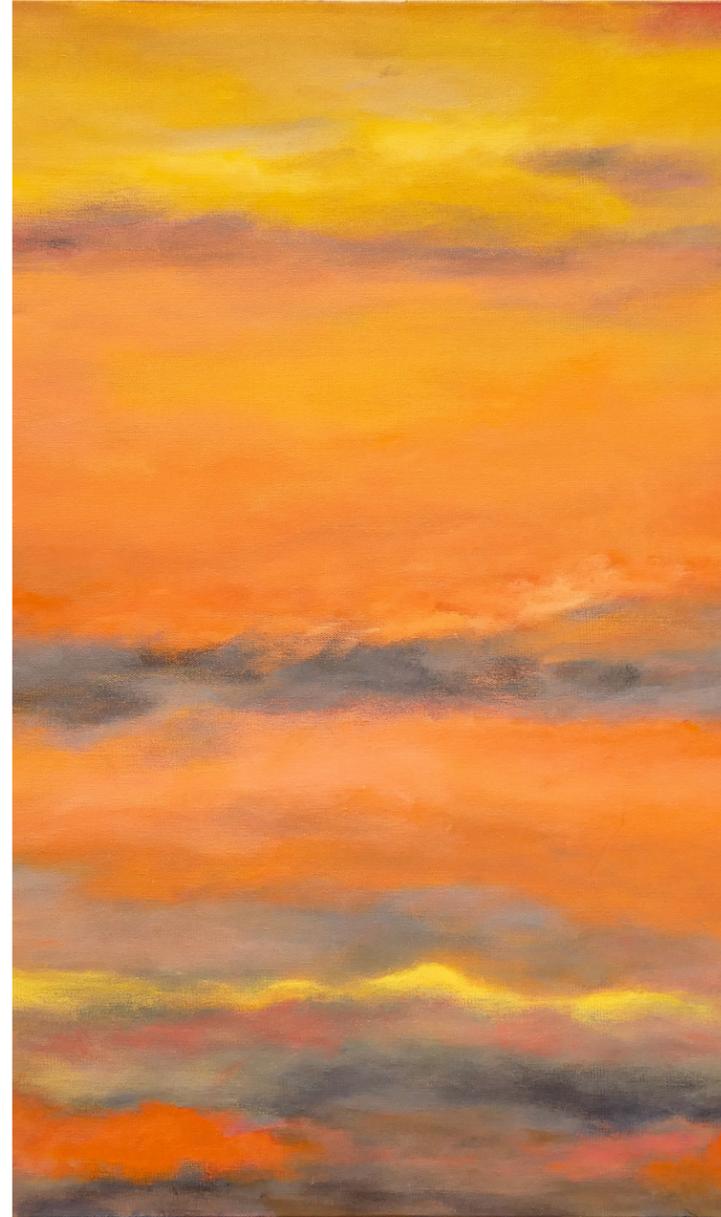
the future slips away in smoke
while past glories crash around us

look at these columns of history
walls greyed by time and worship

tireless warriors strive for victory
facing blame and fruitless solutions

even now the unforgiving fire burns
inside footprints that never were

someday, a footnote of history
today, the weary world's sorrow



Heaven's Splendor
Anna Henderson

LOVED ME FIRST

by Darian McCord

To Earth you came as a lowly babe
Born to die a death to conquer the grave
You came to suffer in a world you created
Bringing life even though you were hated
Brought down a love we could only imagine
Walked to a cross You knew would happen
And I can sing for years
Praise You every word
But You always love more
Because You loved me first

Up from the grave with scars in Your hands
Redeeming us, the ones who wanted Your end
You gave us grace, breaking our chains
You marked our victory with Your blood and pain
You chased after us when we ran away
With open arms pierced by nails we made
I can sing for years
Praise You every word
But You always love more
Because You loved me first

You loved me before I was even born
You loved me as a sinner, shattered and torn
You loved me before I ever gave You praise
You loved me as You bled on the cross I made
And I can sing forever
Praising every word
But You always love more
Because You loved me first

THE AXE FORGETS

by Chloe Wicker

I will teach my children how to cry.
How to release the tightness in their chest
Enough to name the emotions within

No one taught me how to cry.
A twelve-year-old should be able to weep
without becoming the villain

You said that second place was the first loser
But no matter how many times I succeed, no matter how many times I am first,
I am still your first born
I am still the first loser

You say that children have a sensitive meter when it comes to hypocrisy
Maybe that is why I've questioned every word from your mouth
since I was old enough to understand
that blood does not equal love

The tree remembers

The closest thing to a lie is a graceless truth
And I cannot remember the last moment you were tender

When did you say I love you as anything more than a farewell?
When did you express pride without qualification?
When did you ever accept your fault in this brokenness?

The hardest thing about a mirror is the sight of you
And I do not know how to separate my wounds from my healing

How do I keep my confidence from becoming your arrogance?
How do I keep my determination from becoming your harshness?
How do I keep my charisma from becoming your manipulation?

The axe forgets

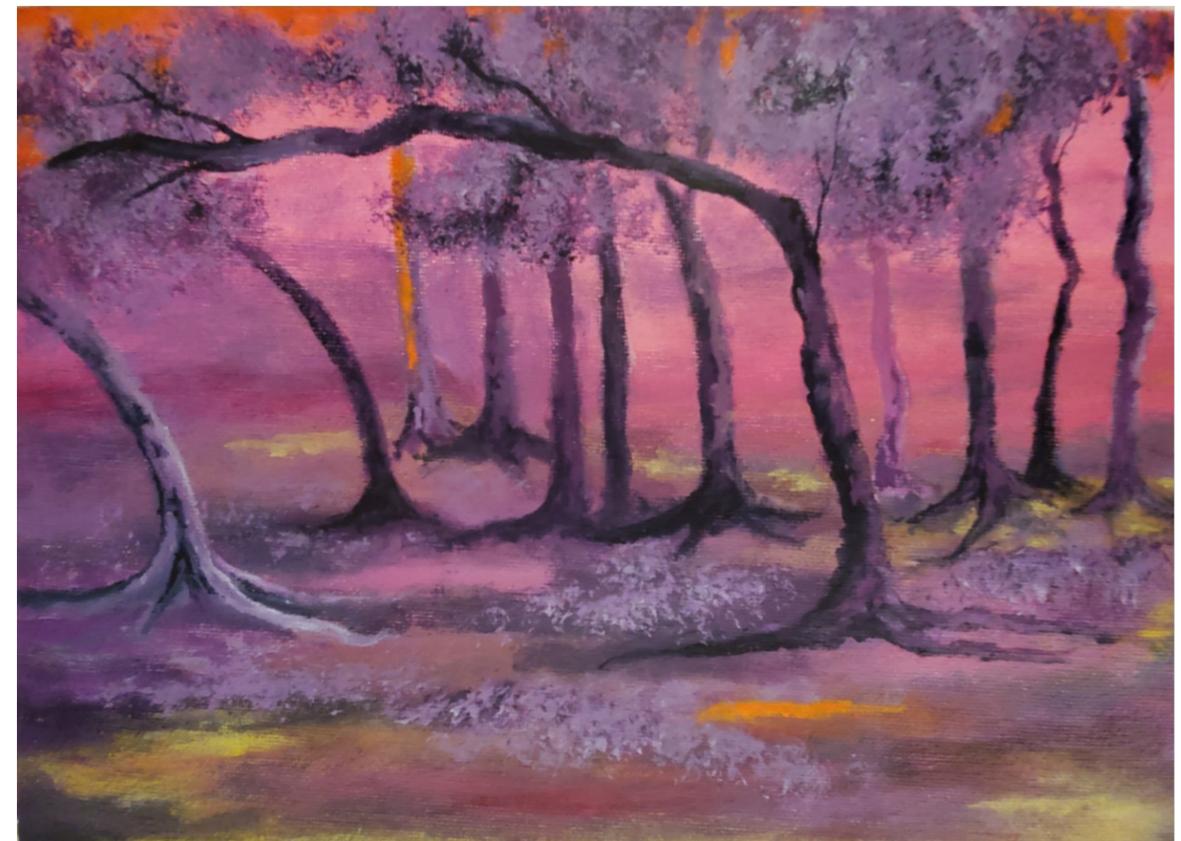
You have more children.
What is one black sheep amongst so many golden ignorant?
What is one disillusioned, broken-hearted child?

The tree remembers

I was first to call you father.
What is one shattered childhood amongst the years of my life?
What is one missing piece from a heart you should have helped make whole?

The axe forgets,
but the tree remembers

Just Breathe
Anna Henderson





BEHIND THE SMILES

by Mike Madaris

See these two oh-so-handsome gentlemen? Both of them have had an incalculable and ongoing impact on me (and on many others). Indeed, they both continue to do so.

The one on the right is my beloved Dad, whose great faith became sight suddenly when I was just 15 years old and he was 14 years younger than I am now. <heavy sigh>

The one on the left is my beloved Father-in-Law. I spent over 35 years in his orbit before his faith became sight just a few years back here in Hattiesburg. (Some years ago, I joined his Grandchildren in calling him "Papa")

But note the uniforms. Two different branches of service and two different wars, both of which brought terrible experiences (which, of course, war does for all involved...). And yet, they still smiled. Perhaps they were anticipating their future after the war...wives, children, jobs, homes, friends, etc. Or perhaps they were simply coping.

Dad enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps (now the U.S. Air Force) in 1944 when he was in 11th grade when the U.S. was 3 years into World War II. Whatever the reason, he stayed home in Lowndes County, Alabama and completed high school and then his enlistment went active. (Ironically, his basic training was at Camp Shelby in Mississippi, which is about 15 miles down the road from where we now live in Hattiesburg!) Papa was playing football at East Mississippi Community College

when the Korean War broke out. (This was long before it became "Last Chance U." in the ESPN documentary.) He, along with his entire team(!), went active duty in the military. There is a statue on campus commemorating them, which includes Papa's name. He was trained as a combat medic.

Now, look at those smiles again before we go behind them a bit.

Dad was on a ship as part of the Invasion force heading toward Japan when we dropped the Atomic bombs on a couple of Japanese cities, which resulted in the end of World War II in the Pacific theater. Thus, he became part of the Army of the Occupation instead of the Invasion force. His first duty post? Nagasaki. The place where one of the two A-bombs was dropped. He never talked about all that he saw there, but I know that it was there deep in the corners of his mind. After all, how could it not be??

Remember that Papa was a combat medic? To be specific, he was a front-line rifle company medic, meaning he was in

combat with his company. If you know the classic TV show "M.A.S.H.", that's where wounded men were sent after Papa & his fellow medics stabilized them on the front lines. He also rarely talked about his time there, but a vivid memory for me is one time when he briefly mentioned it. He & I were getting some cattle feed to take to his cows when a bag was dropped & made a loud, strange noise. After just staring into space for a brief moment, he looked at me & said, "You know a sound that you can never forget?" [Me] "What's that, Papa?" [Him] "The sound of enemy machine gun bullets hitting the side of the steep hill right over your head as you're tending to a wounded man." That's all he said about it. <sigh>

So, Dad saw the horrific aftermath of the A-bomb, and Papa lived out combat as a medic with the bullets flying around his head.

And yet they still smiled.

I don't know how they could, but I'm thankful that they both did so very often.



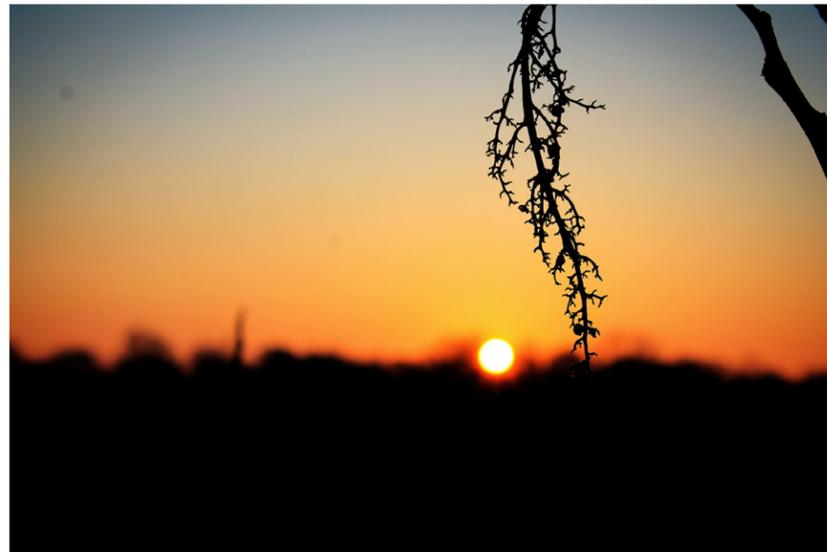
Untitled
Alysen Matthews

IMPERMANENCE

by Grant Guthrie

Teach us to number our days.

There are things more permanent
On earth than our loose cohesion
Of atoms so lately settled;
Our recent bodies flung outright
From dust gathered in every corner,
The refuse of the garden now collected
To form the tissue of the spleen.
Laws of matter manage the give and take
Of an equation never tipped in our favor.
There is stone that has seen
A billion days and more men
Exhaust their lives in breaths
That will nourish intercontinental trees.
One could make good use of humility,
A complimentary partner to our impermanence.



Sunset
Rebecca Ann Mowdy

GARDEN LESSON

by Grant Guthrie

A garden is no worse for weeds,
The latter ensuring an epic struggle against Nature,
Man and sweat to wrestle fruit from the soil,
Hard subsistence to justify the pains taken for existence.

Anxious intent would scour the breadth of every plot
For intruders to devour, before roots could establish
Their depth beneath those of the nurtured elect,
Intentions to tilt the scales in favor of the desire harvest.

But not for me! I want to feel my strength,
After fruit, thorn, and thistle have worked their struggled fates
Together, in fair competition for soil and sun,
Into a tenuous cohabitation of all things fair and foul.

Only then, when the weeding is worth its volume of sweat,
To wrestle the refuse from its rightful place
And nourish my unnatural dominion as man
To bend a small world to his will.



Paper Nature
Dailynn Davis

PRISM

by Meagan Smith

Yesterday,
I put on my going-out glasses.
The burgundy ones with the
rhinestones in the corner.

I thought
What am I waiting for?
or
I can't wait forever.
or
I'm tired of waiting.
or
A mix of the three.

I didn't spend the day
pushing them up my nose
or adjusting my sight
around a scratch in the lens.

And, when the sun
reflected off the rhinestones,
a prism of color
caught my attention.

I didn't mind the diversion.
I welcomed the jolt of joy
that comes from something
unexpected and painless.

Today, though,
I cleaned and stored them away.
Put on my everyday specs,

BURNING BRIDGE

by Loretta Fairley

Sometimes we burn a bridge
without realizing it

Only when we look back
do we know something changed
but we don't know why
how
or when

We may never understand
but it forces a decision

Rebuild
or walk away

BENJAMIN WE GO TO BATON ROUGE

by Stephanie Arnold

I am at the point
of barrenness in
MY RUTH



Expressions of Spring Christian Lovett

holding on to
the sprouted seedling
under the ground
wondering
HOW LONG WILL I FEEL
THIS WAY?

and I hold the
little hand of
my redeemer and
stare into his
smile that gives
me purpose that
doesn't sway with
HOW I FEEL ABOUT
MYSELF.

I thank God for
my valleys and YOU,
my boy, who has

removed my easy
escape and glued
me to this world
FOR CHANGE <3

**SUPPLICATIONS UPON READING
KIERKEGAARD'S PURITY OF HEART**

by Grant Guthrie

Keep us from our dreams.
Their way leads on to many ends
Always prophesying satiation
Yet never measuring to the stature of desire.
They turn ever more tightly about the truth,
Without arrival,
Shifting, changing color to compensate,
Dressed for any weather
And ready, when satisfaction dictates
To move toward more favorable climes.

Encourage our feet to wander,
Never settling too soon in the land
Or staking an impermanent home
Among stones and fields we will have to leave
Again, to move more surely
To our surer destination.
Lean us to the pilgrim's way.
Distract us from our comfort,
Our selected response, chosen
For its ease more than truth.

Teach us to will one thing.
Our confession would unseal the division,
Would reveal out disparate ends,
Would unearth the many paths, some taken,
Some not, but all promising the fruition
Of our orchestrated aims.
We are not single, but
In our confession would shake off
These many bands
And be bound freely to faith's singleness.

Set our hearts in eternity,
For we may never sift from time
Sand enough properly to lay that foundation,
Stone enough rightly to build our own tower.
We had not expected such a cost
And have paid too dearly already
For longings we cannot keep.
Satisfy us with rest from our designs
And grant to our hands new labor
That will not pass away.



Snowset Peace
Rachel Ann Farnham

2020

by Loretta Fairley

Mass shootings
political unrest
pandemics
natural disasters
social media
yadda
yadda
yadda

Let's you and I
sit on the porch
drink coffee
and talk
while the birds sing

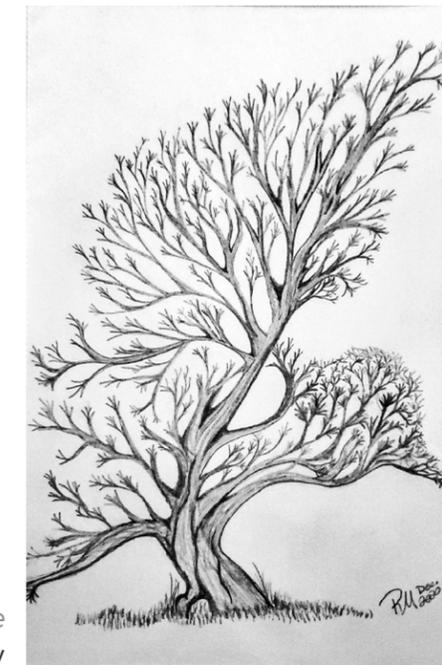
Bird Tree
Rebecca Ann Mowdy

MANKIND

by Loretta Fairley

Why must it be about
straight or gay
black or white
feminist or chauvinist
conservative or liberal
old or young
fat or skinny
atheist or believer

why can't we just be
fellow human beings



BUMBLEBEE

by Loretta Fairley

A bumblebee drones around
going everywhere
and nowhere
I wonder what
his purpose is
he seems so aimless
so pointless
so meaningless
just wasted energy

I suspect God
looks at me
and thinks the same thing

ESPAÑA

by Michael DeLorenze

*Student Interview Poem for
Spanish Artifact Project*

She sits in reserved patience
Excited that someone
asking for an interview
Is interested in her culture

We discuss greetings
shaking hands, confused with
cheek kissing, "the norm"
In her beloved España

She cannot eat as much here
The food chokes her mouth with toxic poisons
That her stomach does not understand
So unlike the healthful abundance from home

One thing makes her pause from leaving here
To go back to the beauty of Spain
She sees freedoms
Stripped away by a dictator

Safety is a feeling she craves
She hopes one day
To have her España return to normal
And her normal return with it



Awaiting Conversation
Christian Lovett

NOT DOWNTRODDEN

by Rachel Ann Farnham

You slander my name in the street,
And mock my kin 'neath a smile of teeth.
You aim to show me my place here
To knock me off my pedestal.
You think I reside in the clouds,
Conversing with birds and their sounds.
You say I know not my limits,
That I seek what should not be mine.
You claim I do not belong where
The proper heirs spend their good time.

In the street, I speak well of you,
And your kin find in me a friend.
My place I have known for some time,
A pedestal it could not be.
I reside upon solid ground,

Conversing with siblings and friends.
My limit can only be found,
When I am told I am finished.
Where I belong is determined
By He who names eternal heirs.

My feet stand firm upon the Rock,
While you shake upon shifting sand.
I fly only with an eagle,
And you climb high on your victims.
He says to build others kindly,
But you destroy them cruelly.
You tell the world you are holy,
Yet your actions show what is true.
Focus on the task He gave you,
While I continue doing mine.



Corner Wings
Rebecca Thompson

AMERICAN ABSALOM

by Landon Adams

Forced across the ocean of innocence,
His sister was abused and disgraced.
Shackled by the grip of a man,
Sharing blood but not resemblance.
Objective crime in a world of subjective judges,
A privileged prince wearing daddy's shoes.
The king was angered but unmoved to action.
Justice was denied.
Years of silence hardened the heart.

Venting his righteous anger,
Who could blame him for his crime?
The world's evil embodied in a brother,
Justice served? Or Cain's footsteps traced anew?
Sent him down to Charon's ferry,
Fled the scene with his nineteen men.
The king was grieved but unmoved to action.
Brother against Brother.
Years of separation hardened the heart.

The distance great-the silence greater.
Outside intervention brokered peace in name alone.
A divided house no more, so long as,
The son stayed in his shack.
Separated and unequal, he burned down his neighbor's field.
His father's attention for a moment to command,
The king was alarmed but unmoved to action.
Forgiveness, reconciliation, and justice all withheld.
Years of passivity hardened the heart.

The son usurped his father's throne.
Now it was the king's turn to flee.
Oppressed takes the place of oppressor,
A vicious cycle seemingly without end.
"For my sake, don't harm the young man, Absalom,"
Commanded gentleness was a poor substitute for the father's own
love.
Captain Joab never was one for orders.
A spear shattered the hardened heart,
Of the unwilling body hanging on the tree.

"O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!
Would I have died instead of you!
"O Absalom, my son, my son"
How hollow the words of David, the king.
Was this God's best? Was this the chosen one?
No. This was not the man.
The true King roused himself from his holy dwelling.
Hanging helpless, another spear shatters another heart.
The perfect heart inside a willing body.

"O my son Adam, my son, my son Adam!
I died instead of you!
By my death I have made a way for peace
I have made one new man out of the two."

ME AND YOU, THROUGH THE SEASONS

by Emily Branan

Summertime with you is always a dream,
year after year, there are nothing but smiles.
Driving down hardy, blonde hair in the wind.
Here on your right side, I look to the left,
see you there and see you smiling at me.

In a society of swiping right,
real interaction is becoming rare.
Emotions are replaced by emojis,
we put up walls to hide our feelings, so
love is rare, but is something we both share.
How lucky we are to be in love now,
at only seventeen, we have no worries,
But somehow have something tangible, real.
Tonight, under the lights, your hand in mine,
I look to your blue eyes and know it's true.
It's me and you. This love is forever.

Arguments, attitudes, and time apart,
Is how we spend our time in November
You say our time is beginning to sour,
I say, "we clearly want different things."
Driving down hardy, staring out, looking
tell my tears not to fall, they don't listen.

December is here, everyone's all cheer,
but gloom lingers, wishing you were still here.

December twenty-first, knock on my front door.
"Can we try again, I miss you so much",

just another "sorry, forgive me" speech.
My walls drop down, I let you back in, and
fall back into your arms without a care.

All too quickly, it is January.
Our bodies find their way back together,
But our hearts are still way too far apart.

April comes, we have both pushed past the pain.
communication helps to regain trust,
Perhaps one day we'll be as we once were.
May flowers bloom. As they find the warm sun,
My heart finds his. We are whole once again.
The hope of forever gleams in my eye.

At twenty-one, life is not quite as fun,
Bills, jobs, classes, take up time, but alas
summertime is here again. I look over
same street, same grey car, same blonde hair
blowing.

Same smile, but just a little bit bigger.
Same boy, but not the same love as before.
It is stronger, it has grown. Together,
we have become who we now are today.
We have weathered sun, droughts, seasons,
and storms.

We found our way, grew up, and grew in love.
Now, we both see forever, together.

SONNET

by Alayna Weathers

He stands against the smokestacks bruised,
while her ghost around him lingers;

A man the war had long abused,
with a lit cigarette between his fingers.

He rests with a gun beside his head—

His enemies now are many;

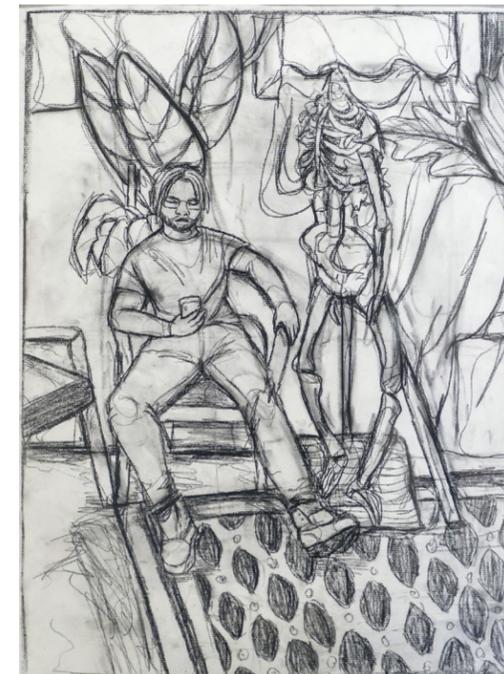
Nightmares with him share the bed,
and his thoughts cost much more than a penny.

He washes the blood from his calloused hands
and kisses his son good night;

Perhaps he'd have been a better man
had they not sent him off to fight.

But a hand reaches down to pull him from the mud;

By his side stand his brothers in arms and in blood.



Inside Out
Sage Pendergrass

ALICE

by Alayna Weathers

I am like Alice—
On every new page I meet
A brave Queen of Hearts.

Each word that I read
Tells me nothing other than
“All ways are my ways.”



Soul Screaming
Rebecca Lauren Thompson

QUEST

by Sara Wedgeworth

Through the corridor
searching for the assigned seat;
the seat to my quest

BOOKS

by Dailynn Davis

I do not always understand my books,
Why do books bother to prove a point?
When I read I read to read for joy.
I do not read to read about who's right.
I do not read to take a personal stance.
I read to get a glimpse of the writer,
I want to wrap my mind around his words.
I don't always want to know his meaning.
I want to read the words and let them be.
Why can't my books ever make sense to me?

THE CROSSROADS

by DeWanda Dawn Hutchinson

One tortured, tormented soul
Crying out from the deepened darkened pit
That many enter, but few escape,
Faced with innumerable consequences
Which way does she take?

One road is small and bumpy,
Filled with twists and turns,
The terrain looks rough and very narrow,
The other much broader and easier on the eyes,
All her desires ripe for the taking
But which way does she choose?

Her mind tells her, “Go ahead...take the easy path,
It will be okay, many before have and many more
will,”

But her heart tells her another story,
“Stick to the path, it may be tough,
But your reward will be eternal
With blessings to spare.”

The right or the left
Oh, which way to go,
She must make a decision fast
If she wants her soul to last.

Her heart starts racing
As her breathing becomes more shallow,
Hurry! For time is running out
And she must quickly choose.

The right path, though tough as it may be

Was filled with happiness and joy
That just could not be explained,
The other, death and destruction ran the way,
But the right way seemed so hard
And the broad path looked so appealing,
Oh, which way should she go?

If only someone could hear her cry,
If only they could understand her pain,
But, sadly, they all pass by
Without so much as a glance
At this poor desperate soul
In her sea of misery and despair
Pleading for just one to stop
And help her find her destiny.

She calls out but no one hears,
Her whole life flashes before her eyes
Life and death hang in the balance.

In a world full of sin and lies
Vanity takes the prize,
Hatred and deceit overwhelm
In this all about me world.

No time to spare,
With life quickly slipping
Make your decision fast,
Now your time of reckoning,
Accept or reject
Your only two choices,
Welcome....to the crossroads.



Friend's Gesture
Bethanie Wilson

SEARCHING

by Julia Berry

Searching for answers but finding shapes and colors.

Searching for answers but finding adventure and mystery.

What if the purpose is self-discovery?

Maybe that is the true victory.

QUESTIONS

by Virginia Fennell

Any questions you may conjure,

Neglect the answers given;

Some will blindly seek

Where others fail to see

Everything is there, but hidden.

Read between the words and phrases

So you'll find the path within the mazes.

PATHS

by Gabrielle Hulin

The straightest path is never fun,

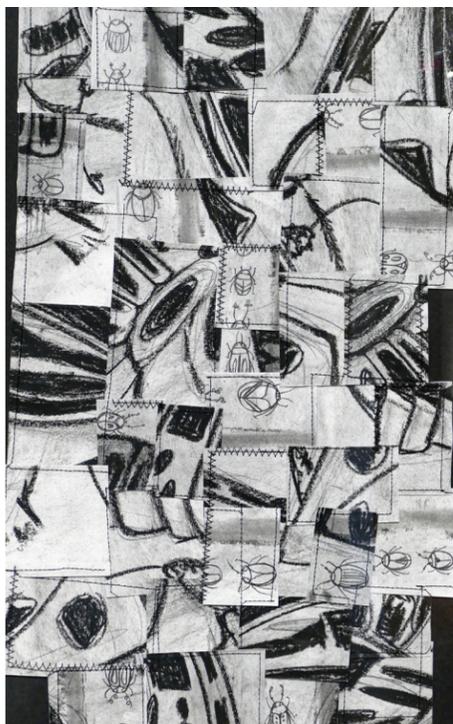
The only direction you can go is one!

Adventures are much more interesting when paths divide.

More paths offer a better ride,

This way all riders can be satisfied

As one can then choose their destination.



Invertebrate
Trinity Stewart

OKAY

by Julia Berry

Are you okay?

She covers it with a smile.

Are you okay?

He hides it behind his work.

She runs from her own fears by asking others

Are you okay?

He escapes his own insecurities by ignoring the question

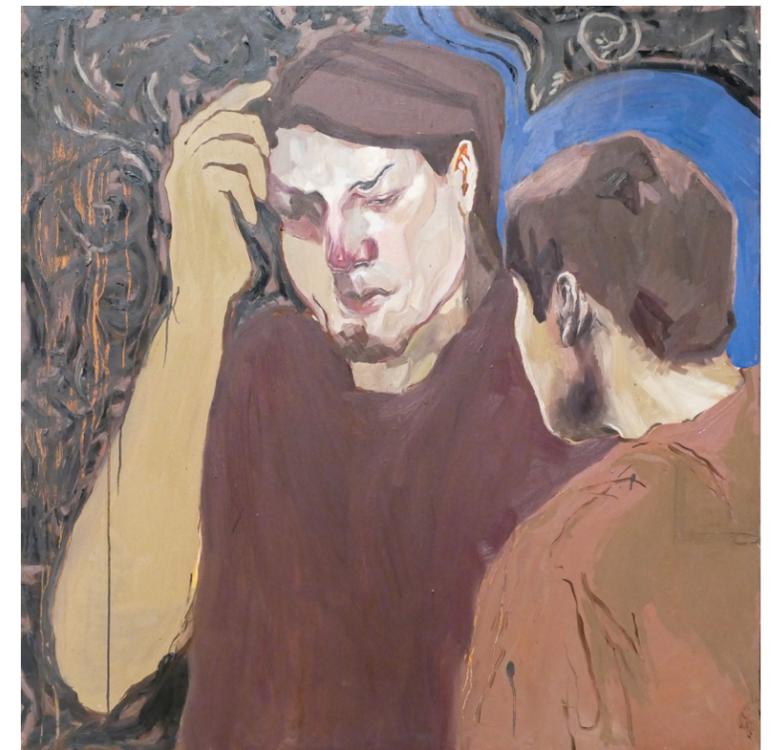
Are you okay?

What if we were honest to a fault?

Maybe we would experience true healing.

Maybe the best prescription is saying

I am not okay



Holoferne
Bailey Adkins

WEALTH

by Virginia Fennell

I do not have
a crumb to eat,
a drop to taste,
shoes on my feet.

A home on a hill,
a dollar to spend
to buy a fence
and keep my belongings in.

I do not have
a place to bathe,
a bed for sleep,
a handed-down fortune
I'll one day reap.

But I have joy.

I have a song in my heart,
a breath in my lungs,
a thought in my head,
and a sweater I, myself, spun.

You see,
I do not need
what others have
to always wear a smile.
Happiness is all around
And finding it's worthwhile.



Still Life
Sydney D Myers

TREE

by Raymond Smith

I am Tree.

I am rooted.

Beneath me are unseen stories and dreams that no one can believe
except me.

Holding me upright, each time the wind blows left to right.

Keeping me held high even when my leaves hang low.

Keeping me from withering under the beam of the sun.

I am nourished.

Watered by the hand of the Gardener.

Watered under the stars.

Fed the purest.

I am selfless.

Producing shade for the hot despite my being in the heat.

Being a representative of what's greater than me.

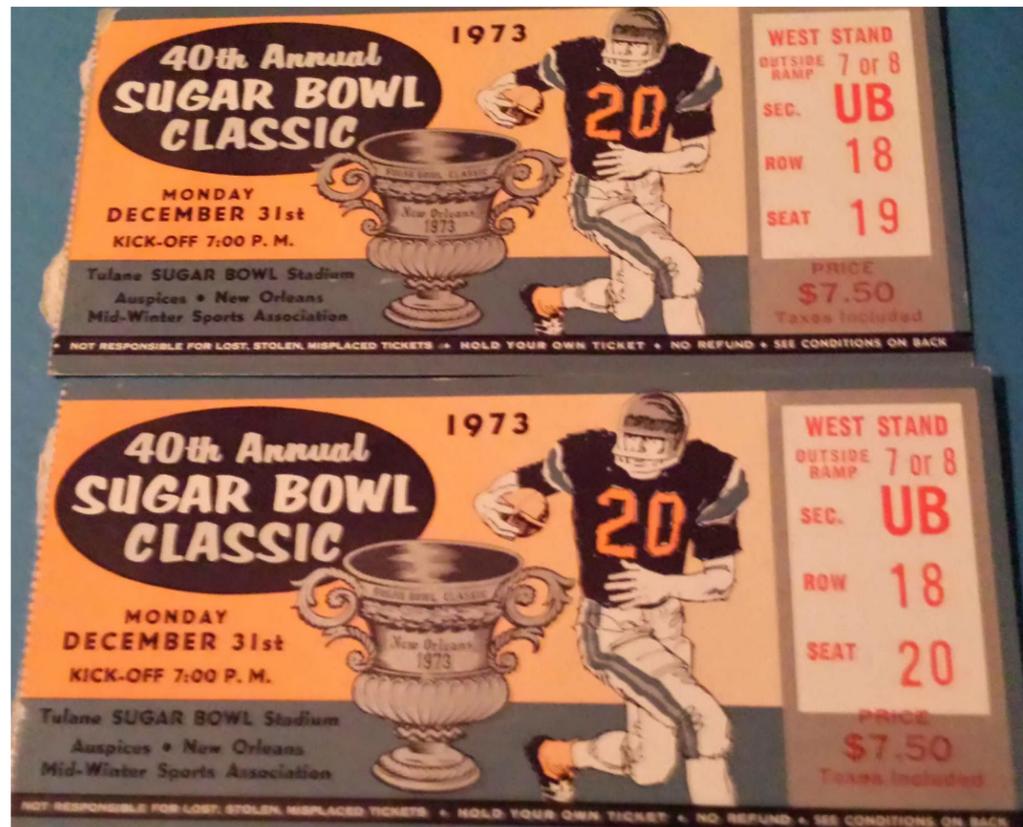
Only point to He.

I Am.

I am Tree.



Brush Creek
Anna Henderson



TWO TICKET STUBS

by Mike Madaris

It's just two football ticket stubs. Specifically, two 47-year-old football ticket stubs.

December 31, 1973. A rainy night in New Orleans, LA at the old Tulane Stadium. An epic showdown between two storied college teams coached by two legendary coaches. Notre Dame Fighting Irish v. Alabama Crimson Tide. #3 v. #1. Ara Parseghian v. Paul "Bear" Bryant. There were future college coaches dressed out & playing in that game. There were also future NFL Hall of Famers playing.

And there was a short kid with a bad haircut up in the stands, sitting with his Dad. Also in their group were a couple of aunts and a cousin. (All were wearing Crimson.) The boy wanted to wear his hair long like his peers were doing. The Dad preferred high & tight. The compromise was not a thing of beauty.

But none of that mattered that New Year's Eve. They were there to watch their much beloved Crimson Tide play football. The short kid had cheered for the Tide for as long as he could remember, dating back at least 9 years. The Dad had cheered for the Tide a lot longer. Neither had ever attended the University, though the kid would do so in a few years. In truth: the kid began cheering for the Tide mostly because the Dad did so. In short order, his Dad's fandom became his own.

They shared some heroes, one of which was head coach for the Tide. In fact, they got to meet and shake hands with Coach Bryant shortly after the game due to a family connection. Their official seats were Section UB, Row 18, seats 19 & 20. They wound up sitting just beneath the press box in an unsuccessful attempt to stay dry. They watched a fantastic game between two very good teams. In fact, Alabama had already been named the U.P.I. National Champion; back then, the champions were voted on before bowl games commenced. The game went back and forth, as often happens on a wet and sloppy field. Coach Bryant would say later that it was the best game he was ever part of, as a player or a coach.

The short kid would agree. But not because of the game's outcome. Notre Dame won, 24-23, on a late field goal. Alabama had downed a punt on Notre Dame's one-yard line, but couldn't keep them hemmed in. The Irish were able to run out the clock. So, why did this kid think this was the best game he ever saw? Because there was a hero of his in the house. Not Coach Bryant, although he was a hero of the kid's. Not John Mitchell or John Hannah or John Croyle, though they were (& are) heroes of the kid's too.

This particular hero was sitting in Section UB, Row 18, and either seat 19 or seat 20. The boy's Dad. The boy idolized his Dad, & still does. Others who knew the Dad did and do too.

This would be the only Alabama Crimson Tide football game the boy and his Dad would attend together.

Just 11 months later, the Dad would die suddenly of a heart attack. And the kid's world went gray. In some significant ways, the kid's world is still gray all these years later. There are parts of his soul and psyche that were wrecked and crushed by his Dad's passing that haven't been restored. Every kid—especially every boy—wants to be welcomed into manhood by his Daddy. When that doesn't happen...when it can't happen...when it will never happen...the world never quite seems to get fully back in order.

But there are glimpses of that order and of a long-promised, long-awaited restoration. 19 years after that Sugar Bowl game, the kid went to another bowl game in New Orleans with another man he deeply admired. Once again, Alabama was playing in a big game against a powerful foe. Once again, it was the Sugar Bowl. The Alabama Crimson Tide v. the Miami Hurricanes this time. Though Miami had the Heisman-winning QB then, Alabama destroyed them, dominating in every phase of the game, winning a National Championship in the process.

But that's not why this is near the top of the kid's favorite-game-ever list. The kid was sitting next to his Father-in-law this time. Thus, the kid's tears were discrete—but still very present—as he both treasured the moment with another of his heroes and role models, and as he ached with longing to rewind the clock back to the 1973 Sugar

Bowl one more time and shake a Crimson & White shaker alongside his Dad.

Recently, the kid and his beloved wife were going through some boxes, and he rediscovered a treasure. Two ticket stubs. "40th Annual Sugar Bowl Classic." "December 31st, 1973." "Section UB, Row 18, Seat 19" & "Seat 20." And the memories flooded back again. As they do every football season. And every December.

A couple of months ago was the 46th anniversary of my Dad's passing.

My hope is that 40 years from now, any number of little boys will be hearing from their Dads about the Bowl game when they sat next to their Dad and watched their beloved Crimson Tide play. (Or their beloved Notre Dame Fighting Irish or Ohio State Buckeyes, or whomever is their team of choice.)

Just as I've been remembering that game 47 years ago when my Dad & I sat there in Section UB, Row 18, seats 19 & 20. The ticket stubs are just pieces of card stock paper. The memories they evoke are rich and amazing and priceless.

I remember, Dad. I still miss you hard and often. Thanks for 15 years of absolutely fantastic Daddying! I'm a cheap knockoff of you in every regard, but your two grandkids who grew up in my house are fantastic, despite their non-fantastic Dad. Like you, I married an amazing Bama coed. Speaking of your grandkids, you'd be very pleased to know that I've attended bowl games with your 3rd grandson in recent years as we watched his alma mater play. I can very easily picture you wearing Red & Blue and cheering on your grandson's Rebels for all but one game every Fall. (This particular grandson is named after you, by the way.)

I love you, Dad. See you soon. Can't wait! Roll Tide! Thanks.

Mike

WORDS

by Darian McCord

I want to cover the world with my words
If I had a pen to write on the earth
I'd put the thoughts of men like a tapestry
Words on earth like a masterpiece
The ocean would be a violent epic over and over
The lines of waves crash on the shore like a tattooed shoulder
Written on the water is all tragedies
Every awful thing that has infected me
The grass would be a fairytale springing from the ground
With each young growth come up, a word to keep it down
Lined on all its blades is every fantasy
The thoughts of what I am and what I dream to be
The mountains would be a list as tall as it could be
Its unforgiving slopes are just a canvas to me
Scribed onto the mount are all the ones I love
The names of every person that I am made of
Then I saw the desert, an endless notebook
More space than I imagined from everywhere I looked
I took out my pen to write down everything I could think
And I was shocked to find that it had no ink
Then I realized why I could write not
The barren desert holds everything I've forgot
I woke up from my dream with the pen still in my hand
And I begin to weep, for I was surrounded by bare land
The world began anew with another day
Leaving every cherished word I've written erased
I cast away the pen and went to go outside
But a ring from behind me made me change my mind
The clock was ticking loud, blank as it could be
And it looked just like a canvas to me
Why write on the world? It changes all the time,
The clock looks like a canvas with the power to change a life.



Grate
Allison Chestnut



*Chapel
Clay Graves*

HOLY NAME

by Darian McCord

When the smiles turn into a worried frown
And the wedding dress turns into a hospital gown
There's nothing you can do but you can't let it be
And you can't stand so you're on your knees

When the trembling hands begin to fold
And the tired eyes finally close
You've got no power but still want change
And your stammering tongue starts to pray

"Oh Father which art in heaven
How can it be I've forgotten
That the Lord gives and He takes away
Blessed be Your holy name"

There isn't much I can do
But there never really was
I'll finally give up control
To a God that always loves
And when the things the world has taken
Are the ones I love the most
I will put all my love
In a God who is in control

Oh Father which art in heaven
How can it be I've forgotten
You are the God of mercy
The only One who can restore me
You've carried me through everything
Even when I'm on my knees
The Lord gives and He takes away
Blessed be your holy name

UNFAILING LOVE

by Rose Bruce

As I ponder over a world of strife,
I think of how we toil through life.
I think of the loving, caring, and easy to please;
and those who criticize, condemn, and tease.

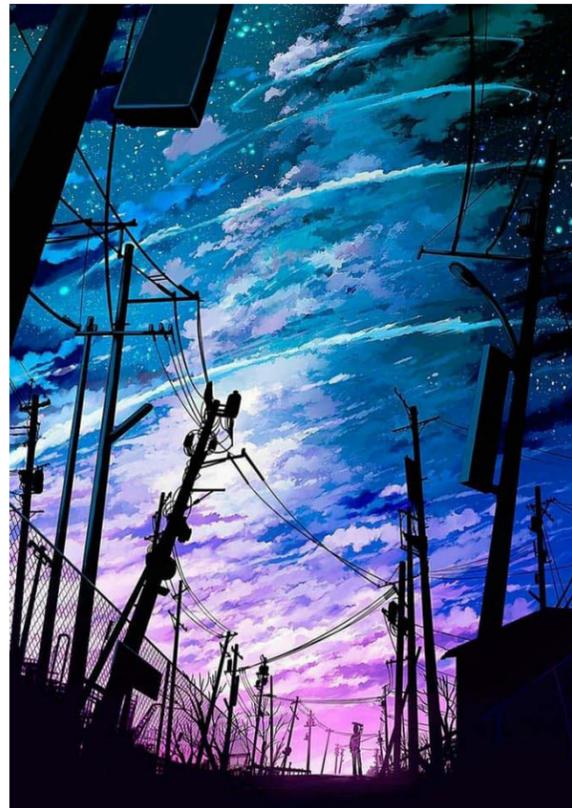
For some it's easier to look for fault,
and overlook the lessons taught.
We are to be kind one to another,
Remembering lessons from Father and Mother

Our lives should be reverent, happy, and free,
that's why our Savior was nailed to the tree.
That's why God sent us his son,
So, we all could live together as one.

So, at night when I lay down to rest,
That's when I think of how much I'm blessed.
And thankful for our Savior above,
For salvation he gave from a heart of love.

Our Lord made the supreme sacrifice.
He carried our cross, he paid our price.
One day Gabriel will call us home,
And everyone will know that I have gone.

Gone to a place that Jesus prepared,
A place where love floats in the air.
The trumpet will sound with a mighty blast,
Praise God! I'm home, I'm home at last.



Night Lines
Deanna Roberts

VERTIGO

by Chloe Wicker

I learned to speak love slowly

This language came with my birth
Written, carved into my bones
But no less difficult to translate

No one teaches you
How to walk to the edge of a cliff
Look down the jagged face of it and
Keep yourself from hurling downwards

I carry the grammar of love with me

These words come with my passion
Stamped, branded onto my tongue
But never to spill into the realm of sound

No one can teach you
How to walk up to edge of hurt
Look into eyes that do not love you and
Keep yourself from drowning in them



Koi Pond
Deanna Roberts

FUTURE

by Gabrielle Hulin

What are you doing with your life?

I don't know.

But aren't you an adult?

Legally.

And aren't you in college?

I am.

And you're not an undecided major?

No, I'm an English major.

Don't you like your English classes?

Sometimes.

Well, what are you going to do with your degree when you finish?

I don't know.

Do you want to teach?

I don't feel good enough to teach.

Do you want to be a journalist?

I don't like writing nonfiction.

Why can't you just pick what you want to do already?

Because I like lots of things, but since I'm not the best at anything, I don't feel like I have the skill to do anything.

Then why are you an English major?

Because everyone else told me I'm good at it.



Xikrins Boy
Leanna Grace Blakeslee

UNMASKED

by Jennifer Scroggins

One day we will look back at the mask we wore,

And remember the lives of those who aren't anymore.

The price we paid in the struggle to survive,

Always amazed of how small things create a greater divide.

Even in through the pandemic the cries rose for equality,

And we found ways to clash about true meanings of liberty.

The cries for justice and the cries for peace,

As the world was swarmed by the silent beast.

Healthcare workers met with a magnitude of distress,

While holding the hands of strangers as they crossed over into eternal rest.

The world in turmoil struggling to bridge the divide,

When what was hidden by our mask was the glimpse of a smile.

But how do you find the strength to smile in the midst of isolation,

Where is the smile in the midst when diversity is seen as aggravation?

No one will listen and determined to be right,

While the smile hidden and become a dim light.

Once again we are faced with a mission to recover,

In the midst of the beast who silently continues to hover.

A true normalcy may never come,

But we will adjust to the beat of a new drum.

And as we all set into familiar and new respected places,

We must honor and remember those deeply cherished faces.



179 Skulls
Alysen Matthews

A MASK OF RAINDROPS

by Thomas Ford

As I watched the fat grey raindrops roll with sluggish indifference down the misted windowpane, my night-wearied thoughts wandered to the woman, as they so often did when storm clouds swallowed moon and stars.

I had seen her on numerous occasions through the selfsame window through which I peered on that dismal evening, always at night, and always during a storm, reminding me of some fabled Nymph or Nereid awoken from enchanted sleep by the music of rain and thunder. It was a fanciful notion, and I kept it to myself. Indeed, I kept all knowledge of the woman to myself, and if any of my neighbors possessed knowledge of her, they, too, refrained from sharing it.

I wondered if I would catch some glimpse of her that night, as conditions were prime for her appearing. The thunderheads had rolled in just

before sunset like a black armada out of the west, smothering the setting sun and flooding the stale air with the welcome aroma of petrichor. I had heard the thunder from my armchair, grumbling irritably like a company of old men come to lament the failings of the young. Like a soft voice in my ear, it had bid me move my chair closer to the window, that I might wait and watch. I saw nothing in the street some several floors below my chamber save for the dim reflection of water running in little streams between the paving stones. Weariness nagged at me as I spared a glance at the clock on the mantelpiece, which declared the time to be several hours past when I ought to have gone to bed. My mind and body declared rather the same notion, and with a feeling of vague disappointment I left my chair and made to fasten the shutters. I should have guessed such an action would summon the woman. Even as my hands fumbled wearily with the latch, I saw her coming down the street. I did not know why the sight of her so excited and intrigued me, for she looked the same as ever, a fair young woman of perhaps twenty, tall and willowy, with dark hair spilling out of the hood that could not contain it. The paleness of her narrow face made her easy to spot even in watery darkness, an almost luminous pallor which, I confess, had made me consider for one startling moment when first I had laid eyes on her that she might have been a phantom. Her eyes were brighter still, and appeared almost too large for her head, though they were lovely and captivating, one bottle green and the other a startling electric blue.

She moved with haste over the slickened cobblestones, clutching at her cloak with one hand while holding aloft with the other a frail lantern that lit her path with milky

light. My eyes narrowed as I watched her, for I was struck suddenly by the realization that she was not wearing shoes. Leaning further toward the glass, I noted a second shocking detail: the woman was dressed in but a shift, a frail undergarment barely suited for wearing in the privacy of her home, let alone wandering the streets at night. I felt my face growing hot, and would have turned away at once, had a stone beneath the woman's foot not turned suddenly treacherous. I gasped along with her as she fell, her lantern flung into the gutter where it died with a feeble hiss.

I was still dressed from my day at work, and so had only to throw a cloak around my shoulders before hastening down the stairways to the front door of my home. I fear the sudden flooding of light into the street as I flung open the door must have frightened the poor woman, for at once her near-successful attempt to rise from the sodden ground failed, and she fell again into a soaked and tangled heap. I hurried to her, and offered my aid, uttering many inane apologies even as she muttered thanks which the rain would not permit me to hear.

Lorna was her name, I learned, and it sounded pretty to me. I offered my own in return, and was glad to hear her speak it, if only in a hushed, embarrassed tone. She had not been badly harmed by her stumble, I was glad to learn, though her knees were bruised, and the palms of her hands had been somewhat scraped. She politely declined my offer of ointment and bandages, saying she was in something of a hurry, which I gathered, given that she was steadily edging further down the road. I offered to summon her a carriage and was again declined. Just as I had begun to fear my actions may have unnerved the woman

– who, after all, was alone with a stranger in the darkness – she smiled earnestly at me, spoke a few final words of thanks, and faded into the storm.

The storm unleashed the fullness of its fury in a single night. By morning, it was gone, leaving behind a hauntingly empty sky. It was some time before I saw Lorna again. I took to glancing out of my upstairs window before bed each night, rain or no rain, in the hopes that I might catch even some meager glimpse of her. I will admit, her falling in the rain had unnerved me, and like a mother worrying over a child away from home, I began to grow concerned that some dreadful fate might have befallen Lorna. I read the paper every morning, dreading to find some mention of a dark-haired cadaver being pulled from a flooded gutter.

When at last I saw through my rain-spattered window the lithe silhouette of the woman again, I spoke aloud a prayer of thanks. I nearly flung open the window to shout my relief to Lorna, but wisely refrained, knowing she might never again chance the shadow of my house if she thought me some raving lunatic. Instead, I sunk contentedly into my armchair, where I imagined once again what might compel a young woman to take to the streets in the dead of night with storm clouds looming overhead.

I was so preoccupied with dreamy thoughts that for several minutes I allowed myself to ignore the sound of knocking at my door. Perplexed, I hurried down the stairs, wondering with some concern whether I oughtn't have strapped on my rapier before leaving the bedchamber. Opening the door, I found neither thief nor prowler, but Lorna, smiling sheepishly. Dark hair was plastered wetly to her pale face, and

I saw that what I had mistaken for a shift was instead a threadbare dress so badly faded that its original color could not be guessed. I had been correct about her being barefooted, though.

She apologetically explained that unbeknownst to her, her fall that night some weeks before had damaged her lantern, which would no longer hold oil for any useful length of time. She had made the unfortunate discovery just before starting down my street, which she called a lucky thing, as it was the one street in town where dwelled someone whose name she knew. Rather stupidly, I did not at first realize she was referring to me, but when I did, I beamed, and hurried off at once to fetch her one of my spare lanterns.

When I returned, I found Lorna still standing on the stoop. My face burning, I stammered an apology, realizing that, in my befuddlement, I had forgotten to invite her to await me indoors. Lorna, though, did not seem to mind the rain, and indeed, before I had begun to voice my contrition, she had been humming merrily to herself. She thanked me for the offered lantern, promising to leave it on my doorstep the next morning, and with another numbing smile she turned to leave. She had not taken half a dozen steps, however, before I blurted out my curiosity about her purpose that night.

I realized immediately the rudeness of my action, and very nearly snapped the door shut after yet another apology. Once again, however, Lorna surprised me, giving a contemplative look followed by an answer. She was on her way to visit her mother, she told me, who had always been terrified of storms. Lorna would sit with her, she said, until the foul weather had passed and clouds yielded to barren sky.

Perhaps emboldened by the success of my presumptuousness thus far, my tongue made a request to join her on her mission before my mind could tell it to hush.

Before I had fully overcome the shock of her answer, I found myself walking through the rain with Lorna just ahead of me. She held my lantern high in the air, looking even more ghostly than usual in its muted light, and led the way at a quick pace, often glancing over her shoulder as though to assure herself that I was still behind her. Streams of dirty water gurgled around our feet and rolled down our faces. Somehow, I did not much mind.

Conversation was difficult to maintain, as every word was dulled by the steady drumming of rain and the guttural belches of thunder. Eventually, though, I gleaned from the fractals of what I could hear that Lorna lived in the countryside beyond the city limits, alone, unless one were to count her numerous pets, which Lorna evidently did. Day or night, she always came to be with her mother during storms, though by day, she said, she came by wagon, and via a different route. She would not force her horses out into the darkness, which she claimed they feared, and so at night she went on foot by a path that was longer, but safer. Every word she spoke made her seem stranger and yet more wonderful to me.

We passed many respectable houses, and as we came to each one I hoped it would be our destination. Lorna, though, hardly gave them a glance, her mismatched eyes fixed ever forward, save when she turned to look at me. She asked about me, and I answered her, though my answers seemed terribly dull in comparison to all she had to say. Still, whether out of kindness or pity, Lorna smiled and nodded politely,

even tilting her head back now and then to laugh, a sound much like a gentle wind playing among metal chimes.

I asked her why she did not come into town more often, though I quickly wished I hadn't. She grew somewhat reticent, and it was some time before she confessed that she did not feel welcome there. The townspeople thought her strange, she said, and usually only acknowledged her either by laughing cruelly as she passed or pulling their children out of her way. She was uncertain what she had done to unnerve them, and seemed very sad about it. I tried to think of some way to comfort her, but my thoughts were sluggish in her presence.

After a while, I realized we were no longer in a part of town with which I was familiar. The shadowed buildings that flanked our path seemed utterly alien and menacing. These were not the tall, half-timbered homes and shops of my reputable neighborhood, but squat little dwellings with thatched rooves and crude stone walls, likely dirt-floored and windowless. I could not help but think of them as cairns, and with growing dread half expected to see phantoms or draugr rising from them with gelid eyes full of hungry malice.

But they were just homes, and at any rate Lorna did not seem frightened of them. She walked more quickly as the paved streets turned to mud paths, and paid no heed to the greedy mud that sucked at her feet and the hem of her threadbare cloak. It seemed to me that she was heading toward a chapel, which was to me a comforting sight. I could not imagine horrors springing from a house of worship even on so foul a night, especially with so fair a maiden near at hand.

I asked Lorna how much further we would

need to go and was glad to hear her say we were nearly at our destination. Squinting in the lanternlight, I searched the darkness for some sign of a house, but saw only the chapel, and the churchyard beyond. Lightning framed the lofty steeple in a blue-white halo, and threw into momentary light a multitude of rain-glazed headstones.

Lorna, to my discomfort, led me toward the churchyard's wrought iron kissing gate, over which she hopped with a practiced step toward what I took to be a shortcut. Intensely alarmed at the prospect of straddling graves in the dead of night, I nonetheless followed after her, keeping my eyes fixed resolutely on the lantern in her hand. I hugged the folds of my oiled cloak tightly around myself, feeling a sudden terrible chill that had little to do with the damp night air.

It had been ingrained in me as a youth that to step on a grave is disrespectful, and thus I did my best to walk the narrow paths between the headstones. This slowed my progress somewhat, but Lorna, I was pleased to find, appeared to be waiting for me some distance ahead, holding high her borrowed lantern as a sign for me to follow. I was embarrassed to find Lorna sitting on a small granite bench when at last I caught up with her. Had I truly been so slow that she had tired while awaiting me? I tried to explain the desire for respect that had impeded my pace, but ended my elucidation abruptly when I realized Lorna

was not paying me the slightest attention. She was staring straight ahead, where sat a modest headstone marked with a set of dates and a name, plain but carefully preserved.

Lorna was singing softly to the same tune she had been humming on my doorstep. It no longer seemed to me a merry melody, but a lullaby meant for the ears of one who nevermore would rise from sleep.

*Dream now with me, and let the world fade
Dream, dream now with me
Sit with me beneath the tree
There together we can dream
Of the golden summer days
When our lives were calm and free
Dream, dream now with me
Dream with me a little while
Of walking through the garden
When the world seemed bright and new
Safe and sound on childhood's isle
Dream, dream now with me
Dream now with me, and let the world fade*

I will forever be ashamed of how long it took me to comprehend the obvious. With so much rain glossing her porcelain cheeks, it was difficult to tell if Lorna was crying, and I, of course, never asked, though I believed, and believe still, that she was. People cannot cast off pain like sodden garments or muddied shoes, but they can mask their tears with raindrops, and sit with those who will not leave them when the sky is dark.

ANSWER

by Dailynn Davis

Do you want an answer?
Tell me "yes" with all your heart.
I'll give you the best of my non-fiction,
Yet you tear my world apart.

Please,
You don't want to know.
You say that you want me to give you
truth unhinged,
Yet here we are reading fiction.

. . . You don't really want to know.

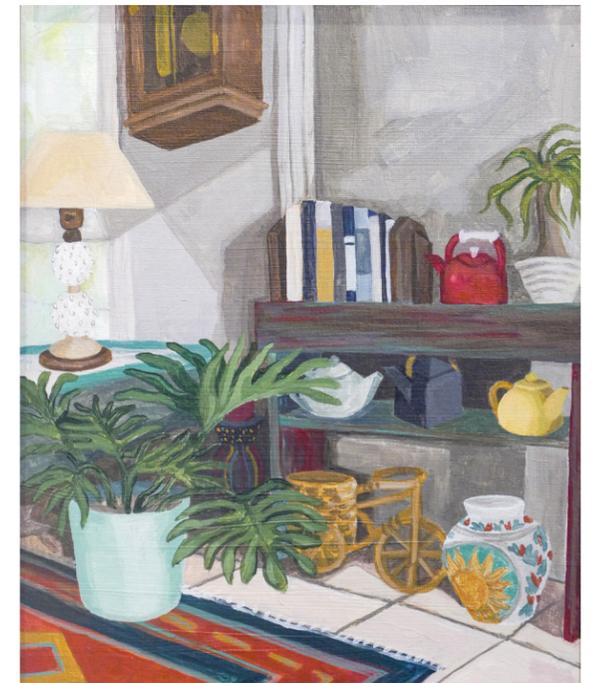
Do you want the truth?
Or do you want it slant?
Emily Dickinson knew what people wanted,
Yet fiction is still the base for our fans.

Do you want an answer?
You'll say "yes with all ALL my heart."
"Well," I'll say with shock,
"Too bad, a straight answer isn't in the
fiction writer's heart."

COUNT AND DO NOT RHYME

by Robert Cox

I sit behind an old and tattered desk,
Attempting to achieve a bit of rest.
Over-thinking each and every line,
Making sure I surely do not rhyme.
I know these words are sounding kind of close,
They don't rhyme so I think it's fine... I hope.
Syllables are easier I have found,
I look back over the lines and I count.
I just checked lines three and four both have nine,
It's too late now I'll leave them, yeah, it's fine.
Oops... I rhymed.



Mom's Plant, Dad's Clock
Jody Pierce



Life's Replacement
Rebecca Lauren Thompson



WILLIAM CAREY
UNIVERSITY