

COMPOSITION BOOK

Western Wyoming Community College

BOARS TUSK



AN ANNUAL PUBLICATION FOR THE LITERARY AND FINE ARTS

WESTERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BOARS TUSK



*A CREATIVE SOURCE & OUTLET FOR
OUR COLLEGE & REGIONAL COMMUNITY*

2020

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2020 Editor's Note & Staff

Note from 2020 Editor in Chief, Jon Howard

Wow, working on a project like this year's literary journal has been a journey, I'll tell you what. As proud as I am to be able to get this wonderful collaboration out there, it would not be possible were it not for our key contributors. I'd like to thank Dr. Dale, the President of Western, for the school's continuing support, WWCC Cultural Affairs Committee and Sweetwater BOCES for theirs.

I'd also like to thank our designer, Kyle Rossetti, for our cool cover. I think he did a fantastic job. This also wouldn't be possible without the help from our wonderful English and Art departments for helping get submissions for this year's literary journal. Thanks also to our editing team for looking through the submissions, going through the rough selection process, and really putting the hours in to make this thing a reality. This was a total team effort.

The biggest thanks of all, however, goes to the many authors and artists who sent their submissions. Publishing your works has been an honor, and I hope to see more of your brilliant works in the future. There were some fantastic poems, literature, and photography and ... honestly, I'm totally blown away by how much talent you all have. Continue to keep writing, drawing, and snapping photos because you all are seriously something else.

To those of you whose work didn't get selected, I'd like to point out that the judging process was totally blind. We removed names to judge submissions on their content alone. There may be biases there, I'm not going to lie. We did have a vision of our own for the content in the journal. Just because your submission didn't fit our vision this time, doesn't necessarily mean it won't next time. So, keep your chin up and keep honing your craft!

Editor in Chief and Literary Editor

Jon Howard is a 22-year-old English major from Green River, Wyoming. He's a well-travelled man, yet too young at the time to remember. He was born on a Navy base in San Diego, California, moved to Austin, Texas, then to Jacksonville, North Carolina, then to Orlando, Florida before finally settling down in Green River, Wyoming, where he remains until he feels like moving again. He has no immediate plans for the future, kind of a "go with the flow" guy. When he's not procrastinating work by playing video games and browsing Twitter, he's working as a substitute teacher at his local school district.

Nonfiction Editor

Brittany Pope moved to Rock Springs a few years ago from Spokane, Washington and currently is working on a major in History. The level of thought and work that has gone into the non-fiction submissions has been impressive, and this made it difficult to decide on the finalists.

Cover Design and Cover Layout

Kyle Rossetti and Jon Howard

Inside Cover Design

Dave Gutierrez

Faculty Advisor, Art and Photography Editor, and Layout

Chris Propst, a Western English Faculty member, earned his MFA in Creative Writing: Fiction from Texas State University.

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Fiction

The Harvester

Alexie was a Harvester. He lived in the place between universes. Humans haven't figured out a real name for it yet. Some call it Dark Matter. Others call it The Afterlife. It's really none of those things. It is a place of transition. It's not dark matter, because it isn't really made of anything. It's not the afterlife because no one stays there long. It's an invisible highway. This highway is made up energy that carries souls to their next destination. It is more like an invisible, very complicated, electrical circuit. You see, a brain is mainly an antenna, or maybe the best way to describe it would be to say, your brain is a receiver for a signal. The brain receives the signal, process it, and stores some of the information, but the signal is coming from the circuitry outside the universe, and that signal is your soul. If it makes you more comfortable, you can call it your essence or spirit or whatever you want really. The point is this thing is what makes you...you. When referring to this invisible, indescribable circuitry; we will just call it what Alexie knew it as...The Energy Field.

The harvester's only responsibility is to catch souls and remove a piece. The harvester removes the pieces and passes it off to the sculptors. They then assemble the pieces together to make another soul and release the recycled souls back in The Energy Field. Souls are pure energy, so they can't be destroyed, but they do get weaker after a few hundred lifetimes. The weaker they get, the harder it is for the brain to receive the signal. So, the role is Harvester is extremely important. It is also, for those assigned the task, a 1000-year prison sentence. No one knows if the selection of a Harvester is random or if it is punishment for past misdeeds. The selection is done by the Sculptors. They manage The Energy Field, and the number of Harvesters that are placed in any given section of The Energy Field is determined by the need. Alexie's time was almost up.

Alexie was just weeks away from hitting his thousandth year. When you're doing something for so long though, it might as well be a million years. Harvesters do not sleep, eat, or relax. In The Energy Field there are no weekends or holidays. Time doesn't even exist at all. The sculptors base your time served off the universe that they plucked you from. Alexie happened to be from our version of earth. He couldn't remember anything from his past life--the only thing he could remember was being snatched by a Sculptor and forcefully placed in his current body. It wasn't much of a body; he was basically a lump of matter with two arms attached so he could work the retrieval pole and cut the souls apart with his shears. The sculptors didn't give Harvesters legs because they didn't want them wandering off. Living in this body was torturous. The antenna that held Alexie's soul was very crude, as it had been manufactured by sculptors, not grown organically, so his soul was basically tacked onto it. His soul was constantly pulling on the antenna because of its attraction to The Energy Field. Each day was filled with monotony and pain.

The days were starting to go faster for Alexie. He knew his time was growing short, and soon he would be set free to find his next antenna. Alexie tried to focus on his work as much as possible to help the time pass. His area was a fairly desolate one. He was lucky to catch 100 souls a day. He would send his pole out and wait. The pole looked a lot like a dog catcher's pole. It was a long rod with a loop attached, and Alexie would quickly pull the loop tight when a soul flew through it. He would then pull the soul into his station, snip off a chunk, and release it back into The Energy Field. The chunks were placed in a bucket and when the bucket filled up, he would put them in an elevator. The elevator took them to the Sculptor, and a new bucket would be sent back to him. Alexie had completed this process billions of times. He felt like a machine, performing the same function over and over again. Now though, it was time to focus. He threw himself into his work. He had heard of harvesters who had their dates pushed back. He would not allow that to happen to him.

Many days passed that way, with Alexie catching as many souls as possible and trying not to think

too much about how close his final day was. He had just filled a bucket. He placed it in the elevator and sent it off, when the doors reopened. Instead of an empty bucket, there was a sculptor standing in the doorway looking very annoyed. Sculptors were small, elf-like creatures. He had a thick set of spectacles perched atop his long, skinny nose. In one hand, he held a tablet. It looked a lot like an iPad, with some sort of strange writing filling the screen. In the other hand he held a pair of legs. "Hello Alexie. I am Pen." He said, staring at his tablet and never actually looking in Alexie's direction. "I am with the Bureau of Harvester Affairs. I will be handling your out-take process. Here are your legs. We will be loaning them to you while you for the duration of your check-out. Any damages to these legs will be penalized with additional time. I will now attach them to your body so you can proceed to headquarters. Any questions about the process shall be submitted, in writing, to the Bureau of Information. Now, please roll to your back while begin the attachment process." Pen said all of this in one breath. Alexie did exactly as he was told.

Attaching his loaner legs was more painful than Alexie anticipated. When one spends a thousand years with his soul being stretched in eternity, pain becomes routine and manageable. The legs were attached with pins that seemed to be made from some kind of hard plastic. Since Alexie didn't have a normal skeletal structure, he had no hip bones. Therefore, the legs were crudely attached to what would best be described as his ribs. Once attached, Alexie struggled for several minutes to find his balance. Without hips he found it very difficult to maintain his center of gravity. Alexie found himself having to move much like a crab, as it was easier to walk side to side versus forward and backward. Pen watched as Alexie struggled, with a vaguely amused look on his face. Once it seemed that Alexie would be able to make to the elevator, Pen hurriedly ushered him inside and hit the "down" arrow.

It was a long ride down to the Department of Harvester Affairs (DHA). The elevator finally came screeching to a stop and simultaneously the doors opened, revealing an arched corridor. A sign hung from the ceiling saying, "DHA, Welcome, proceed forward, and take a number." As Alexie's eyes adjusted to the darkness of what he thought must be the basement of wherever he was, he noticed a line formed in the distance. Standing along the wall were hundreds of Harvesters, all looking exactly like Alexie. "Good luck," Pen said. As turned on his heel and quickly made his way back onto the elevator, Alexie made his way to the back of the line and leaned up against the wall. His borrowed legs were aching terribly, and he wasn't entirely sure what he was supposed to be doing. Was this the line to be released? Would he have to be evaluated for release? How long would this take? Tapping the Harvester ahead of him on the shoulder Alexie asked, "How long have you been here?" The Harvester didn't even look back to Alexie. He only grunted and threw up his arms exasperatedly. Alexie took that to mean that the Harvesters must have been in line for quite some time.

From there, not much happened for a long time. We'll go ahead and fast forward a few weeks. Alexie was delirious with boredom. Every day or so, he would take a step or two forward. Slowly the line moved into a large grey room. Up at the front, he could see a long line of desks running perpendicularly to the line in which Alexie stood. A few of the desks were occupied by Sculptors. Most of the desks were vacant with a sign taped across the front. Some of the signs read "On Break". Others said, "In a Meeting". The whole scene was looked like a Walmart during Black Friday, with the few working tellers casually helping frustrated customers. Alexie was finally at the front of the line. The Sculptor at the desk ahead of his lazily looked up from the papers on her desk, saw Alexie standing in front of her, and swiftly placed an "On Break" sign at the front of her desk. Alexie looked around perplexed. He quickly shuffled over to the front of the next line. "Stop you!" Someone shouted behind him. Alexie slowly turned around to see another Sculptor, this one wearing a jacket with the word "Security" embroidered over the right breast pocket. The elf wore a stern look on her face, and she was waving what appeared to be a cattle prod vigorously in front of Alexie's face. She looked identical to the woman that had

just left him standing at the desk. Apparently, all Sculptors looked alike. The only difference being, the males were bald with glasses, and the women had long hair that dragged the ground.

"Get to the back of the line you!" she said.

"But I was..."

"Shut up you!" she said with a loud raspy voice. "Harvesters go where they're told. Harvesters don't talk. Your line is closed. You go to the end of the next line."

"I've been here for weeks though!" Alexie yelled. "I just want to get the fuck out of here!" Alexie formed a fist, and pulled his arm back, ready to crush the small Sculptor standing in front of him. She quickly jabbed the prod into Alexie's body. The shock sent him huddling into the desk behind him. The world went back.

Alexie woke up in another line. He looked down to see his legs had been removed. His body had been placed in a four wheeled cart. Alexie's hands were bound in front of him. Two Sculptor security officers stood on either side of him. One was the woman who had shocked him, the other was a man wearing silver stars on his sleeves. This line was moving much faster than the previous one. Alexie's guards guided the cart forward as the line advanced. Before he knew it, they were at a large door. The sign on the door read, "DHA-Penalty Division." Alexie's heart sunk. There was no way this was a good thing. The doors opened to reveal a large room. An elevated desk stood at the center of the room. Behind the desk sat yet another Sculptor. This one was wearing long white robes. "So, this can only be the judge," Alexie thought to himself.

The judge was looking down at her desk scribbling in a notebook. She looked up at Alexie and said, "Why are you here You? Why are you causing trouble? You could have gone home. Now you must stay."

"I'm just trying to leave," Alexie said. "I have no idea what is going on. All I want to do is get out and continue my existence." Alexie wanted to scream. He wanted to tear them all apart like the souls he had been harvesting for so long. Instead, he listened.

"You have been charged with troublemaking and destruction of Sculptor property. You fell on the legs you were loaned, and they were broken. The penalty is 100 years for the troublemaking and 100 years for each damaged leg," the judge said dismissively. "You will be returned immediately to you post to resume Harvesting." With that the judge banged a gavel on the desk. The guards began to wheel Alexie out of the courtroom.

"Stop!" Alexie pleaded. "Please, just let me go. I've done my time. Just let me go."

"You're getting crazy you," the guard with the stars on his sleeve croaked, and with that he hit him one more time with the prod.

Alexie woke up back at his station. The elevator door was opened, and there was an empty bucket sitting inside. His pole and shears were placed in front of him. There were no guards, no judge, no sculptors at all. He was all alone again. For a moment Alexie considered next steps. There was no means of escape. He had lost his freedom once again. He couldn't run away; he couldn't appeal his case. Alexie picked up the shears that he'd used to cut apart so many souls. The answers seemed obvious. He plunged that shears deep into his eye and waited for the end. Nothing happened. It didn't really even hurt. He pulled the shears from his eye and looked. There was no blood. He could even see through the eye. It was a little blurry, but still functional. Alexie sighed, picked up his pole and started reeling in another soul.

Patricia Swan-Smith

Leftovers

I called my friend Karen on the way to work one morning. As is often the case, the sky was breathtaking. It begins to transform from black to orange and pinks to diamond-hued clouds as the sun broke over the mountains. She answered the phone, and I could tell by her voice she was still in bed.

She turned sixty-two that year. I am only two years behind her. We are two of the baby-boomer women who worked all our lives but did not reach the American Dream ideals—no 401K, savings accounts or stocks and bonds. We got out of our marriages with our lives, our children and just enough sanity to reach an amazing feat—being at peace with getting older. A feisty sense of humor helps.

She, like so many women who don't know it, is so beautiful. Her eyes dance. Her laughter and sense of humor make you feel great about being alive. She's someone who actually calls to talk and laugh rather than just texting or sending five hundred forwarded emails a week.

I apologized for waking her, and asked if she wanted me to call back later. Yawning, she said, "No that's okay. I already got a call this morning telling me Isabelle's ashes are ready to pick up."

I asked how she was doing. Two days prior she had to deal with the loss of her companion of eight years—a Bearded Collie that had been having trouble breathing for about a month. Incurable. Putting her down was the humane way to set Isabelle free from the pain and inability to be the dog she had been—running, playing and supervising other dogs during their daily walks.

She said she was okay. I asked what she would do with the ashes. She said she wasn't sure. She said she has Ryan's and Sammy's ashes back at her house in Georgia. Ryan was her oldest son, and Sammy, another of her dogs. She'd take Isabelle's ashes there, and they would join the others. Then she shared her long-held idea for the ashes. I thought it a grand idea, and we laughed and laughed. She gave me every detail, and it would be a memorial service that allows so many possibilities for her friends and loved ones.

We know the value of friendship, and the limited time we have on earth. We know how wonderful we feel for opting out of the pressure to look young and live forever in size ten bling-jeans. We can talk about constipation or the weather and make it fun.

We get lonely, but we no longer whore ourselves out for temporary love and attention. We can simply pick up the phone or drop by a friend's house, and fill our souls with the love that develops when expectations are based on reality, not fantasy or material wealth.

I think back on her life and again realize how many of us seldom know each other well, well enough to share the awfulness of what made the scars, and not be ostracized for telling the family secrets—just loved for every experience that brought us to this place. There's a big difference in the depth of our lives when we can deal with the wounds rather than hide them or pretend they didn't happen. The latter can taint each and every day—the brain and body are powerful friends, or enemies, and past trauma can run the show when kept in the dark. I would be one of the attendees who was lucky enough to know what created this amazing woman.

Her childhood, like for many other children, was tainted by abuse—alcohol, volatile outbursts that ended in beatings and depression. Her mother had suffered through a stillborn birth and a mentally disabled son who often pummeled his siblings. My friend said she had to play dead to end the poundings. She had a sister who began acting out, and was never able to turn her life around.

She said she was ugly, and her siblings beautiful. Her brother had straight black hair. Her sisters, red and blond-headed. Beautiful. She on the other hand “had bad eyes, crooked teeth, fuzzy hair and cat-eyed glasses to try to make me look better. I was so skinny people would point and stare in horror.” Although skinny, she was often called a “big fat slob.” Talk about conflicting information for a child.

She married a Narcissistic manipulator who came close to driving her insane before she understood it wasn't her. Her oldest son Ryan died just a couple of days after his twenty-sixth birthday following a night out partying. She had gotten Isabelle two months before Ryan's death. A month before that, she had sold her house. Already dealing with huge changes, the death of her son crippled her. In a snap, there was no sunlight. No air.

A friend of hers offered her a place to recuperate in Alabama. She packed a pickup with what was left of her world in Pennsylvania. She made the drive and started the slow journey that no parent should have to make. She said her grief was so heavy that each day when she awoke, she thought, “it was a real shock that I was alive—a mystery—how could I live?” With time, she finally healed enough to live again.

Today she has that pain sectioned off and soothes it with humor, her harp, youngest son and her belief there must be more to life than the greed, rush and the detached population that inundates our world. She loves her friends, and they love her.

As I listened to her plan, I felt exhilarated. I had truly lived another phenomenal experience with another beautiful sunrise and a divine friendship. I drove through downtown and parked. I sat in the car and replayed her memorial service before walking into work.

She said, “When I die. The bad parts are over. I'm gonna get cremated and then have all the ashes mixed up together and have them put into my old garden bucket. I'll have the bucket and a little garden shovel on a table at my service. Next to it will be paper bags. You know the ones you can get at the hardware store. And there will be a sign saying ‘Help yourself to the leftovers.’” We laughed so hard.

She said she hadn't told a lot of people about this idea because a couple people thought it was disgusting. A few others thought it too painful to have possession of their friend's ashes. But for us, it was unanimous—we agreed it was amazing and fun not knowing where you would be headed. She continued.

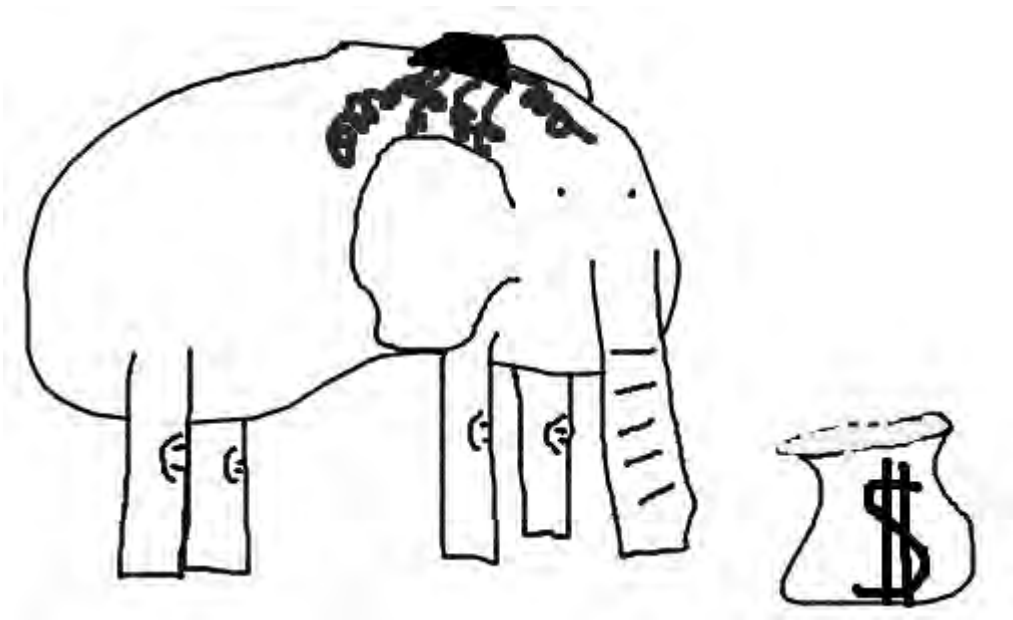
“There will be no limit or restrictions. You can take as much or as little as you want. You can spread them anywhere. Some would take me to the Mediterranean and dump me in the blue water. Some would throw me in their gardens. Others might take me into outer space.” She froze, and then after a few seconds continued matter-of-fact like with a serious tone.

“I'm not real crazy about outer space and wouldn't like that.” After a quick silence, her tone lightened. “But, I said there would be no restrictions, and I meant it.” Another pause.

“I could end up in a lot of places.” I told her I'd take her all over Wyoming, Montana,

Washington and Canada. She was pleased with all these drop-off spots! I arrived at work and we wished each other a great day.

As I gathered my stuff up and headed into work, I thought that I would make sure I was the first in line at her memorial celebration. I would fill my bag to the brim. Then I would go and stand against the wall and wait. When everyone had gone through, I would go back to the bucket and make sure that none of the leftovers were wasted, even though I would need another paper bag.



Elphant by Samuel Trujillo

Brittany Pope

Rough Patch

The first thing I became aware of was the sound of my own gasping, trying to swallow as much as I could, my heart hammering away in my chest, the blood throbbing in my head along with the headache. Something was wrong – that's what I knew, that something was very wrong, and I was in danger.

Everything was blurry – of course, it always was. It took my throbbing head a few moments to catch up on this fact that this had been my life since the Great War. Let's see... I am sitting - no tied to a chair with scratchy rope – hemp probably - my elbow, head, lips, and chest are aching like they all went on a bender the night before, and the smell of dried blood filled my nostrils, and I could taste that rusty tinge. No blindfold – not that they needed one, and I'm not gagged – so this place is either isolated or insulated enough that they're confident that any sounds I make wouldn't be heard.

Rex...? No, of course not, Rex isn't here, why would they take a dog? God, if they did anything to – no, I can't think about wringing their necks for something that might not happen – Maybe Rex got away. I need to get out of here first, but where was here? I slipped a shoe off, feeling the floor – my sole rubbing against fibrous carpet. I'm in a house or flat then. There was the low thrum of florescent light. There's no breathing, talking. I'm alone - apparently. Strange... if someone bothered to take me alive, why wouldn't they leave someone to guard me? Did something happen while I was out? I strained my ears as I wiggled in the ropes to test its give. Someone had been here at one point, judging from the stale cigarette smoke hanging in the air.

Nothing, not a squeak nor peep nor bark – did my kidnappers really just leave me here all by myself?

Cocky idiots. I'm blind, not helpless! I know for sure I did pop one of them in the kisser when they stuffed me into their car. Exhale, inhale, pressing against the ropes, trying to force them to loosen as I slid my other shoe off, to try to loosen the rope around my ankles.

Every so often, I stopped, straining my ears, listening for a sound beyond the silence, before resuming my work – my best estimate was that I was in minute ten in my escape attempt. Houdini will be glad to know that he'll have no competition from me. The rope scratched and dug into me as I exhaled, but the motion was working, I could feel it starting to loosen. Again, why had no one come to check on me?

Hell's bells... could it be I'm meant to die here? No, if they planned on setting the place on fire, I would've smelled something by now, and no amount of flames is going to hide a corpse that's tied up to a chair. No weird smell either and nothing in the blobs of color I could see that seem threatening.

Focus! I snapped at myself as I worked the rope up so I could bend my elbows, so my arms were no longer forced straight against my side. There, I thought that should give me options, and judging from the serious rope burn I'm getting before it let up, it wouldn't be long until I got my ankles freed as well. What can I use? What's there for me? I squinted – more out of habit as it never did jack to improve my vision – someone had smoked here, so where's the ash tray? Maybe someone left a lighter or matchbox close by, burning isn't gonna be the best way, but lacking a knife or a sharp corner, I'd use what I could get.

The chair was heavier than I thought, or really, trying to push a chair across carpet when you're sitting in it isn't easy at all as it turns out; the jerking thankfully seemed to loosen up the ropes a little more – maybe I could get it burnt off without scorching myself by the time I find something. A soft thud told me that I had hit the – side table, I thought? And I groped the surface. The stank of old ash and cigarette was especially strong here, and with a hiss I jerked my hand back as something sharp sliced across my knuckle.

I turned my head, making out a vague circular shape – the ashtray? Was it that that cut me? Then there was something a little lighter in hue, like a triangle... carefully, I reached out again, grabbing it and cursed as it nearly fumbled out of my grip. A cigar cutter! And a scissor-type, rather than a guillotine! Perfect – much better than my original plan!

It didn't take long for me to angle it against one of the loops around me, and with a few snips to fray it, I was freed. Thank goodness the kind of man that prefers a good cigar always keeps their cutters in good shape... if I angle it like so while keeping it open, it could work as an improvised knife. Who knows if I needed to fight my way out of this mess, wouldn't hurt to keep it – it's no bayonet or even a swiss knife, but I thought I could make it work.

Now – if my abductors are out of this building, I could slip right out, but they could be in another room and somehow didn't hear me? I need to be careful, need to figure out the pieces. Let's see, why was I here? I was looking into the disappearance of a Gerald Abelsom. His girlfriend hired me about a week back. Earlier today – I doubt I've been out for more than a couple of hours – while I returned from trying to get access to his impounded car, the men jumped me and Rex.

If I was getting too close to the truth of some dirty business, they would've just shot me, if they wanted me to stop poking around, they would've attempted to grease my palms or scare me off. Then... there must be something they want, something they don't know, and they think I do.

Damn. That's not a good situation, if I didn't figure out what that is, I'd end up dead. Might explain why they weren't here; they might be ransacking my office and house while I fumbled around here. I hope Rex went to O'Leary when we got separated like I was trying to train him to; hate to have get that flatfoot to save my bacon, but better than dead.

The sound of a distant motor pricked my ears, and it was getting closer. Hmm, the fact I could hear it meant it was late at night, not many things going on... then. Ah! I thought I got it.

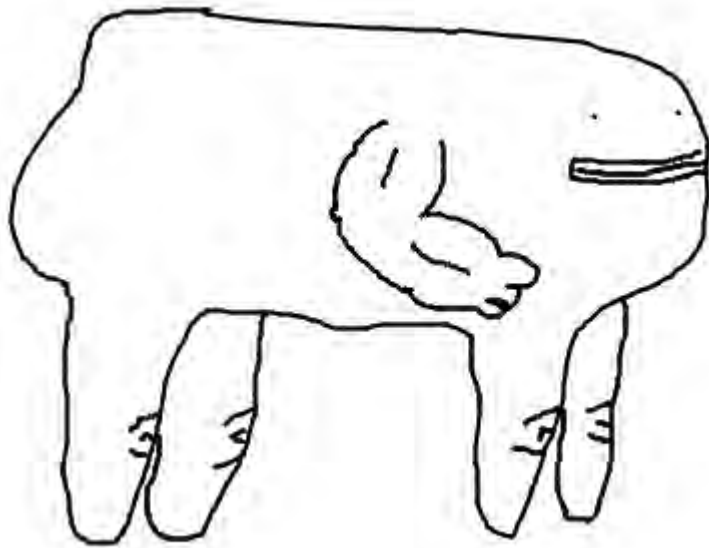
I scrambled against the walls, yanking out plugs, the room visibly getting darker, and all that was left was the ceiling fan overhead. A quick slam with a floor lamp did the trick in blowing out that light...

Damn, I should've put my shoes back on before I did that. But it was too late now, especially as I heard something rattled somewhere below. I hefted the lamp, pressing myself against the wall, trying to quiet myself. Several men ran up, their footfalls heavy on the stairs rushing towards my location. They were practically elephants, clumsy elephants when they pushed and trampled their way in.

One, two, three... they didn't notice me, too distracted by the crunch of glass underneath their shoes, and the realization the chair's no longer in the middle of the room. Even with them being blind as bats I knew this is a fight I wasn't going to win. As two of the men bickered and argued over whose fault it was that I got loose, the third started to head towards one of the table lamps – close to me. Once he got close to the light in the hallway, he'd find me.

Without a second thought, I slammed the lamp against his head before forcing myself past him – and damn near broke my neck on the stairs, cursing as I hastily grabbed the bannister. Hearing confused voices shouting behind me provided some extra motivation to force my feet back under me. A second, a few damnable seconds too long for my liking, I struggled back to my feet, half running, half sliding down, and out the door. I stumbled on the ground, before picking myself up - there was no time to play slow and steady – I had to get to a road.

But least I got out of proverbial frying pan, then to just get through the fire.



Finger Horse by Samuel Trujillo

The End of God

In the beginning, there was nothing, and then, there was light. Soon after, the sky was created to contain the light. The dry land, seas, and vegetation joined the ranks of things that exist in quick succession. Then the sun, moon, and stars and every living thing was created. Within the scope of this creation, there was one tiny paradise, and in that paradise, there was man and woman. The man's name was Adam, and I was called Eve.

We had plenty to do and eat in this place called Eden. All animals and plants were at our service. We named the creatures, great and small, and gave them purpose. The beasts of the fields and fowls of the air each behaved exactly as they were instructed and made the garden beautiful.

We had a purpose also; our purpose was to tend to the garden, although it did not need much from us. The trees did not need trimming, although we would not have had the tools even if they did. The leaves and fallen fruit did not need gathered from the ground, for they did not fall from the trees at all. The fruit, always perfectly ripe, hung in picturesque bundles from the branches of each tree, each more beautiful and tantalizing than the last. We did not need to water the plants because each night a heavy mist covered the garden and nourished all living things with moisture. We were told to tend, but the garden did not need our help to thrive, so we simply wandered and watched for anything that was a threat to our tranquility.

In the beginning the Creator had been with us. He told us that we were his children created in his image and that we must do as he says. He told us of our responsibilities in Eden, as well as forbidding us from the two trees in the center of the garden, one with golden leaves and red fruit, the other with silver leaves and black fruit. He warned us of the consequences for disobedience, saying "If you eat of the fruit of those trees, in the same day you will surely die." Then he departed, promising to watch us and visit from time to time.

We loved the garden and the leisure it afforded us. We spent many an afternoon lounging on the banks of one of the four rivers that crossed through Eden or wandering along the high wall that surrounded the garden until we came back to the place we had begun. The rivers were the only thing in the garden that seemed to leave, flowing out under the walls, but we had no desire to follow the water to its eventual destination. Eden was our home, our paradise. We were not tempted to leave. Oftentimes, we laid with the animals, watching the garden and basking in its beauty.

It was one such leisurely day when Serpent appeared. We had been swimming in a branch of the river near the center of the garden when we saw what looked like a fallen branch in the water. That was extremely peculiar because, in Eden, the branches do not fall. We swam over to investigate and discovered that it was a creature, but not one that we had encountered before. That was strange because we had been responsible for naming all living things. Adam called out to the unknown creature, naming him, and said, "Serpent, what is thy purpose here?"

Serpent declined to answer, instead exiting the water and climbing the branches of silver leaved tree. We followed him, curious as to his purpose in coming here to our garden. Adam spoke again to Serpent, but was met, once again, with silence. We decided to spend the night by the tree to watch Serpent and perhaps learn why he was in the garden and how he had come to be there.

We usually avoided the center of the garden. The glittering leaves of the forbidden trees were so mysteriously alluring that we couldn't help but to wonder what kind of fruit would grow on such a strange and beautiful tree, but tonight we were more intrigued by Serpent than the mysterious fruit.

In the night I could hear the various nocturnal animals. Nothing was unknown, so the sounds were a comfort rather than a source of fear. Adam was asleep when Serpent began speaking. "Do you know why Creator forbids you from partaking of this fruit?" he questioned, looking at me with piercing and unwavering gaze.

I thought about it for a moment and decided to tell the truth. There was no reason to mistrust Serpent, all things in Eden were as they appeared. "No, he didn't tell us why. He just said that it was forbidden, and we must stay away. If we eat of the fruit his anger will be great and we will surely die."

The Serpent laughed, a strange, whispery sound. "You would not die. Creator fears what you could do if you ate of them. Do you know the names of the trees?"

"No."

"The silver tree is The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The golden tree is the Tree of Life. If you eat of the first you would know good from evil and be able to decide for yourself. The second would bring you only death, though you would live. It would bring you a different sort of life, a half-life. You would outlast even Eden and Creator himself, but at the price of everything you know."

"Why would he hide such knowledge as this from us?"

"That I cannot tell. I know only that you should have the knowledge of what is hidden from you before you agree to live within Creator's terms. Now I must go before he discovers I am here. Do with this information what you will, but I cannot let you follow Creator in ignorance." He came down out of the tree and went away into the darkness. I watched him go and then woke Adam, relaying to him everything Serpent had told me. Adam was just as shocked as I about what The Serpent had said. If Creator was such a perfect being would he truly be afraid of his creations? Why would he plant these trees in the garden and give us the power to partake if in doing so we could destroy him? Why would he give us this as a choice if we were not meant to make it?

Eventually we decided that such a decision could not be made on the minimal rest we had had that night, so we went back to sleep and promised to discuss it further in the morning.

I was shaken awake in the weak dawn sunlight by Adam. He was as pale as the morning sun and looked as though he had blood dripping from his lips. "I couldn't resist, Eve; I couldn't live willingly ignorant." Tears streaked down his face and his words were garbled with sobs. In his hand he held a black fruit from The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The flesh inside was a deep red and juice dripped from the fruit like blood from an open wound. I could not let my husband bear the knowledge of the fruit himself. He heaved into my shoulder and I gently took the fruit from his hand.

As the bite passed my lips, it was as if the four rivers of Eden rose up at once and crashed down upon me. The weight of all creation seemed to be held up by only me and my dear Adam. Then I was struck by the knowledge that this had happened before. The fruit had not remained untouched from the beginning, but had been tasted of many times. I saw flashes of men and

women fleeing from the tree and trying to cover themselves. Attempting to avoid the wrath of the all-knowing Creator. I saw Creator coming to the garden, visiting each couple and seeing their mouths stained bloodred. Then I saw various methods of execution. Countless deaths in countless ways. I saw flashes of fire and brimstone hailing from the sky, waves of the four rivers flooding the garden. I saw mountains and jagged rocks rise up from the ground, crushing those running in their shadows. Each time, the only surviving part of the garden were the two trees, gold and silver, at its center.

In that moment I had the knowledge of good and evil, and I knew that The Creator was evil incarnate. Eden was no paradise, but a gilded prison. An awful game played with those inside. Creator was not caring for us, but simply waiting for our transgression so that he could have some sick sort of fun. Serpent was not a friend, but a disguise used by Creator to nudge us to a decision when he got tired of waiting.

When I was at last able to once again focus on my surroundings rather than my new knowledge, I realized that I had been crying. I understood the sheer tonnage of what Adam had been feeling. Adam was a few feet away, splashing water on his face from the river and trying to scrub the stain from the fruit off of his lips and chin.

Just then we heard Creator's voice calling us, asking us to come see him. We knew that if he saw us with our stained mouths we would be dead, so we hid. We climbed into the branches of the golden tree, still afraid of the knowledge the silver tree had given us. Creator appeared from the surrounding trees, again calling out for us. "Adam," he called, "Where art thou? Come to me."

Adam could not disobey Creator, so he came down from the tree, shaking and cowering from the evil being. Creator, seeing Adam's stained mouth, began to laugh a vile, hair raising laugh and the earth began to shake, mirroring the low rumble of the chuckle escaping Creator's throat. The rivers started rushing and rumbling with a fervor I had never before witnessed. The shaking grew so violent that I was thrown from the tree. I tried to catch myself, but only managed to pull a red fruit from the golden branches of The Tree of Life on my way down. By now, Creator's laughter was reaching a shrieking pitch and the ground was shaking violently and beginning to bubble as if it were a pot of stew. Bursts of water were shooting through the grass and ripping the foliage off of the surrounding trees. I grabbed Adam's hand with my free hand and pulled him through the chaos, breaking his eye contact with Creator. We ran from the center of Eden with no plan for where to go or any real hope of escape.

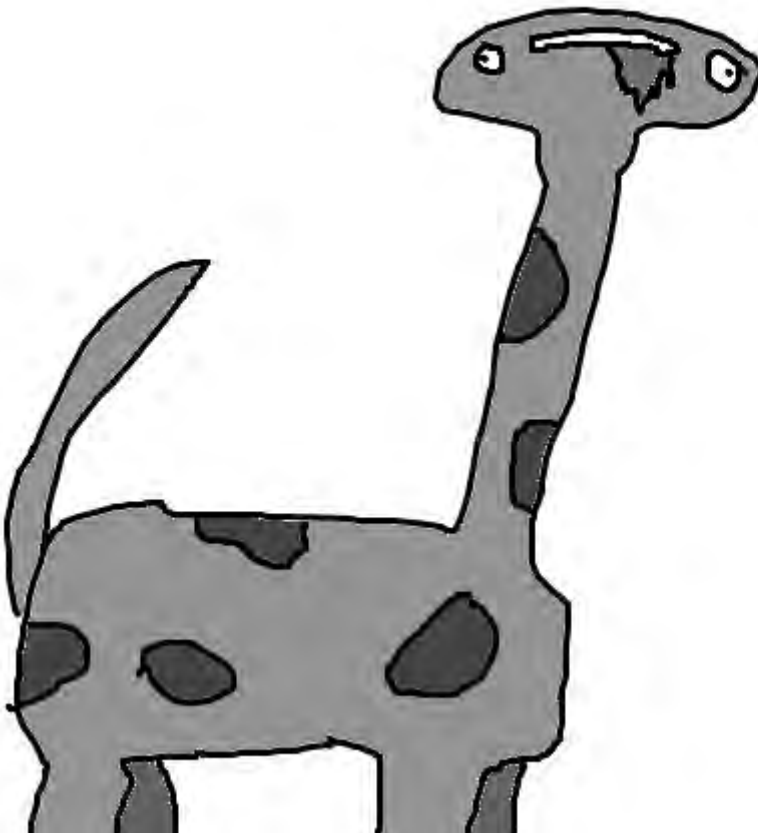
We came to a stop at the edge of one of the rivers. It had far overrun its banks and was beginning to tear the earth away with it. Adam and I look at each other and knew what we had to do. I held up the red fruit and he nodded. We both took a bite out of opposite sides, the sweet flavor seemed to. Explode in our mouths and juice smeared on our faces. We dropped the fruit on the bank, and then jumped in the river, clutching each other as if the alternative was death, because, of course, it was.

The water pummeled and flipped us, disorienting our tiny bubble of consciousness until we could no longer tell up from down or even if we were moving at all. A long time passed, or possibly just a few moments. Either way, it seemed an eternity. Then we were lifted from the river into the air, and what we assumed was our death. But when we opened our eyes, we did not see Creator, but a light, far brighter than anything we had witnessed in Eden.

When our eyes adjusted to the light and we could see what manner of being had saved us from the roiling water we realized that it was the being itself that emitted the ethereal light. The

being had three sets of great white wings extending more than 10 feet in length and it was with these wings that she carried us up and over the garden wall into a barren land. When she set us down, the angel spoke, saying, "You, unlike the others before, have partaken of both trees and allowed me to defeat Creator. He has been trapped in his garden and I will stand guard for all eternity. You, however, must live outside of the garden. With the knowledge you gained from the fruit you should be able to survive, but your life will no longer be a life of leisure. You will have to get your bread by the sweat of your brow."

And with that, she drew her flaming sword and turned her attention to Eden. Soon after, Adam and I left into the desert to create our own paradise. Of course, eternal life was not exactly what we expected. We have grown old and, in time, we will die, but our posterity will continue to grow and expand, filling this endless land outside of Eden. We ourselves have lived long, but Creator will live longer, but he will never be a threat as long as we live. Micah, his personal guardian angel, will make sure of that. Though we will not live forever in this physical form, our descendants will carry our memory as they live free in this godless land.



Retarded Giraffe by Samuel Trujillo

Johnny Hiltner

The Passenger

It was getting too hot in that humid, insect infested Kansas town for me anyway. That obese sheriff, who wheezed every time he moved more than six feet was getting a little too nosey. It was time to move on, but I was beginning to wear down from lack of sleep. I needed a riding companion and figured the disease filled pond they referred to as a truck stop would have just such a person.

I picked him up an hour ago and he hasn't said a single word. He didn't even thank me for the ride, or tell me which direction he was headed. He's just sat there looking out the windshield with a blank look on his face, clenching his red JanSport backpack as if it was going to jump out the window at any moment. He hasn't moved much either, except to adjust his thick glasses. He has to be legally blind wearing them things. I'm sure he could use them like a magnifying glass and fry ants to death with the concentrated sun light beam they could create. That's most likely where his animal torturing tendencies began. He has to be a serial killer. I'm almost positive there's a severed head inside that back pack. That's why he picked the color red, so the blood seeping through the bottom wouldn't be so obvious.

When I saw him sitting on the curb staring off into the distance at nothing in particular, he looked like a halfway intelligent human being, a bit goofy, but intelligent nonetheless. I figured some nice conversation would keep me awake, but boy was I wrong. About the conversation that is. I'm wide awake now and not planning on falling asleep around this creep anytime soon. I even thought about letting him drive when I first picked him up. That's certainly not going to happen. I doubt if he even knows how to drive. Looking him over makes me think he went to his nearest book store and bought, "How to be Serial Killer for Dummies" and followed the direction to a tee, starting with his outfit. He looks like a runaway child in an adult body, wearing that yellow Lacoste shirt with the tiny embroidered crocodile just above the heart. Of course he's going to tuck it into his khaki pants that are being held up by a brown braided belt that's barely visible underneath the neon green fanny pack. To top it all off, he's wearing some odd looking white Velcro strap shoes. They must be orthopedic with those extra thick soles. He almost looks fake, even his hair looks like it's snapped onto the top of his head like he's a fucking Lego character. I don't know what Lego character he would be. Maybe Napoleon Dynamites' "Sweet" brother Kip.

That's what's going on here... he's going to find LawFawnduh to confess his undying love for her. I sure hope that's what he's up to anyway. Maybe it's LawFawnduh's head in the backpack. He already confessed his love to her and she laughed in his face. That's the straw that broke the camels back. He was on the fence about murdering that first victim he's been stalking for the last three months. He just needed a woman to love and share a life with, and LawFawnduh was that woman, or so he thought. Now he's gone full blown psycho--he's gone to the dark side, and Dahmer don't have shit on the sick, twisted thoughts bouncing around in that head of his. He kind of looks like Dahmer.

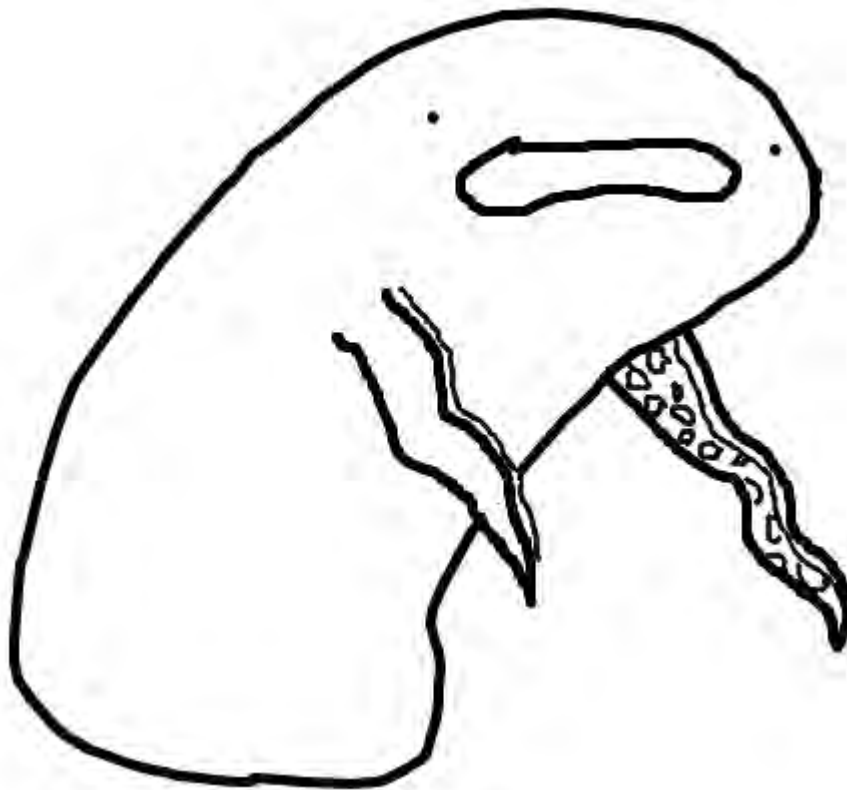
Maybe I'm being a little too judgmental. Maybe I should cut the guy some slack. He's probably been locked in a bomb shelter since he was six and doesn't know what's going on. He thought the world was rotten and radioactive from the nuclear fallout. He was expecting to see communists running around in gas masks fighting the Toxic Avenger, the sole American survivor of World War Three. He's just a little lost and wants to say something, but can't find

the words. He's probably sad too, since his parents passed away last week. His mom went first, then his dad. His dad had spent his entire life with her, and the thought of living one more day without her was too much for him. He was perfectly healthy. He just died the next day from a broken heart, but not before giving his only son a fanny pack full of old two dollar bills and a .38 Special.

"Here you go champ. Just cock back the hammer and point at whatever you want to shoot" were his dying words. So the grown child packed up his bags and headed out. I'm just the lucky son of a bitch who had to find him. I hope he doesn't mind the heat because we're headed to Bullhead City, Arizona to find my peace of mind.

The quiet company is actually quite soothing. I can handle some weirdness, just as long as a Chihuahua doesn't pop it's head out of that fanny pack looking for a treat. That's it! He just so happens to be going my way. He's headed down to Texas to celebrate his Chihuahua's Quinceanera. I read somewhere about folks who do that. They have no real social skills and their animals are all they know. They treat them like their family and celebrate all the holidays with them. He never got his license or owned a car, but that little Chihuahua hidden away in the fanny pack is going to celebrate her introduction into womanhood no matter what, even if he has to hitchhike a quarter way across the country to do so.

This has to be the his story, otherwise he's a serial killer and that would be extra crazy. That would be a one in a trillion shot, because like the joke says... what are the odds of two serial killers in one car?



beansquid by Samuel Trujillo

Poetry

Sarah Kropf

This is God

The sound of birds waking you up
Coming through the silver curtains in your window.
The sun playing peek-a-boo over the grassy hills
and the calm oceans.
Saying hello.
I'm shining today.
You can do this.

The clanging of a pot, crashing of a pan.
Dings of dinner bells and smells of freshly baked rolls,
apple cider, and dirty dishes.
Hands held together in grace around a table,
Saying hey,
We're here.
You're not alone.

The smell of their perfume, cologne, hair,
arms wrapped around yours.
Grabbing shoulders, wiping tears.
Hands clasped in a fervent prayer of pleading desperation and grace
Saying cry.
It's okay,
I love you.

Chittering of crickets,
goosebumps from a cold breeze on your skin and a rough old blanket.
The encompassing presence of stars,
and the majesty of the expanse.
Saying breathe,
feel the air.
This is peace.

This is God.

Myra Peak First Prize, Poetry

The Road

is thirstier
than I've ever seen.
Dust flies, then hangs
without knowing how
to get away.

We drive through its clouds
leaving ash of hurt,
blamed others who desired
our distraction when only we own
the jagged, bloodied crevasses between us.

Our love burned white hot
until it tangled with thundershower mud
of heart tumbles and confusing fear
of a future without the past.

Glum – we have some
but no glue for each other.

Maybe we need the memories
and not the now.

Myra Peak

Spring

The first –

Butterfly,
 palest yellow and small
Shadows of colored chalk,
 pinks and blues on the sidewalk
A cardinal pair in the only snowless,
 dry patch of grass
Volunteer corn shoots in rows
 defined by no others
The somnolent rhythm of a playground swing
 as a child pumps harder and harder
Brown speckled eggs washed by rain
 in my hand
Honks of a hundred geese as they land
 near nests to be
Violets along the timber's edge,
 fragile and purple strong
Kittens of the rabbit pair as they pop out
 from under the shed

Whitney Anderson

The Rant

Growing up you see all these Princesses
Beautiful and elegant
We raise our children to be fierce and independent
Yet all the shows we see tell our children differently.
They teach them to sneak out at night
To fall in love with the first person they see
We teach them to follow the rules
They teach them they need a man to survive
We teach them anything is possible
They teach them lies
We teach them lies
The world is not what we teach them
The world is a place that will eat you up just to spit you back out.

Smoke

The way smoke moves through the air is magical
With no control of where it goes just hoping the air will take it to the right spot
Name another substance that can be so thick and yet so thin
So much all at once then all of a sudden nothing
Who knows where it goes, no one thinks about that part they just take another puff.
They just notice when it is gone. When it is all gone.

GothicWonderland

My Heartbeat

Monsters surround me
Clawing at my wrists
My ankles
My thighs
Life is my daydream
Leaving no traces
My heartbreak
My mind
Sometimes I'm alive
Only when I feel
My paintbrush
My pen
Understand my fear
When everyone says
My hardship
My choice
But if that means I
Can feel alive then
My future
My heartbeat

My girl

She loves september
Cuddling in Soft sweaters
Autumn mist surrounding leaves
Scarves and mittens and long sleeves.
Smiling blushes, lips just kissed.
But loving her Is so remiss
They laugh and say i'm wrong But still
I love her, against my will

Savanah Walker

I never wanted

To break
Your heart

I just wanted
To keep it
From breaking
Me.

The creatures in my bathtub --Honorable Mention, Poetry

didn't end up there through coincidence.

they were just lonely
and so was I.

They slithered through the pipes,
scratching at the tap until
I popped off the guard and let them
drip

into

the basin.

At first, I thought perhaps
they would see that I
was just as miserable as them,
That eventually they would
Slide down the drain
one

by

one.

I still fear the day
they leave me
alone in the unbearable isolation
of my thoughts,
but I don't think they will.
The grip of their teeth
on my skin
does not loosen with time
or company.

It hurts,
but much less
than

being

alone.

Joe Gibbs--Second Prize, Poetry

Life

The wheel keeps turning, the carrousel keeps spinning
The earth spins constantly in perpetual motion
That same earth revolves around the much larger sun
Round planets, spinning around round stars in a circle
Round food on round plates surrounded by round people
My commute is 30 miles round trip. Round tires propel me there.
A round ring sits on a cylindrical finger. Guests gather around a spinning bride
A round head pokes out of a mother. The doctor takes a tape around to measure.
The child grows up. Life comes around full circle.
Now a crowd gathers around a wooden coffin. Round stones are placed over a rectangular hole.
If everything keeps coming around does it ever really end?

Bel Burgess

She looks in the mirror, but the reflection is not of her.

The reflection looks like shattered mosaic.

The picture is not clear.

The reflection is their expectations.

Expectations of who She should be.

Since birth her life has been laid out.

Society, Family, Friends have decided.

She feels like an empty canvas.

A canvas who gets started and gets erased.

The standards change with time.

The struggle of identity remains.

How much longer?

One by one she picks up the pieces.

She places each piece with intention.

Finally, the picture is complete.

Her Mosaic is as it should be.

The reflection of its creator.

Terri Thomas

Air

It curls forward
 as a mist.
Reaching out,
 then touching...
With a whispered caress,
 sometimes warm,
 scented, or wet.
Surrounding me, softly,
 then – moves on.

Zach Birch

A Prophet Making a Sail

In a vast desert
Full of duteous people
There was a clever craftsman
With a beautiful ship
Decked with birch wood and a brass woman prow.
Door to door he dragged this boat
And everyone understood it's splendor

But no one would buy

The craftsman claimed it will be useful
When water filled this desert
Rushed, the doors and reshaped the floor
Yet here, never before
Had the heavens cried
Yes, even this captain of sand could not believe his claim

So he mustered all his strength!

Grabbed his rope and drug this boat he treasured so
Through crashing sand and scorching sun
For days,
For weeks,
For too long

Till, withered and weary, he was alone

With that, which he wanted in solidarity
His lips cracked, spirit broken
He fell long into slumber amongst the light
Woken to a sharp wind and bitter cold
The sun had disappeared
Rain, the first he had known

Fell into his eyes

Zach Birch

Guidance

Hell, it's been so long
Since, in dissonant song
I saw one of the enlightened
In the darkness where I went

On the banks of the river Styx
I was holding a quick fix,
When radiant, She appeared!
Graceful, deservedly revered

A heart blessed with advice, plentiful
Transcendent soft and beautiful.
But when she spoke to this lunatic
A hideous gargle, snarl and click!

From where once a tongue lay,
To her horror and dismay
Came forth a dark red stain
A terrific colored rain

Frozen by her tearful caress
Left behind only to guess
As she took my coin to pay
Charon, to take her away

I gave the blood to the water
Yet, forever as I wander
Haunted by her aeonian dye,
Her thumb, and that damned lullaby

John Henning

Sweetwater

(County, Wyoming)

Sun warmed, primal peaks once were ocean floor
History runs deep "A mile, maybe more!"
Nature urges the sand grains to shift
'Twas the tide, now the wind causes the drift

The sagebrush holds spirits of shark and whales
Wild steeds roam sand beds once home to sea snails
The core of the planet risen, exposed
We harvest from life millennias ago

Bitter and sweet waters flow through this place
Home of dinosaur, mammoth, human race
Trails have been etched in the rock and the land
Ever showing the quests of modern man

From the east to the west mankind has sought
To find the very best the god has wrought
Eagles keep watch over the life down below
For whatever comes here will die or grow

Sweetwater, here for the old and the new
Refreshing to all, but home to the few

Michele Irwin

Speaking Truth to Power, Spring 2019

Collusion
Fake news
Witch hunt

Pocahontas
Pencil Neck
Lock her up

Build the wall
They're rapists

Rigged election
Drain the swamp
People on both sides

Grab 'em by the pussy
If Ivanka weren't my daughter
Blood coming out of her wherever

Patriotism
Journalism
Justice

Native American Princess
Big brained
Liberation theology

Tear down this wall
Latin Americans

Free and fair elections
Appoint well qualified people
Good triumphs over evil

Don't touch
She is, and that is creepy
Feminine Power

Photography and Art

Michele Irwin--Honorable Mention, Photography and Art

Snow-Pony



Michele Irwin

Tatanka Horizon



Michele Irwin

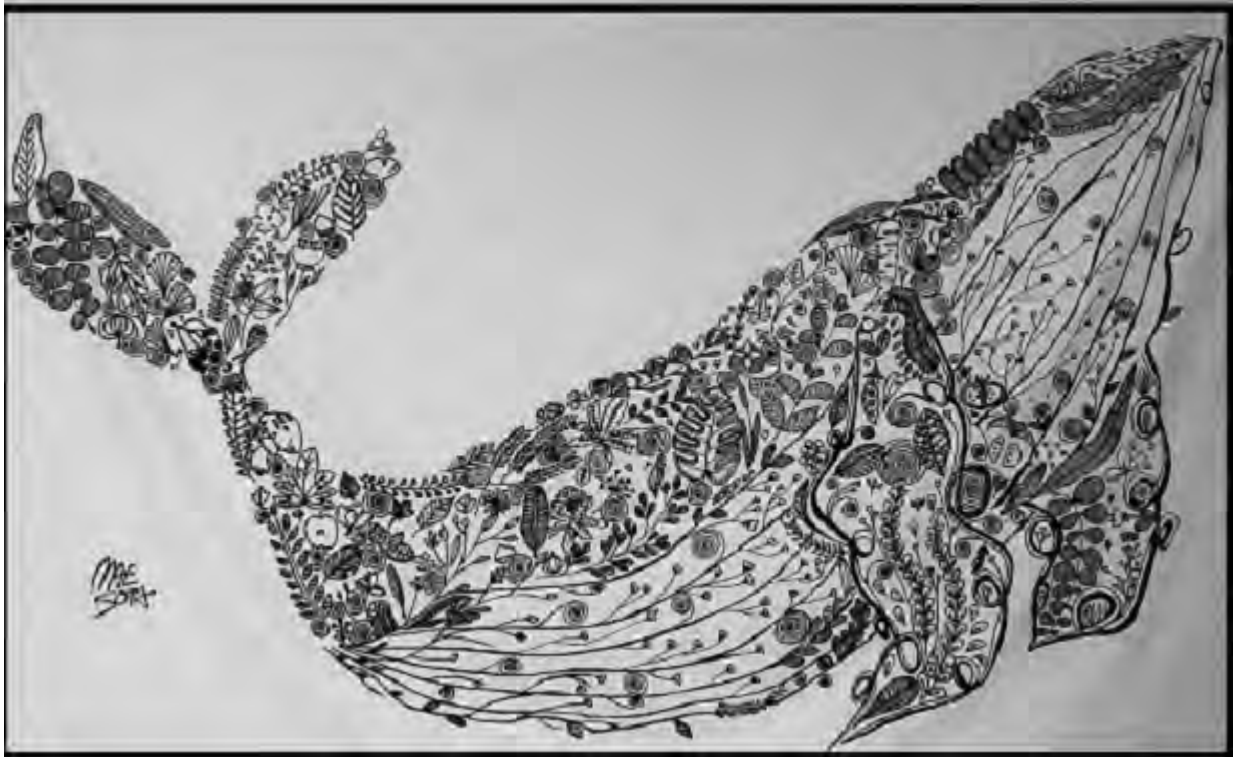
Tundra-Proof





Mae Soto--First Prize, Photography and Art

Green Whale



Matt Henley

Poser



Matt Henley

Spotted Wolf



Matt Henley

FifteenMT



Matt Henley--Second Prize, Photography and Art

Ramp Dreams



Nonfiction: Essays, Memoir, and Creative Nonfiction

Kaitlin McDaniel

A Skier's Bucketlist



- 1.) Ride the Aerial Tram to the top of Redezvous Mountain
- 2.) Eat a waffle at Corbet's Cabin
- 3.) Enjoy the view while having the waffle. Or waffles...

Brent Alcorn

The Death of My Daughter

My daughter's death is a very hard and sad tale for me to tell, but if there is one thing that I have learned throughout my life is that when something is bothering you, you talk about it. I will tell you the when and the how of her birth, the circumstances of her birth, what led up to her death, and the aftermath of her death.

My lifestyle growing up in the sixties is what you might expect from someone of that era. Although I always got great grades in school, and I was a 4-year letterman in the sport of baseball, I did experiment with a lot of drugs such as LSD, mescaline, peyote buttons, and things in that nature. The reason I'm telling you this is because I always thought this had a direct impact on my daughter's birth. I was under the assumption that because I had done these drugs that there could be something terribly wrong with my sperm that could lead to birth defects. As it turned out, this had nothing to do with my daughters being born conjoined at the buttocks. The doctors reassured me that since I had been drug free for 11 years that my sperm was not contaminated.

Tiffany Lee and Hope Rain were born attached to each other at the butt. They were born June 1, 1982 to Brent and Rene Alcorn. We had been married for two years before she had got pregnant. The pregnancy was a very tough one as one might expect when carrying twins. It was during an ultrasound that we became aware of the problem. I can remember standing in the doctor's office, with the smell of medicine, the sick, and the sound of crying babies when I got the news. This scared the hell out of me, as well as it did my wife. I asked the doctor "What now?" So, in the following months with the help of countless doctors we put a plan into place. I got in touch with a specialist in England to do the operation to separate them after they were born, but things do not always go as one plans. Rene went into labor early and instead of the birth being at Children's Orthopedic Hospital in Seattle they were born at Saint Joseph Hospital in Tacoma, Washington. The birth went well and the next day they were brought to the hospital in Seattle. Since they were born a month premature, we had to wait for two weeks before the doctor from England could arrive.

The day of the operation had arrived. When I met the doctor, who was doing the surgery, he was very tall, clean shaven, and, of course, had a very pronounced accent. The operating room was like a stadium. It was round, big, with a viewing area all around the top. All the viewing area was enclosed and was filled with doctors, all kinds of doctors, taking notes, talking to each other, and learning. This procedure hadn't really been done that much in the U.S., so it was an invaluable learning experience. Going into the procedure, Dr. Fletcher told us that it could take up to 27 hours to separate them. We had our priest, my mother, and two of my sisters there with us for support. The room was very bright, very busy, and sometimes it seemed very chaotic. The room was filled with equipment, machines, 5 doctors, and 6 nurses. There seemed to be a buzz in the air as the operation started. The weather outside was cold for a June morning. I don't know why I remember that, but I do. The operation seemed to take forever. I could tell when there were complications, when things were not going right, and sometimes when they seemed to be confused. To me, the longer it took, the more likely something bad was about to take place. Father Michael could see the fear in my face and he would sit me down, calm me, and we would pray. The operation was finally done and over after 29 hours. My baby girls were now separated. But just like that there was a problem with Hope as her heart stopped. The doctors and nurses were scrambling, doing this and that, and then came the sound that I will never

forget, the sound the machine makes when the heart flatlines. Hope was dead.

I remember waking up to chilly water on my face, people standing all around me and asking if I was alright. I had fainted. It was all too much for me. I had just lost a child. Parents are not supposed to bury their children. It should be the other way around. I had lost Hope, but I gave thanks to still have Tiffany. A week later, we buried my baby next to her great grandmother. The funeral was very sad as you might imagine. There were many people there, family, friends, as well as people from the community. That day was extremely cold for a summer day and the rain did not want to stop. After we buried Hope, my marriage to Rene would never be the same. One might think this would make our relationship stronger, but in fact it did the opposite.

Tiffany was still in the hospital in Seattle and would be for the next two months. I would go up and spend my nights with her, putting my finger through a hole in the glass and she would hold on to it tightly. I did this every night so that she would not be alone. My wife Rene would not go see her, and the reason or reasons are still to this day unknown to me, but she completely shut down, emotionally. This really pissed me off. I could not understand why she wouldn't go see her surviving daughter, who had just fought for her life. She needed a mother's touch, one that she would not get. After Tiffany came home, things didn't change. Rene was cold, distant, and not a good mother. A year later, we were divorced. Although I fought for custody, the judge granted it to Rene. Tiffany is now 35 and doing well.

Although the Lord decided to take my little girl Hope from me and break my heart, he did leave me with a beautiful daughter, Tiffany. We did not originally have middle name for Hope so we decided to name her Rain. It was pointed out to me that since it had been raining during her birth and her operation that maybe, subconsciously, the name just fit. I have always blamed myself for not being able to raise my daughter, Tiffany, and that if I could have, maybe she would not be a heroin addict, which she is. Again, I have been reassured that it's her life and her choice. Losing a child is one of the toughest things a parent can go through, but life goes on and we just must deal with it the best we can.

Social Media and Its Negative Impacts

There are, at this time, approximately 7.7 billion people on Earth (“current world population”). That’s quite the hefty number. Of those 7.7 billion people, more than 2.46 billion use social media (“number of social media users worldwide”). In 2017 only 2.34 billion people used social media, so we are steadily increasing (Lewis 5). All in all, that means 31.9% of the world uses social media. In the case of this report, social media pertains to the social networking sites Twitter, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, and YouTube. Throughout the process of writing this paper, I gathered information from my personal social media accounts. If nearly 32% of people on the planet are actively engaged in an activity, it should be considered significant. If that many people were watching pornography eight hours a day, (I select that number because it’s close to 32% of the day), it would be concerning. Social media, however, can be a gateway to negative and other addictive things such as pornography and is extremely dangerous because it affects everyone. Through social media, hundreds, thousands, and millions of people can be affected by words and pictures shared. As time progresses, social media appears to be turning into a popularity contest, it glorifies the ideals behind the “perfect” body and appearance, it can be an addiction, and it has the potential to slowly teach the coming generations to replace real life, face-to-face interactions, with conversations exchanged behind a glass screen. Social media can be dangerous for physical and mental health. These dangers cannot be ignored.

Throughout this paper, I will be referencing my own research. As a seventeen-year-old girl who spends numerous hours a day scrolling through social media feeds, I get to see hundreds of different posts each day. Knowing the influence this overwhelming sea of opinions and information has on me, I chose to ask for my followers to volunteer their opinions as well. They were promised complete confidentiality, and everything was voluntary. I posted a poll on my Instagram for 24 hours asking them the following question: “Is social media more of a positive influence in your life or negative?” I received 255 responses. 138 people felt it was positive, and 117 felt it was negative. The percentages come out to 54% to 46%, which is pretty close to being half and half. Immediately after the poll, I gave participants the option to explain their opinion and 61 people participated. My final question was geared towards those who felt that social media was negative: “If you voted that social media is negative, why do you still have it?” I got 33 responses. I had an age range from 11 to 53. Majority of the responses were from high schoolers, which is fitting because that’s my age and the age of my friend group. It should also be pointed out that most of the volunteers are from Wyoming, but I also had some participants from Washington, Utah, Nebraska, and Idaho. I recognize that my results don’t speak for everyone on Earth, but because the answers were completely voluntary, they should be considered valid and treated as such. I also recognize that there are some people who feel that social media is both positive and negative, which is why I wanted people to pick one over the other.

Throughout my research I discovered that one of the major consequences of social media lies in the fact that it can become a competition of who can have the most followers, who will get the most likes and comments, and who will get the most private messages. While most would not say that they are consciously participating in these competitions, they are, and through them, jealousy is fostered while negativity is spread. One of the more common theories dealing with psychology, which is a major player in this unfair and negative competition, is the self-determination theory. The following information comes from the European Journal of

Social Psychology. This theory deals with how our motivation is influenced by “internal and external factors” (Ferguson 299). While this theory is applicable to just about anything, when applied to the context of social media, it shows readers that we are at the highest degree of self-determination when we feel as though we are in control and can make our own decisions.

The concept of being in control may be one of the most alluring ideas behind social media, but that idea couldn't be further from reality. When people allow their friends, families, associates and their neighbor's-cats-uncle's-hamsters-great-grandpa's-fish's mothers, to follow them, they are potentially putting their emotional well-being in the hands of others. One of the explanations I received for a negative vote was as follows, “I hardly ever feel better after Instagram than I did before I got on. I see so many beautiful photos and perfect lives, and I feel like my life is just not as cool, but I loved my life the second before hopping on Instagram! I think social media is a perfect example of ‘comparison is the thief of joy.’” When posts are shared on social media, inevitably feedback occurs. Whether it's someone choosing to heart or like your photo, show a surprised reaction, leave a comment, or unfriend you, this feedback can influence your behavior and emotional well-being. If you were to post an image of yourself that you felt confident in, and someone were to comment something rude about your hair, suddenly a photo that you loved and a situation where you felt in control, can shift to a negative experience that may make you question yourself. If one post involving you and your cat gets less likes than a picture of you in a swimsuit on the beach, despite the apparent control you think you have, you may consider posting more pictures of yourself that people may find attractive. It's human nature to want to be liked, and to feel accepted and loved by the people you surround yourself with, and this need carries itself into social platforms.

One of the other major issues that social media can create is the idea of the perfect body. Anyone with access to a phone can look up some of the most popular social media influencers and will notice that there is a trend. The women idolized on social media all have the “perfect” body type. To put some names out there: Kylie Jenner, or anyone in the Kardashian Jenner clan, as well as any number of fitness models. Social media is promoting the ideal body by exalting those who have it. Some of the saddest responses I read from my study dealt with body shaming: “I often find myself jealous of other people and the things they post and how they look or I feel uncomfortable”; “Social media has put pressure on women to look the way society thinks they should”; “I feel like it makes me subconsciously compare myself to others”; “I find myself comparing myself to others and it really takes a toll on my mental health”; and “[social media] makes me compare myself to other girls and lowers my self-esteem.” After reading through many comments written by girls in regard to the negative effect social media has on how they view themselves and whether they're “perfect,” I became curious as to whether boys dealt with these comparative issues. In order to figure it out, I messaged a friend of mine to see his take on it. After asking him if he felt the pressure to be physically perfect, he responded, “I'm constantly evaluating myself based off of other people's looks, likes, follows, comments, etc. I feel like if social media wasn't a thing there wouldn't be so much teen drama and depression.” It is obvious that the concept of achieving physical perfection can be a challenge for both genders, and that it needs to be addressed.

Another issue associated with the perfect body are the ever-popular “nudes.” Because this topic is a bit dicey, it's hard to find research articles about it. However, from my personal conversations with both teenage boys and girls, I have noted one common trend in why people send pictures of themselves without clothing, that being the need for validation. By sending these pictures, and receiving positive feedback, an unsafe habit is developed. While each person is in charge of their own body and that should be respected, nothing sent over the internet is ever truly private because things can be screenshotted or saved without the sender knowing. Once something is sent through the interwebs, there's no way to keep it private, or take it back; it is now out there for anyone to see. If you sent an inappropriate picture, and years later you

wanted to be a politician, or be in any position of importance, you may not be able to because of decisions you made years ago. In order to stress the fact that nudes are not private, I found a story shared on *The Guardian*. To provide some background, after long distance dating for quite some time, a teenage girl felt as though her relationship was ready for intimate pictures, “I finally pressed ‘send’ and, with that, lost all ownership and dignity of something deeply private and personal to me – my own body. It is hard to describe my feelings in the moment I found out that boys were showing my pictures around my old school. I felt exposed and – a feeling I’ll never forget – disgusted with myself. In the days that followed, I remember feeling so helpless that I could not function” (Ankel). The growing popularity of nudes should be concerning.

Yet another potential concern brought up in the results from my personal research, was that social media can be addictive and takes time that could be spent doing productive things. I do not use the word addiction lightly. According to an article released by the Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing, “anything which stimulates human beings and which make[s] them feel energetic can be addictive” (Deep 741). One of the responses I received from my research was from someone who was trying to make change: “I took a break from social media for like four weeks and I just felt all around happier and like I wasn’t wasting a ton of time and got a lot more done.” Similar to drug and other addictions, social media addiction has withdrawal symptoms. The most prominent withdrawal symptom, and one of the main reasons people justified still having social media even though they felt it was negative, was FOMO. FOMO stands for “fear of missing out”. In an article released by *Psychiatric Quarterly*, FOMO is used interchangeably with the need to belong. Due to the fact that 31.9% of the world is using social media platforms, they can provide a sense of belonging. Once you join the social networking world, leaving can be a challenging task because by deleting social media, you delete a potential outlet to the world and way of communication that is extremely popular. Instead of your friends being able to Snapchat you, or Facebook Messenger you, they have to text you, which for some reason feels much more challenging. By deleting such a popular thing, you may feel left out and as if you do not belong. People struggle to convince themselves to disconnect from the world of instant gratification because they fear that they will be missing out. On the majority of social media apps, your friends and people you follow can upload images constantly, this can be unhealthy. As a teenager I can vouch that seeing images of my friends together can be discouraging and hurtful when an invitation wasn’t extended to me, and I’m sure I have caused other people to feel the same way. The constant need to show everyone what we are doing every waking moment of the day, can have backlash. Through social media, we have forfeited our privacy.

One potential troubling side effect of the ability to share whatever whenever we would like, is the phenomenon of “vaguebooking” (Berryman 308). Vaguebooking refers to posts on social media platforms that are vague (no surprise there) and invite people to ask questions. For example, “just received the worst news ever...” Naturally people are going to want to know what bad news you just received and thus will give immediate attention to you. While vaguebooking may not seem like a serious issue, it can lead to bigger issues. In a study done by *Psychiatric Quarterly*, 471 undergraduate students were given a questionnaire that touched upon all aspects of social media. The most pertinent information occurred when vaguebooking was linked to loneliness and suicidal thoughts (Berryman 311). I am in no way saying that just because you and I may post a vague picture or quote to get attention every once in a while, means we’re suicidal. It doesn’t, but the fact that we feel like we need the constant attention of all our associates and peers is troublesome and can lead to mental health issues. Social media can become an unhealthy addiction and can consume too much time.

The final issue I’ll touch upon is the fact that social media has the potential to slowly replace in-person interactions. With the ability to message whoever we want at any hour of the day, the need to meet up with people and discuss things in person seems to be diminishing. As I was conducting research, I came across a family with five children. Due to the fact that

the mother's children are so spread out in age, seventeen years old to thirty four years old, the mother has gotten to see just how much of an impact social media has had on her family. Her older children used to have to get their chores done by ten in the morning if they wanted to play with their friends, and when she tried to apply the same strategy to her children ten years after, it didn't work. The younger children had no motivation to work so they could see their friends because they knew that they could text their friends all day long, and the need to work quickly was diminished. I heard similar things from one of the responses to my research questions, "Social media has begun to eliminate social people. People can text, but not talk." Keep in mind that that response came from a teenager. A teenager is willing to recognize and admit that their peers struggle to interact in person because of the ease of social media. This has been backed up by *The Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* which states, "simply knowing that social links are readily available in one arena (e.g., cyberspace) may decrease the pursuit of them in another (e.g., real life)," (Li 182). If we continue to allow social media to take the place of in-person interactions, we could potentially have generations who can't communicate in real life situations, which doesn't seem like the smartest idea.

As you can imagine, I got many explanations from people who felt that social media was a positive influence in their life. Some argued that social media keeps them up to date with current events, "it's easier to get news faster," or "social media is a really easy way for me to stay up to date on what's happening in the world." While I can understand the logic behind that, there are so many easy alternatives that would make it so that social media could be eliminated, and society could still keep up to date on current events. There are apps for the majority of news stations that will send you notifications every time something new and important happens. It's not challenging. You could also just look up the news station on the computer or your phone, which is quick and easy as well. The current news can be delivered to your phone just as easy as social media does it, and getting your news directly from actual organizations devoted to current events can provide you with more facts, and less opinions and biases. It can be too easy to fall into the habit of believing everything we read on social media, but oftentimes the news we find on Facebook or Instagram is fake. An article called, "Combating Fake News in Social Media: U.S. and German Legal Approaches", defines fake news as anything that defames someone or is negatively impactful that has no truth to support it. When we intentionally seek news from sources we trust, we are less likely to fall victim to fake news. In the conclusion of the report, author Ryan Kraski goes as far as to say, "fighting fake news in social media can be compared to falling into a quicksand pit; the harder you push to get out, the deeper you sink" (954-955). Don't get me wrong, I recognize that news stations can be biased, but the biases are usually well known and can be combatted. For example, CNN is known to be liberal while Fox News is typically conservative. However, a private source can harbor any bias or special interest they desire, but their consumers may never know. Someone else explained that social media "keeps me hip", which I can also understand. However, is being hip really that important? Shouldn't the emphasis be on being happy and uplifted, and contributing something positive to society? This argument relates to the desperate need to belong and feel validated as previously discussed.

A final argument presented to me occurred when someone described social media as a "great distraction, which is great when I am sad or overwhelmed." I find it important to note that sometimes distractions aren't healthy, and as quoted earlier, one of the responses said that Instagram left her/him feeling worse. Yes, it can be distracting, but that doesn't make it a positive influence. There are much healthier ways to distract yourself. I personally blow bubbles when I'm stressed. A bottle of bubble solution only costs a dollar, and as a high school student who makes little money, I can afford that. I would also recommend trying to spend time with people who will not only distract you, but also help you through whatever is making you yearn for a distraction. One argument presented to me that I felt was extremely valid stated, "my boyfriend is deployed and it's the only way we can stay in contact." As someone who has had numerous brothers and cousins deployed in the military, I recognize the real nature of this, and

I agree that social media is beneficial in this scenario. It should be pointed out, however, that there are alternatives to majority of the positive arguments that were presented in my personal research. While social media is relatively new, the desire to stay up to date on current events, fit in, and find distractions isn't, and people coped with desires for thousands of years.

Through making everything you share a contest to see if you're popular enough, hyping up the concept of body perfection, and teaching people to only communicate through a screen, social media can become unhealthy in the physical sense as well as the emotional sense. To conclude my research paper, I feel it's necessary to share a few more of the responses I received. A close friend of mine said that social media, "adds more stress to my life than happiness." How sad is it, that because of the societal expectation that we have to be a part of the social media world, we choose to cause ourselves grief and sorrow? In the name of what? One of the other responses referred to social media as a game, "social acceptance is the goal but will it be achieved? Probably not." It simply doesn't make sense, and isn't right that there is so much pressure to be involved in such a toxic practice as keeping social media accounts up to date on your every last move. During the process of gathering my research, and pondering on others research, I've become more determined than ever to learn how to control my social media. While I will not completely abandon the wild frontier of social media, I will start to pay attention to the things I see and hear. No longer will I follow accounts that make me question my self worth or make me long for things I don't need. I am going to choose to limit my social media use so I can focus on the beautiful things in life. I will choose to be happy, and social media will not stop me.

Works Cited will be available online when Boars Tusk is added to WWCC English webpage.

Elijah Carr

The Arrogant Gene

It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind...Three generations of imbeciles are enough. (U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., *Buck v. Bell*, 1927)

The decision of the U.S. Supreme Court and Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. in support of the forced sterilization of Carrie Buck reflects the opinions of many scientists, physicians, politicians, and writers of the early to mid twentieth century. Today, people denounce eugenics as an inhumane and immoral pseudoscience. While the practice of forced sterilization has been outlawed, eugenics is very much alive and prevalent in pregnancy screenings and abortions, and with the advent of genetic modification and genome editing, eugenics may soon be practiced with striking accuracy and efficiency, but one constant has remained: the arrogant belief that some lives are inherently more valuable than others.

Merriam-Webster defines eugenics as “the practice or advocacy of controlled selective breeding of human populations (as by sterilization) to improve the population's genetic composition.” The term “eugenics” was first coined by Francis Galton in 1883, but the academic concept of improving human population through selective breeding can be traced all the way back to Plato's *Republic*. David J Galton, a Professor in the Department of Metabolism and Genetics at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, wrote an excellent journal on ancient Greek eugenic theories. In Plato's *Republic*, the Athenian philosopher Plato lays out a form of constitution for an ideal society. In this work, Plato suggests that the ruling class of Athenians should take part in “judicious matings” in which members of similar natural abilities mate together, similarly to the process applied to the breeding of horses and dogs at the time (Galton). While Plato's visions of an “ideal” society were never put into action, many ancient civilizations practiced eugenics through infanticide. According to the Avalon Project at Yale Law School, In ancient Rome, it was dictated by the Twelve Tables, a set of written laws to be impartially enforced to all Roman citizens, under the section regarding paternal powers, that “A notably deformed child shall be killed immediately” (Yale). Many historians believe that infanticide through exposure was a common Roman practice, especially with regards to females and weaker children. With the rise of Christianity, eugenics faded from western culture, where infanticide was viewed as an egregious sin, and was only ever carried out in secret.

During the late nineteenth century, thanks to the work of Charles Darwin and growing understanding of genetics, eugenics once again became a popular concept among academic circles. While many may associate eugenics with the atrocities committed by the Nazi Germany during WWII, eugenics was initially popularized by American scientists, and was prevalent in both academic and legislative circles in Europe from the late nineteenth to mid twentieth century. Steven Arthur Farber, a staff scientist at Carnegie Institution for Science, thoroughly outlines the growth of the American eugenics movement and it's impact on policies in europe. Initially, Francis Galton proposed encouraging marriages between the fittest individuals through monetary incentives. Prominent individuals such as Alexander Graham Bell, Winston Churchill, and Woodrow Wilson only supported the notion that governments should promote the genetic welfare of society through incentivised mating but these early ideas laid the groundwork for practices such as forced sterilization, discrimination, and even genocide. Despite the positive intentions of some individuals, the eugenics movement was deeply connected with racism and a

desire to keep one's gene pool "pure." In the opening address of the 1923 Second International Congress of Eugenics, titled "Eugenics, Genetics, and the Family," the president of the American Museum of Natural History said, "In the matter of racial virtues, my opinion is that from biological principles there is little promise in the melting-pot theory. Put three races together (Caucasian, Mongolian, and the Negroid) you are likely to unite the vices of all three as the virtues" (qtd in Farber). This logic was used to justify wide-spread sterilization programs and legislative discrimination of interracial couples in the United States and other western countries. Lutz Kaelber, an Associate Professor of Sociology at University of Vermont, is the author of a thorough research project on the eugenics movement. According to Kaelber, by 1936, over 30 US states had passed compulsory sterilization programs and over 60,000 individuals of "inferior" genes had been forcibly sterilized. Academic support and the many U.S. eugenics laws passed in the first decades of the twentieth century gave credence to compulsory state sponsored eugenics and influenced much larger programs carried out by the National Socialist Party (Nazi's). By the end of WWII, the Nazi Party had forcibly sterilized over 350,000 people and killed approximately six million Jews (Kaelber).

From a modern perspective, it is easy to see the misguided and racist nature of the eugenics movement. Today, society denounces eugenics as an archaic pseudoscience and a dark part of history that will never be repeated. But the reality is that eugenics never truly died, and its practice brings up some very disconcerting ethical questions. Today rather than being coerced by government programs, biological parents willingly take part in the genetic engineering of future generations. Thanks to advancements in prenatal medicine and genetic screening, parents now have the choice to see whether or not their child will be born with genetic disorders, such as Down syndrome. In Denmark, over 95 percent of fetuses diagnosed with Down syndrome within the first trimester are terminated (Lou). As someone who has a brother with Down syndrome, I find this statistic quite disturbing.

My brother Eddie was born in Campeche, Mexico. When my mother traveled to adopt Eddie, she found an emaciated and neglected baby in an overcrowded orphanage. My brother would be considered a burden by many; he is unable to live without our support and suffers from multiple complications from his disability. Many parents in Denmark or other developed countries would have chosen to terminate Eddie within the first trimester upon learning of his disorder believing it to be the right thing to do. But I consider myself lucky to have such an amazing brother. Despite the challenges he faces in life, Eddie always seems to be the happiest person I know. He is incredibly caring and has a positive influence on everyone he meets. I find it quite disturbing that people like Eddie are considered less valuable by society, and that with the development of cheaper and more accurate genetic technology, people like Eddie may never be born again. I understand the desire to have a healthy "normal" child, but I'm not sure that it is our place to decide whether people with Down syndrome deserve to live. I believe, that without people like my brother, the world would become a much darker and duller place.

Frank Stephens, an actor born with high-functioning Down syndrome and an advocate for people with his disability made an incredibly compelling speech before the U.S. House of Representatives that best conveys what I am trying to say. I highly recommend watching a video of Stephens' speech because my paraphrasing can't do it justice. The main point that Frank wants the audience to take away from his speech is, "I am a man with Down syndrome and my life is worth living". Stephens feels compelled to make this point because thanks to Down syndrome pregnancy screenings many are beginning to believe that Down syndrome is no longer a genetic condition worth researching. Stephens goes on to state that in places such as Iceland, Denmark and South Korea, government officials have stated that through government encouraged terminations, they will become "Down syndrome free by 2030". Frank goes on to say, "I completely understand that the people pushing that particular "final solution" are saying

that people like me should not exist. They are saying that we have too little value to exist. That view is deeply prejudiced by an outdated idea of life with Down syndrome. Seriously, I have a great life.” Stephens then goes on to explain how having an extra chromosome makes people with Down syndrome a “blueprint for medical research that could reveal answers to cancer, Alzheimer’s, and Immune System disorders.” He then cites a Harvard study that found that people with Down syndrome, as well as their family are generally happier than society at large. He says, “I know happiness is not something you can assign dollars to, but surely it must be worth something.” The final argument that Frank Stephens makes in his speech, is that the screening and subsequent terminations of Down syndrome pregnancies are a sign of the direction society is heading with regards to genetic modification, saying, “Finally, we are the canary in the eugenics coal mine. Genomic research isn’t going to stop at screening for Down syndrome. It won’t be long before we can identify all manner of potentially expensive medical or personality ‘deviations’ in the womb. As a society, we have an opportunity to slow Down and think about the ethics of choosing which humans get a chance at life.”

As Stephens said, people with Down syndrome are the canary in the eugenics coal mine. With the development of more accurate and effective genome editing technology, it isn’t far fetched to imagine a world in which infants are no longer born with any genetic disorders. As someone who’s afflicted by a genetically inherited form of arthritis, I can see the appeal of a world without genetic disorders, but society may not stop at the removal of genetic disorders. With increasingly accurate gene mapping, it is imaginable that parents will begin engineering their children to have greater natural abilities, such as strength and intelligence. In America, there is already astonishing disparity between medical treatment available to the wealthy and the middle and lower class. With the rapid advancement of genetic technology, it’s not far fetched to expect to see wealthy children born with perfect health and natural abilities that are impossible to compete with without genetic enhancements. I’m not a religious person, but I truly can’t imagine a positive result from geneticists playing god like this.

Isaac Asimov once wrote, “The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.” The history of eugenics has proven multiple times that society does not possess the wisdom to wield such incredible power over the genetic destiny of future generations. While the practice eugenics has evolved since its conception, one thing has remained the same; the arrogant assumption that we have the wisdom to decide who deserves a chance at life simply based on their genetics.

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The Military Man

For some people the most formative time of their life is the time they spend in college. For me it was the four years I spent in the United States Marine Corps. During those four years, I was pushed further than I ever thought I could go. I spent sleepless nights in the California desert and hot, exhausting days in the jungles of Thailand. The most challenging of those experiences was my time in Basic Training. Basic Training is designed to mentally prepare recruits for the challenges that you will face once you enter the Fleet Marine Force. It only gets harder after boot camp, but the experiences you have there are designed to give you the tools to succeed once the recruits leave. When I think back on my time in Basic Training, I think about all the positives I took away from it. When I analyze it more closely, I can see that there was some damage done there as well. Boot camp changed me in a lot of ways, but not all of them for the better.

It started for me January of 2008. I was 20 years old, and I wanted a challenge. My local Marine recruiter was more than happy to oblige. He signed me up quicker than a used car salesman at “the sale of the century” that tends to come to every dealership every fiscal quarter or so. Before I knew it, I was on a plane bound for The Marine Corps Recruit Depot in sunny San Diego, California. Upon landing in San Diego, we were met at the USO by one of the many Drill Instructors whose main focus would be to make me as uncomfortable as possible for the next three months. At that time, the drill instructor told us that they will not ask anything. We will be told exactly what to do at every minute of every day. We will respond quickly, aggressively, and exactly to each order given. From there all the recruits are loaded on a bus and driven with our heads down to the Recruit Depot. As soon as we pulled up in front of the building, a red face Drill Instructor came crashing through the door. He was screaming, but in an unusual, hoarse way that I would go on to discover was the voice that nearly all of them had. They spend so much time yelling they speak as if they have a large wad of flem lodged at the top of their throat. I did exactly what I was told at all time. I sat cross legged for hours in the dark California night, waiting for my turn to go inside and be transformed. A transformation may not be the word for it though. It was more like I was a car being stripped down for painting. They removed the primer (my hair), and the coat of paint (my clothes). I was given three pairs of Marine issue utilities, three pairs of underwear, two pairs of green shorts, four pairs of socks, and a pair of boots. They made a point of telling us that there were no names on our uniforms. We would have to earn those.

The first month was a blur. The most significant thing I remember was the amount of time spent marching in formation; the heel of my boot sticking the hard pavement until blisters formed, then popped, then bled. Everywhere we went, we marched in four columns, our boots hitting the ground in lock step. If there was a break in activities for the day, we marched around the Depot until it was time for our next class or round of physical training. During recruit training I lost my name. I, like the rest of my platoon was “this recruit.” We had not earned our names yet, and we wouldn’t earn a name until the completion of our training. The first month is dedicated to learning how to be a Marine. The Drill Instructors teach you how to speak. Windows are now portholes, a bathroom is a head, trash can is a shit can, and your hands are now dick skimmers. We learned all the customs and courtesies associated with the Marine Corps, and we learned how to do everything from making our bed to putting on our clothes “The Marine Corps Way”. Military training always builds on itself. Everything we learned was preparing us for the next evolution.

Month two we headed “up North” to Camp Pendleton. We had now entered the weapons and field training portion of the course. Things got a lot more physical. We hiked with heavy packs for miles and miles. The bottoms of my feet, which had been soft and smooth at the start of training, were now thick and cracked, like leather that had been left outside and neglected too long. Every night was freezing cold because the Drill Instructors thought open windows and blowing fans would somehow prevent sickness. As a result, we all suffered through bouts of bronchitis and a particularly aggressive strain of Pink Eye. No recruit was spared. I learned how to shoot an M16, and I learned how to fight. We spent many hours learning how to navigate and survive outside of civilization. We were all starting to get tougher. Every day, you were pushed, and you kept going farther than you thought you could the day before. As a platoon, we were coming together. We relied on each other and learned that every man could carry the load for the other. At this point I was beginning to feel unbreakable. I’ve been through hell and I’m still here. What else you got?

Most of month three is spent being evaluated. You have final drill, which is a competition between platoons in the company. They want to see who can march the best in formation. We had our final uniform inspections, and our knowledge of the Marine Corps and First Aid were formally tested. The last week is the final test: The Crucible. The Crucible is the most important test of Recruit Training. There are no grades, you just have to make it through. Under no circumstances are you allowed to quit. It is three days of intense marching, tests of physical prowess, and mental acuity. Over the course of those three days, we marched close to 90 miles, all with our gear on our backs, stopping only to complete challenges along the way. We were given almost no sleep, and very little food to eat. The challenge culminated with a 15 mile walk up The Reaper. The Reaper was one of the steepest hills on base and was affectionately named for the number of heat casualties sustained on the march to the top. When we reached the end, the Drill Instructors that had been in our faces the last three months presented us with the coveted Eagle, Globe, and Anchor pin. This was a symbol of our acceptance into fold of the Marine Corps.

I came out of boot camp with an extreme amount of confidence, and the knowledge that the only limits I have are the ones in my mind. This way of thinking can tend to lead to a “suck it up” mentality. Any time I reach a challenge I just tell myself to suck it up and get through. It also made me fiercely independent. I became so accustomed to shouldering the load that it made it incredible hard for me to swallow my pride and ask for help if I needed it. I built a room in the back of mind for all my problems, and any time I have a negative feeling it gets shoved back in that room, and the door is slammed shut. When you’ve pushed through so many challenges, it can be easy to think that you can just push through everything. Just keep your head down and keep marching. Things will get better if you soldier on and keep your eye on the prize. Life is a lot more complicated than that. If you don’t take time to deal with your shit, it will pile up, and sooner or later you’ll end up shoveling on top of shit mountain.

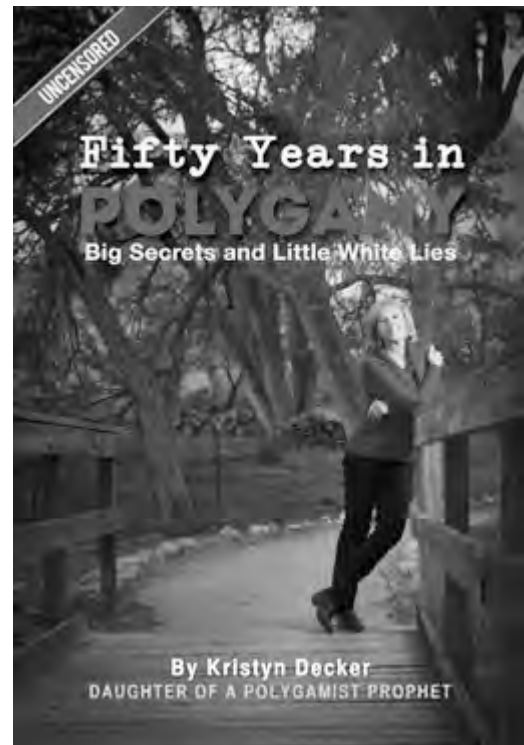
My time in the Marine Corps was valuable to me. I learned so much about myself, and ultimately, I became a more patient and self-aware individual. To say it was totally positive would be very short sighted. The ability to “suck it up” can be helpful at sometimes in life, but at other times it can be a cancer. By constantly keeping my eye on the prize, I’m left with tunnel vision. This harms my relationships and creates feelings of isolation and inadequacy when my goals aren’t met. I’ve learned that I’ll never be done working on myself. I now try to use my boot camp mentality strategically, instead of as an all-encompassing philosophy for life. I’m sure it will something I will continue to struggle with for a long time. The military helped mold me into a man, but I’ll always be working to take back some of the pieces they cut away.

Susan Allred--First Place, Nonfiction

A Sound Choice for Human Rights

In 2013, after the publication of her book, *Fifty Years in Polygamy: Big Secrets and Little White Lies*, Kristyn Decker was catapulted into the world of social activism (see photo below). “When I first wrote my book, it was cathartic. I didn’t even care if it got published. I was angry and I wanted the world to know about this life of bullshit!” Kristyn speaks firmly with determination in her voice. Once the book was published and she started promoting it, she was met with a deluge of former polygamous cult members wanting to tell her their sad and horrible stories. At this point, she decided that someone needed to help these people, so in 2015 she founded Sound Choices Coalition. Although Sound Choices Coalition stands in opposition to Utah’s pro polygamy advocates, it is imperative that they help change laws on polygamy, help victims of polygamy receive funding, and raise awareness of the human rights violations inherent within polygamy.

Kristyn was raised in a polygamous family. Her father had seven wives and forty children in several homes scattered throughout Salt Lake City. When Kristyn was 16, she married a man that eventually married one other woman. This relationship lasted for 33 years, and was mostly a struggle of poverty, jealousy, neglect, and frustration. None of her children have chosen to live polygamously, but she feels that growing up in that type of a household limited their ability to know what is truly right from wrong, what is abuse and what is not abuse. “They’re missing the concept of what human rights are,” she sadly points out.



Kristyn sits at her desk organizing paperwork and fiddling with her gadgets as we talk. She is slender at 5’ 6” tall, with soft blond hair, sparkly blue eyes, and looks much younger than her 66 years. I reflect on the length and endurance of my 35-year friendship with Kristyn. She has always had a preternatural way of sensing when someone isn’t being honest with themselves, and she’ll calmly and patiently call them out on it. This has inadvertently caused many of her relationships with family and friends to end. Kristyn speaks openly about these relationships, how they feel about Sound Choices Coalition and the opposition she faces. It visibly saddens her, and tears start to fill her eyes. Quickly switching gears, she resolutely states, “Major opposition! People in Utah want to shut their eyes and pretend it doesn’t happen. They don’t know what to do with it. It’s part of their Mormon doctrine, so it’s a conundrum in their minds.”

In July of 1843, the leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Joseph Smith, informed his followers that they were to practice polygamy. In 1852, Utah was trying to gain statehood, but Washington considered the practice of polygamy barbaric and would not grant it. By the end of the 1880’s, the Mormon church presidency had curtailed the practice

of polygamy in order to gain statehood. The 1852 revelation in The Doctrine and Covenants is famously called “section 132” by fundamentalist Mormons and is the germination point of their deeply held beliefs. Unlike the mainstream Mormon church, they do not believe that polygamy was ever supposed to be reduced in practice (Smith). Kristyn feels that this difference is where the religion becomes a coercive and dangerous cult, and why Sound Choices Coalition is active in helping inform laws on polygamy.

Reversing House Bill 99

Kristyn believes that a Utah Judge’s decision to decriminalize polygamy in December of 2013 ensured that Utah could continue to ignore polygamous cults and their practices. “It makes it even easier if it’s decriminalized. Abuses go on, people won’t report just because it’s decriminalized. It was decriminalized for two years and still no one reported abuse. They’re trained to protect polygamy at any cost, literally,” she states, her voice rising. On July 13th, 2011 Kody Brown of the TLC series *Sister Wives*, challenged Utah’s laws on polygamy. On December 13, 2013 the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that “A U.S. District Court judge has sided with the polygamous Brown family, ruling that key parts of Utah’s polygamy laws are unconstitutional” (Dalrymple). Federal lawmakers were not happy with the Judge’s decision, so they took it to the 10th Circuit Court (Bonner). In that time, which was about a year according to Kristyn, Sound Choices Coalition had an opportunity to gather hundreds and hundreds of amicus briefs. “Amicus briefs,” Kristyn explains, “are our stories.” Amicus briefs are documents presented to the court by non-litigants. They offer more information about the case for the court to consider. The hundreds of amicus briefs that the coalition turned in had the desired effect, and the 10th Circuit Court overturned the Judge’s decision re-criminalizing polygamy (Carlisle). Kristyn and the Sound Choices Coalition were incredibly relieved and happy with the reversal.

Initiating House Bill 214

Many people that are trying to leave polygamy are ill equipped to do so. They lack money, education, and the self-esteem to sustain themselves while they integrate into the common culture. Quite often they will return to the polygamous cultures they left out of frustration and desperation. Recognizing this problem, Sound Choices Coalition director, Angela Kelly, initiated a bill to Utah’s House Committee that would let anyone leaving polygamy get assistance from the Victims of Crime funding. It was approved unanimously by all 75 members of the House Committee. Angela Kelly stated, “I don’t know if anyone realizes this but no one in Utah has reported on victims of polygamy until this bill. No one has talked about the hundreds of thousands who have left as victims of polygamy. It’s incredible now that this bill has passed the House and the Senate and I’m so grateful” (“Utah”). Kristyn is beaming as she relays this information to me, “We helped push that through and it passed with flying colors!” Her pride of what the coalition stands for and what they have been able to accomplish in such a short time is apparent.

Raising Awareness

Kristyn feels that Canada’s ruling to outlaw polygamy was fair and just. The decision came after a two-year global study to determine if polygamy was harmful to society. The study found that cultures that allow polygamy have lower life expectancies, education, and marriage ages. Along with higher rates of sex trafficking, domestic violence, maternal mortality, and less legal protection for women and girls (Alberty). “Polygamy will probably never be legal in the U.S.,” Kristyn asserts, “There are too many problems with legalizing.” She encourages me to read Craig Jones’ book, *A Cruel Arithmetic*. Jones was lead counsel for the Attorney General of British Columbia during the case that determined if polygamy would be legal or illegal in Canada. “This book explains in a nutshell why Canada, the most liberal country, voted it to

remain illegal,” she says, nodding her head.

Advocating for Freedom

Kristyn has worked tirelessly to assuage the discouragement she faces watching so many polygamous cult members vacillate between staying in the cult and leaving. “For me, like most who’ve been raised in the fundamentalist cult system, the process of leaving was and is long, arduous, exciting and terrifying – at least getting to the point of feeling completely free – mind, body and soul,” she attests, placing her hands over her heart. “As I began to own my genuine freedom and happiness, believers who tried to bully and shun me no longer had power over my emotional well-being. This was especially rewarding as I became an outspoken advocate for those who had escaped or were leaving. I knew my power was in teaching and helping others find theirs,” she declared. Kristyn has seriously considered ending her time with Sound Choices Coalition so that she can spend more time with her eight children, 24 grandchildren, and five great grandchildren, but the call of advocacy, awareness, and education, along with the desire to witness personal power emerge from former cult members is keeping her motivated to continue. Keeping her sound in her choice for human rights.

Works Cited will be available online when Boars Tusk is added to WWCC English webpage.

Susan Allred

Bewildered to Brilliant

In the 36 years since I graduated from high school, I have continued my education by: raising five children (which forces you to learn whether you like it or not), running a household, and working outside the home. You would think that all these things combined would give me the self-esteem and self-assuredness to easily breeze through college classes. But going to college for the first time is like being awakened from a sleepy sabbatical and has forced me to look at life and learn in a different way. For non-traditional female students the logistics of family responsibilities, work scheduling, and tuition affordability, are not the only concerns. Returning to school can be deeply and profoundly confusing; college courses can dredge up fears of failure, vulnerability, and weakness. These reasons could be contributing to the fact that nationally 29% of non-traditional female students drop out after the first year (Chen et al. 8). However, success can be realized by creating a morning routine, adopting a “growth” mindset, and trusting what has been hiding in your voice.

Morning Routine

Creating a morning routine can help develop stick-to-it-iveness. After the birth of my first child, I was experiencing post-partum depression and was having a hard time getting into a functional routine and feeling good about myself. I worked with a woman that was successfully going to school part-time, working part-time, and raising five children. She explained to me that being prepared for the day was what contributed to her success. Every morning, including weekends, she woke up, got dressed, did her hair and make-up, and put her shoes on before anyone else in the house stirred. But...she had some specific caveats to her routine: 1) no ripped, torn, dirty, stained, ill-fitting or shoddy looking clothing, 2) no sloppy buns or sloppy hairstyles allowed, 3) if shoes were not donned first thing, they must be at the ready. At first, I thought her methods were too stringent and stuffy, and as a young family just starting out, I wasn't sure that I could afford to wear anything other than baggy sweats and my husband's cast-off t-shirts. However, growing up with a mother that could never find her shoes, mad dashed to get ready for every event, and did her hair en route to anywhere, I had the desire to learn a different way of being. I squeezed some money out of our meager budget, purchased some clothes second-hand, and put my friend's plan to the test. Her method worked! Being ready for the day helped me face whatever challenges came my way – even if the challenge was cleaning up after five dirty, sticky, smelly kids. My morning routine gives me a sense of accomplishment and is so ingrained, that there have only been a handful of days in 34 years that I have not followed through due to illness. Familiar, self-respecting routines can be the starting point that leads to long-term success and encourages a mind that is eager to learn.

Mindset

Being open to new challenges and information, including criticism, can ensure long term success in college. In an article in *New Scientist*, Peter Aldhous interviews Carol Dweck about her ideas on a “fixed” mindset versus a “growth” mindset (3). Dweck, a psychologist and author of *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, states that: People with a fixed mindset believe their basic abilities are carved in stone, so they are concerned about making their abilities look good. Those with a growth mindset believe their abilities can be cultivated through dedication and education. They are more concerned with stretching themselves (3).

Dweck continues, adding that a person with a “growth” mindset understands that accepting criticism is a way to improve and refine abilities (Aldhous 6). Welcoming criticism has been awkward and has taken courage for me to not automatically think, “I am too stupid; I do not understand what you are talking about, or I cannot do this.” I have had to challenge myself to appreciate the criticism and find a way to use it to my advantage. For instance, one bit of criticism I received on an essay from a fellow student seemed lack-luster and unhelpful. Once I removed my judgement and paid attention to what was being conveyed, I was able to make the necessary revisions. I received a better grade on the essay because I chose to use the criticism to improve my skills. Understanding that criticism is a tool for a “growth” mindset can encourage trust in the capacity to communicate without reservation.

Trust

Trusting what has been hiding in your voice can move you toward more intelligent ideas and build confidence. Many non-traditional female students have had many years of experience to gather insight but lack the ability to formulate and articulate the wisdom academically. Claudia Limbert, Campus Executive Officer at Penn State University, writes in *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, “In this classroom, there are no wrong answers. Say what you are thinking. Even if it is not exactly on target, it may serve as a springboard for some really solid discussion” (par 33). Limbert asserts that mentoring non-traditional female students, offering help with study skills, personal goals, and stress management will give them the confidence needed to speak authentically, and complete courses successfully. This was the case with Lindsey Travis, a non-traditional student who earned her master’s degree in library science while raising two young children and working full time. Travis is now co-director of the Sweetwater County Library System and manages two library branches. She chuckled as she told me, “I was in graduate school before a professor explained to me that I needed to ‘put it in my own words.’ Once I figured that out and trusted what was already there, it was much easier to write a paper” (Travis). Allowing your voice to flourish and grow can contribute to all of academia.

Worth It

To conclude, attending school as a non-traditional female student may feel as if you have returned from a long sabbatical and are stumbling around confused. As thoroughly unsettling as it can be in one respect, it can be wholly reassuring in another. When my friend Bernie Weiss returned to school in 1996 to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, she recalled that, “At times I felt overwhelmed by all the work and questioned if I wanted to go on.” Over time she adjusted to her course load and developed a routine, doing the bulk of her homework once her children were asleep. The benefit was apparent as she gleefully tells me, “It was worth it! I fulfilled a lifelong dream to get my BA degree and teach elementary school” (Weiss). In my experience, establishing consistent and self-respecting routines, developing a “growth” mindset (which includes embracing criticism), and trusting your thoughts and how you articulate them, can be the difference between a great experience and good grades, and a mediocre experience and average grades. These accomplishments can take you from abundantly bewildered to brilliantly awake.

Works Cited will be available online when Boars Tusk is added to WWCC English webpage.

Terri Thomas

Learning to Drive and Birds

“Terri! Terri! Time to wake up! It’s 3:30. We need to get going if we are going to get there before sunup.” It was my Dad. Oh, yes! It’s time to go!

I jumped out of bed and threw on my clothes, I was excited. I was going to drive today. I grabbed a piece of bread for breakfast and Dad and I got into our brown ’69 Chevy station wagon. We already had our lunch and drinks packed.

It was totally dark outside as the two-and-a-half-hour journey started.

We had almost made it to the west entrance of Yellowstone Park when we turned left, heading west. The sky was just starting to lighten. We drove another 20 minutes and Dad stopped the car.

He showed me how to use the blinker and the brake. How to set the mirrors, how to shift into reverse and low and drive and neutral and what the purpose is for each one. He demonstrated how to use the windshield wipers and how to move the seat up.

In Idaho you could get your driver’s license at 14. I was ready! He had taken me out just a couple of other times for very short experiences but this as going to be for a whole day.

My other instructions were to keep an eye on the odometer and have a watch in my hand. I was to drive for half a mile, stop and turn off the car. Then time for 3 minutes, drive a half a mile, stop the car and time again. We were to do that for about 30 miles. After I was situated and with all the windows down, Dad got out of the car with his binoculars and notepad and sat on the hood on the passenger side. He waved to me to let me know it was time to start.

I cautiously started forward. One eye on the odometer, one eye on dad.

It was time for the annual Audubon society bird count on the Red Rock Lakes bird refuge in Idaho. My Dad was one of many to help with that count and today I was able to help as well. It was almost a rite of passage to be able to participate on this count with him.

His job was to list ALL the birds he could both see and hear. He had prepared for this. My sister remembers him lying in his bed, for hours, in a dark room, listening to a recording of bird calls and their identification preparing for the bird counts he participated in.

The country was varied with groves of the deep green of pines and the lighter green of aspens. We drove through wide open meadows and back into thick forest. We drove past the beaches and marshes of lakes. There were blue mountain peaks all around us with small white caps of snow, signaling the start of summer.

Through such a variety of habitat there were shore birds, water birds, birds in the sky and birds in the tops of the trees, some landing on the trunks. Each with different beaks and feet and color patterns. Each with a different call. Then there were all the varieties of one species. Mature, immature, female and male! My Dad knew them all.

I kept driving and timing until he signaled it was time for lunch. I was ready for a break. I had been trying to miss potholes and stay on the road and not let bushes knock Dad off the front of the car. I had been successful! I did miss a few of those 3-minute stops because I too was looking at the birds and trying to identify them. Of course, I couldn't catch all that he could. The whole day I had heard this terrible racket!

"Dad, what is making that awful sound?"

"You mean that rusty pump sound?"

"Yes!"

"That is a bittern!" Dad replied. "Look it up!" I opened the book beside me and found a picture of the brown and white 12-inch bird. I studied its beak and long legs and coloring, trying to commit it to memory.

All my life I would ask Dad what bird is that? Whether it was a bird song or a bird way up in the sky, he could identify it. Many family outings were to the forest and lakes with binoculars in hand ready for all 10 of us to be together and enjoy the world of birds.

What began as a driving lesson turned into a lifelong enjoyment of nature and the other world of birds.

Continued Recovery: An Alcoholic's Journey

Drinking has been a part of my life as long as I can remember. It has been engrained in me and invaded every aspect of my life. It has been both my best friend and worst enemy. Alcoholism isn't a new idea, but is almost accepted in today's society. I can't watch television, listen to the radio, or even drive down the street without being reminded how great alcohol is. Everyday after work I drive down the access road leaving Jim Bridger Power Plant, when I come to the stop sign at the end of the road and see the huge billboard with a picture of the power plant and a bottle of Budweiser with the new slogan, "This Buds for a better tomorrow." A better tomorrow isn't what I think about when I drink Budweiser, it's usually a hungover tomorrow for me. Don't get me wrong, there are probably more people than not, who can drink alcohol without the destructive impact that I have had to deal with for the last 20 years. Many people can drink alcohol and not overindulge, or become physically dependent on it. Almost every single person in my life drinks alcohol, and the majority of them do it without suffering severe consequences. These are the people I have grown envious of in my new life of recovery. It took an unbelievable amount of trouble legally, mentally, and physically, for me to come to terms with the fact that I am powerless over alcohol and will never be able to consume even a single drink, if I want to have the life I have been working so hard for. My alcoholism has been a constant battle I wasn't ready to face, but in my new life of recovery, I have found joy that I never knew existed.

In order to understand my alcoholism, I have to go back to when I first started drinking, so I can discover the root of why alcohol took hold of me. As a teenager, I was shy and often felt unsure of myself. I was unable to express myself the way I wanted to, and although I had much to say, I couldn't bring myself to spit out the words resting on the tip of my tongue. I can vividly recall the first time I felt the effects of my new best friend. It was euphoria! My stomach was warm and tingly, my head seemed to grow lighter, and all my timidness, self-consciousness, and insecurities seemed to just fade away into the background. I became the person I wanted to be. I was able to say what was on my mind, I was funny, and most of all, I didn't care what others thought of me. I could be at a house party, walk right up to that girl I liked, and spout off a joke like, "What do you call a fly with no wings? A walk." She'd laugh and I'd get that feeling of being comfortable in my own skin. When something does this for you, especially when you're a young awkward teenager trying to find themselves, then it's like finding a miracle drug. There was only one problem with this. I couldn't just walk around drunk all the time, being charming and outgoing. No, as soon as I woke up the next day, I was transformed back into my unsure self. Actually it was worse, because now I was hungover and my self-awareness came back. I would remember all the crazy shit I did and said, but because I wasn't drunk anymore, I felt the embarrassment of my actions. I would feel guilty, ashamed, and just plain stupid. Luckily for me, most of the other teenagers were as drunk as me, so nothing really stood out and I would be able to continue with my life. I had found a way to fit in with my peers, and that way was to drink.

By the time I was out of high school and beginning my young adulthood, alcohol had taken over. I had already become a daily drinker and drank almost every chance I got. The awkwardness of my teenage years seemed to fade, and I had this counterfeit sense of confidence that only the booze could give me. I didn't have any aspirations, except to party and chase girls. This was what drove my life. I can't lie... I had a lot of fun during this time. I maintained a job, but it was only so I had enough money to support my compulsive lifestyle. If I felt like doing

something, I just did it, without fear of consequences. I would take off in the middle of the day to go to a concert, or to just get out of town to party. I would spend every cent I had. I didn't care because I figured I could just earn more the next week. I lived for the moment and never gave my future a second thought. Retirement, career, security? These words had no place in my vocabulary. These were things that normal people with boring lives, without real substance worried about. My life was to party and party I did. Viva Las Vegas!

After years of living this way, my life began to suffer those consequences I was so unconcerned with. My legal issues began to catch up with me and I was having to finally deal with them. I received several Driving Under the Influence, which resulted in jailtime, loss of my license, and thousands of dollars in fines and legal fees. None of this was able to convince me that maybe alcohol wasn't as good as I had convinced myself it was. I had placed drinking on a pedestal and was unwavering in my pursuit of my next drunk. My legal issues weren't the only negative effects of my drinking. I lost relationships, jobs, and worst of all, my determination. Even after school, I knew no matter what, I was going to build myself my dream truck. An all-black 1977 Chevrolet Silverado, with a six inch lift and thirty six inch Super Swamps, but even this dream faded because doing this would cut into my drinking money. I had lived my life only to drink for so long, that when I finally got to the point where I finally realized I might be an alcoholic, I was too frightened to admit it because that meant I was weak and that I would have to give up my only true friend -- alcohol. My life had gotten unmanageable and lost any real meaning.

My disease was winning and I was suffering the repercussions of it. If I didn't take actions toward repairing the damage I had sustained, then I was going to die. After a prison sentence, going through a treatment program, and two suicide attempts, I broke down and looked at myself in the mirror for the first time in years. I was so demoralized and beat down that I couldn't recognize the person staring back at me. It was the physical appearance that I didn't recognize, it was the sadness in my eyes, the loss of hope, and want to live that I could see, that had never been there before. I had this void in my stomach and it felt like my insides had been pushed to the side and replaced by a black hole that consumed everything it came in contact with. I knew it was time to do whatever it took to take back control of my life (If I ever had any control of it). I did take this first step and admitted to myself that I was powerless over alcohol. I began to attend Alcoholics Anonymous, I continued with my therapist from treatment, and I focused on working towards a positive life. Doing all of this has not been easy. I made goals for myself and followed through with them. I've spent more days in jail than I can count, and during many of these days, I had made hollow promises to myself about getting back on track and finding something worth pursuing.

One of these hollow promises had always been to go back to school. I had always felt shame about not graduating from High School and often had dreams where I couldn't find my locker and would wander down an endless hall of classrooms that never ended. I know that it was one of the few things I truly beat myself up over. I could only think of one way to fill that void in myself, and that would be to enroll into college. This is one of the three things I knew I had to do in order to regain that control I so often dreamed of. So this is exactly what I did, along with the other two things, which were getting myself out of debt, building my credit back up, and of course... not drinking! Not one of these three things have been easy, but the hardest and most important one, has been the one that keeps dragging me back into those dark places I fought so hard to shine light on. I have relapsed several times in the last year and each relapse has taken a massive toll on me. It seems so crazy to me, that I would risk literally everything, including my life, just to have a few drinks. Of course, a few drinks always turns into a three day bender with mind altering chaos that has nearly brought me back to the brink of death.

My life has improved drastically since choosing a life of recovery. I am enrolled in school

and pursuing a degree in English. I have gotten myself out of debt and maintained employment with an excellent company that takes good care of me. I bought my dream truck and am searching for a house to buy. I have found positive people to spend my time with, who actually motivate me and have positive experiences that I can reflect on. I continue to see my therapist and talk through my emotions and crazy thinking, instead of burying them in a mountain of bottles. I have found joy without alcohol. Everything that I have today, is a direct result of me choosing to fight for my life and not let my worst enemy – alcohol, control my every step.

**2019
English
Department
Essay
Contest
Winner**

Kyla A. Ditges

Honky-Tonk Religion: An Exploration of *The Worldly Chapel*

Our quaint little town in the middle of this frigid desert has a shadowy history that few outsiders would guess and fewer locals willingly claim. But Daryl Newton tries to change that. Working for the Sweetwater County Museum, Newton brings the unique history of our little city to life – and he doesn't shy away from the dark and tragic. Newton depicts the Chinese massacre and the crime-wave of the booms as carefully as he recreates historical cave paintings and temples. As Newton says, these painting are “historic document[s] on social problems and controversial subjects . . . wherein a person, community, or society may see the truth in themselves presented in a crafty way rather than a direct, offensive one” (Krza). His most notable and controversial painting, *The Worldly Chapel*, does just that: it uses expert skill to show a dark moment in Rock Springs' history that demands preservation in all its unflattering glory.

From the gold boom that instigated the Chinese massacre and brought Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid to fame (Blewer), to the coal boom that instigated the crime in the 70's, to now, Rock Springs has earned it's reputation as the living Wild West (Propst). It's this spirit that Newton tried to capture in *The Worldly Chapel*. According to Newton, the bar scene portrays a typical night in Rock Springs, with men coming out of the mines and the oil-fields to spend their hard-earned money on “every decadence imaginable” (Newton, Personal interview). The composition of the painting moves the eye through vignette after vignette of decadence: prostitution, gambling, drinking, adultery, and brawling – just to name a few – emphasizing the magnitude of decadence available.



The Worldly Chapel by Daryl Newton

The Worldly Chapel is more than just a mass of detailed depictions of self-indulgence, though. Like Rock Springs itself, it celebrates diversity, evident in the prevalence of gods from religions across space and time. The diversity of these religions is also a nod to Newton's background as an archeologist and general student of history, who spent 18 years working on digs across the globe. Many of his works depict this stage in his life, showing true to life depictions of different religious practices, including South American temples. *The Worldly Chapel*, however, brings these religions together and shows their lack of ability to contain the waywardness of the human soul.

Newton's use of surrealism in *The Worldly Chapel* emphasizes this unconstrained waywardness. Surrealism has always served a unique purpose in the artistic universe. It allows artists to comment on the unspeakable by masking it in the pretend; Maus by Arthur Spiegelman uses this philosophy to present the horrors of the Holocaust through comics, making them easier to examine. In the same way, though with a resoundingly less vital subject matter, Newton uses oil on canvas in *The Worldly Chapel* to showcase the debauchery

of Rock Springs, Wyoming in its boom days (Newton, Personal interview). His distorted proportions and exaggerated human forms, especially in the people fornicating under the pool table (Figure 1), bring a cartoonish characteristic to the painting, which is furthered by the deep saturation and wide variety of value in the colors. This style allows Newton to showcase the sex, drugs, and corruption that plagued Rock Springs in the boom era. According to Newton, *The Worldly Chapel*



Figure 1

"brings these issues to light so that they can start to heal." But, where a more realistic style would have offended people, surrealism allows him to illuminate these problems in a way that allows people to hide their offended pride behind the cartoony feel of the painting.

Surrealism serves another purpose in *The Worldly Chapel*: it creates a connection between itself and stereotypical religious paintings of the Renaissance. According to Newton, surrealism has been a facet of religious art for centuries and using it in *The Worldly Chapel* ensures that the world of the painting evokes religious connections in the viewer. That idea juxtaposed with the decidedly non-religious scenes in the painting alludes to the hypocrisy of religion that Newton address throughout the painting.

Contrarily, Newton's style creates a distance from his own previous religious works. Newton uses oil on canvas to create precise vignettes in minute detail in *The Worldly Chapel*. Much of his work depicting religious scenes from his archeology days, however, is done with mounded oil: the paint is thick, creating texture on the canvas that almost suggests sculpture as well as painting. But *The Worldly Chapel* suspiciously lacks this element. According to Newton, the piling of paint makes the minute details in *The Worldly Chapel* impossible. That minute detail is essential to the painting: it lends an air of realism to *The Worldly Chapel* that contrasts with the general style of surrealism, paradoxically emphasizing the reality of the vices – and the lurking catacombs – in the cartoonish atmosphere of the painting.

This paradoxical emphasis on detail also gives *The Worldly Chapel*'s characters the realistic feel of a photograph while simultaneously making the painting more accessible than photography would allow. For example, every face in *The Worldly Chapel* is well lit and in focus (Figure 2); there are no deep shadows obscuring the detailed expressions. But, as Newton points out, there should be. The



Figure 2



Figure 3

average viewer probably doesn't notice, because it's done so cleverly, but the light sources in the painting (mainly the overhead light and the lit stage) should have created deep shadows on almost all of the people (Figure 3). However, Newton chose to present each face in full relief. The use of oil on canvas instead of a more realistic medium like photography makes this possible. It also allows the viewer to see the fine details of the faces and connect with the characters and the setting.

Light in general also plays a huge part in the overall composition of *The Worldly Chapel*, adding variety to the different regions and creating movement between them. The archangel stripper on the stage is the lightest part of the painting and draws the attention first. The stripper- angel becomes the first focus of the painting, immediately creating an air of judgement, suggesting the sins apparent in the decadence that is displayed. The eye

is then drawn in a circle around the central pool table, bringing all the different sins into focus. It's only after long perusal that the eye drifts back to the darker regions of the painting: to the pews in the top right and finally to the catacombs in the eleventh hour of the painting (Figure 4). As the last thing the eye sees, the catacombs make Newton's point clear: the indulgent sins of the party lead irrevocably to the finality of death.



Figure 4



Figure 5

Line is also important in understanding *The Worldly Chapel*. The axis lines of the vertical posts and the horizontal ceiling beams center the eye on the pool table, keeping it focused on the decadence taking place there. It also keeps the eye away from the catacombs, subtly suggesting the naiveté of the revelers who don't see their own looming end. The line of the bar and the open space of the backroom (almost the only open space in the painting) eventually draws the eye to that region (Figure 5), suggesting the unstoppable escalation of the revelry in the center.

The details also help expose the problems that Newton wanted to showcase in *The Worldly Chapel*. One of Newton's main focuses was the corruption of religion, and allusions to this theme appear throughout the painting. The most noticeable is the stripper painted with the sword of Gabriel, the Arch Angel (Figure 3). The juxtaposition of angel and stripper make an undeniable point of religious corruption. The stained-glass windows on the left provide another example (Figure 6). These windows look church-like, but instead of saints, they show a miner with money to burn and a woman offering alcohol. This contrast highlights the transformation of religion from the religious

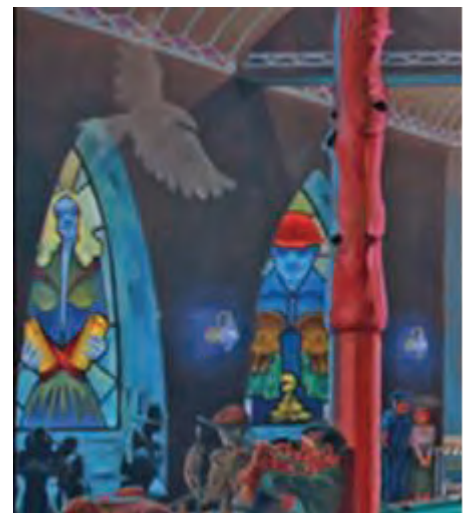


Figure 6

to the worldly debauchery of drugs and money. This conflict is also present in the halos that some of the figures in *The Worldly Chapel* have (Figure 7). According to Newton, these halos mark the prostitutes in the painting, who offer a type of holy redemption to their customers. The juxtaposition of holy symbols with this worldly profession again shows the hypocrisy of religion that Newton showcased throughout *The Worldly Chapel*.



Figure 7

Newton also shows the corruption of religion with the women clad in latex standing guard over the backroom (below). According to Newton, these “are S and M women” and they are meant to allude to a time when priests punished themselves for their sins, with everything from whips to hair shirts. The sexualization of that punishment, though, highlights the



corruption of religion with worldly self-indulgence. According to Newton, people went to church and the bars to “deal with that ‘thing’ and find relief.” By highlighting corrupted religion, Newton showcases the connection between the bars and church, and the resulting corruption of religion, in a beautifully cynical way.

One of the best examples of corrupted religion in *The Worldly Chapel*, though, is the priest under the table (Figure 2). Not only does this vignette represent the corruption of religion in the breaking of vows and the sordidness of a priest having sex under a pool table, it also represents the corruption of the bystanders who passively encourage the act; the miniature people to the right of the pool table are actually watching the priest (Figure 9). Newton also points out that the Quaker (the man in the black suit and the hat) is taking offerings, which suggests that the act under the pool table has become a sermon of sorts (Newton, Personal interview). This showcases both the corruption of religion present in Rock Springs at the time and also suggests that self-indulgence itself has become the religion.



Figure 9



Figure 10

Not all of details of *The Worldly Chapel* point to vague ideas of corruption, though. Several of the figures in the painting actually refer to specific people at the time. The most notable is the man at the bar holding a beer with a viper rising out of it (Figure 10). Newton says that this is his brother, who died in a drunk driving accident. The viper rising out of the beer can and coiling to strike blends with the theme of the harm of unchecked decadence; it becomes a vivid commentary against the rampant alcoholism of the time.

Michael Rosa, the deputy that was famously shot by the corrupt sheriff Ed Cantrell, also makes an appearance in the bottom right (Newton, Personal interview. figure 11). His presence there highlights the rampant police corruption in Rock Springs at the time. Newton has also said he intends to build this allusion by adding Ed Cantrell to the painting, watching Rosa. This addition will increase the dominance of the theme of police corruption.



Figure 11



Figure 12

As one might expect, *The Worldly Chapel's* allusion to infamous events and the general corruption of the time has created controversy, but it has also inspired many people. Newton says, “it’s about a[n] 85/15 divide” between people who like that it shows these problems and people who hate it. But controversy is often the way to creation, as evidenced in Sweetwater 70’s, a dance created by Rebecca Mayer, WWCC’s dance director, and inspired by *The Worldly Chapel*. Sweetwater 70’s appropriates set design, costuming, and drama to create a living reenactment of *The Worldly Chapel* (Figure 12). According to Mayer, she “wanted to show Rock Springs and what it was about.” Her interpretation of Newton’s painting brings the several of the characters to life, adding a layer of humanity to the painting. The subject matter differs slightly from Newton’s focus in the painting, though. The laid-back form suggests an exploration of the

relationships between the characters more than the corruption present in the scene. Mayer also points out that the dance focused on engaging her dancers. Mayer says many of the steps were created by the dancers themselves, as they lost themselves in the characters of the painting. The last scene, specifically,



highlights this more humanized conceptualization, showing characters connecting and disconnecting as the bar is bathed in light and people leave (as shown above). This forgiving interpretation was a huge success; Mayer says the dance earned a warm reception from the community. Though the most controversial scenes of the painting were not represented in the dance, Mayer still says she was surprised by the almost total lack of controversy. But the focus on relationship and connection may well have been responsible for this. Or perhaps, forty years later, the community is finally accepting the reality of the boom days.

Daryl Newton's *Worldly Chapel* fearlessly presents the social corruption that persisted in Rock Springs during the days of its first boom. But, like all spotlights that illuminate social issues in a community, *The Worldly Chapel* sparked outrage. Perhaps the most famous incident is the one that inspired the painting's alternate title: *The Painting That Should Have Been Burned*. The librarian who inspired that title was so offended by *The Worldly Chapel* that she exclaimed "it should have been burned" (Newton, Personal interview). Newton, certainly, has never shied away from controversy, and *The Worldly Chapel* is no stranger to it either. But that controversy is an attempt to heal wounds from the past, and the warming reception to the painting is hopefully an indication that the community is becoming more willing to discuss them.



Daryl Newton and *The Worldly Chapel*

WWCC Visiting Writers Fall 2020

October 5, 2020

Silas House, an award winning writer of six novels, including *Southernmost* in 2018, creative nonfiction, and plays. He's a frequent contributor to the *New York Times* and is former commentator on NPR's *All Things Considered*. Currently, he's on fiction faculty at the Spalding MFA in Creative Writing and the NEH Chair at Berea College. He will give both a workshop and a reading.

Here's some praise for *Southernmost*:

Long-listed for the Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction, winner of the 2019 Weatherford Award for Fiction, and One of the American Library Association's Ten Choices for Best Book Group Books of 2018.

"[A]n urgent and beautifully written literary thriller about a man on the run that explores themes like the pain of atonement and the necessity of reconciliation, being published at a time when understanding across cultural and political divides seems wider than ever." *Salon.com*

September, 2020

Robert Sullivan, is the author of *Rats*, *The Meadowlands*, *A Whale Hunt*, *My American Revolution*, and most recently, *The Thoreau You Don't Know*. His writing has appeared in *The New Yorker*, and *Vogue* where he is a contributing editor. He'll give a workshop and reading. and **Suzanne Sullivan**, a talented ceramicist and literary textile artist, will give an exhibition and art workshop.

In praise of *My American Revolution*:

"Historically fascinating and deeply personal." — *The New Yorker*

"A delightful and quirky history lesson." — *USA Today*

In praise of *The Thoreau You Don't Know*:

"It's time to pack the old Thoreau — austere, high-minded, solitary — in mothballs and break out the new. This new model, as advertised by Robert Sullivan in "The Thoreau You Don't Know," is a wisecracking, subversive, entrepreneurial party boy, as likely to dance a jig and break into song as preach at you, a man who heads into Concord not just to do laundry at Mom's, but to attend dinner parties where he plays his flute before heading back late at night to his cabin." *NYTimes*

Fall 2020/Spring 2021

WWCC Creative Writing and Literature Offerings

If you're interested in developing your own creative writing skills or reading more great literature, please consider these classes next year:

Fall 2020

ENGL 2250 Women in Literature (Online)
 ENGL 2310 American Literature I (Online)
 ENGL 2040 Introduction to Creative Writing
 ENGL 2065 Memoir Writing
 ENGL 2091 Publishing Your Work

Spring 2021

ENGL 2320 American Literature II (Online)
 ENGL 2019 Writing Studies
 ENGL 2340 Native American Literature
 ENGL 2100 Creative Writing: Literary Journal Production
 ENGL 2050 Creative Writing: Fiction

Creative Writing Certificate

Earn a Creative Writing Certificate

Purpose: The Creative Writing certificate is a 10-credit program for students to experience a range of creative writing genres, develop and improve as a writer with the goal of becoming professional, and feel confident in transferring to a university-level creative writing program. Through workshop methodology, studying professional writers, and doing exercises, poems, and crafting stories, and creative non-fiction essays, students will become well-rounded writers and readers of literature.

Required (1 credit)

Course	Credits
ENGL 2091 Creative Writing: Publishing Your Work	1
OR ENGL 2100 Publications Production	1

Subtotal 1

Choose any three (9 credits)

ENGL 2040 Creative Writing	3
ENGL 2050 Creative Writing: Fiction I	3
ENGL 2051 Creative Writing: Fiction II	3
ENGL 2064 Creative Writing: Journaling	3
ENGL 2065 Creative Writing: Memoir Writing	3
ENGL 2080 Creative Writing: Poetry I	3
ENGL 2081 Creative Writing: Poetry II	3

Subtotal 9

Total Credit Hours: 10

Professional Writing Certificate

Purpose: The Professional Writing Certificate offers students the opportunity to learn how to communicate effectively and apply their rhetorical skills to a variety of professional audiences. Many studies show employer concern about lack of writing skill in their workforce. While an English major is one important way to develop that skill, this focused program provides another option to both increase writing-specific knowledge and give students a background in a variety of writing applications. This certificate aims to increase audience awareness, genre flexibility, and practice with important writing types in the modern market. It can provide a path for students to write professionally as freelancers or staff in a wide variety of settings.

Note: Students will need to take ENGL 1010 in order to place into ENGL 2005, as well as some of the optional courses that follow.

Course	Credits
ENGL 1010 (English Composition I)	3*
ENGL 2005 (Technical Writing)	3
ENGL 1020 (English Composition II)	3
MKT 2100 (Marketing) OR ENGL 2040, 2050, 2064, 2065, or 2080	3
ENGL 2100 (Literary Journal Production) OR ENGL 2091 (Creative Writing: Publishing Your Work)	1
BOTK 1515 Introduction to Social Media Management AND BOTK 1525 Social Media Campaign OR ENGL 2019 Writing Studies	2 1 3

Total: 16 Credits

* In addition to ENGL 1010, students may be required to also take ENGL 1011 (2 credits) due to placement, adding 2 additional credits to their graduation total.

Writing Skills Certificate

Purpose: To improve writing skills for the continuing professional and/or to help equip students with majors or expertise in other areas for writing-intensive applications of those skillsets. Many studies show employer concern about lack of writing skill in their workforce. While an English major is one focused way to develop that skill, this short program provides another option that focuses solely on writing itself. This program will be ideal for the current professional, as well as those with specific writing tasks in mind.

Course	Credits
ENGL 1010 (English Composition I)	3*
ENGL 2005 (Technical Writing)	3
ENGL 1020 (English Composition II)	3
ENGL 2019 (Writing Studies)	3
Total: 12 Credits	

* In addition to ENGL 1010, students may be required to also take ENGL 1011 (2 credits) due to placement, adding 2 additional credits to their graduation total.

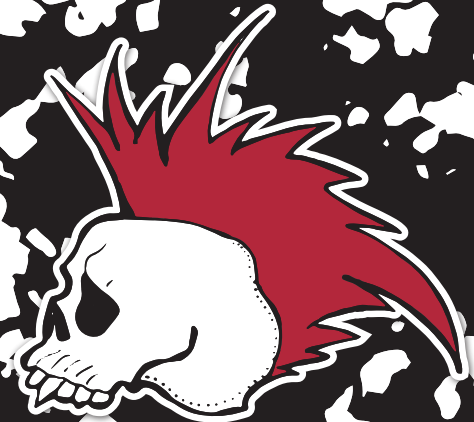
This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 28 horizontal blue or grey lines spaced evenly apart, typical of notebook paper. The lines extend across the entire width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical lines, text, or other markings on the page.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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Thanks for all your great submissions this year. We'll be calling for new submissions in the Fall of 2020 in December and would love to see your photos, art, poems, stories, and essays.

Also, come join our staff next year. You can be a non-class editor or enroll in ENGL 2100: Publications Production in the Spring of 2021. If you have questions, please email mzuppa@westernwyoming.edu.



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