



**LEGACY**  
XIV 2015

*unfinished*



Legacy 2015 XIV  
*unfinished*

Reading Area Community College  
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## Acknowledgments

As the staff of *Legacy XIV*, we express our gratitude to all those who have made this publication possible. We are thankful to the students who have submitted work and, in particular, to those who have contributed to the pages of this year's *Legacy*. Their contributions are a testament of the potential of our college's student body.

We also thank our fellow students, Sarah Belles, Joshua Colon, Lauren Devlin, Shelby Heckman, Kelsie Knabb, Janise Morales, Ashley Rodriguez, Mallory Staub, Christine Studenroth, Janelle Zimmerman, and Amanda Zuchowski for their support and feedback.

We extend our thanks to the faculty for educating, guiding, and, above all, fostering drive in the students—and encouraging them to write, create, draw, paint, and then share. Their dedication has helped make this publication and many bright futures possible. And finally, we offer our sincere appreciation to RACC's administration for creating and maintaining an institution for us to gather, learn, and grow together and as individuals.

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2015 XIV

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# Never Ceasing

*Christine Studenroth (soft pastel)*



## To the Reader

One of our contributors, Christine Studenroth, wonders, “Is anything really finished?” While the word *unfinished* tends to make way for the negative, bringing “incomplete,” “inadequate,” and “half-finished” to the forefront, it actually calls for the positive.

The unfinished work does not offer a closure or invite finality. Announcing itself as a fragment, it privileges openness, inconclusiveness, and ambivalence. As we, the audience, have no real closure in our hands, we have no other option but to participate, explore, and expand. But the work remains unfinished, always calling our attention to what lies beyond—always giving rise to a new version of itself. Just like the unfinished work, we are always in the process of becoming—always remain unfinished, fragmentary.

Unfinished does not mean undone. It is not a stopped pen, a still brush, or a quieted mind; it is a state of being. We, moment by moment, are writing stories; we are editing our selves and our lives. Catherine J. Mahony, another contributor, writes, “My work will always be unfinished. . . . the spark that resides within my soul will continue and attempt to finish what can never be completed. It is only within the process of trying to finish something that we truly become whole.”

*Legacy* is our spark. It represents the unfinished in all of us—the unfinished souls we all are. We are not “undone”; we are simply moving forward.

The *Legacy* Staff

# Four Faces of Ann

*Sarah Belles (watercolor, ink, and acrylic)*



# Passenger Window Escapades

## Joshua Colon

A crystallized mushroom cloud reflects the intense sun beams  
glistening above the tree tops. The base, unseen, is covered by the green of the great oak's leaves.

From behind the trees, appears a magnificent turtle.

He reveres himself a prophet as he throws out one last jeer,  
his monstrous face has a smile on it.

Upon further observance,

two faces sit

back to back

looking far

beyond

the clear blue yonder.

Wondering,

pondering

of the vast explorations

the deep blue sea may hold.

The hairs on my arm wave like husky corn stalks through the storm, but dance with feverish intensity in the dazzling rays of the sun. I turn my gaze to the sky as the cloud in my window shapes itself into a mushroom.

# Deities of the Future

## Stephanie Coriolan

We pound the yellow brick road  
Down to the green forest we go  
The dreamers,  
The wishers,  
The some-dayers,  
The patient ones,  
We don't have to wait,  
We become the future  
The heroes  
What myths are made of  
The impossible like Beowulf,  
We are Gods and Goddesses,  
The world is our throne just for a little while  
As the darkness soaks what little rays of sun is left,  
We sleep together under the shade  
Of the weeping willow tree,  
Cursing the day for being gone too soon  
For tomorrow is the same day,  
When we want to be somewhere else.



September Storm  
*Christine Studenroth (soft pasetel)*



# Early Morning Snow

*C'mane Grik Wiley Mcfadden (photograph)*





# My Body Beats

Wesley A. Gehman

I feel my body beat  
my heart my veins  
going at a continual time  
as it rolls through my soul  
unable to control  
The ever present passion  
newly sparked  
I feel marked  
with each moment that passes  
my grammar harasses  
The pre-planned chorus  
just one last phrase  
the final word fades  
wanting this constant peace  
but now the song will cease

Yet the beat continues  
unlike the little song  
my life is too long  
too many ups and downs  
some smiles and few frowns  
Reflecting the motion of my soul  
in the hours of change  
my heart the only beat the same  
still to youth my hands clasp  
only my mind cannot grasp  
The unplanned verse  
just one last phrase  
my final word fades  
finding that constant peace  
my heart finally will cease

# Oil Lamp

*Rafael Nunez (graphite pencil)*





**Edge of the City**  
*Sarah Belles (watercolor and acrylic)*

# In Stitches

Sarah Belles

The needle and thread were waiting for her on the vanity, put close together as couples usually are. Her fingers ached to pick them up, to begin working, but she knew that now was not the time. Still, out of habit it seems, this girl of mid-twenties opened the top left drawer of her vanity and pulled out a pair of large polished scissors. They weighed heavy in her hand. And as she parted the blades, the impression of a smile came to her porcelain face. She took a strange enjoyment out of the long, clean snip they made as she closed them again. Passing them into her right hand, she caught a glimpse of her reflection on their surface: a warped portrait of brown eyes, short brown hair, and a pair of rosy lips which were no longer smiling. Turning the image away, she methodically set the scissors down in front of the needle and thread. An act which turned the duo into a holy trinity.

Getting up from the lace-covered stool,

the girl forced herself to break from her vanity in order to finish getting ready for the outside world. Not daring to turn on the overhead light, she dressed herself in the yellow glow of a single lamp. Its bulb had already been burning away for hours—all the while she was performing her morning ritual of beauty creams and hair removal. Slipping into her dress and stockings, she turned her eyes to the wall where a long grey shadow had been cast. She watched it move in sync with herself, bedazzled by how smooth and perfect its lines were. Transfixed with her shadow, she began placing her limbs in various positions, posing and studying the way they looked displayed against the wall. It went without saying that she liked what she saw, and in that moment, she thought of that shadow as more like *her self* than she actually was. A thought which she suppressed in order to get herself moving again.

A mini dress on, heels on, and a small matching white purse slung over one shoulder, she finished her ensemble with a large pair of white rimmed sunglasses, which hid a good half of her face. Only with this last

piece of armor on, did she make for the door of her tiny apartment and escape out into the concrete wilderness.

Outside, the summer sky over the city had lost the orange tinge of dawn, adopting a cooler blue instead. However, even in the brilliance of the morning light, the tall buildings that surrounded her on every side still afforded some shadow. The girl took this opportunity to hide herself away as of yet, keeping her body as close to the immensity of these steel and cement giants. This way, she was able to avoid the gazes of the people, who, like her, were out on early morning agendas—normal folk who were required to be about because their jobs demanded it. Unlike her, however, their trivial labors consisted of untying stacks of newspapers, unlocking gates, or setting up stands baring cheap trinkets for sale. Her goal was much nobler; the treasure she would obtain at day's end held greater value than basic monetary gain. Now, though, still in the beginning stages, she was as common and as base as anyone else around

her—maybe even more so. This early, it was better to keep oneself in shadow. She had to abandon caution, however, once she entered the corner pharmacy. Inside, there was no escaping the onslaught of the overhead lights. They hummed and they buzzed without consideration; they created unrelenting vibrations that rumbled against her eardrums, allowing her to count the minutes she spent beneath them.

Her purchases were quick, as there was only one thing she had come for and no other temptation to pull her toward the aisles. She passed them all by without so much as a glance, all the pills, lotions, toys, cards, and food, with her only interest lying in the magazine rack. Tucked away in the far right corner of the white-walled pharmacy, it stood before her like some glorious behemoth. Tantalizing in its immensity, it shined forth with the glossy pages of trendy, or not so trendy, modern interests. Then the frenzy began. She took every fashion magazine on display, eventually filling her basket with covers that displayed the ideal. They advertised faces and figures, quick fixes,

and at-home-how-to's, all in unrepentant, radiating letters. It was a brightly colored ecstasy and the salvation of girls who only had themselves to rely on, if and when a change was necessary.

Standing at the checkout, the girl tried to keep her gaze directed at the speckled tiles on the floor as a line of people slowly moved in front of her. When it was her turn, she took her basket and heaved it onto the counter. Then she set about making a neat pile out of its cargo, matching edges together in order to make the perfect presentation. The aging cashier, with his red vest and thinning white hair, looked down at the pile in mild surprise. A look that was just identifiable beneath the lines of his weathered face.

"Some kind of sweepstakes going on?" he asked in an effort to be funny.

The girl cracked a little smile but did not say anything to confirm or deny; she just shook her head and tried to avoid looking directly at him.

"I know that women are into these sorts of things," he continued, picking up the first

of the magazines and running it across the scanner. "But so many of them and at the same time?"

The girl smiled again. It was not his world after all. She could not expect him to understand. These were not just cans of soup or packs of gum; they were body manuals.

"I like to mix and match," she finally said. Her voice was soft and subdued but far from inaudible.

The aging cashier looked back at her with furrowed, overgrown eyebrows, a deep grimace forming in his sagging features. "You can do that?" he asked, with the magazines in his hands going *Blip, Blip, Blip* as they passed over the scanner. "I thought these were supposed to be like instructions, things you shouldn't really stray from."

Her smile, as small as it had been, faded and was replaced by a straight and unamused line. She had not expected him to unwittingly repeat the disclaimer that was printed at the bottom of every center fold.

"I know what I'm doing," she said flatly.

"Oh no, no, I didn't mean to say . . .," the cashier replied, stumbling over his words.

“Obviously, you know what you’re doing. It’s just a little out of my depth, you see.”

“I understand,” she said, pretending not to care. “Don’t worry yourself about it.” Reaching into her purse, she pulled out a fifty dollar bill, knowing preemptively how much her items would tally. Placing the bill on the counter, she slid it towards him and waited to be handed her bag. “Don’t bother with change, please,” she said, this time making eye contact with the cashier from behind tinted lenses. “I’m in too much of a hurry, thanks.” Then taking the bag in hand, she smiled at him once more just to show how genial she could be, and was on her way.

She returned home sometime around noon, laboring through the door with even more bags hanging from her arms. It had been a busy day. Moving to a corner, she set them all down on a small yellow table, built into the wall, which she had fooled herself into calling her dining area. She took out her magazines. Hugging them to her chest, she walked the few feet over to her bed and laid them out in a semicircle. Starting from the

left, she opened each one to its centerfold, quickly transforming her floral duvet into a gallery of nude, smiling women being displayed from different angles, front, back and side. She studied them all, at times tracing her finger over an area of particular interest such as a calf or a waist.

From the pages of these centerfolds stuck out a wide folded piece of brown paper. The girl took the papers from each magazine and opened them up like a road map, unveiling a series of strange shapes marked out in dotted lines, the makings of a pattern one might find at any fabric store. Taking the scissors from her vanity, the girl set herself to cutting out what she wanted from each one, bothering to fold the rest back up when she was done. Then, taking her scraps and her scissors, she placed them both at her vanity. The trinity was now a quartet.

Leaving them with the promise of being back soon, the girl returned to the small yellow table and began the last of her preparations. From a bag marked “Bill’s Hardware,” she took out some rolled up bundles of blue plastic tarp. These she laid



out over the floor and over the cushion of her vanity stool. She did this with caution, flattening out the plastic and holding down its corners with old books or cans, anything heavy enough to keep the edges from rolling up. Once laid out, the slick blue plastic led from its origin in the bedroom, all the way to the bathroom, and ended just at the door frame. Once satisfied with her work, the girl took a large bottle of bleach, the final item she had purchased that day, and went into the bathroom.

Here she made no hesitation and flipped the light switch on, allowing herself to be fully illuminated. She did not have to fear it for too much longer. After a blink or two, the florescent bulb came to life and brightened the corrugated, claustrophobic space. Placing the bottle of bleach in the sink, she stood over the bathtub and began checking the release of nozzle on a home-made funnel. Cut from an old detergent bottle, it hung upturned on the short curtain rod and was kept in place by a generous amount of duct tape. The nozzle itself, which had once belonged to a pressure hose, had a long plastic tube which led from

its end into the bath. Once clear, it was now discolored and cloudy from the passing of various liquids. Taking a cup from atop the toilet tank, she filled it with water via the tub, and let it run through this device of hers. Reassured that there were no gaps anywhere, no means for leakage, she closed the nozzle, took the bleach, and began to fill up the funnel again. Finally, everything was ready.

Starting with her glasses, the girl began to strip down until she was as nude as the women in her magazines. Now there was no dress to improve her lines, no stockings to shape her legs, or no shoes to make her look taller. She was as bare and incomplete as nature had made her. The next stage began the moment she set foot in the tub. Within the protection of the fiberglass womb, the girl took the tubing and plugged up its open end with her thumb, while with the other she reached over and opened the valve. Sitting down with her knees pressed against her breasts, she took in a deep breath, and at last took her thumb away.

In a gush, the bleach came pouring out

over the top of her head and sluiced down the rest of her body, stealing all her color away in a tide of stinging whiteness. She let the chlorine soak into her pores for a while, wanting the final product to be free of any indication of what she used to look like. In a way, this was like a baptism, something to go through in order to come out clean on the other end. After twenty minutes or so, she ran the shower, rinsing away the slippery film which the bleach had left behind. Then, drying herself with a towel spotted from use, she went into her bedroom and stood before her vanity.

Sitting against the mirror was a coffee mug stuffed full of pens and pencils. Shuffling through them, she took out a single black marker that had been stuck somewhere in between. Taking one of the shapes she had cut out earlier, she pressed the four-cornered, diamond piece of paper against the right side of her stomach just below her ribs. Uncapping the marker with her mouth, she traced the shape onto her skin, tossing the used up pattern away right after. She did this

again on the other side of her body, then the backs of her arms, her thighs, and finally on her lower stomach.

Next came the scissors. Pulling at the flesh of her arm, which stretched too much like elastic, she began to snip away at the lines on her skin, not stopping until they were all connected in red, painful lines. *It only hurts for a minute.* She reasoned in her mind in an effort to deal with the pain. And she gasped almost in a whisper. *It's worth it—when you're done, it'll be worth it.*

The blood that flowed thereafter trickled down her arms and legs like little streams of life. They ran together and collected at her feet, creating a small puddle that eventually grew to cover a third of the floor around her. When she was done removing the unwanted pieces of herself, she at last took the needle and thread in her hands in order to begin working on those red, barren parts which begged attention.

With every individual stitch there came pain, a sense of relief, and, above all else, closure. Things were becoming as they should be—how they never were on their own.

It took so long to do, but, being a labor of love, it was time well spent. At seven o' clock she finally finished: those threads of white-turned-pink silk were all aligned and perfect. Stepping back so that her whole body was reflected in the mirror, the girl took a minute to examine herself head to toe. She turned from side to side, lifted her arms and legs to see if there were any puckering areas of skin that needed to be gone over again. But there was nothing. Everything was stitched up as neatly as could be. But why did it feel like something was missing?

Drawing closer to the vanity mirror, the girl started considering the other parts of her body which she might have overlooked. She pulled the skin of her neck back, but was not convinced that *that* was necessarily it, nor the skin on her hands, or her buttocks, back, anything. Sitting down, she turned her attention towards her face, her own milky, rinsed out eyes scrutinizing the reflection they took in. Thinking back to the magazines, she came to the realization that what she lacked was very simple. Threading the needle again, she hooked a finger in the corner

of her mouth and began to lead a strand through her cheek.

The needle came out cleanly on the other side, just short of her ear. She repeated this three times and did the same to the other side of her face. Done. She gathered the tied off ends which hung by her ears and began to pull slowly. Her lips spread apart as she did so, exposing a set of pearly veneer caps which previously had been kept hidden from the world. Now that she was smiling, the girl secured the strings and snipped away the excess ends. Leaning forward on her stool, she examined her face again to see if she finally liked herself. And had the strings not been there, she would have smiled on her own.

Another shower, some mopping, and a garbage bag full of blue plastic later, the girl finally walked out into the waning daylight hours. As she passed under the streetlights, she held her head high for the people she walked amongst. Nearly all were above average people, out there getting ready to celebrate the night just as she was. Of course,

there were others walking the street who were exactly like her, ones that had just finished with their own needles in preparation for the night. At times they would spy one another, acknowledging each other with a smile or a subtle nod of the head. They served as a reminder that she was not alone in her pursuit for something more than what she was. They truly understood the necessity of change, and that it was ridiculous to settle for what they had been given. In time the stitches would heal and the skin would fill out again, but a little pain every couple of years was well worth the result.

Not completely to her surprise, every now and again she would catch an average someone out on the street. Much like a bad smell or an irritating song, they had a habit of sticking around when you just wanted them gone. Why they were out at all, she didn't know, but as she passed each by, she could see them openly staring at her. This filled her with a certain kind of pride. It did not matter if those looks were from a man or a woman; it did not matter if those looks were out of desire, fear, or jealousy, just as long as they were for her.

Adam and Eve  
*Sarah Belles (watercolor, ink, and acrylic)*



# Inner Ramblings of a Creative Process

Joshua Colon

...and the lightbulb clicks on...

As I claw through my brain, the holds are slowly shrinking.

I can't help but restrain myself from this way of thinking.

One step, two step, red step, blue step.

Rigid and steep, is my climb while I sleep.

I can feel my feet weep from the tingling sensation

As I draw closer to the peak.

The path of motivation

Begins to create a sensation

Of creation fused with adoration,

Laced in the precipitation

From the storm clouds outside

That transfer into the creative cloud in my mind.

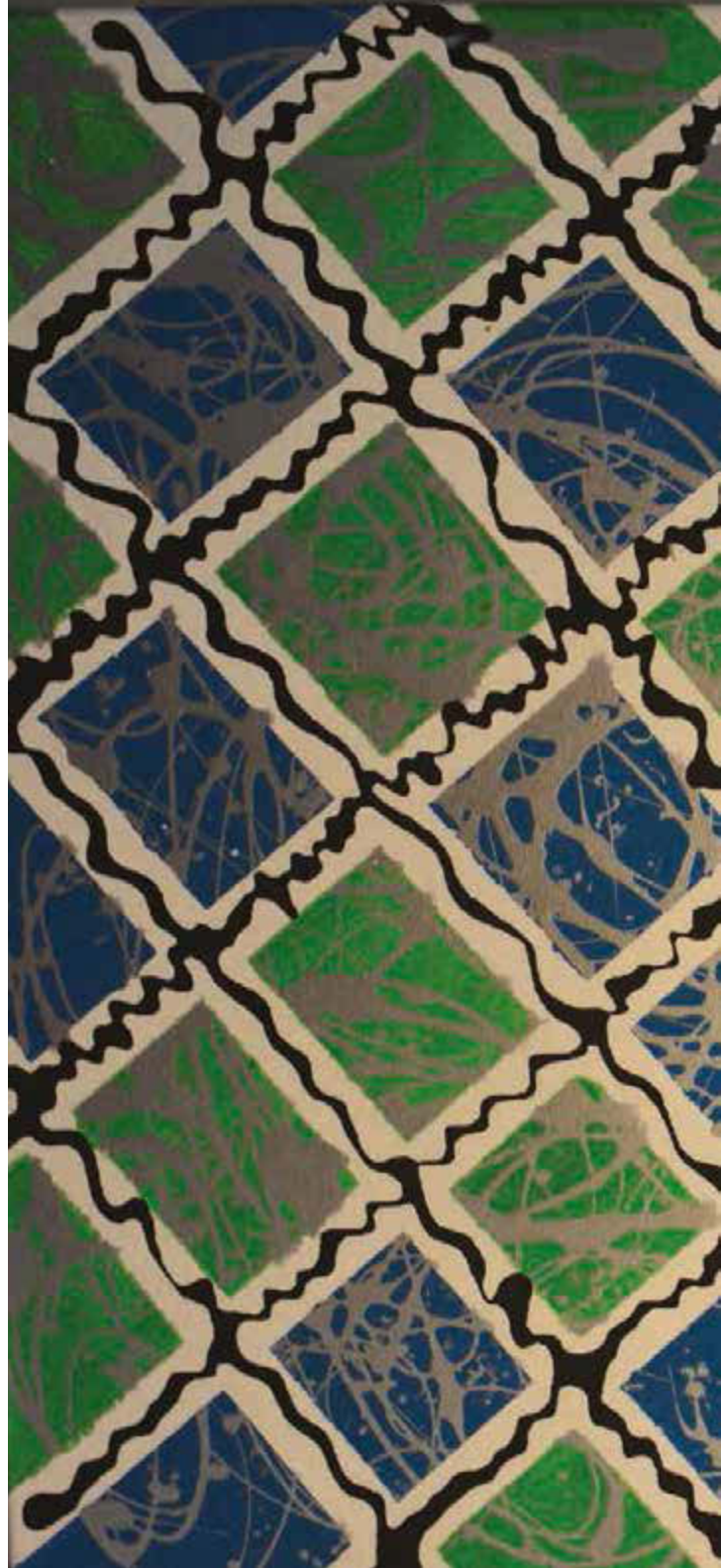
The journey on this paper is mine

And while I drag this line,

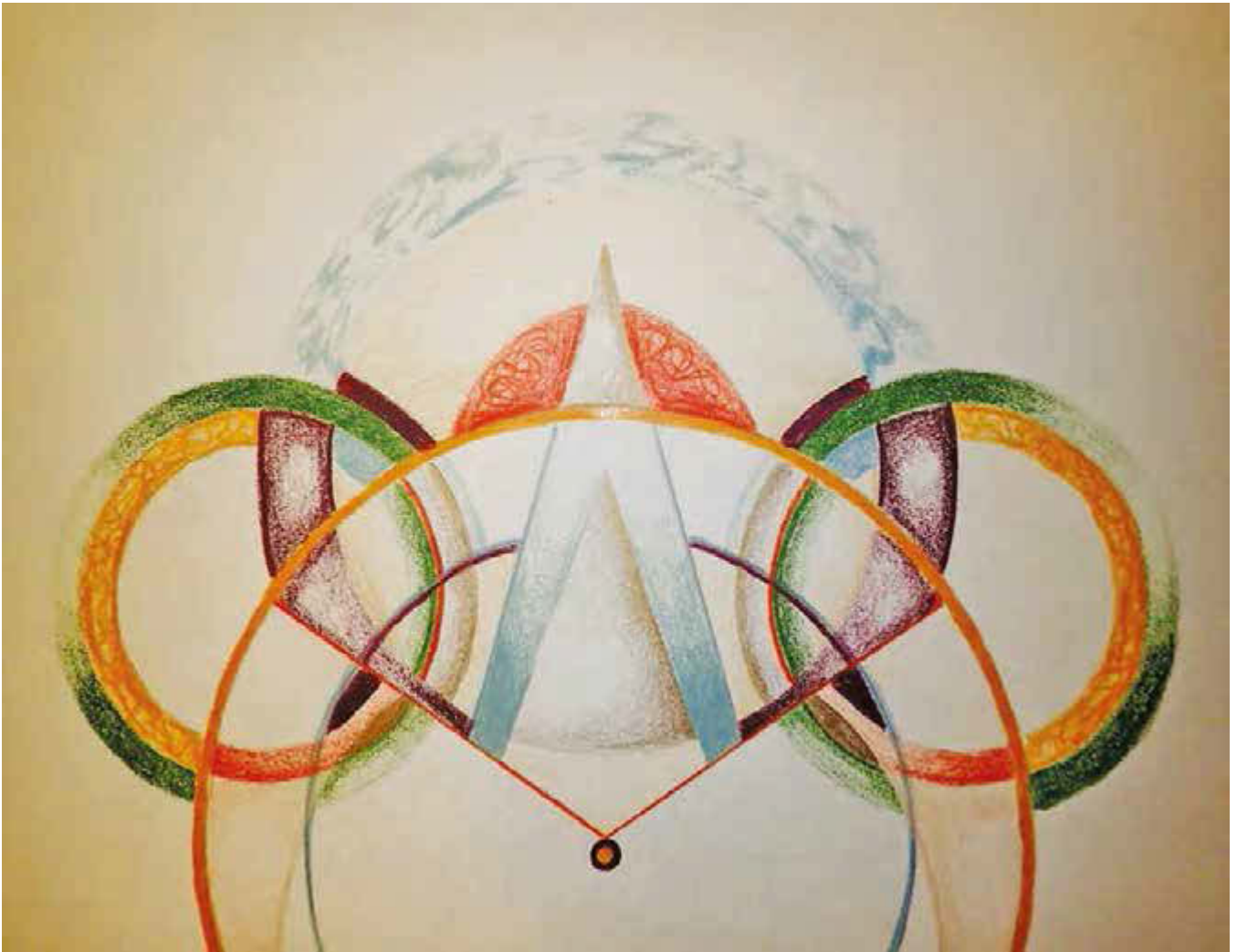


I can't help but feel alive,  
Thriving on the cramped joints of my wrist,  
And sunny skies I see in the dis-  
tance of my subconscious.  
Self-conscious, yes.  
Obnoxious, no.  
Disastrous, probably so.  
Oh, paper lines, you never end.  
Rather, you begin again  
Before the lightbulb clicks off.

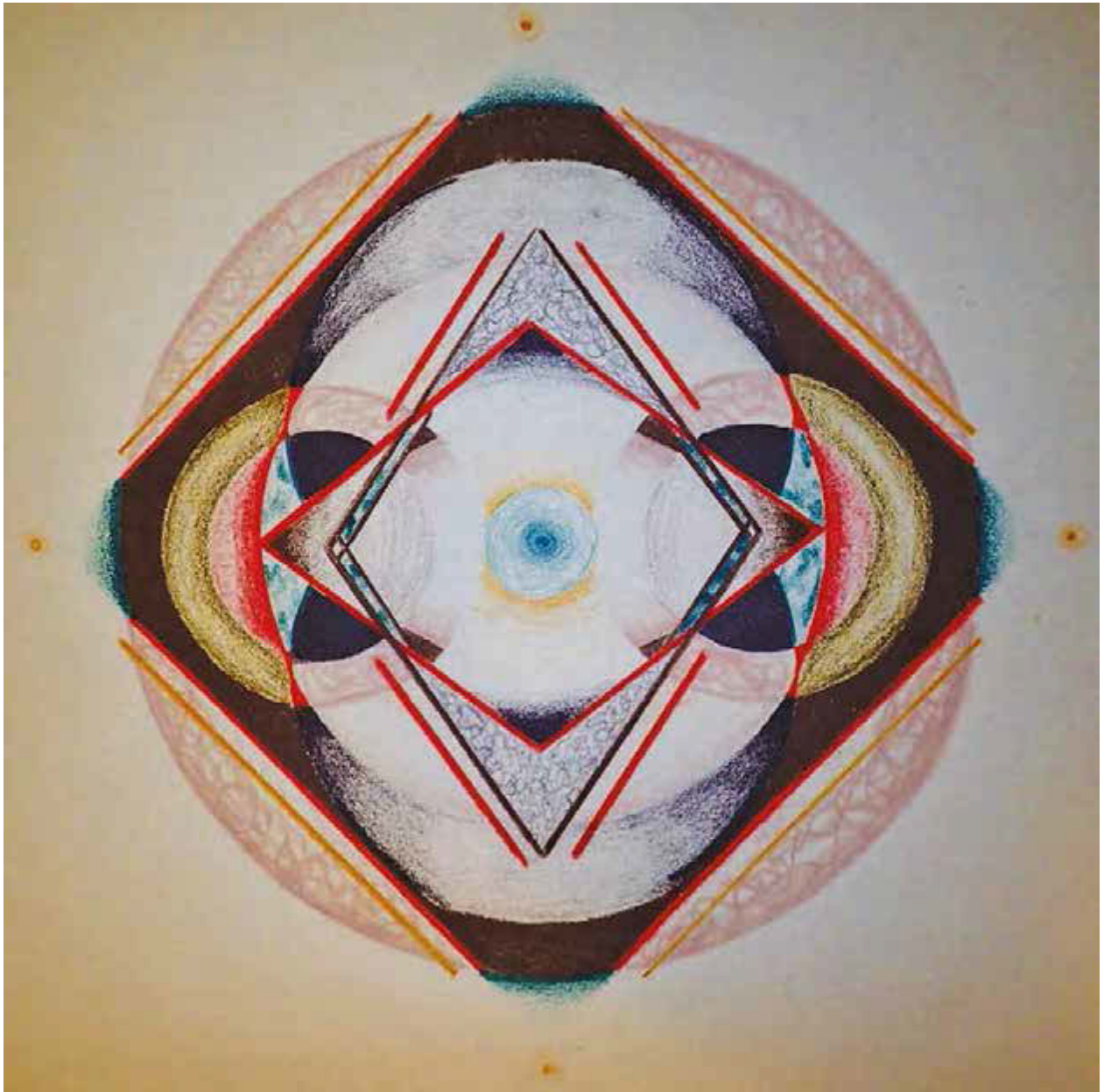
Seaglass  
*Jeremy Reed (acrylic)*







# The Citrus



Primitive

# Voluntary Apnea

## Karleigh Knapp

We are living every day in a sea of fear  
Choking on broken bits of ourselves

Tumbling, falling, drowning

Constantly hoping for the pain to stop  
Waiting for the sea to stop dragging us around

Praying for a change in scenery  
Or a chance to be free

Tumbling, falling, drowning

We seem to be stuck in this cycle  
Breaking off more and more pieces of our being

Trusting that the more we rip off  
The higher to the surface we will float

Breaking, shattering, drowning

We cannot move fast enough

To tear ourselves down before the next wave takes us

Holding our mouths shut tight

Long enough that we feel as if our heads are exploding

Breaking, shattering, drowning

We never knew that all along the answer to our plea for safety

Was locked in ourselves

And that the only way for it to stop hurting

Was to open up our mouths and let the water choke us

Flooding, engulfing, drowning

Only when we finally let the water in did the pain subside

Voluntary apnea, causing our pain to die

Then the world goes black and we are finally free

We can start again, hopefully without falling back into the sea

# Tongue-in-Cheek Grading Practices

Daniel Johnston

*The human mind, after all, is a mystery, and in large part, will probably always be so. It takes even the most thoughtful, honest, and introspective person many years to learn even a small part of what goes on in his own mind. How, then, can we be sure about what goes on in the mind of another? Yet many people talk as if we could measure and list the contents of another person's mind as easily, accurately, and fully as the contents of a suitcase.*

John Holt, *How Children Learn*

*If individuals differ in their intellectual profiles, it makes sense to take this fact into account in devising an educational system for individuals, groups, or even nations... [The question is how to] teach and assess in ways that bring out [our] capacities—that mobilize our several intelligences.*

Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*

Competition plays an undeniable role in education, whether students are aware of its presence or not. The unfortunate fact is that we live in a world bound by very real rules that stand to limit the number of students who can benefit from higher learning. Some of these hindering rules are common sense, encompassed by factors such as maximum class size, student to teacher ratio, and financial quotas. As mundane and simplistic as these guiding variables are, they create a scenario that necessitates grading and assessment systems capable of differentiating one applicant from another in order to assure the most qualified candidates have the highest chance of attending the college of their choosing. These practices, while they create a source of stress and competition among students as they classify and sort them based on so-called objective standards, perform an unmerited yet a necessary role in the academic world.

I do not advocate an academic setting that does not employ the idea of grading in some capacity. It is true that grading can act as a constant source of stress and competition

for many students, but it also takes the role of a *necessary evil* in American academia. Without fear of poor grades, the vast majority of students would be unwilling to take their studies seriously, knowing that there was not a system in place to differentiate one student's accomplishments from another. This emphasizes the importance of understanding what criteria current academic practices see suitable to test, which has turned out to be a confounding puzzle. In *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*, Paul Tough questions if the focus on cognitive development and "the push on tests" that primarily measure cognitive abilities is the answer to this puzzle:

. . . I often felt that I had stumbled upon a pervasive, if still somewhat inchoate, anxiety within the contemporary culture of affluence, a feeling that something had gone wrong within the traditional channels of American meritocratic pursuit, that young people were graduating from our finest institutions of higher learning with excellent credentials

and well-honed test-taking skills and not much else that would allow them to make their own way in the world. (183-84)

The unfortunate caveat of our current grading system is just how few areas of intellect are actually tested, creating an environment where students are in essence learning how to do well in an academic setting but not in endeavors that require application. Howard Gardner, a revered anthropologist, narrowed down learning strengths into seven categories: linguistic, mathematical, musical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (xi). Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has been well received by both the scientific and academic community, making current grading practices that only test one or two forms of intelligence all the more perplexing. As a society, we seem to only reward individuals who are proficient in a very narrow window of intelligence, forcing those adept in other areas to either adapt or flounder. Our current grading practices could only be described as the system society needs, but not the system students deserve.

Perhaps the sense of finality equated with current grading practices would be lessened if students were given the opportunity to demonstrate worthwhile skills to potential employers firsthand, but as a general rule this is not a realistic scenario. We live in a society where we are judged on a single sheet of paper that promises to consolidate four plus years of growth with a single digit. Dr. Pamela Blakely, a Professor of Anthropology at Reading Area Community College, believes this practice stems from America's social role as a "low context society," stating, "We live in a society in which citizens are so detached from the lives of others that there is an inherent need to express what you know in an immediate and concise fashion— such as a degree." Dr. Blakely's insight helps validate the severe importance our society equates with grades and the SAT results, and, in turn, explains why students are in constant underlying competition with one another.

In the low-context American culture, objectivity and comparability hold great value. No wonder why standardized college-admissions tests, such as the SAT and ACT,

have become the standard measures—the most accurate predictors of the academic potential of applicants. Tough reminds us why the SAT was created in the first place:

[T]he SAT was invented, in the years after World War II, because of growing skepticism about the predictive power of high school grades. How were college-admissions officials supposed to compare a 3.5 student at a suburban high school in California with a 3.5 student at a rural high school in the Pennsylvania countryside or at an urban school in the South Bronx? The SAT was designed to correct that problem, to provide an objective tool that would distill a student's ability to thrive in college down to a single, indisputable number. (152)

The crucial question is whether the SAT is a good-enough measure in today's world. Is there an alternative system of assessment that does not promote marketplace-like competition—one that does not miss the human aspect? Kevin McManus asserts, "We should compete only against ourselves . . .



Historical performance, not [peers], should be our enemy” (18). It is entirely unfortunate that we live in a culture where the concept of competing with one’s self so rarely has the opportunity to become an end goal in academia.

If there is a silver lining to current grading practices, it is the fact that there exist college admission officers who are aware of how narrow current policies are—how limited standardized tests and grades are in predicting success in college. In fact, some college admission committees are more interested in students who display strong lopsided intelligence over those who prominently display a 4.0 GPA. Dr. Blakely, who occasionally acts as a Harvard admissions interviewer, states:

Admission to Harvard isn’t entirely focused on grades. In fact, a lot of the time they are more interested in the students who display a strong focus in one particular subject over across the board excellence—students who are more focused on getting through high school classes in order to rush home

and launch rockets in their back yard. While the negative aspects—yellow Ativan, green Prozac, blue Valium, and a veritable rainbow of both mood suppressants and enhancers—are immediately apparent, there seem to be very few positive characteristics to be associated with the current role competition plays in academia. A solitary rare case only recently transpired at John Hopkins University earlier this year: in order to avoid a curved test, Peter Frolich’s class banded together as a single cohesive unit in a successful boycott. Their combined effort resulted in a class high of zero, which resulted in all students receiving an automatic A (Budryk). The creativity of Peter Frolich’s class stands out as it exemplifies a student body’s willingness to take a risk, which, according to John Holt, is a characteristic of students that usually diminishes as education progresses (167).

The most common argument in favor of competition in an academic environment proclaims that competition is in place to separate the cream from the proverbial crop, but given that grading practices only

test a small section of intelligences, the foundation of this argument is inherently flawed. A better juxtaposition would be that competition separates those who understand how to play the game from those who do not. The irony, of course, is that I write this statement as both a member of my college's honors program and as an individual who has reaped the benefits of a grading system that generally plays to my strengths. Perhaps, instead of invalidating my view on competition in academia, my willingness to point out the flaws in a system I excel in only stands to substantiate my case.

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# The Girl Made of Love and Shadows

Stephanie Coriolan

“I like you. Will you go out with me?” Martin said. The girl felt herself tense up, her hands slightly shaking while her thoughts scrambled to make sure she had heard it properly. Looking up at him, she saw his brown eyes staring directly at her. He really was talking to her. Instantly, nerves took over. *Can he hear her heart beating against her chest?* It was deafening to her above the noisy shuffling of feet, as the last students left the cafeteria. The girl took in a breath, ready to answer. Yet the words got stuck as doubt clutched her throat. She whispered, “No,” stumbling over her words. “My parents don’t allow me to date.”

Awkwardly, she looked past his head to the pale gray wall. “You’re the first girl I ever really liked.” She liked him too; she really did. But what if her parents found out? She had worked too hard to gain their trust to let it go. The girl flexed her fingers. *Does he notice them shaking?* She wanted this encounter to

be over so they could go back to just being friends. *Girlfriend?* The idea had never crossed her mind. Well, it was not entirely true. She had thought, maybe once or twice, it would be nice, but she quickly buried the thought in the back of her mind, reminding herself that she was not ‘girlfriend’ material. *No, I am not.* She always joked about it with her friends: “If you need a shoulder to cry on, I got you. If you need someone to pat you on the shoulder, I got you. If you need me to listen to you rant on how much your life sucks for two hours, I got you. But if you need a girlfriend, I don’t have you.”

This would usually be followed by laughs and smiles as she said it with exaggerated hand gestures. This time, however, it was no joke. She was really standing in the middle of the high school cafeteria being confessed to by one of her friends. All because she had no guard, she let him get too close. She did not understand the magnetic pull that just seemed to draw others to her. *They are all nice.* She had yet to realize they were nice because of what she gave. She would always be willing to give without a care or a second

thought: a smile, a word, a shoulder, a song, a poem, a hand. She even shared her lunch with Martin at times. That was who she was: the girl made of love, even when the shadows came—when she just wanted to cry and break apart.

He took her hands and entwined their fingers. It felt nice to hold his hand. She thought of telling him. *Would he understand?* The idea of love had been ruined for her long before he came—the moment her mother told her that her father was actually someone else. Her real father left while she was just in her mother’s womb. She could not comprehend what her mother meant by this. The man she called dad every day—the man who took care of her. Was he not her real father? Hurt later replaced confusion. Tears would well up in her eyes as she wiped them away. Was she really not good enough for her real father to stay?

She gazed into Martin’s eyes. They seemed so sincere. But she could not help to think of the shadows. They were forever attached onto her, always following wherever she went. She could fool herself all she wanted, but

the shadows were always there clouding her thoughts. She imagined him dumping her, not a week in the relationship saying he had made a mistake. This seemed to seal her lips from taking anything back.

“I like you, but I understand the thing about your parents,” Martin replied with a pained smile. She smiled back, shook her head, and glanced at the floor. No, he did not understand. How could he understand something unsaid? She wondered if her real father had promised her mother love, only to run away. She met him for a DNA test when she was eleven; the three of them, daughter, father, and mother sitting in the court waiting room. She was polite and kind. They played hangman in the margins of a newspaper that he had brought with him, to pass the time.

There were phone calls exchanged between the two of them. Yet they did not last long. The girl was the one that stopped calling so suddenly like death. She had a loving family who did not run out on her. She felt she did not need him. He had missed his chance to raise her and know her a long time ago. He did not deserve another chance. She

put it all to rest. A fragment of pain, however, still pierced her mind chanting: *not good enough*. She was not good enough for her own father. How could she be good enough for anyone else?

Martin turned away to pick up a milk bottle on the floor. “Why?” she asked, bending over to look at him from under the lunch table. “Why do you like me? Is it because I’m funny?” Her voice was light and casual—as if she was simply asking him for his favorite color. *Can he feel the suspicion that edges her voice?* He straightened himself, throwing the bottle away. “If you don’t believe you are awesome, you won’t believe in anything else.” They walked out the cafeteria. Thinking about what he had just said, she felt restless. Those words stung her almost as much as his confession. Were they not true? She did not see herself as ‘girlfriend’ material, not as good enough, certainly not as remarkable, so she doubted his words.

Given another chance, would she do anything different? How many girls were left behind by a parent, especially a father who did not love them, feeling utterly alone? How

many girls felt as if they always fell short? This hurt would be the catalyst, propelling her to create her own corner of love in herself, for herself, a place that shadows could not touch.

How many people indeed?

Maybe her father was one of them. Maybe he did not think he was good enough to be a father. Maybe she could begin to forgive him and maybe one day she will pick up the phone. One day in the middle of building her rosy house in the sky, the hurt will melt like the sweet raspberry cream pops she used to eat as a kid. There will come the time she would not feel the way she felt in that cafeteria, utterly lost, confused, and undeserving. One day, just not today.

For a while, the girl wanted to turn around and chase after the boy who thought she was good enough. *Shall I go after him?* If she hurried perhaps she could catch him walking up the stairs. *Will he notice her? Maybe she won’t even make a sound.* All her insecurity and doubt seemed to bounce off the walls of the halls, drowning out her mind screaming all the things she could have said, should have said. It would all sound like a symphony of

nonsense, so she did not say anything. She let him walk away.

He drifted far from her. She rushed to class pushing away the shadows of the past—and thought to herself, “What a complicated day.”



# **Pixie Dust**

## **Lauren Jones**

I wanted to snort you up and spit you out like pixie dust.  
You are the magic.  
You are the blurred digits on my phone.  
The one more drink that turns into a round of shots.

All that flesh and blood and lust  
Hidden behind temptation.  
I wanted everything.  
Empty hotel rooms, clean sheets, room service.  
I know you couldn't.

So naturally I wanted more.  
Suites, plush white robes, five star dinners.  
I wanted everything from you and more.  
But more than anything I wanted you entirely.  
Shaggy hair, hazel eyes, calloused hands.  
I wanted too much.



## Girl Shape

42 *Irving Guzman (digital illustration)*

# Northern Lights



*Christine Studenroth (soft pastel)*

## Blue

Lauren Jones

What I remember the most is her blue veins peeping through her thin white skin, so thin that you could see every vessel inside of her. It is as though the inside of her was at war with the outside. And I wanted to save her—help her through the murky waters of her mind. Somehow I wanted to gain a sense, any sense of completeness, as if it were possible to be complete with no aspect lacking—no gap in one’s identity. She was a big part of who I was and I wanted her to remain as me. I wanted to believe what they always said was true: “Things will get better.” But I never truly believed in *better*; I believed in good days and bad, like a toddler trudging her way through kindergarten. That is how our days, good or bad, proceeded with whispers of “How is Nana?” Sometimes I felt as though she was washed out to sea, and the ocean played its tricks and lured her into its frothy depths. And I wanted to save her.

She was a popover-making queen, a bona fide movie star; she had all the glitz and glam of Jacki-O with a homemaker’s touch. The home she had made for all of us was inviting but as chaotic as could be with ten children and many grandchildren. What I remember the most were those hands, inviting each puzzle piece in, until she realized it would not fit, and thus rejecting it—but rejecting it ever so daintily, so gingerly, putting one down and picking up another in a sort of haphazard dance of disjointed puzzle pieces. When the tide got rough, the puzzle pieces went away and their dance were ceased. These were the sad times.

The sad times gave the hands a beating, poked and prodded, but still somehow, even beyond all the destruction, they remained the same. The family room became her hospice room, which, even with the finished puzzles hung up on the walls, did not feel the same. It smelled sterile, like a hospital, and lacked the quirks that were always found in my Nana’s house. I sometimes felt myself drowning in the depths of the frothy ocean of her mind. The hands, however, were always there to find

me and I would welcome them back.

But I refused to welcome death, just as I refused to dive deep into the sea. I refused to accept that everything was changing. The puzzles were taken down off of the walls. Goodbyes had to be said. The hands that I knew so well were changing too. I would try to memorize every inch of those hands that I loved so very much, every blue vein, trying to study them so when the inevitable happened I would remember. *1 squeeze. 2 squeeze. 3 squeeze. I love you.* To me those hands were comfort. Even when her body and mind were failing her, her hands still found a way into mine. Together they locked, and, in my mind, they will always stay together.

# The Paper Men

*Marianna Mello (cardstock)*





# Buds



# Education within Utopian Communities: Ephrata and Brook Farm

Janelle Zimmerman

Intentional communities—that is, deliberately created communities designed as an alternative to mainstream culture—are an important part of American history. Their educational practices reveal important aspects of their ideology and praxis, and provide insight for modern educators. Ephrata and Brook Farm are two distinct intentional communities that shared a belief in the efficacy of community for achieving a better life and the importance of education as a means to prepare individuals for participation in communal living. They naturally differ in many details, but are similar in their commitment to education.

The Utopian Socialist period was a time of explosive growth in community building. There were numerous attempts to establish perfect societies in the United States during

the nineteenth century—communities that would ideally solve the major social problems of the day and improve the human condition. A group of religious mystics, under the leadership of Conrad Beissel, founded the Ephrata Community in 1730 at the site of the future city of Ephrata (Bach 4). Contemporary accounts of the Ephrata community relate their extraordinary devotion to spiritual living, including a unique and beautiful hymnody (Seidensticker 241). Brook Farm, another well-known experiment in community building in America, was founded in New England during the Utopian Socialist period from 1824 to 1848 by the members of a literary circle known as the Transcendentalist Club, who had been inspired by Thomas Waldo Emerson, particularly his concept of “self-reliance” and idea of reform (Brown 7). Emerson was one of the leading intellectuals of the time who were fascinated with the idea of changing the cultural landscape of nineteenth-century America, and wrote to Thomas Carlyle in October 1840, “We are all a little wild here with numberless projects

of social reform. Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket” (Carlyle and Emerson 308). Brook Farm, though short-lived, was an important social experiment whose influences can be seen in some aspects of contemporary America including education.

The members of these communities drew inspiration from many sources, often trying to put philosophical ideals into practice. The educational theories of Swiss-born Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi were a major influence on leaders at Brook Farm (Matteson 34). Pestalozzi developed a comprehensive theory of education emphasizing the humanity of children and stressing the importance of educating the whole child. To Pestalozzi, education should not and could not be confined to a certain period in a child’s life, but begins in the cradle and continues throughout a person’s lifetime (Heafford 74-78). This holistic approach to education is common to Brook Farm and Ephrata, whether or not the members had read Pestalozzi’s works.

Pestalozzi saw education as a progressive

endeavor, in which the teacher must be content to begin with the very smallest bit of a child’s knowledge and gradually build from that fragment into a complete structure of understanding and comprehension: “In every aspect of education you try to organize a progression of experiences in which each new concept is a small, unnoticeable addition to former experiences already firmly engrained and never to be forgotten by you” (qtd. in Heafford 45). He anticipated Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development by nearly a century, stating that a child’s capacity for learning developed in chronological order (46):

By ordering knowledge and experiences, [Pestalozzi] hoped to find an ideal way . . . to teach children and methods which would prove universally applicable. At the same time by continually stressing that education is for the child and not the child for education, he showed that the needs of the individual child had to be taken into account. Education was to become at the same time more

human and more scientific. (49)  
According to Pestalozzi, any attempt to teach a concept before the child is capable of understanding that concept will fail, as children cannot comprehend concepts too advanced for their cognitive abilities. Among those who endeavored to put Pestalozzi's theories into practice, there is a common understanding that education is a communal endeavor and the entire community must be involved in education. Although not every member of the community is active in the schoolroom, every member influences the formation and development of the children within the community.

#### Ephrata: Spiritual Living

*Where the united souls live,  
Let no one more from there escape,  
For God Himself among them now is reigning.  
Their joy blooms in the united love-filled flame,  
Because from God and His own love they came.*

*Author Unknown, Wallchart  
(Ephrata Cloister)*

The city of Ephrata, within Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, originated in 1732 as the home of a group of Seventh Day Baptists

who built a religious community in a bend of the Cocalico River (Bach 4). The Seventh Day Baptists were an offshoot of the German Dunkers, a conservative religious group that originated in Germany. The first Dunkers immigrated to Pennsylvania in 1719, establishing a community in Germantown (Seidensticker 214). Religious leader Conrad Beissel led a small group to the Cocalico area, where they established a compound with separate quarters for the men and women (Bach 8).

The Dunkers were accused of being anti-intellectual and in favor of ignorance. According to a *Century Magazine* article, published in 1881, the Dunkers believed that “ignorance is the healthiest condition of man in this preparatory stage of life” (Seidensticker 215). Like their predecessors, the Dunkers, the Seventh Day Baptists, had a robust mistrust of the value and trustworthiness of human knowledge and wisdom. However, they appreciated the intellectual faculties as given from God and recognized the value of education. Founder Conrad Beissel is noted to have said, “It

would be a shame for the human mind if it would be defeated in anything” (Lamech and Agrippa 287).

The Ephrata community established formal schools as early as 1740 (Bradley 41). The first schoolmaster was Ludwig Hacker, who wrote and printed his own textbook for his students’ use (1). Local historian Richard Seiverling notes that in the eighteenth century, the Academy attracted pupils from a wide geographic area, including Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York, and was a leader in public education (16). The current Academy building was built in 1830 and was used as a private school until after the Civil War, when it was leased by Ephrata township and used as a public grade school into the 1920s (Bradley 41). During its time as a private school under the direction of the Seventh Day Baptist church, the Academy provided a pre-college curriculum, offering instruction in “Spelling and Reading . . . Penmanship, Arithmetic, Geography, English Grammar, Natural Philosophy . . . Astronomy” as a “common English education.” For an additional fee, students could receive instruction in

“Mensuration, Algebra, Surveying, Geometry, Trigonometry, or Chemistry” (“Ephrata Academy”).

Similar to Brook Farm, the Ephrata Academy offered an education that prepared students both for productive work within the community, and if they so chose, for entry into colleges and universities. The Ephrata Cloister community also placed a high value on understanding music and singing as a spiritual exercise. Founder Conrad Beissel wrote many hymns during his lifetime, as did many of his followers (Seidensticker 220). Beissel’s hymns were highly treasured in the community. Peter Miller, who was Beissel’s second-in-command and became the leader after Beissel’s death, sent an illustrated copy of Beissel’s “musical Book” to Benjamin Franklin as a gift (Erben 195). The visitor’s brochure of the Museum at the Ephrata Cloister presents the story of these “pioneers” as “a spiritual quest to unite with God” and adds: “We may look upon [their] actions as different from ones we would choose for ourselves, but the desire for a better life rests within everyone. Ephrata is one expression of

that desire” (qtd. in Lenz). The pursuit of “a better life” seems to also have been at the core of their approach to education.

#### Brook Farm: Social Harmony

*The great object of Education should be commensurate with the object of life. It should be a moral one; to teach self-trust: to inspire the youthful man with an interest in himself; with a curiosity touching his own nature; to acquaint him with the resources of his mind, to teach him that there is all his strength, and to inflame him with a piety towards the Grand Mind in which he lives.*

#### Ralph Waldo Emerson on Education

Brook Farm grew out of the religious and cultural philosophy of Transcendentalism. Established in West Roxbury, Massachusetts in April 1841, Brook Farm membership increased rapidly, sheltering hundreds of different people over the next six-and-a-half years (Delano 1-2). A former member wrote, “This plan was, in short, to locate on a farm where agriculture and education should be made the foundation of a new system of social life (Codman 7). Founder George

Ripley set out the purposes and intentions behind the creation of Brook Farm in this extract from an early letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson:

Our objects, as you know, are to insure a more natural union between intellectual and manual labor than now exists; to combine the thinker and the worker, as far as possible, in the same individual; to guarantee the highest mental freedom, by providing all with labor, adapted to their tastes and talents, and securing to them the fruits of their industry; to do away the necessity of menial service, by opening the benefits of education and the profits of labor to all; and thus to prepare a society of liberal, intelligent, and cultivated persons, whose relations with each other would permit the more simple and wholesome life, than can be led amidst the pressure of our competitive institutions. (qtd. in Delano 34)

Brook Farm was an educational community and learning activities always played a large part in the daily life of the community. The



newspapers of the day actively covered the beginnings of this unusual secular (as opposed to religious) community. *The New England Farmer and Horticultural Register* reported that Brook Farm was to be a “Practical Institute of Agriculture and Education . . . to furnish the means of a liberal education to those who are not meant for the learned professions” (Delano 40).

The pedagogical focus of Brook Farm was evident from the beginning. The leaders at Brook Farm, in common with the founders of the majority of collective communities, saw education as vital to their mission and service—as Founder George Ripley stated: “We are a company of teachers. The branch of industry which we pursue as our primary object, and chief means of support, is teaching” (qtd. in Delano 79). The school at Brook Farm was unique—and exceptional—in the nineteenth-century America. According to Delano, who wrote a comprehensive examination of Brook Farm, the faculty had an unusually high level of education, including several Harvard graduates in an era when higher education

was relatively rare (79). This concentration of intellectual talent led to the formation of a uniquely education-focused community.

The most unusual aspect of the school at Brook Farm was the openness of the enrollment and the variety of the curriculum. The student body was quite diverse. Brook Farmers did not believe in excluding students based on wealth and privilege. They accepted students regardless of economic status, and the student body included those from relative privilege and from relative poverty. There were also several international students, including one from Cuba. Brook Farm had an extensive series of evening classes for adult learners in subjects ranging from agricultural chemistry and algebra to music and French. Education did not end with the younger members of the group. The “infant program” was for students under six years of age, the “primary program” served those aged six to ten, while the “preparatory program” was a six-year program designed to prepare young men and women for college (Delano 79-81).

The teachers at Brook Farm had high standards both for themselves and for their

students. The students lived up to those expectations. The 'preparatory program' course was so exemplary that Harvard endorsed it for college-track students (Delano 79-81). Brook Farm survived as a transcendentalist community for approximately four years and another two years as a Fourierist phalanx. Brook Farm's school was egalitarian in a way that few institutions of the time could boast. It took the rest of America more than a century to catch up to this rag-tag band of dreamers on a rocky farm in New England. For all its brief life, the school in rural Roxbury, Massachusetts, had a profound influence on our nation and still serves as an example of what education can be in an ideal community.

#### A Shared Vision for Education

Although separated by geography, differing practice and varying ideology, Brook Farm and the Ephrata community shared a common vision for education. Both communities believed in the efficacy of community as a means to achieving a better life, and both saw education as an

important means for preparing individuals for full and effective participation in this life. They are linked by a common philosophy of education, built on theories and practices first promoted by Swiss educational theorist Johann Friedrich Pestalozzi. At both Ephrata and Brook Farm, community members emphasized the importance of involving the entire community in the preparation and formation of the next generation. Communal living formed the foundation of their lifestyle, and education served the crucial function of preparing the next generation and ensuring the continuation of the community.

With their emphasis on the importance of community involvement in education, they underscore the importance of educational programs rooted in community, tied to the entirety of the lives of the students and the community. In our postmodern world, students too often suffer a lack of intentional instruction, and end up floundering in anomie, un-rooted by traditional values. Through the radical social experiments conducted by the members of Brook Farm and Ephrata, we learn that a strong

community, focused on transcendental values—philosophical or religious—often leads to the creation of excellent schools with educational methods that address the whole of the child.

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Tarnished  
*Karleigh Knapp (photograph)*



## Exhibition Moves

Catherine J. Mahony

I lift yellow tape,  
That roped off the exhibit—  
Prohibiting admittance to  
The undignified display.  
I climb museum steps,  
And brace dilapidated columns.  
Color collides with gray scale  
As warm flesh grips cool knob.  
Silence falls.  
I see her there,  
A Blue Period Picasso—  
Monochromatic hues of  
Blues—  
Lips,  
Fingernails  
And skin,  
On blanched canvas  
Taut by rigor mortis.  
Post-mortem stains  
matted in bed frames.



I see her there,  
The once “Weeping Woman,”  
Face distorted by gravity.  
—Still life—  
A misinterpreted portrait of  
A daughter,  
A mother,  
A grandmother,  
And friend.  
I peel back layers of “Just another junkie”  
And “One less addict”  
With solvents of “She was loved”  
And “She mattered.”  
Shattered shards between us,  
I reach in and take hold of her hand.  
Pink saturates her porcelain cheeks,  
A Rose Period Picasso.  
I lift yellow tape,  
And release her.

# Weathered

*Cody Hudzik (photograph)*



# Lizard Lounge

*Cody Hudzik (photograph)*



# The Improvement

## Rebecca Dunst

I looked down at my desk  
The red circle with a C  
“Not good enough,” my teacher said,  
“You’ll never get a degree.”  
An improvement, I need to see—  
An improvement, I need to see.

So I revised all night  
A better grade I would earn  
This assignment was harder  
But that was not my teacher’s concern  
An improvement, I need to see—  
An improvement, I need to see.

The next paper came fast and  
Though I thought I was ready,  
When she handed my stack back,  
I saw my grade was steady  
An improvement, I need to see—  
An improvement, I did not see.

Her nose was always above me  
Making the nerves in me rise  
With her red pen she scarred  
Aiding in my quick demise  
An improvement, I needed to see—  
An improvement, I won’t see.

I worked and I worked,  
But she was always jaded  
All I saw was the red of her pen  
And the pain that it aided  
An improvement, I needed to see—  
An improvement, I won't see.

When she arrived for the final exam,  
She noticed something was awry  
There was a difference in the air,  
Something she could no longer deny.

I had taken a red pen to life's pages  
I wrote my own end to the story  
She was the one that found me there  
Sitting upright in all my glory  
An improvement I needed to see—  
An improvement I can't see.

She looked at her desk  
Then looked back at me  
Horrified at what I'd done  
And how responsible she'd be  
An improvement I needed to see—  
Now an improvement I'll never see.



# Domino

*Jeremy Reed (acrylic)*



# **From the Prison to the Community: Education and Reentry Success**

## **Trevor Metterhauser**

Every day many Americans commit crimes, become incarcerated, receive sentences of varying lengths, and the vast majority are eventually released from prisons into the community. Even though the aspirations of these individuals vary from one person to another, most of them intend to make an effort to stay out of the correctional system and find meaningful endeavors to pursue. However, many struggle to reintegrate and often recidivate due to a reentry process that does not prepare them for post-incarceration life. Most current in-prison education programs are underfunded, outdated, and thus irrelevant to the needs of the labor market, and often used by prison staff as a form of social control. Many programs offered in prison bear the insignia of the Department of Corrections and do not transfer to outside education centers for completion of a certificate if they have not

been completed prior to the release of the inmate. In an effort to reduce recidivism, education should become a requirement for individuals who have been convicted of or have pled guilty to a criminal offense. By requiring these individuals to further their education beyond the standard high school diploma/GED, the justice system can prepare them for post-release life. Completion of a degree or training program as a standard of the sentencing procedure in order to attain confinement release or complete supervision will also aid in changing public opinion of the correctional system and help to reduce the stigma of the criminal record. It is therefore important that the criminal justice system provide former offenders with the skills that are necessary to advance in today's labor market and knowledge that will aid them in making better choices throughout the rest of their lives.

In her article “Me and the Law is Not Friends’: How Former Prisoners Make Sense of Reentry,” Lucia Trimbur, a professor of sociology at John Jay College, examines how former prisoners envision their social



and economic future and the ways they cope with the conviction stigma that they experience. “Given that 95% of the men and women incarcerated in jails and prisons are released at some point,” Trimbur notes, “prisoner reentry has become an important part of criminal justice studies” (261). Upon their return to the community, most former inmates face challenges in finding and keeping meaningful employment and often have no choice but to take employment for minimum wage or below and even then have difficulty attaining a 40-hour workweek (267). The struggles of having a low wage include but are not limited to inadequate housing, lack of food, and the inability to attain reliable transportation. Trimbur highlights the first three years of release as the most critical time in the reentry process (259). During this period of reentry, as they struggle with unemployment or underemployment, many former inmates rely on family and friends for financial support. Unable to rebuild their lives on their own, these ex-prisoners often regress and return to crime.

When entering a correctional facility it is staggering to truly realize how many illiterate and functionally illiterate individuals are congregated in a single location. The author of the article “How Minority Becomes Majority: Exploring Discursive and Racialized Shifts in the Adult Literacy Conversation,” Daphne Ntiri points to the widening gap between “the educated, uneducated, and undereducated in the US”: the results of the 1993 National Adult Literacy Survey and 2003 National Adult Assessment of Literacy reveal “a wide scale prevalence of illiteracy of 30 million adults in our society” (161). The results of the surveys also show a correlation between literacy levels and income levels. Ntiri explains that if illiterate people make the effort to gain a functional level of literacy, they will then be able to fill out basic forms and applications for entry-level employment, and perform basic tasks required in daily life that many take for granted. To advance beyond this, Ntiri points out, these individuals need significantly more skills to gain a higher level of income, become “stakeholders in their

communities,” and influence their families’ educational aspirations (160).

In their article “The Disconnect between Education and Social Opportunity for the Formerly Incarcerated,” the authors Marie Pryor and Douglas Thompkins draw attention to the role of correctional education in creating social and employment opportunities for former inmates. Pryor and Thompkins note that “the adult illiteracy rates of prisoners are nearly five times the national average, and the percentage of those deemed functionally illiterate are nearly double the national average of adult illiteracy” (U.S. Department of Education, qtd. in Pryor and Thompkins 459). As an individual who has spent three months within the walls of a correctional facility, I have witnessed firsthand the illiteracy epidemic in our prisons that our nation has for the most part turned a blind eye to. I met many individuals who needed to complete basic forms such as grievances of staff, post-conviction relief act appeals (PCRA), and motions to appeal. Even with a rudimentary knowledge of the legal system, I was able to process a PCRA and

motions for a few individuals, and at least one of my actions actually succeeded in the reduction of a mistaken sentencing. Given the extremely high illiteracy levels of inmates, adult education in prison should be a great priority. Unfortunately, Pryor and Thompkins add, “education in prison often fails to meet its mark in terms of participation and completion and these factors inhibit its ability to translate into employment opportunities on the outside as promised” (460).

The education of prisoners has always garnered controversy. Pryor and Thompkins report that in the 1970’s, the “Golden Age of correctional education,” adult education programs, vocational training, and even postsecondary programs were widely regarded as important forms of rehabilitation (458). However, a shift in public attitudes and policy, as Pryor and Thompkins note, came about in the 1980s, which resulted in a decrease of funding. This caused many of the programs that were instituted throughout the 1970s to be discontinued. The authors point out that, when Congress passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement

Act of 1994, postsecondary enrollment of prisoners fell by 44%: “Needless to say the elimination of Pell Grants was paramount to the decline of in-prison [postsecondary] educational services and their ability to produce successful reentry for the formerly incarcerated” (459). The Pell Grants elimination amendment has since been removed; however, prisoner education programs have not seen redevelopment and, in large part, reintroduction into the correctional system. When education programs are available within an institution, they are expected to meet the standards required in the modern labor market. The failure of suitable standards sets the individual up for failure when the skills and training become most critical for the reentry process. Former inmates who hope to capitalize on the benefits of the education they received while incarcerated are many times shocked and dismayed at the realization that the skills they have gained are no longer relevant to the industry or that the specific jobs they were trained for have been outsourced to other countries for cheaper

labor.

In 1998, The United States Congress reauthorized the Higher Education Act of 1965. The article “Walking a Policy Tightrope: Balancing Educational Opportunity and Criminal Justice in Federal Student Financial Aid,” published in *The Journal of Negro Education*, authored by Christopher Brown, et al., exemplifies the damages done by the new language of this bill:

No matter how noble the intent, there are some public policies that simply fail to demonstrate the tenets of reason or logic. . . . Encased in this apparently benign public law is a policy that prohibits individuals from accessing federal student aid if they have ever been convicted of possessing or selling illegal drugs. The intent of the policy was to dissuade students and other citizens from engaging in the use or trade of illicit drugs while receiving aid. The reality of the program is that it removes access to one of this nation’s primary

mechanisms of social mobility from those individuals who may be using higher education as a means to escape the cyclical dynamic of drugs and its concomitant companions-race, poverty, and disadvantage. (234)

The denial of educational opportunity for individuals of low socioeconomic status has created a cycle of recidivism among offenders where they do not see an end to their struggle and often return to habits familiar to them. Since the introduction of the 1998 language of the reauthorized the Higher Education Act of 1965 the law has changed to make individuals ineligible after a third conviction of possession of a controlled substance while receiving student aid. However, if an individual is convicted of distribution of a controlled substance while receiving student aid, ineligibility begins after the second conviction (*Department of Education*). This new policy is far better than the draconian language of the original Act introduced in 1998; however, these very people are the people most in need of educational services to enable them to escape the cycle of

recidivism. Instead of denying student aid, would it not be better to provide a substance abuse program deemed appropriate to meet the needs of these individuals? By delaying or denying student aid to those individuals on supervision by probation or parole, the most critical time to influence change in their lives is wasted with punitive and restrictive barriers. After supervision ends and such restrictions as random drug/alcohol testing are no longer instituted, the motivation for school may not be prevalent. It is therefore reasonable to assume that these individuals will be less likely to enroll in educational coursework after supervision and become a productive citizen if they have not completed some sort of education while being supervised by the criminal justice system.

The voices of opposition feel that people who commit criminal acts do not deserve educational advancement; they should be tossed aside, only permitted to sweep floors, clean windows, landscape, and perform other menial tasks for poverty wages. Tell the children of a former offender who is trying to make the world a better place for them

that their life must now be a life of poverty because of an irresponsible decision. Do children deserve to live in poverty because of the irresponsibility of the parent? This type of policy will cause undue harm not only to the former inmate but also to the child who had no control of the situation in the first place and will have no knowledge of a better life unless something is done to intervene in the continuous, vicious cycle. Who should bear the burden of not providing social services to individuals with a criminal record? There are solutions to poverty—and one good solution is to increase the economic viability of an individual and enable him to advance in the modern society, which could only be achieved through education.

Pryor and Thompkins note that “the advantages to having an education are boundless, especially for the formerly incarcerated” (458). It is true: education is paramount in overcoming the obstacles that the government has placed upon these individuals and reducing the stigma that society has attached to them. Trimbur also notes that the “Post-conviction penalties,

especially those that restrict eligibility for financial aid and professional licensure, and criminal records limit the means by which former prisoners can reintegrate” (267). Once released from prison, these individuals are expected to rebuild a life that was set on pause, in some instances decades prior. Employment is the primary factor that will allow them to rebuild their life. Without the benefit of an education, it will be difficult for former inmates to find employment that allows for a living wage and they will continue to be a burden on society by receiving funds distributed through the welfare system. Education is not a privilege in our society; it is a right. Inmates pay a debt to society by serving a determined amount of time locked within the confines of a prison. Upon release from prison, having paid their debt, it is time that former offenders exercise their right to continue their education, which will counteract the common misconceptions that are inappropriately applied to all former offenders and increase the opportunities available to them while reducing the likelihood that they will reoffend.

In the article “The Impact of an Associate’s Degree Program for Incarcerated Students: A Randomized Trial of the Correctional Education Association College of the Air Program,” published in the *Community College Review*, Stephen Meyer and Bruce Randel explore the possible connection between “participation in prison educational programs and participant outcomes.” Meyer and Randel write that prisoners who “participated in postsecondary education while incarcerated” were less likely to recidivate by as much as 46% compared to those who took no college classes during their time of incarceration (223). The authors also point out that by having an associate’s degree upon release from prison correlated with increased employment, reduced public assistance, and increased overall earnings. The former offenders who have the increased employment rates will have an easier time adjusting to post-incarceration life and will find that their time spent within the correctional facility was not wasted by continuing to reinforce old habits that brought them into the correctional system in

the first place.

Effective use of an individual’s time while incarcerated or under the supervision of a probation/parole officer is essential to the rehabilitation process. Currently, it is common practice for a judge to order anyone without a high school diploma or GED to attain this status during the period of incarceration or supervision. In today’s world, however, it is crucial that former inmates go further than this in order to become an individual capable of earning a wage high enough to live above the poverty line. Employment is good; however, when the only employment that they can attain is minimum wage, public assistance is needed to “foot the bill” and taxpayers will then continue to pay for these individuals long after their debt to society has been paid. In their *Public Administration Quarterly* article, “The Invisible Job Seeker: The Absence of Ex-Offenders in Discussions of Diversity Management,” Brandi Blesset and Marie Pryor point out that, even if the applicant’s criminal history has no or minimal relevance to the employment, many employers are

hesitant to hire a former offender due to fears of negative customer reactions and possible future victimization. This stigma around the criminal background has become a blanket policy that excludes anyone with a history of incarceration (438). In-prison education and, more importantly, continued education upon release is the key to reducing the stigma of a criminal record and finding meaningful employment. However, as Pryor and Thompkins point out, besides federal housing and student loan restrictions, probation/parole officers and mandated conditions of release sometimes place additional restrictions on released inmates that would make unattainable the goal of continuing their education (469).

Are all forms of employment appropriate for all felons and should financial aid depend on the form of crime committed? The answer to these questions creates a policy tightrope. While it is not appropriate for ex-criminals to be employed in all forms of employment, there are appropriate forms of employment for every individual. It would not be appropriate for a person with a violent

or deviant history to find employment where there would be access to vulnerable persons; however, the same individual may find employment within a skilled industrial setting that would not put the former inmate at a risk to reoffend. Some individuals may find that their criminal history may oddly enough offer expertise in certain fields. Take, for example, Frank Abagnale, quite possibly the most famous check forger and imposter to ever reform. Abagnale became a consultant to the FBI as well as the CEO of his own security-consulting firm. Although this outcome is extremely rare, an individual who has invested himself/herself in reform and personal transformation has the ability to use the life experiences gained through criminal activities in a positive way. A person convicted of drug use would not be a candidate for working in a pharmacy; however, the same person may have the people skills required for becoming an excellent substance abuse counselor. It is the offender's responsibility to know what form of employment would be appropriate for him/her as an individual. The human



# Serenity at Sunset

*Christine Studenroth (soft pastel)*



resources department should also have knowledge of high-risk types of individuals that should be excluded from employment. However, the employers should not use a blanket policy and refuse to hire anyone with a criminal record unless the disqualification is required by specific job-related conditions.

One easy-to-understand truth about current prison policies is, Pryor and Thompkins note, education is used as a form of “social control” within the prison, which, in turn, affects offender success in programs due to minor infractions that may interrupt the educational process or cause loss of funding for an individual (475-76). Transfers from one prison to another may remove inmates from an educational program that they are currently enrolled in. The completion of programs is critical to a successful reentry experience for most offenders. Many times, however, the next correctional institution does not offer an equivalent educational program. Pryor and Thompkins’ review of the history of correctional education—particularly the policies that have proven to be ineffective

in preparing inmates for their release, offers answers to the question of how to improve the ability of correctional education to serve those that would benefit most and create a modern “Golden Age of correctional education.”

Education alone will not solve recidivism, but numerous scientific research studies have concluded that education reduces recidivism, increases earning potential, reduces reliance on public support, expands employment opportunities, as well as improve the self-esteem of the individual. The first step, however, should be to better understand the people that crowd the U.S. prisons, thousands of whom are released each year into “a world where they have failed before—with the added disadvantage of a prison record. More than two-thirds will be rearrested within three years; half will go back in prison” (Western). These are high-risk individuals—and education is a pivotal factor in equipping them with skills that would meet the demands of the modern labor market, reducing the stigma around incarceration, and making their transition

into the community successful; education is the key to helping them cope with the complexities of the life on the outside.

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# Value of Color

*Cody Hudzik (photograph)*



# I-Beams 4 U

*Cody Hudzik (photograph)*



# Unscripted Symphony (A Composition of Psychosis)

Catherine J. Mahony

## Movement 1

I curled my sweaty hand into a fist and breathed deeply before rapping on the heavy oak door. I had rehearsed what I was about to say a thousand times in my head, but the slightest external noise would slice through my lies and distract me, forcing me to start reading my internal script from the beginning again. I ran through my lines quickly, one last time, as if I had just pressed fast forward in my mind. I tried to place them back neatly into a logical and believable sequence.

I pushed all of my weight against the door, taking note of the precautions the facility took concerning security and the intricate and most precise details that went into making it difficult for patients to gain admittance to certain areas of the ward. By the time an unruly and resistant patient tried

to burst through the head psychiatrist's door, the security camera would alert staff of the ensuing danger and the patient would be restrained.

I felt the beady black curvature of the eye in the sky glaring at me from overhead. It taunted me, winking its red gleaming ocular lens in my direction. Despite its efforts to unnerve me, I proceeded confidently and took a seat in the hard plastic chair in front of the large mahogany desk at the far end of the office. Dr. Paroe was either gazing out the window or taking an afternoon nap. I was not quite sure which, because the only thing visible to me was the back of his head, adorned with thick gray locks that curled around the lobes of his ears and his oversized hands that were limply draped over the arms of his chair, his massive fingers making them look like upholstery-covered matchsticks.

Just his looming presence intimidated me, but I needed to set aside my insecurities and convince him that I was ready to venture out into the realm of the "normal." The realm of the "normal" was where people walked to the

beat of a steady, organized rhythm. The realm of the “normal” was where people never deviated from a structured set of beliefs, formulated by a harmonized society. To blend in, I needed to say the opposite of everything I had believed and would believe until the disconcerting staccato noises in my head subsided, once and for all. This is why I had been up until 3am., reciting what I thought were the thoughts of someone who could be deemed sane enough to be released into the world again after three months of being committed.

The doctor cleared his throat and without even turning around began questioning me.

“So, I hear that you think you are ready to be released. Tell me what brings you to this conclusion?”

I tried to swallow the large lump that had lodged itself in between my vocal chords and my ability to speak. I shifted uneasily in my chair and its legs squealed like a sliding trombone. Suddenly, the rain outside started to pound against the window pane, providing the percussion. The electric heater hummed—a harmonica of radiating

warmth. I tried desperately to drown out the symphony of insanity that was being arranged in my mind and reassemble my script. The doctor then turned abruptly in his chair. He was silent and just waved his hand like an erratic conductor, motioning for me to continue. So I began to play.

“Well, I greatly appreciate the efforts that were put forth by you and your kind staff here to assist me in recovering from my episode. My medication is working wonderfully (drip, drip, swoosh, swoosh).” I moved my head slightly to the left, looking past the doctor so I could see the melodic drops as they cascaded down the glass, composing an elaborate adaptation of a musical masterpiece, one that only I could see and hear. Then his gray curls, intruded upon my line of barred vision like wispy clefs, and our eyes met.

“You were saying?”

“Yes. Well, I greatly appreciate the efforts that were put forth by you and your kind staff to assist me in recovering from my episode. My medication is working wonderfully and I must say that I have not had any intrusive





# Rebirth

*Rafael Nunez*  
(acrylic)

thoughts in quite some time now (swoosh, swoosh, drip, drip). I really think it is crucial for everyone involved that I be reunited with my daughter (drip, drip, swoosh, swoosh).” I gripped the sides of my chair, trying desperately to focus on what I had to say, what I needed to say in order to be released, but in my head the walls of the room were collapsing, the doctor’s voice was fading into a low murmur, and all I could hear were the drops. They echoed inside of my brain and invaded crevices normally reserved for logical thoughts.

A switch suddenly flipped and I leapt from my chair, shouting in a climactic octave, “They took her you know. They took her right out of my arms and they could be anywhere by now; Canada, Mexico, fucking China for all I know. I think it is a cryptic code, the symphony that they inserted within the rain drops. If I can just figure out the embedded pattern in the transcription, then I can find out where they are hiding her.”

“Symphony? Encryption? Okay, well I understand your sense of urgency in wanting to locate your daughter, but I assure you she

is safe. I am going to increase your Seroquel by another 50mg. We can talk in a few days and then see how you feel.”

I sat back in my seat defeated; despite my hours of rehearsal, I still diverted from my carefully crafted script.

## Movement 2

I lay still after what seemed like hours of fighting, exhausted from struggling against the leather straps which encircled my wrists and ankles, fastening me to the hospital bed. My jaw ached and my teeth felt as if they were about to shatter like beaten and battered ivory keys on an overplayed piano. I could still taste the metal on my tongue and feel the edge of the square buckle in my mouth, from succeeding in freeing one arm with the perseverance of gnashing enamel. A nurse was then assigned to my bedside to keep a closer eye on me.

“Come on now Sweetie, settle down. Ain’t no use in trying to get outta those again cause you can’t bite through the lock on that door too,” the new night nurse said to me as she nervously raised the corners of her lips.

I could tell she was new, because her

face was one I did not recognize. Her skin was the color of coffee and it was taut like a snare drum, not yet worn and weathered from her work. Her deep brown eyes still had the sparkle and glimmer that would come with the satisfaction of truly believing she was making a difference and helping people in her chosen profession. I remember faces mostly. I could vividly recall every deep-seated wrinkle, grimace, and furrowed brow as they exerted every ounce of strength they could muster to wrangle my limbs into those belts.

I ignored her advice and as soon as she lowered her eyes to survey an article in some outdated waiting room magazine, I began wiggling my wrist again to try and loosen the leather strap just enough to bring it towards my mouth. No one understood my desperation. No one there could possibly conceive what it felt. I was trapped in a locked unit, not knowing where my child was.

I think my utter disregard for her presence took her by surprise and she jumped out of her chair, dropping her crumpled up

reading material to the floor. She secured my arm as quickly as her fumbling fingers could manage.

“Now, please just stop. You don’t want them to come in here, do ya? I only got a few hours left and I don’t wanna be at this all night wit ya hun.” She stood directly in front of me, blocking the view from the nurse’s station.

“Please, you don’t understand. I need to find her. You have to help me get out of here.” My eyes began to fill with tears.

“What on earth are you talkin’ bout?”

“My baby, they stole my baby. Please, I’m begging you, please. Help me get out of these things!”

I could see her eyes getting wet with empathy and her shoulders drop with pity. I began writhing uncontrollably, violently arching my back and craning my neck. My wrists and ankles were on fire with friction and my puffy, red cheeks were stinging as salted streams poured from my blood shot eyes. Within a fraction of a second I felt bony elbows pressing down hard on my sternum.

“God damn it Lucy, move outta the way.

How did you not see her getting so out of control right in front of your face?” The charge nurse scolded her, unsympathetic to her lack of experience.

I remember him well. His hair was blonde and thinning. His dark blue eyes would pierce me from over the top of his gold wire-framed glasses as he pinned me down on the nights I was “non-compliant.” Regardless of who was working the overnight shift or how many security guards were called into my room after I “acted out,” he seemed to always position himself in the front of the group, ensuring he was the one directly on top of me, squeezing my wrists just a little tighter and breathing in my ear just a little heavier than the others. I could see the beads of sweat dripping from his eyebrows and as they fell on my exposed skin they reverberated like cymbals crashing on bare linoleum.

The penetrative bass in his voice echoed in my head and rendered me temporarily deaf. I could feel his repulsive excitement, pressed hard against my thigh as he reveled in the control he had over me— a sedated and incapacitated mental patient, *under* his

care. Then, once I was detained, he would force the long tip of the dripping syringe into my buttocks, and stand back and grin as the rigid muscles in my face fell, my fists opened, and my helpless fingers lost their grip.

He leaned in close after the room was clear and whispered in my ear, delivering loaded threats on his hot, putrid breath. “Who is gonna believe a crazy bitch like you? You are never getting your daughter back. You might as well get *real* used to me. Me and you, we are gonna be like this.” He crossed his middle and fore finger tightly and shot me a crooked wink as my eye lids grew heavy. His voice decrescendoeed in waves and then I passed out.

### Movement 3

“Jesus, what’s the deal with this one?” I overheard the police officer say to the security guard stationed at my door.

“We found her walking her baby in a stroller, coming back towards her place of residence around 9 am. The baby seemed okay, but she was rambling on about some contest that the people who lived inside of the radio told her about. She said that she

was just following their instructions. The lady in the apartment next to her called the super of the building, because she heard her chanting in the middle of the night. She had come out in the morning to go to work and found ‘some God damn alter erected on the floor outside her door.’ When we finally got the whole story and approached the patient, attempting to remove the kid from her, she started fighting us. This woman has completely fucking lost it, if you ask me.”

Somehow during the course of the struggle I had to be hog tied. My tail bone dug into the frigid tile as I rocked back and forth. I was waiting for someone to come in and tell me that this had all been some horrible practical joke and I could go home to my baby. I felt like a fish in a bowl—a patient in a psychiatric observation center, where they evaluated the mentally ill to determine which facility would best suit their individual needs. The staff members’ wide eyes peered through thick glass as they watched me intently and feverishly wrote on memo pads. I could hear the tips of their pens shrieking across crisp paper with the

heightened frenzy of maddened composers. I could see the words floating off the tablets and forming their first impressions of me, in tiny notes on ledger lines above their heads.

I wondered for a moment how I had actually gotten there. I closed my eyes tightly to try and block out the overwhelming stimuli that were invading my mind, so I could focus. Then, the events of that morning began playing in my head to the soundtrack of Chopin’s “Funeral March.”

My face was pressed against hard asphalt. Knees dug into my spine. My arms were forced behind my back. I felt the sharp tips of my shoulder blades meet as the cold metal was clicked around my wrists. Like an off-kilter view from a tilted camera, I saw the back of her tiny body in the arms of a stranger, who was dressed in a neatly creased blue uniform. He bounced her up and down as she whimpered. I was helpless. They took her from me and I could not do a thing about it. I then manifested the most guttural roar I could conjure from the core of gut. I could feel the veins bulge in my neck and the furious spit fly from my lips.



“I didn’t do anything wrong! Give her back to me! Don’t! Don’t! What is happening? What did I do? Gimme my baby, please!”

My wails chimed with the cries of my infant daughter and the screaming sirens which resonated from the police car I was about to be taken away in—all of which resounded inside my ear drums creating a torturous swan song. She got smaller and smaller as I was being driven further and further away from her. She disappeared in the rear view mirror along with my grip on reality. My official diagnosis was Postpartum Psychosis.

On the day I was released, the chain-linked gates surrounding the hospital got smaller and smaller as I was driven further and further away from the locked unit. I saw the faint silhouette of a conductor set his baton down on a podium and then fade out as a heavy curtain fell over that mental institution. I turned around in my seat and faced forward for the first time in over three months. I asked the driver to turn the radio on and I was almost certain that we both

heard the same tune. His massive fingers tapped the wheel that was about to steer me home to my daughter.

### The Overture

She is getting bigger and bigger every day. I stared at her in the audience, her little eight-year-old hand giving me the thumbs up as I proceeded up the aisle to receive my college degree. The notes of “Pomp and Circumstance” drifting through the air were overwhelming, but all I could focus on was her face, beaming in the crowd. In a few months I will sit in the auditorium of her elementary school as she carefully positions her fingers, nervously preparing to play her first song on the cello. I will listen proudly as I hear the symphony she will create.

The whispers of “You are never getting your daughter back,” which haunted me for years, are now drowned out with the melodic voice of my daughter saying, “Mommy come and give me a kiss good night.”

# Songbird

Samuel Charowsky

The birds woke her. As she lay asleep, their calls infiltrated her dreams, forcing her back to the world of the waking. A melodic song coursed through her ears as she stared into the predawn darkness. She did not need to look at the clock beside her bed to know what time it was. Five thirty, the same as every morning. The same dream, too. These were the constants of Joanna's life.

Her final dream of the night was always an echo of her past. She stood behind the curtain as the emcee joked with the audience, a cigarette in hand to calm her nerves. Soon his jokes would end and he would begin to introduce her. An unnecessary routine. Everyone in the audience knew her name. She was the reason they were there after all. The audience clapped. The curtain parted. Somewhere in the darkness, a piano began its song, and soon after the first few notes went waving through the air, the spotlights came to life and turned toward her. "Fly Me to the

Moon," her usual opener. Then, as she opened her mouth to sing, only silence came out. That was when she heard the birds.

Suddenly, her alarm clock blared to life, blasting with it the sultry tones of Frank Sinatra. Five thirty. Rolling out of bed one arm reached for the alarm and another for her housecoat. Today was a big day; she had to be ready.

Fumbling through the darkness, she found her bathroom. Her Aunt Marie had always claimed that the best way to keep her voice strong was to gargle steaming water immediately after waking up. "It washes away the filth of the night," she used to say. In the end that had done Jo little good, but she was a woman of habit—a woman of constants.

The rest of her preparations were just as routine. Brushing her teeth, taking a shower, doing her hair—none of this was unique but all of it infinitely more important for a stage performer than the common woman. Jo frowned at that. Could she really call herself a stage performer? She used to have a team of attendants whose sole purpose was to make her presentable—with the benefits of the



finest products money could buy. Now it was just Jo and a mirror, using a two-dollar-can of hairspray she bought at the supermarket.

By the time she had finished, the sun had risen far into the sky sending streaks of light penetrating through her window. The birds had quieted now, their stomachs full from the fresh morning worms. She pushed open the glass and stared at the sky. Not a cloud in sight. A good omen.

Victor rang her doorbell at noon, reliable as always. In her past life, he had been her piano man, always ready to play the beat she needed. They used to joke that he was the real star and she was just his backup. That was all in the past when she still told jokes. These days Victor parlayed his musical talent at local bars. Without Jo to complement him, he had gone from a world star to just another figure in the crowd.

She could see the concern on his face as soon as she opened the door. “Are you sure you want to do this?” was all he asked. She simply nodded affirmatively. He sighed and headed towards his car.

Victor had worked with her long enough

to know there was no point trying to dissuade her. The doctors had not been so wise. They had warned her not to smoke—that not only was it bad for her lungs but it was bad for her throat. As a singer, her throat was her life, and with every cigarette she lit, she endangered that life more than the last. She did not listen, of course, too caught up in the glamor of Broadway to pay attention to their incessant yammering.

Unfortunately, it eventually proved true when they found a tumor in her throat. She was lucky, they said, that it had been discovered so soon. They managed to safely remove the cancerous mass without having to remove her voice box. She did not think she was lucky, though. The surgery had left scars, and while she could still talk, it had damaged her ability to sing. Without it, she lacked a livelihood and, in the competitive world of stage acts, she was quickly pushed to the side and forgotten.

Now she was sitting in Victor’s car, their instruments thumping around in their cases behind them. It was not a big gig, just a party an old friend was holding for his wife. He

had asked her if she knew anyone who could perform and she had volunteered herself. Taken aback, he could do nothing but stutter out agreement that if she were capable he would be delighted.

Once again, a doctor warned her against it. Putting so much stress on her vocal chords could cause internal bleeding and destroy what little ability for speech she had left. Just like the first time, though, his warnings did not discourage her. She was done living like this. A voice that could not sing was useless.

They pulled into the driveway at quarter to two. They were not scheduled until two fifteen, which left them plenty of time to prepare. Victor handled unloading the car and setting up the gear while she went to check in with their host.

Jo found him sitting by the food talking with some guests. His shirt had been stained from the grease of the grill; he was holding a half-finished bottle of beer in one hand. Suddenly, she felt a wave of embarrassment wash over her. Here she was, a woman who had sung for the most exclusive of societies, rendered so low as to entertain at some

backyard barbeque. She was half-tempted to grab Victor and leave out of sheer pride.

Before Jo could act, he saw her and welcomed her to the party. He was nothing but gracious, causing her embarrassment to morph into shame. This was a fate of her own doing, she knew. She had chosen to smoke rigorously despite knowing the risks. She should be grateful for any chance she got. Who was she to think herself too good for such an occasion? Aunt Marie would have scolded her for such disgraceful thoughts. “It’s not about the venue—it’s about the song. Anywhere can be Broadway if you sing beautifully enough,” she could almost hear her say.

Her host must have seen the unrest on her face. “Is this still ok? If you can’t do it, it’s fine.”

“No, I can do it,” she whispered. “If you’ll excuse me, though, I think it’s time to begin.”

Jo did not give him a chance to answer. She turned and headed towards the area reserved for their act. She found Victor sitting on an old wooden chair with the sheet music opened before him. He had chosen to use a

# Building Blocks

*Karleigh Knapp (photograph)*



trumpet, an instrument from his youth. “Not as great-sounding as the piano,” she thought, “but far more mobile.” While she preferred to simply sing today, she opted to include a guitar in the performance. As Victor would be occupied with his brass, it fell to her to both play and sing.

As she walked up to the microphone, the crowd that had gathered around began to grow silent. No one here was ignorant of her history, nor of the importance of this day. She had not publicly sung in over five years—and thought she never would again. No doubt, there were many uninvited guests at this party who had shown up simply to see her performance or her lack of one, should that be the case. As she stood at the microphone, the whole of the crowd focused solely on her.

A younger woman might have been put off by the attention, but Jo had performed before crowds of thousands. To her this small backyard gathering of a couple of dozen was nothing more than a warmup before breakfast. Yet, she could not help but feel a nervousness overtake her as Victor began the introduction. She was now at a crossroads in

life. Should she fail here, should her voice, which had been so scarcely used in the years prior, fail her now, she would resign herself to her fate. She would put away her costumes, her makeup, and her dreams of returning to the grand stage. She would accept a life without song—that she had decided the moment she agreed to the performance. But if she should succeed, her voice would defy all the doctors and therapists who had declared with such certainty its deficiency—then her dreams might yet live on. As the sound of the trumpet led into the beginning of her lyrics, she opened her mouth to sing. All mingling in one sweet burst of melody—she heard the birds.

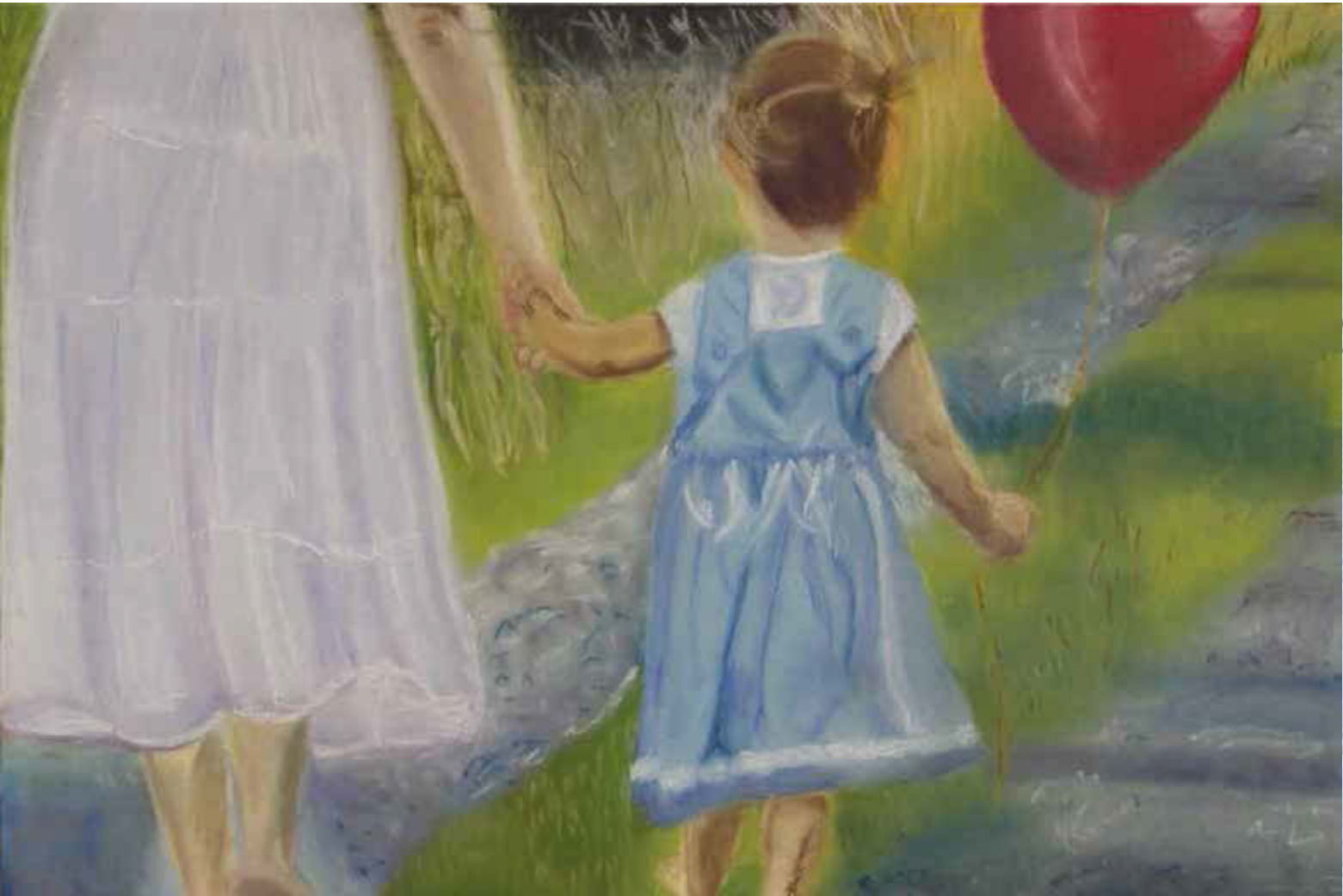
**Sand Castle Woman**  
**A Poetic Response to “My Mother’s Secret,”**  
**an Essay by Stephanie J. Andersen**

**Catherine J. Mahony**

Out of the waves she came,  
Pulled by a child’s earthbound hand  
Like a strong-willed tide refusing  
To succumb to the moon’s fixed phases.  
Dunes form from imperfect storms—  
Loose sand,  
Stiff winds,  
And the longing to be Still.  
Sandcastle woman,  
Slipped through fingers  
Until salted tears tamped down  
Parchment memories  
No wave could erode.  
Moonlit silhouette,  
Set free from  
Cloud shadows that loomed  
Like narratives without resolution.  
Stallions fall at the mercy of an albatross  
Whose wings glide over settled seas.  
Into the sky she flew,  
Released by a mother’s earthbound hand.



Little Blue Dress *Christine Studenroth*  
(soft pastel)



Innocence

*Karleigh Knapp*  
*(photograph)*





# Memories: A Becoming

Jami Gresh

Memories are like wild beasts. They lie in wait silently in the corners of my mind. They are unpredictable. I never know when they are going to attack, to throw me down and paralyze me.

I try to condition my memories, to tame them so they will appease and quiet my mind. At times, I feel that I have come so close. But that is just it: so close is not close enough. In the end, they will always rear up; they will always bite.

“If you put the hot sauce on your spaghetti, we’ll do your chores for the weekend,” Leah said. Her twin, Anna, stood close by with her arms crossed and nodded along to confirm it was the truth. My sisters were bored. We had a day off from school because of the snow and freezing rain. I was lucky enough to be their rainy day entertainment.

I did it.

I sprinkled the hot sauce on my spaghetti noodles, not because I wanted my chores done for me, but because I wanted to prove something. I think I had hoped that it would gain their approval. But at seven years old, most of my thoughts seemed to be non-verbal with no clear labels. I just knew that they were fourteen and thought themselves to be too cool. I wanted to be too cool, too.

“Let’s put on a little more,” Leah said as she took the bottle from my hands and tilted it over my plate.

I did not argue. Instead, I propped myself up higher in the chair. I sat on my knees and watched the reddish-orange sauce sprinkle out over my noodles in tiny constipated drops.

“Okay, Leah, that’s enough.” Anna took the bottle from Leah, twisted on the cap and set it on the kitchen counter.

They sat across the table from me and watched with anxious eyes as I twirled the noodles around my fork. I was not scared. I had had salsa before. Probably not a big difference, right? I raised the fork to my mouth – and that is the last calm moment of

the hot sauce incident.

My mouth was on fire. My insides were melting, I was sure of it. I cried as I spat and coughed as I choked. My eyes watered and my nose ran. I could feel the mess of wetness on my face. All I wanted to do was scratch my throat out, but Leah held my arms above my head as Anna patted my back.

“Don’t choke,” they demanded. “Just breathe! Shit, whatta we do?”

I gagged a few times, felt a strong grip wrap around my arm, and a force drag me to the kitchen sink.

I threw up.

Some of the pain was gone, but I still cried just as hard. I stood by the sink scared and betrayed. I covered my weeping eyes with my hands until something cold gently tapped my lips. I opened my eyes to see a glass of water. Michael hovered the glass in front of my face, but his glare was sideways in the direction of our sisters. I accepted the water and appreciated every swallow as Michael tried to figure out what had gone wrong.

Anna was the first to admit the truth: “We’re so sorry. We dared her to put that

on her spaghetti.” She stepped back as she pointed to the bottle on the counter. “We didn’t think it would be that bad.”

Michael looked at the hot sauce that was brought to his attention. He did not react to it at first. He took the empty glass from me and bent down to wipe my face with a warm, wet paper towel. He touched the back of his fingers underneath my chin and gently guided my face towards the ceiling. He tilted his head from one side to the next as he inspected my face – making sure he had cleaned up the mess of tears, sweat, and snot. With a pat on my head, he gestured to the table and said, “Go have a seat, Squirt.” He smiled softly. The slight upward pull of the corners of his mouth were reassuring. Though my head still spun and I had not yet fully caught my breath, I knew it was going to be okay.

My brother turned to our sisters and stared at them. He stood still and silent for what seemed like forever. His silence must have been terribly frightening to Leah and Anna. They stood still as well and did not say a word – a rare moment for my teenage



## Sculpture

*Rafael Nunez  
(graphite pencil)*

sisters. I watched them from my chair. They stared at him and waited while he picked up the bottle and read the label.

Finally, he spoke, "Red Devil." He put the bottle in the cabinet. "You gave that to a seven-year-old?"

I turned to the twins as they stood there quietly. I knew the whole story. After all, I was very much a part of it, but I was not willing to take any sort of blame. I was innocent and I wanted retribution for their crime. With my brother around, they were not so cool anymore. "I'm telling Mom."

"Oh, shut-up," Leah hissed. "You did it. We didn't make you."

"Yeah, I'm sure it was her idea," Michael said. He walked to the edge of the kitchen. "Come on, Squirt, Rob's coming over. You can hang with us, buddy."

I gladly hopped off the chair and pranced to his side.

"Rob's coming over in this weather?" asked Leah.

"His Camaro can't make it through the snow and ice," Anna added.

I waited next to Michael, hiding slightly

behind his legs, while he put the twins in their place. "Mind your own business," he told them. "And clean this shit up before Mom and Dad get home, or else I'm telling them what you did."

Knowing I had the protection of my big brother, I stuck my tongue out at my sisters. Leah glared at me while she made a fist and pretended to lunge in my direction. She probably would have come after me if I had stayed, but I ran away quickly. I caught up to my brother and followed him up the steps.

The twins kept their distance from us for the rest of that day. They cleaned up the leftover food from the table and my puke from the sink. Michael kept his word. They did what he had told them to do and he did not tell our parents about the hot sauce incident.

Rob's Camaro made it to our house despite the twins' doubts that it could. I enjoyed the rest of the snowy afternoon with my brother and his friend. I was always granted access to Michael's room. It was the highest privilege in my little mind, because no one, except for his friends, was allowed in his room. I knew



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Boxman

*Sarah Belles*  
(watercolor)





Prometheus

I was also an exception. I always had been. Incidents between me and my sisters were a common occurrence. Perhaps knowing I had a safe hideaway was the reason I was always daring to get involved in those incidents that did nothing but escalate quickly and, for me, usually painfully.

We sat on the floor of Michael's smoke-filled room as a chilly breeze came through the open window. Marlboro Reds. It was a secret; I could not tell our parents. We listened to Bon Jovi's new album, *Slippery When Wet*, and later, Rob played the air-guitar to some Twisted Sister as my brother flipped through car magazines.

He picked out a few hot rods and asked, "What about this one, Squirt? You think Mom and Dad will buy me this one for my birthday?"

"What about the red Nikes you told Mommy you wanted?" I asked, not understanding wishful thinking. I did not know that he did not actually expect to get a car in a month for his seventeenth birthday. But what I knew that Mommy had already bought the red Nike high-tops. They were

hiding in her closet. It was another secret I had to keep.

"Well, I still want the Nikes and the dirt bike, but I want this Thunderbird, too."

"Yeah, that'd be rad." I had heard my brother and the twins use that word before – rad. I hoped I had used it right. It sure felt cool to say.

Michael smiled playfully and ruffled the hair on the top of my head with his hand before he went back to his magazine.

I could not wait to be a teenager, to dress like the twins – like the girls in the music videos. I could not wait to have all the things that teenagers had and know all the things that teenagers knew. One day I would have my own record player and maybe one day I would get a Thunderbird, too. I happily wished and dreamed the afternoon away as I watched my brother and Rob.

My parents came home a little late that day. The weather, they said, was terrible.

"Should I make spaghetti?" my mom asked as she looked in the cabinet for ideas for dinner.

Flashbacks came rushing through my



mind and an awful taste began to develop in my mouth as I remembered a few hours earlier. “Yuck, I don’t like spaghetti,” I cringed.

“Since when?” my mom asked as she chuckled at my usual fickleness.

The twins sat at the table and simultaneously looked up from their homework. They both scowled at me as a warning not to say anything about the afternoon’s events.

“Since now,” I answered. I checked to make sure my mom’s back was turned before I made a hissing noise at my sisters and swiped a claw in their direction. I scampered off to the living room to watch TV with Michael, Rob, and my dad.

My dad and Rob sat on opposite ends of the couch and my brother was sprawled out on the brown recliner with his hands behind his head.

“Hey, kiddo,” my dad said. He patted the couch cushion next to him, inviting me to join them as they watched *Mash* on the TV.

“Hi, Daddy,” I said, but I passed by him. I crawled up onto the recliner and

squeezed in next to my brother. He inched over a little so I could rest comfortably between him and the left arm of the chair. I laid my head on his chest and my eyes became heavy as I listened to the sturdy rhythm of Michael’s heartbeat.

That memory is perfect, controlled—the last of its kind. Now memories are complicated, frustrating, and overpowering. They taunt me. They flash and fade like fragments, choppy and quick—with missing pieces.

It had been a few nights that my mom had stopped cooking. Every night I would ride along with her and my dad to the corner sandwich shop to get food for me and my sisters. It was always cold and dark when we went, and my mom was suddenly strict about wearing seatbelts—even for such a short drive.

I sat in the back of the Jeep and asked the same question every night: “When’s Michael coming home?”

“Soon,” they would answer together. I would smile.



Orchid  
*Cody Hudzik*  
*(photograph)*

# Roses in Ice

*Delaney Muller*  
(*photograph*)



I never worried about the downward pull of the corners of their mouths, the dark purple and blue circles under their eyes, and the slow-paced daze they had suddenly fallen into.

The twins did not come out of their room much, and when they did, they were much quicker to snap at me. It was not long before I stopped bothering them all together.

I can recall a cold, white room. The furniture was red, itchy, and held together by a steel frame. There were piles of magazines that held no interest to me on the table. The screen on the TV that hung on the concrete wall was fuzzy and up too high for me to reach. No sound played from it anyway. The shiny tiled floor seemed overly hard, but I loved the clink-clank sound that everyone's shoes made on it as they walked or tapped their feet impatiently.

I was impatient and antsy.

My aunts and uncles, who had just been here a few weeks before for Christmas, had flown back in from California and Texas. Usually that meant fun activities and new Barbie dolls. But everyone was so tired—too

tired.

“Come on,” my aunt said to me. She stood above me with her hand out. I took her hand and noticed that we were following the rest of the family. We were not leaving. We were going deeper into the cold building. Hopefully, my mother would meet us where we were going.

We stopped in a thin corridor that seemed to go on forever. It was dimly lit by flickering fluorescent lights that added a tint of green to everything, but everything was still white—perfectly white.

I climbed up and sat on a narrow bed that was pushed against the wall of the hallway. My legs dangled over the edge and I swung my feet from side to side.

The grown-ups and the twins gathered together – talking, crying, and breathing so heavily it seemed like a struggle. I could see their chests moving in and out and their eyes watering. I had seen people cry before because they are happy. I guessed they were also excited about seeing Michael. That is why we were there. Michael was coming home.

I sat on the bed against the wall and watched my family huddle together—such an infinite hallway and yet they all stayed so close. Hands touching arms. Hands rubbing backs. Hands holding hands. Soon, my mother appeared. She walked towards us. When the grown-ups saw her, they froze. Some even held their breath. I stretched my neck to see if Michael was with her. He was supposed to be.

My mother's teeth were showing through a distorted grin; her eyes were wet and swollen. The tissue in her hand was squished in a tiny ball. Her feet stopped at the edge of our small gathering and she made funny noises as she tried to choke out words. Words that sting. Words I would never forget.

The worst part about never forgetting is always remembering. Once the sharp end of the chisel meets the place where memories reside, the words are there forever – etched in deep, but rearing up and clawing through the weak moments of delight. These words that I heard I hate. I hold them close though, because they are a part of me, a part of who I

am and who I will become.

I had heard my mother's voice every day and it was not her voice. It was a battle between her mouth and her mind, between her lungs and her heart. Finally, she triumphed. She had fought so hard to say the words: "Michael's dead."

The twins were right. Rob's Camaro could not make it in the snow and ice. My mother had told them not to go, but they went anyway. The red Camaro hit the car in front of them and Michael flew from the backseat through the front windshield. Nobody had told me this, at the time, but I overheard my sister, Leah, telling someone: "Brain damage, black ice." I was not sure what they meant.

We walked down the narrow hallway as a family, close together, and my dad held my hand. We came to a brown door where the sullen-faced doctor waited. He gestured towards the room behind the door and said, "Please, take your time."

Somewhere in between the sadness and commotion, my hand ended up in my mother's. We were last to enter the brightly lit

room that my brother, engulfed in white, lay in the center of.

Quiet machines surrounded him. His eyes were closed and tubes were up his nose. His hair was flat and his earrings were missing. He would never know that he had gotten what he asked for—that the dirt bike was in the garage and the red Nikes were in the closet.

“Say good-bye to Michael,” my mother said, squeezing my hand.

I went to walk toward him, but she held me back, gently. She stood still and did not release my hand. I looked up at her. Her face was apologetic, her eyes welling and overflowing with tears, but she shook her head.

I looked back to my brother. His eyes were still closed.

“Bye, Michael.”



# Lullaby

Lauren Jones

And what I love are the colors.  
The blurred lines that remind us someone is alive somewhere.  
That we are indeed as small as we feel.  
Cruising through those desolate streets.  
While everyone is asleep.

My heavy eyelids that droop  
Lulled to sleep by the melodic drum  
My favorite song now a lullaby.  
And now I realize why people can't sleep.

Their mind too noisy.  
Due to the constant critique.  
But if they could only see the world from this perspective  
They would see  
Nothing to fear of quiet little you, quiet little me.



# The Roses and the Poppies

## J. David Roslin

Look at us said, the red rose—we are so beautiful and bright.  
We are the ones, everyone loves; are we not a sight?  
Our petals as soft as the wind, on a summer's night,  
We come in different colors, yellow, pink, and white.  
We were made to be laid before the thrones of Emperor, Queen, and King.  
When secret lovers meet in hidden halls, we are what they bring.  
Our thorns spark the poets and make the artists feel alive.  
Our fragrances tell everyone that we have arrived.  
Tis true, said the Poppy, that you have captured all the fame.  
Stole the love from many who lived their lives in envy—in vain.  
While we the lowly Poppy ask nothing more than this.  
To spread out over hallowed field and grow in silent bliss.  
We cover the graves of the forgotten men—soldiers sleeping in the earth.  
To mark the places where they fell, showing what they're worth.  
When the rose's petals start to die and colors all do fade,  
On the battlefields our blooms will stand, to show where they were laid.  
So that they may be remembered; that's why we were made.



# Woman on a Lake

*Jose Rodriguez*  
(oil on canvas)

# My Learning is *Curved*

Catherine J. Mahony

Chalk board screeches like sirens in a paper cup  
pressed to my ear.  
Pay attention!  
Focus is crucial!  
Lesson one: I squint hard  
To absorb, but there's a raindrop cascading down the pane in my peripheral:  
My eyes' corners— Venus flytraps  
for things that shouldn't really matter, but do.  
 $Y=MX+B$  is the problem,  
but I'm solving for the reason why the girl next to me  
is clicking her pen incessantly.  
Trying to assign my mind to the task at hand—  
hands tremble.  
I wonder if they notice,

notice that I pretend to understand.  
But really, I need to read that sentence 3 times, 3 times, 3 times,  
before it looks like anything other  
than a chain of unfortunate tiles  
handed to me  
In a jumbled game of Scrabble.  
My brain of gears,  
    unaligned with the lines that guide others.  
I sit in a classroom  
Designed to cut out paper dolls  
Without deviating from the p\*e\*r\*f\*o\*r\*a\*t\*i\*o\*n.  
I sit in hole-punched margins,  
dangling my feet,  
toes barely scraping the surface of college-ruled expectations.

# The Gambler, the Rambler, the Solitary Man

## Joshua Colon

The Gambler makes his move,  
The Rambler calls him out.

Their targets are set,  
Their guns are steady.

The Gambler makes his move,  
*Lucky 7*  
Rolls again.

The Rambler is caught off guard.  
Conversation is gone, dead,  
For now.

The Rambler returns,  
After one night's sleep.  
Fresh on Déjà vu,  
Lacking in luck.

The Gambler continues,  
Hitting on 13,  
Fortune in his favor,  
He rules this world.  
*Unlucky 22*

The Rambler sits patiently,  
Waiting for his time.  
The seconds tick,  
His finger taps.  
*Lucky 21*

The Gambler sits patiently,  
Because he knows what happens next.

*Lucky 21*  
Stalemate.

The Rambler starts to unravel,  
The gambling man made him look like a fool.  
He rushes his way through the next hand,  
But the Déjà vu is a lie.

*Unlucky 25*

The Gambler gloats,  
Collecting his earning.  
He turns to the rambling man,  
“Be sure to come back again.”

The Rambler goes home,  
But cannot sleep.  
Obsessed with discovering a way to win,  
He doesn't catch a single wink.

The Gambler celebrates his good fortune,  
With women and wine.  
Nothing can tear him down  
From the Beauty on cloud nine.

The Rambler has an idea.  
Deception is at the heart of success.  
Distracting and Misleading are the hands.

# Inside My Head

*Christine Studenroth  
(watercolor)*



Today, his bad luck ends.  
The Gambler enters,  
Like a King on a carriage.  
With money in his pocket,  
And Beauty by his side,  
There is no need for despair.  
The Rambler has set his course,  
The showdown ends today.  
The Gambler focuses his eyes  
On his nemesis.  
The Rambler begins his bluff.  
His hands,  
Overshadowed by his heart.  
“Let’s raise the stakes.”  
The Gambler, before obliging,  
Calls it a day.  
Sitting back,  
Sipping away.  
The Rambler has the upper hand,  
He’s about to gleam with joy.



A Solitary Man,  
Sitting at the table,  
Opens the door to a full house.

*Lucky Winner*

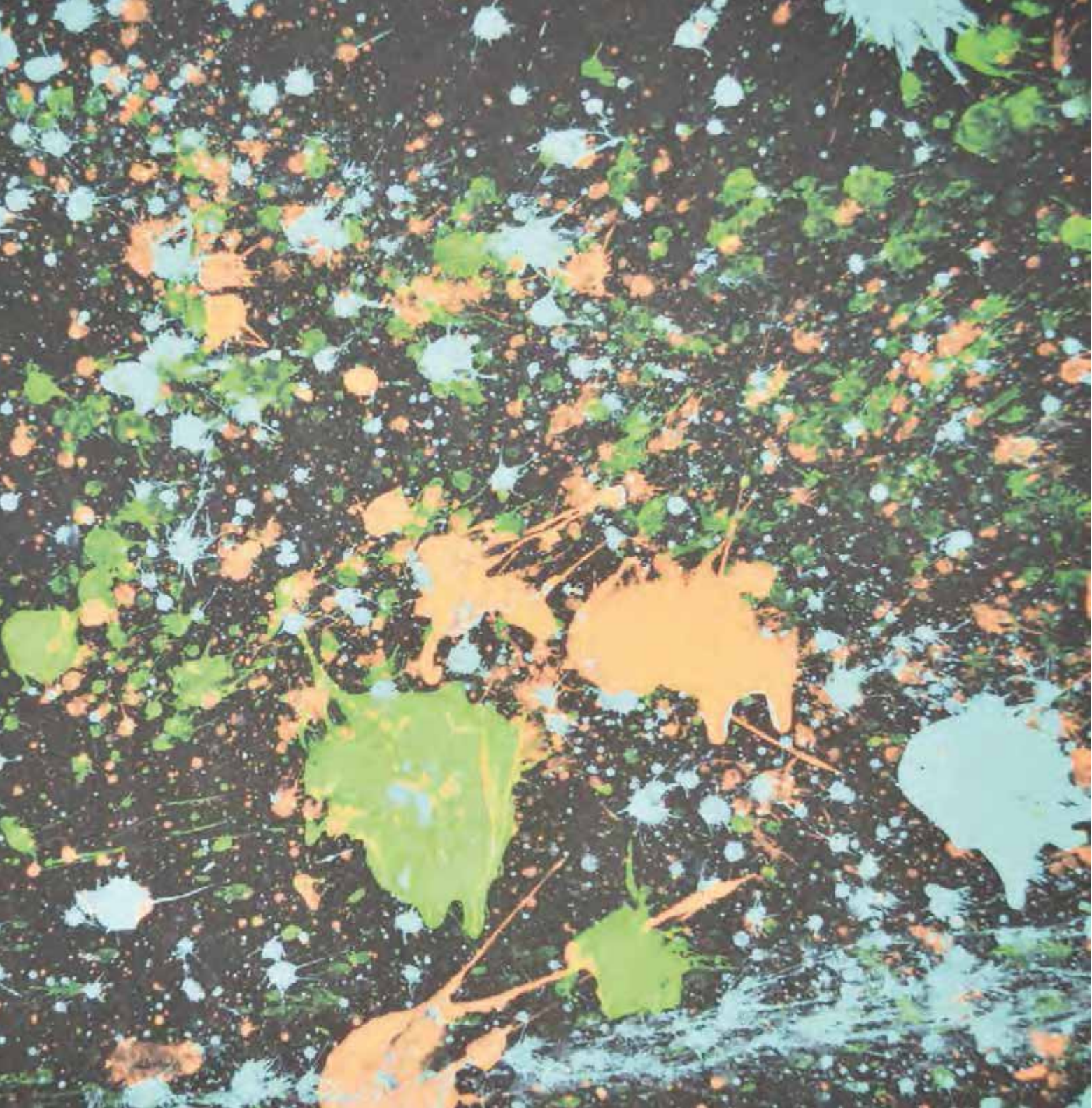
The Gambler smiles,  
The Rambler cries out,  
“How am I so unlucky?  
Why?”

The Gambler stands up,  
A gleaming sparkle in his eye.  
“While you planned for the reason *why* you wanted to win,  
I discovered how.”

The Rambler sits frozen,  
Unable to respond.

While The Solitary Man  
Casually moves along.

The Gambler stands to leave,  
Money safe and secure.  
“Now, I’m off to rest,  
After playing just one more.”





*(previous page)* Genesis



### Editorial Policy

*Legacy* has been published for a general college readership since 2001 by the students of Reading Area Community College. *Legacy's* student staff seeks to inspire intellectual curiosity, excellence, and creativity in research, prose, poetry, and visual arts by presenting student work in a publication that honors the principles of the college—equality, diversity, and community.

*Legacy* is published once a year by students currently enrolled in credit courses at Reading Area Community College. *Legacy's* main purpose is to provide an annual showcase for outstanding student work—research, prose, poetry, artwork, and photography. *Legacy* is the property of Reading Area Community College and available free to all students. Submissions to *Legacy* are accepted only from students in attendance within the current academic year. All work must be submitted with proper submission forms, which can be found on *Legacy's* website.

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### Colophon

The fourteenth annual edition of *Legacy* was designed using Windows-based personal computers. The software used in this production included Adobe InDesign CS5.5, and Adobe Photoshop CS6.

Volume Fourteen was printed by Reading Eagle Press Commercial Printing in Reading, PA. The cover was printed on 100# Sterling Premium Matte cover stock using a 4/1 color process in a 8x8 inch format with Soft Touch Aqueous Coat. The body of the journal was printed in black and color ink on Accent Opaque Smooth 60# Text paper. The font for body copy was Minion Pro. The font for the titles and authors/artists of submitted work was Century Schoolbook.

2014-2015

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# Unfinished

*Sarah Belles*  
(digital painting)









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