

COMING OF AGE

VOLUME 1 – FALL 2009



photo by Joshua Hein

“COMING OF AGE”

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Volume 1 – FALL 2009

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WHAT WE ARE:

The Catalyst is a student-run creative journal of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse English Club publishing prose, poetry, photography, art, music, and all other creative works by the students and faculty of UW-L. Each semester, the student editors pick a new theme and accept submissions about and outside the chosen theme.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

This year marks the beginning of a new partnership between the UW-L English Club and The Catalyst. We're excited to follow in the Honors Program's footsteps, and hope to make The Catalyst accessible to everyone with the new online format.

Our title aptly describes our goal— to spur thought and growth through creative process. This edition of The Catalyst contains the works of students and community members pertaining to the theme “Coming of Age,” a process that can represent new beginnings at any age. We appreciate all of our submissions and can't wait to watch The Catalyst grow.

-Elizabeth Fleig and Laura Imming

Editors

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” -Ralph Waldo Emerson.

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Dreamer's Season

Rebecca Reinhold

Like a blue bird I flit from branch to branch.
On the wind I sail, as the sun sets over the hills.
Life is grand.

As the leaf quivers and flutters from its bough,
the smell of hazelnut and chocolate fill the air.
A warm glow touches the rosy cheek of all within.

Autumn

...is here.

Untitled
Karlee Simkowski



A Poem for a Friend

Daniel S. Broadbent

How can the essence of our existence be so vague?

Why is it that when everything seems so clear and full of life that it all
falls apart?

How can anyone persevere under these conditions?

All of these questions can be answered with two words, "We must."

And it is as simple as that.

Life with all of its complexities is solved with simplicity.

It is so very difficult to learn that humanity is not made of concrete
but rather clay.

For if we were made of concrete life would destroy our solidity, leaving
nothing but dust in its wake.

But as clay no matter the amount of crushing turmoil life sends
flowing down,

It is simply soaked in until the excess washes away the pain and parts
of us that are now dead.

Then and only then as a large jumbled clump of what makes us
human and who we are,

Our soul is able to pick up the pieces and allow life to mold us once
again.

Untitled
Katie Nolan



Fleeting Moments

Life to Fruit Flies

Blake-Auler Murphy

Sunlight on blood soaked

pages, calls, runs to see

lemon juice darkens over

candles hold our breath

until open

Windows indoors and a fear

of not meeting on the right date

time this all out

slope inward, feel free but

be alone

stare steadily don't let the

inevitable tears deter

your vision clouded

as it may be

Chug more in the sound

of shiny time station

than our hopefully survived

peer pressure

Gain wisdom until it seems

to stupefy

rotting out spring

life to fruit flies

This day is a dream in passing

This life is an unmarked passage

We are its beginning amassing

from serene to savage.

Untitled
Kristina Howard



Eric Van Ramshorst

13

I Met Death Once

Kelleen Nolan

I met Death once. I'd been walking down a small country highway—going nowhere important—when he caught my eye. He was lying in a dusty, black wool coat by the side of the road, a small walking stick in hand. His face was etched with pain and he was barely breathing. Come to think of it, he probably wasn't breathing at all, but since he was going through the motions, it was only polite of me to play along.

"Are you alright?" I asked. He looked up at me. His eyes were cavernous. They told me exactly who he was.

"I haven't come for you." He said flatly.

"I know." I said. I hadn't actually. But I'd thought not.

"Just a bit tired, that's all. It's been a long night."

"Oh?"

I was trying to be polite, but to be honest, I didn't know what to say to Death. I'd always assumed that when I met Death, I'd go running and screaming the other way, dodging his mighty scythe. But here he was, a tired old man lying on the browned grass with not so much as a pocket knife on his person. I couldn't leave. I didn't really want to.

"Yes yes. You would think that for just one day, just a short period of time for you people, that no one could die. Just for a bit. I need a nap. I'm so tired of working all the time."

"Not to be contrary, sir, but don't you bring death to people?"

"Heh. That is what you would think, isn't it? No, you people call me. Or, rather, your souls call me. All the bloody time, I tell you..."

"Is there anything I can do?"

“You kill anyone lately?” a solemn smile.

“Nope.”

“Then you’re doin’ everything you can.”

“I s’pose.” I shifted my weight. He noticed.

He sat up. “Sit a while?” Death looked hopeful.

“Sure.” I sat. We watched a car drive by. He reached in his pocket.

“You smoke?” he offered me a cigarillo.

I shook my head. “Nah.” He placed it between his tired lips.

“Good call. Delay me a bit longer.” He lit it expertly.

“Don’t suppose those do much to you.”

He chuckled. “I wish.” The smoke he blew out was just slightly darker than it should have been. It disappeared in the gentle wind. We sat there a while longer. Another car breezed by.

“Can I ask you something?” I was dying to know.

“Can’t promise I’ll answer.” Another puff of too-dark smoke.

“What’s it like?” I paused. “After, I mean.”

“I knew what you meant.” He took another draw. The smoke came with his words. “Lemme ask you something. When you’re on break at your job, do you like to sit and talk about your work?”

“Point taken.” I looked up at the clouds. I couldn’t find any shapes. I felt him looking at me.

“Sorry, kid. That was harsh.” He looked sorry. “I just get that a lot. A lot. And it’s one of the few questions I can’t answer. Cause I don’t know, you know? Just ‘cause the cab driver takes you to the ferry doesn’t mean he knows what’s on the other side of the river.”

I’d never thought of it that way before. I said so.

“No one does.” He tossed the cigarillo. He looked up nervously. Then he relaxed and pulled out another.

“No one dying?” my question came out lacking the proper gravity.

“Not in my district.”

“Quite a few of you out there, then?” He closed his eyes and leaned back. “We’ve been hiring.” Another car.

I stumbled over words. Opening and shutting my mouth stupidly. I resigned to lying in the grass next to him, hoping for conversation inspiration.

“You ever wonder what the point is?” he asked without opening his eyes.

“The point? To what?” I leaned up on an elbow.

“Anything. Eating breakfast. Being nice to strangers. Paying your rent. Existing.”

I looked at him, bewildered. I laid back down. I took a deep breath. Then I smiled. “I eat breakfast because I think a morning without waffles, maple syrup, and peanut butter should be considered a criminal offense.

“I’m nice to strangers because you never know which of them will end up being your best friend, the love of your life, or the crazy guy who doesn’t shoot you in his rampage because you smiled at him every day.

"I pay my rent because I don't want to get kicked out, and I think trading my land-lady a roof over my head for her monthly groceries is a pretty decent deal.

"As for existing, I do it because I was given an existence by something, be it a higher being or deformed critter, and I'd be a damn fool not to do my best with what I've got. By existing, I get my waffles, my friends, and my roof."

"Huh." He was looking me square in the eye. He looked a long time. "Huh." He turned to blow the smoke, then looked back at me. "Good for you. No really, good for you. You get it. Some of it anyway. Heh." He looked at the road and laughed while grimacing. "Doin' better than most, kid."

"Thanks." I smiled. "I'd like to think so."

He must have gotten the signal he hadn't been waiting for. He threw down the cigarillo, planted his walking staff, and pulled himself up. "There it is." He sighed. "It really has been nice chatting with you. Maybe we could do this again some time."

"Sure." I towered over his frail form. "In the same, non-cab driver way, right?"

He smiled ruefully. "I'll see what I can do." He started to leave. I called after him.

"You know, when I see you again, hopefully, I'll still be just as grateful as I am now. Or maybe I won't. Maybe I'll be bitter and solemn. But either way, I think I'll be glad to see you again."

He turned slowly back to me. His wrinkled lips curved as far up as they could manage. His too-deep eyes had a hint of light to them. He stayed frozen that way for just a moment, and as he turned back, he disappeared in the sun's blinding reflection off the passing car's windshield.

Untitled
Christina Kinney



And She Can Breathe Again

Chris Bergum

Trees and telephone poles rush past the train.

A woman watches, expressionless, hands
gripping the silver handles of her dark purse.
Her hair hangs wet and knotted at her shoulders,
keeping her coat from ever becoming dry.

The familiar chunkchunkchunk rhythm slows,
spreading out and then dying altogether as brakes
scream to announce the presence of the station.

A handful of passengers board the train
and the landscape is moving again, the rhythm returned.

An old woman walks past six empty seats. Her
hair is white and curly and hasn't been styled
since she bought her clothes, likely 30 years ago.

The younger woman stares at and through the
window. The older woman is not bothered by this.

She sits, puts away her umbrella, and settles in.
Her name, she says, is Marjorie, and she's going south
to visit her grandchildren and her first great-grandchild,
a newborn with her father's eyes and, she's sure,
her mother's curiosity, though she's only seen pictures.

The woman does not smile or turn away from the window.

Her hands only tighten their grasp of her purse.

Marjorie talks through the next seven stations. At
the eight, she wishes her silent companion well, smiling
as though she'd never felt sorrow, and gets off the train.

As the station pulls out of the view from her window,
the woman's face does not change, but her hand slides
into her purse, and the .38 caliber awaiting her inside.

Even she can't hear the cylinder click as she presses it
with her thumb and lets a single bullet fall into her purse.

Mystery Drawer

Jane Thissen

eccentricity loved by
quirky me
sometimes creates confusion
lovely moments of appreciation
for questions
with no answers
which I file in
my mystery drawer

my keeper of the best
walkers of light
which touched me then
and touch me now
who are they
never changing
in their ability to transform
that is the essence
of growth

you are gently wrapped
in fine golden tissue
placed with tenderness
in that cache of memory
ongoing love
for people once and always
part of me
individuals who helped me
become

what I strive for daily
unique in tolerance
acceptance
and appreciation
for the person you are
whoever that is
I'm not sure
thus your treasured nest
in my mystery drawer

The Struggle of the Rain

Elizabeth Fleig

I like the struggle of the rain.
I like the walk,
I like the ride.
It runs down my lips,
paints my skin with resin.
At first I sped through, trying to escape,
but the cool air saved me,
cycled through my lungs.
My hair clings to my shoulders,
as if I'm losing my roots.
But I smile and shake my head,
I like the struggle of the rain.
I feel the drops course down my neck,
attempt to get under my skin,
and soak my heart.
But I am impervious, try as it might
I don't melt
I am washed
And refreshed,
Even as I struggle through the rain.
My brakes squeak as I come to a crossroads,
I think I'll take the one to home.
It seems easier to go straight to the point,
even if sometimes the straight is too narrow.
But I'll take freedom, even if it is the long way.
After all,
I like the struggle of the rain.



Picking My Teeth

Anonymous

I climbed to the top
To run from what's loud;
I climbed past the trees
To feel like a cloud

I've swallowed the hearts
of 10,000 girls
I'm picking my teeth
On top of this world

When It Rains

Anonymous

So should I give this world my run,
And break my back out in the sun,
And rise on high, and soak in shame;
And when it rains
It's all the same.

Need I to fill my lungs with breath,
And scream and laugh and tear my chest,
And could I feel it in my brain;
And when it rains
It's all the same.

Should I jump in and wear a mask,
Or sit watch the playful laugh,
And they'll come in and know I'm plain;
And when it rains
It's all the same.

I'll sit on high and smoke my pipe,
And shift and sigh 'til morning light,
And contemplate that same refrain:
And when it rains
It's all the same.

Some Great Mystery

Anonymous

Out in the woods there
Resting on rocks,
I took in a breath
And took off my socks.
I looked at a mushroom
And it looked at me,
And as if to solve
some great mystery,
I asked the kind thing,
"So hey, what's your game?"

As it looked up at me
It's look was quite plain,
And the words that I heard
Never sounded more sane.

He said, "Son, don't you know
That we're all just the same?"

History 101

Anonymous

He sat looking past aisles
Of doldrums of smiles,
For miles and miles,
And yet all the while
He noticed her eyes,
And the way that she cried
Made him feel like the sun,
And it made his blood run

Just the feeling of the touch
Of her hand.

If there was just a way
Of making her stay
Perhaps she could understand

Going Home Again

Jessica Shank

Going home again, I think that as I turn onto my street on a Friday afternoon at about two o'clock. We made really good time from school, but no one is going to be home yet; mom works till five and dad has been working late so I'm not even sure what time he'll be home. My sister is working late, so she won't be home till midnight. I walk into my empty house, well not really that empty. My dog is very excited to see me and although the cats don't show it as well, I know they're excited too. I throw my months of laundry into the laundry room, my backpack onto the kitchen table and sit down on my couch.

In this moment I feel strange. I've sat here a thousand times before for hundreds of different reasons. I've been in this room with all my friends, with all my family, and alone, like now. Being alone this time I think how strange it can feel. The room doesn't look any different and when I look out the window the backyard is still the same. Coming home again I feel a very strong connection with my past because that's really what I left here, my present is three hours away. I feel like I'm in high school again. In fact when I'm home I act like I'm in high school. I go to the same places with the same people and do the same things. Yet still everything is different.

Everything is different. I've grown and changed. In the last four years I've experienced success and disappointment, excitement and pain. I've loved and cried. I watched my friend break up with her boyfriend, I watched my friends fight and scream at each other. I've helped my roommate learn to write a thesis statement. I played a part in a historic election. I saw a Korean kid and a Saudi Arabian kid fight in broken English. I drove my friend to get the morning-after pill. I've bought condoms with my friends. I've drank to the point of black out. I've worshiped the porcelain God. I've cut my hair, colored my hair, and ruined my bangs. I've fixed the toilet. I've packed and unpacked my stuff. I've been driven to the emergency room. I voted for the first time. I went to countless birthday parties. I said good-bye to my roommate when she studied abroad. I've been very embarrassed and

really confident. It really is an endless string of thoughts. Capturing the experiences individually is hard.

Coming home again though, sitting in this spot, looking at this room; this room where I received my first kiss, waited for my prom date, waited to go to graduation, opened my birthday presents, napped. It almost seems like the last four years never even happened. They did, and I'm changed forever because of them.

For now though, I know I'll get texted about my roommate's boyfriend being a jerk and an e-mail about our energy bill, but I'm home. Where, even though I've changed, my parent's comfortable couch has not.

Untitled
Katie Nolan



Going Home

Sarah Wenman

The board rests against the porch railings,
waiting for its return to the west,
anticipating the ice-slickened glaze of snow,
the spray of powder over frost-crisped evergreens,
and the brisk burn of winter air.
I remember that trip to Telluride,
and that board's first real ride.
Twenty-five hours spent on a bus,
filled with the promise of freedom.
Flour-freckled hills rose to towering treed peaks.
Five days would stretch out
on a canvas too large to paint.
Log cabins, brick fireplaces and hot cocoa
in the bitter Colorado evenings.
In the mornings, we glided over
mile-thick fluffs of white, and breathed
in fresh mountain air.
My mind found peace along the slopes.
My soul found its home amongst the pines.

Ode to Manuel Antonio

Allyson Edmark

I can feel the reflection of the stars in my eyes
They pierce my soul with indescribability.
The sand still warm from the heat of the sun
Floods the shoes under my feet as they're flung off
In a fit of excitement and incredulity.

An inhibition has flown away...free at last!
I wish I could fly to touch the stars.
I can fly: they appear so close.
I reach out and grab one and hide it down deep in my belly
Because it's all mine.

The moon is magic the way it draws in the tide.
It rushes to meet me before I can catch it myself,
As if to say "Hi! Where have you been?"
Well I'm finally here! I didn't know it was you
I was waiting for.

I did not know how much I've missed you,
As if we've met before!
Let me splash in your refreshing glory
And taste your salty bite
Ah, it's never tasted so sweet!

I, in drenched attire,
So they convince me to change.
I race back, flying sand clinging to every part of me,
Then hear a certain crackling from behind
That lures me right back.

Bursts of red and blue fill the speckled sky
Like the best part of a flaming birthday cake.
Cries of joy escape my amazement
Because I never knew what perfect felt like
Until now.



Untitled
Ruth Marco



Just Doing It Professionally

Andrew Polzin

It is expressly and with the most common, efficient, and pointedly-abstract language utilization that the dictator of this message, here to be identified as and held in reference to as the expressive party, intends to articulate the simplistic ideology to those all those observing the statement, here to be identified and held in reference to as the observational party, this message: the individual or assemblage who comprises the entirety of the observational party, should proceed deliberately; with an inferred, heightened level of persistency, forward with an exploit. The essential temperament of this dictation also unswervingly implores that while the observational party is in the process of and/or in the moment immediately temporally preceding the aforementioned exploit, the observational party is recommended to utilize the minimum quantity of conscious logical reasoning necessary or sufficient to implement, or attempt to implement, the aforementioned exploit. It is of substantial importance to comprehend the overall ambiguity of which exploit is being dictated by the expressive party to the observational party; in all factuality no specification what so ever is made which can be taken to be guidelines restricting the aforementioned exploit, with the obvious exception of those previously mentioned, by the expressive party should rightly lead to the deduction by the observational party that regardless of the exploit of at hand it should follow those guidelines which have been presented here previously. Conclusively, it becomes evident that the expressive party in this instance is requesting and/or commanding the observational party to: “just do it.”

~By, a Vocal Sound Speaker~

Eric Van Ramshorst

The sound comes quick and swift,
a shake takes over her hips.

Clapping hands to the beat, Boom, Clack, and Snap.
Her head slowly begins to sway, lost in the music she is lifted from
this place.

Free, free, free, she can't be touched or seen, she moves within
notes, and electronic tones.
The floor lights up for the placement of her feet, she has no say in the
way she twists and shifts.

She smiles, as the sweat runs down her perfect brown face flushed
with kinetic energy from the music's transition as it smacks her ear
drum.

BOOM

Her brown, weightless, springy hair, moves from her body as she
slides,

hands finding there way to the air reaching for the impossible.

Capturing the notes, as they are shot forth. Click, Snap, Kick. Her
eyes closed not wanting to accept her world, their world, your world.
She will open her brown eyes to see if the music has entered a visible
state, but closes them as quick as a beat change. Her legs slender,
but strong hop, skip, and twist making life perfect and capturing the
moment in a mental state of stellar accounts, and all the moments
that will never come to this.

This.

Freedom.

Freedom is music,
dance, this enjoyment she has of feeling alone, and beautiful.
But,

Freedom only lasts three minutes and 27 seconds.

Coming of Age
Jane Thissen



You Understand What I'm Trying to Say Here, Right?

Ryan Nell

As a person with a disability I get asked a lot of questions in one-on-one conversation, and I feel as though it might do us all some good to review a couple of these questions with a more general audience. I warn you, these questions tend to be personal in nature, and the discussion may be what some might consider, well, rude. The G rated conversation is down the hall.

The number one question I get asked in private conversations is, drum roll please, does “it” work? I know most of you are with me, but for those of you who have the inability to understand my indirect reference to this taboo, let me level with you; I’m talking about my penis. There are a host of medical problems that come with my disability, but an inactive “member” is not one of them. I don’t need a little blue pill to make me harder than Chinese algebra.

Another question I get asked frequently relates to the topic of accessibility, or lack thereof. How do I deal with the lack of accessibility in the world around me? The answer is simple; I get pissed. Not like, I want to talk to your manager, throwing silverware, mean-mugging exiting customers pissed. Instead, I prefer a more subtle approach. One that breaks down like this, I’m never ever coming back here, not if it was the last possible safe place on the planet; not that I could get in anyways, so what’s the difference? Along with that I’m going to tell every single last one of my 733 Facebook friends to never give you their business, and hopefully they will tell their friends too. My goal is to systematically destroy your business one Facebook wall post at a time. Weather or not this is a feasible approach is really a matter of debate, but I can’t do that either because podiums, well, they’re generally not wheelchair accessible.

Dan Wilkins says “a community that excludes even one of its members is no community at all.” Well I say screw that, we have to play with the hand we’re dealt, even if the deck is stacked against us. So kids, pick yourselves up by your boot straps and hang on tight,

there is a lot of shit you'll have to shovel through, so I hope you brought your waders.

How Can I?

Kelleen Nolan

How can I sit next to you and not tell you?
That I want
you
That every time you look at me
I smile a little more
That every time I think of you
That long lost tingle returns.

How can I sit next to you and not tell you?
That life is a little better
With you in it.
That words, which are
so natural to me are lost
And that I can't look you in the face
For fear of giving it all away.

How can I sit next to you and not tell you?
That every time you grace my hand
I shiver
And must tell my heart to slow its pace
For fear it should leap from my chest
To join yours.

How can I sit next to you and not tell you?
That I love you
When the man I'm sworn to
Is sitting at my other hand.

Untitled
Joshua Hein



~The Persistence of the Unattainable~

Eric Van Ramshorst

Flat and tacked to a wall you stay. Looking on others with a smile that shines while time decays. Piercing eyes that flash as red, disguising yourself to the on lookers. Coated skin with a glossy edge. Reflecting back the ceilings light. I reach a finger to touch what stays the same. Trapped in a 4 by 6 prison forever entombed in a moment of time that ceases to continue. I want to be pulled in with you but remain, just looking at you. As the hands on the clock continue to move. Your smile stays true. I pull the tack that pins you to the wall. You flutter to the ground, reminiscent of leaves in fall. Twirling in circles your smile rotates and closes the gap between yourself and the ground. You fall to the ground without even a thud. I wait to see your face change and show a sign of pain. Yet you still remain the same. On the ground smiling up at me. Trapped but still seeming content with your own condition. I grab a quarter out to peel off your glossy coat in hopes to remove what pins you down. I press it hard to your edge and drag it across your timeless smile. It peels the image to a white with splatters of color in fragmented dots. I go till I see no more of the smile or the vibrant red eyes. The image of you is no longer there. You're gone, no longer defying time. Free from your prison. Free to a world affected by time. Free from my piercing glance.

Free from all the piercing glances that wanted to be where you were.

Untitled
Joshua Hein



Rain Falls Down

Nathan Northup

Funny

how we find our own

pain in the words of another's

And they say music is the only international language

Rain falls down on last year's dream

Cold Maker holds my hand

I hold my cigarette

They say animal inherit memories-

fish and birds and beasts

Some ancestral voice of generations past

Do they think

about where to go? Or just

hear...and know?

Cold Maker holds my hand

I hold my cigarette

I'm listening

But all I hear are drops of rain

sliding off the roof of this half-assed

apartment complex

onto some old man's

neglected gas grill

A half-assed ting

On some half-assed hi-hat

Rain falls down on last year's dream

Cold Maker holds my hand

I hold my cigarette

I've always tried to hear

those drums

Maybe this blood is just

too thin
Too White to hear
Too Red to surrender
I've always wanted to hear those drums

Cold Maker holds my hand
I hold my cigarette
Rain falls down on last year's dream

Fuck that gas grill

Perseverance

Tyler Nellis



False Alarm

Jacob Wood

The question of agency (that is, what are we to do?), in its applicability to the plethora of social issues confronting us, cannot find its response in the antinomy of the power to act benevolently or to act malevolently. These responses are amoral responses. Herein we find no ethical experience whatsoever, simply a directive, “you must do such-and-such.” But, perhaps, if there is one such example of a truly ethical experience, the question of agency will gain clarity. In Kafka’s *A Country Doctor* we find the content of one such example.

Upon being summoned to treat an ailing patient upwards of ten miles away, the country doctor commences his “urgent journey”[1] in the dead of a winter snow storm. Without a team of horses but in possession of a gig, the doctor obtains a team of horses from another man (the groom) who asks for his servant (Rose) in payment. This doctor, early in Kafka’s short, is to be seen as a benevolent actor. He fulfills this category insofar as he treats his patients while being “...badly paid and yet generous and helpful to the poor.”[2] Despite the initial rejection of the groom’s offer, the doctor, in his call (his duty) to benevolent action, must leave Rose behind to be the victim of the groom’s devices, his patient takes precedence.

The horses, now a symbol of the power of action, drive him to the house of his ailing patient almost instantaneously. But, during treatment, all control of the horses is lost as they break free from their reins and poke their heads into the patient’s room through the windows. Now, the only means to return to Rose is lost. Duty’s unintended consequences are manifest. Even in pure benevolence the action cannot yield perfection. To add insult to injury, it is at this point that the doctor discovers that the patient is past helping. That is, the entire trip is a false alarm.

It is the false alarm that elicits an action (or more properly, inaction) that defies the categories of benevolence and malevolence. The doctor’s action cannot be benevolent, for he has not helped anyone, the patient will die. Additionally, it would be unfair to call such an

action malevolent, for the doctor has carried out his duty to the utmost, moving at all costs to save his patient. It is in the space of impotence that the doctor finds himself; he is incapable of either benevolence or malevolence.

The passivity of impotence contains the locus of truly ethical experience, wherein the doctor remains in the power to not act. To close the story, both the patient and his family turn on the doctor, stripping him of his cloths and leaving him to die. It is in this state that the doctor escapes, incapable of even reacquiring his fur coat. The doctor, no longer constituted in the categories of moral action, finds ethical experience in the nakedness (quite literally) of the action of inaction. His team of horses (the symbol of power of action), by now completely out of his control, move but go nowhere. The doctor will persist in ethical nakedness, never to be benevolent or malevolent again, for he cannot return home with a team of horses that move but do not go anywhere. Kafka writes, "A false alarm on the night bell once answered – it cannot be made good, not ever." [3]

Emerson finds in the space of the power to not act the exposure of the truly inadequate nature of the antinomy between benevolence and malevolence. He writes that, in people like the doctor, "...in their unconcealed dissatisfaction, they expose our poverty..." [4] Some may object that in passive inaction, in remaining in the power to not act we will grow old and useless. Some may also object that we who persist in the naked ethical experience of impotence are merely persisting in sloth. Emerson finds sufficient responses for both criticisms. As in the example of a false alarm, the philanthropist's action is an action without any aim, a "life without love." [5] Emerson will wait (this is not sloth); he will persist in truly naked ethical experience that exposes the inadequacy of action without purpose.

The agency of impotence, in its applicability to so many social issues, is in many regards an aesthetic agency. People who only act insofar as they remain in inaction are those who love the nakedness of ethical experience, who love the nakedness of a nature devoid of the additional capacity for politics, or as Emerson articulates, lovers of the Beauty of Earth. They find in this nakedness sufficiency and even

the good life. They refuse to engage in the fulmination of the debates we see televised, the propaganda of political talk and the stigmatization of unrelated words. In his poem *Earth-song* Emerson articulates a rejection of moral responses to agency upon learning of the possibility of an ethical experience (the experience of “Earth”):

“When I heard the Earth-song,

I was no longer brave;

My avarice cooled

Like lust in the chill of the grave”[6]

[1] Kafka, Franz. “A Country Doctor.” *Collected Stories*. Trans. Willa & Edwin Muir. New York, NY: Everyman’s Library. P.164.

[2] *Ibid.*, P.167.

[3] *Ibid.*, P.170.

[4] Emerson, Ralph Waldo. “The Transcendentalist.” *Essay and Poems by Ralph Waldo Emerson*. New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Publishing. P.106.

[5] *Ibid.*, P.108.

[6] Emerson, Ralph Waldo. “The Earth-song.” *Essays and Poems by Ralph Waldo Emerson*. New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Publishing. P.448.

The Streets

Jessica Haugen

I walked across an empty street
I felt its pathway on my hands and feet
I felt the earth of better days
As I rewound to recollection's haze
Oh taken thing, where have you gone?

I'm growing old, and I need something more to lean on
So, tell me when can blind men see?
And deaf can hear, when pain will be set free

From ancient oak, there hung a swing
Collecting thoughts and sights of better things
Is Hope a name we used to love?
Is this the place that I have long dreamed of?

If humanity could open unwilling eyes
Life's subtlety of time has spread its wings to the sky
This could be extinction of everything but low
So why don't we travel somewhere only we know?

Let us create a path, uncovered and unknown
And fill the trees with memories, the earth with how we've grown
For footsteps are the unfilled pens, with which we choose to write
The footsteps of our memories are candles we must light

Untitled
Ruth Marco



Untitled
Katie Nolan



The Magic of Medicine

Lindsay Wasicek

Medicine. Webster's dictionary tells us that medicine is a substance or preparation used in treating disease, something that affects well-being, but to me it's so much more. I have been interested in medicine for as long as I can remember. Growing up with parents who are pharmacists probably had something to do with it. The idea that a pill the size of your fingernail, a capsule jam-packed with powders or liquid "medicine" could change something that affects the entire mass of a human is astonishing. The infamous 200mg Advil pill can make that horrible demon playing the drums on your temples disappear; the tiny ten-milligram Sudafed tablet can allow even the most congested individual with the ability to once again gain full use of the nasal passage; it's miraculous! My life has been surrounded by medicine and I hope it will continue to be. My memories, my current studies, and my career ambitions revolve around medicine.

Though I cannot pinpoint an exact date when my "addiction" to medicine began, I can remember the location where my intrigue was set into motion. It was in my parents' cozy, country dinette. As any child looks up to her parents, I certainly looked up to mine. I can remember gathering around the dinner table over the fresh-out-of-the-oven chicken noodle casserole with French rolls smothered in Smart Choice margarine substitute, and hearing the countless conversations discussing the events that had occurred in the hospital pharmacy that day. My parents embodied health and wellness. I wanted nothing more than to understand and be a part of the adult conversation they would partake in. I was a young girl sitting there, feet dangling, unable to reach the floor, avidly listening, soaking up every piece of information about medicine that I could, ears pricked up, straining to learn anything and everything. This medicine that they spoke of called to me. Before I knew it, I was speaking words like "intravenous" and "ibuprofen" and had learned abbreviations like ICU and OTC decades before my peers.

My parents radiate intelligence. I longed to grow up and have the same wisdom behind my eyes that they had. They just seemed to

know everything about health and medicine. For everything from every scrapped, bloody knee to traumatic throbbing headaches, my parents knew the solution, be it Neosporin or Tylenol. They had friends and family calling all the time to discuss prescriptions and treatment plans and to see what my parents thought of new drugs on the market. For every question asked, I would see the wheels turning in my parents' heads. It was as though they had used the Dewey Decimal System to categorize and store all of the knowledge they had accumulated over the years.

I was not a typical child when I was in grade school. Most young kids enjoy animals and trips to the zoo; not that I didn't have an appreciation for the cute, cuddly creatures; my attention was just somewhere else on those trips. My recollections of those day-trips are quite different than the typical petting-the-goats-making-faces-at-the-monkeys-plugging-your-nose-while-walking-past-the-penguins-and-hippos norm. On my mother's day off she'd plan a trip for me and my little brother. She'd put together snacks and lunches and put the little red Radio Flyer into the trunk and we'd head to the Milwaukee County Zoo. On our way we'd stop to visit my dad at work in the pharmacy at Lakeview Hospital. We'd drop by to say hello since the hospital was conveniently located across the street from our destination. While my parents chatted, I'd roam the pharmacy and venture into the hallways wide-eyed, enjoying everything about the long, eggshell corridors filled with all sorts of cool, magic, medicinal machines. After a few minutes Mom would say it was time to let Daddy get back to work. Though my request to stay with Daddy was always denied, I was persistent in asking with the hopes of staying in the hospital surrounded by medicine. My wonderful memories of trips to the Zoo are instead memories of the much-too-short pit-stops to the hospital beforehand.

Another abnormality surrounding my childhood involved appointments with my pediatrician. Unlike many children who hated or feared the doctor, the days I went to see my doctor were some of my favorite ones growing up. I remember counting down the days on my "Doogie Howser, M.D." calendar, crossing each day off with a big, bold "X," indicating one day closer, one less day of anticipation. This

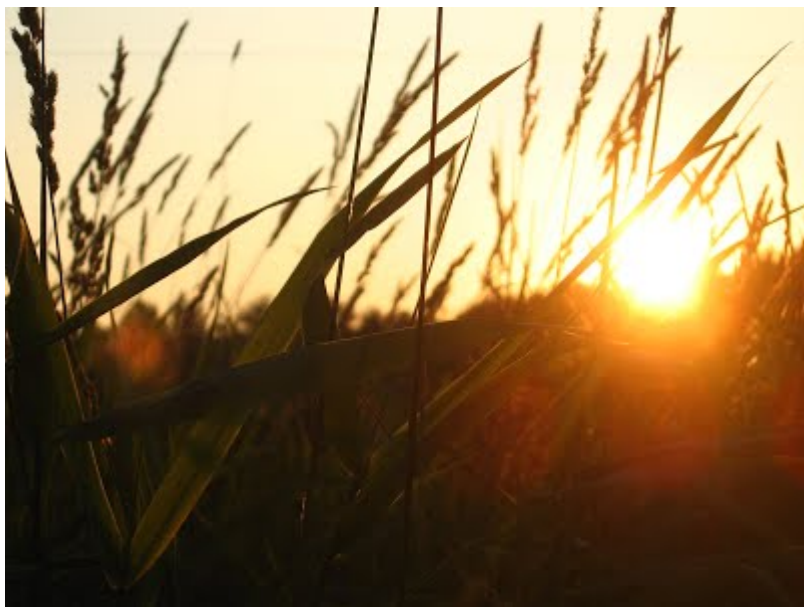
of course proceeded by my frantic running down the hall, thumping down the stairs, and crashing into the kitchen breathless to make my announcement of “Three more days till I go to see Dr. Leech!”

My obsession with medicine continued well beyond my childhood. By taking biology, chemistry, anatomy, and physiology classes in high school, I gained a basic understanding of biological functions and how the human body works. Attaining this rudimentary background only made me yearn for more. I have carried my passion for medicine with me into my studies in college. I decided to major in biochemistry and biology with a biomedical concentration. In college I have taken courses studying in depth the details of human structure and function, the problems and diseases encountered in the human body, and the combinations of chemicals that establish medicine which works within a biological system to fix and control these illnesses and ailments.

My organic chemistry laboratory was the most eye-opening experience in my college career. After spending years performing mindless lab experiments with unclear purposes, my brilliant professor had us execute a lab that would hit home. Our assignment was to synthesize ibuprofen, a core medicine on the World Health Care’s Essential Drugs List. Ibuprofen is an anti-inflammatory drug that almost every individual on the planet has taken or will take at one point in their lives. After several weeks of combining, separating, crystallizing, and purifying several chemicals found in the university chemistry department, I ended up with several grams of a grainy, white powder. This powder, the sand like granules in front of me, had been produced after a few liquids were run through several pieces of fragile, expensive glassware. This product was medicine. I had created medicine! This powder was actually capable of reducing swelling. It had the power to relieve a headache. I was astonished; I sat there smiling in disbelief. I had created medicine. On a larger note, something that I had synthesized in lab without too much trouble could do something so incredible, help people. At that very moment I knew that I had to continue my pursuit of a career in medicine.

I want to help people the way medicine can. Knowing that, I have decided to continue my education and apply to Optometry schools. My life will forever be filled with medicine. Upon completion of my graduate degree, I hope to one day be as intelligent and passionate about my career as I can remember my parents were. Medicine has surrounded me my entire life, and I hope it always will.

Untitled
Elizabeth Sisko



My Favourite Song

Nathan Northup

A chocolate eddy
swallows my line
and my time
and life is good

A moist, warm
Southern breeze
greeted those ancient
cottonwood trees
and they sing
their timeless symbiotic song
My favourite song

Sun nods his goodbye and fades
over the Western bluffs
Leaving this great river
dappled
in notes of crimson
and black

A chocolate eddy
swallows my line
River seems hungrier
than the fish
that reside in his waters

How many times
has this song been wasted
on those oblivious
to its grace?

A chocolate eddy
swallows my line
and my time
stops

My favourite song

The Thrift Store Chair

Spencer Best

The green thrift store chair wouldn't fit in the car.

"We'll come back tomorrow with my dad's truck. I think it'll still be here," Em said.

I shook my head; I knew what that meant. It meant that we would not come back for the chair tomorrow or any day after. It meant that the chair repulsed her. I'd be lying if I said that her opinion of it wasn't a major part of its appeal.

"We'll wedge it in the trunk," I said, knowing full well that we would not be wedging it in the trunk. It was a very large chair and a very green chair – a gangrenous bastard child of a loveseat and a regular-sized chair. The exterior layer of fabric wasn't just green; it was "snot green" (Em's description, not mine, though I couldn't really argue), and it had black pin stripes running vertically down the back portion of it. The real kicker was that someone had actually reupholstered it with that fabric. Someone had badly reupholstered it. Around the over-stuffed arms of the thing, we saw bits of a deep purple sticking out along the edges where the green fabric wasn't stapled securely. The reclining mechanism was broken as well, but neither Em or I are much the reclining type.

"The trunk?" Em asked.

I nodded. Yes, the trunk. I paid the three dollars for the chair, and the cashier said that she'd have someone bring it around back. I asked Em if she wanted to pay me back the cost for her half of the chair now or later. She didn't laugh.

We walked out the sliding glass doors towards my car, a clunking little Oldsmobile. Em stopped as we neared it.

"Ok, so, even if we do get this thing in your trunk, what're we going to do with it until we move in next week?"

“Your dad has room in his garage, doesn’t he? I mean, can’t we just keep it there for the week?”

“Well, yeah. I mean, sure, but if we’re going to leave it with him anyway, then why don’t I just call him to come pick it up with his truck?”

“Because we’re doing this ourselves,” I said, unlocking the passenger-side door and opening it for her.

As I walked around to the driver-side, I watched Em shake her head and blow a burst of air through her mouth. I got in and drove around to the back of the thrift store.

The back of the thrift store was just a long brick wall with an open garage door in the middle of it. Inside, we could see mounds of crap. No, really, mounds of other people’s unwanted garbage. Piles of pillows and stacks of dinner plates and an unstable pyramid of sofas. We walked inside since no employee was around. I couldn’t imagine why someone making six-fifty an hour piling up strangers’ unwanted shit wouldn’t be rushing to our assistance.

Everything was so simultaneously organized and unorganized. It was like walking through a labyrinth where each wall was built out of different objects stacked eight feet high. We rounded the wicker chair corner and almost collided with a teenage boy in an orange vest carrying our chair. We followed him out to my car.

“It’s not gonna fit,” he said. No – he didn’t just say it – he sneered it. He sneered it as if it was solely his own keen intellect that could make such an astute judgment call.

“It’ll fit,” I said. Em had separated herself a good five feet or so from me by that point and was actually standing closer to orange vest guy than she was to me. She had chosen her side.

I opened my trunk and carried the chair over to it. Orange and Em followed a few feet behind. I hoisted it onto the back bumper, making that mmmppff sound you make when you’re exerting a burst of physical energy, and rested it there for a minute. The green thing towered a good foot above the top of the car, nearly bumping the

open trunk door. I balanced it there, wondering what the hell I was doing.

“Told ya,” Orange said. Em distanced herself farther from the both of us.

That was really all I needed, though. I needed Orange to be a dick. If he wasn’t, then I may have given up right then. Testosterone kicked in. I went to work wedging.

I tilted the chair forty-five degrees towards me and pushed it in as hard as I could. It slid about a foot, the wooden pegs on the bottom of it carving their way through the carpet-like lining of the trunk. I pushed three more times – like I was giving it CPR – and it moved negligibly at best (not at all at worst). Orange stood with his hands on his hips. Em just looked at me like she was really, really tired. I was tired, too, but for different reasons. I turned to Orange, using my back to hold the chair in.

“Got rope?” I asked.

Em’s eyes woke up. Her brows furrowed and her mouth hung open a little, silently asking me if I was the dumbest person she had ever met (rhetorically, I suspect).

Orange didn’t even bother to answer. He made some guttural noise in his throat, shrugged, and disappeared back into the shit labyrinth.

“We can tie it in. You know – open the back windows and feed the rope around. It’ll work,” I said, sort of to Em and sort of to myself.

“Let me know how that works out,” she said.

She leaned against the side of the car next to me.

“We’re doing this together,” I said. I said it really seriously, too. It wasn’t even a serious moment. I just felt like it was important. I don’t know why.

Orange was back out a minute later with a beach ball sized lump of twine and a knife. He handed them to me, stepped back a bit, and

put his hands back on his hips, like he had the best seat in the house and the show was about to start.

Dick.

“Hold the chair in while I tie it around,” I told Em.

Em obliged.

I looped the twine through the opened back windows and around the chair hanging mostly out of the trunk. After six loops and the most excessively knotted knot I’d ever seen, I told Em to let go of the chair. She did; it stayed.

I handed the knife and what was left of the twine to Orange. He said, “good luck” as he walked back inside. I’m not convinced that he meant it, but looking at the chair I figured we could use luck, even insincere luck. I got in the car. Em hesitated, grabbing the arm of the chair and giving it a shake. It shook. She blew a strand of her hair away from her face and got in the car. I did not drive fast.

The transition between the pavement of the parking lot and the pavement of the road was uneven. When the back tires went over it, the resulting bump caused the chair to bounce. I watched it jump an inch or so into the air in my rear view mirror. There was a quiet crackling noise from the open trunk being pushed past its maximum level of openness. Everything held together, though. Em’s left foot tapped incessantly. Her eyes pleaded with me, but she said nothing. I said nothing.

Em called her dad to let him know that we were on our way. I couldn’t hear him on the other end, but when Em said, “I don’t know why dad, ask your soon-to-be son in law when we get there,” I could imagine. I remained silent, watching the chair in the mirror more than the road ahead of me. Em hung up. I got on the interstate.

“What are you doing? You can’t take the interstate with that thing about to fall out the back!”

“What do you want me to do? Take Eastgate all the way to your dad’s? It’s five miles and like twelve lights.”

Em said nothing. Her foot stopped tapping. She sat still for a second before slamming her open palms down on the dashboard in front of her, sounding like two judge's gavels making their joint rulings. I put my hand on her thigh and gave it a squeeze, but she pushed it away.

"We'll make it," I said.

Em pushed her long hair back, away from her face and behind her shoulders. She clasped her hands behind her neck, elbows pointing outward in front of her. She exhaled through her nose.

"I know," she said.

Then the chair broke loose. I don't know how. We didn't hit any potholes and I didn't swerve or break. It just slipped itself under the rope and fell backwards and out of the trunk, spilling itself onto the highway behind us. I watched it in the rear view mirror; it tumbled end-over-end a dozen or so times. The right arm of it splintered and flew off into the ditch. The fabric ripped to pieces, and the spinning chunks of purple and green blurred together until it came to a stop well behind us. I pulled over onto the side.

"At least there weren't any cars behind us," I said, putting the car in park.

Em looked at me, eyes large and wild.

"Don't," she said. "Just don't."

She got out of the car, leaving her door opened, and began walking forward down the side of the road in the opposite direction of the chair. I got out and caught up to her.

"Hey," I said.

I grabbed her arm. She ripped it away, twisting her body and swinging her other arm at me, hitting me in the neck with her wrist. I stumbled back, wide-eyed. She covered her mouth with both of her hands. We stood frozen, face to face.

"I'm sorry," she started, "I didn't mean-"

I turned around and walked away.

“Where are you going?” She asked.

I said nothing. I walked past the car and back down the road a few hundred feet. The chair waited for me. I knelt down, picked the sad looking thing up, and carried it over to the side of the road. I was off in the ditch, looking for the arm, when Em came walking back over.

“What are you doing?” She asked.

“Need to find the arm,” I said.

I walked away from her. She just stood there, head down.

The arm flew a good fifty feet from the chair and was off in the ditch. I picked it up, threw it as hard as I could, and screamed. I kept screaming, too. Mostly just noise mixed in with some awful and horrible profanity. I turned back to the road; Em was sitting in the chair facing away from me. I stopped behind her, breathing hard and chewing my bottom lip like taffy.

“I’ll call my dad,” she said.

“Forget it,” I said, “it doesn’t matter anymore.”

She reached her hand back behind the chair a few inches shy of making contact with me. She didn’t turn around.

“We’ll make it,” she said.

I looked down at her outstretched hand, took it, and squeezed it tightly.

“I know,” I said.

We stayed there like that, watching the occasional car pass, waiting for her dad to come pick up the pieces.

Bicycle Rabbit
Katelyn Hoffman



Asylum In Art
Jane Thissen,

UW Non-traditional student
BA English University of Iowa

what of the memories
blue fog we wedge away
resuscitate our sanity
calm magenta dreams

false innocence
battle the past
always our present
no holiday meals
no celebration, nostalgia
simply purple dread

what of the chronicles
we can't recall
on purpose
lightning flashes a doctor
would dredge up

if we remember them
would we be artists
still brush orange, ink passion
or succumb to
asylum of bitter judgment

art is the process
of remembering and
forgetting
of being someone else
being the same

The Implications of Loss

Matt Landi

“In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on.” –Robert Frost

Perhaps those who have lost can relate...

A flurry of emotions sets in. A sweet pain endures. The heart tends to forget to beat, and compensates by speeding up occasionally. A sad understanding follows the storm of thoughts and feelings. A sweet melancholy is the only passion in this moment. In this moment, I miss you, and at the same time do not. I cannot describe what you have meant to me, and at the same time I cannot understand how I meant something to you. A love, a zest for life, the purpose that you gave me wanes, and I struggle to find my own. Not everything is as beautiful as it once was, and not everything is as easy. You have taken from me an innocence that cannot be replaced, a view of the world that believed in the good in everyone, and the trust that you can really see the good in everything. It is a struggle to remind myself that these are the ways of the world, and simply because one person abused the world I tried to give them, does not mean that the world I once had can't exist or didn't exist. It means that my life, my values, my strengths, my weaknesses, my feelings, my thoughts—who I am, all of it did not agree with you. Although some parts are worthy of remembrance, there are others that you would rather wish didn't happen, and never transpired. I say this only because if there wasn't anything to regret, then nothing would have went wrong.

Instead of the road that would make my life easy—to stay on a path that reminded me of you and more importantly of myself when I was with you, of a road that could grant me a reprieve of reality and absolve me from the hardships I choose to endure—I choose a road less traveled, where only those with the strength and courage to create a better future for themselves travel. No, I traveled lightly upon a treacherous, darkened road, where the path before me was limited only to as far as my hand could stretch and my foot could reach. I traveled the road that is hardest to remain on: acceptance. My

destination is still unknown, but I know the place where I am going will be a place of solitude and freedom; freedom from you, freedom from the destructive hope of us, freedom from feeling anything towards you. A better future awaits me, and on this path, I will be free. There are many burdens on this road. There are obstacles that you cannot see until you are upon them, and there are destinations with different people who serve only as a temporary home, a shelter from the storms of this road, but cannot remain permanent for their sake and yours. They are much to bear. This road is not easily traveled.

This road is uphill, and the force of gravity constantly reminds me of the constant pull back towards the beauty that we once shared. I find it hard at times to regret anything, for everything I was given and gave was more beautiful than anything I could have ever imagined. Despite the power of this nostalgic force that serves as a reminder of what we had, to think that the gift you gave me was clearly not the best thing that can and will happen to me is quite possibly the most comforting fact of my life over these past few months. I have never lived in the past, nor do I intend to, but sometimes I find it hard to escape it, and this explains my disposition as of late. Constantly gnawing at my actions and pursuits, reminiscing has become an acid that slowly dissolves passion. In any given moment, I am the product of fear, the desire for new opportunities, an indescribable range of emotions, and the inability of finding a resounding voice and idea of who I am. With this comes pain in the form of a lingering, festering bruise and soreness that was suffered in an accidental fall a couple days earlier, yet can still be felt sharply when moved the wrong way or pressed upon, whether by my actions or by others. The pain I go through is few and far between, and gradually grows further apart each passing day, but it is still there, and in all probability will be for the rest of my life, although I believe that I'll learn to live with the weight on my heart and someday be able to easily endure and carry it. I have not been myself, and am struggling with finding myself anew, without you, without the world I thought we knew, and escaping this burden is not easy. My escapes come in the form of new experiences. It has been said that the core of man's spirit comes from new experiences. If this is so, my waning spirit needs to be transformed by new: new people, new places, new faces, everything

new. So, I do only what I feel like I have been able to do; what is necessary to move on.

And there it is: to move on. To embrace this life that I am creating for myself; without you, without the idea of us, and without the things that we shared is something that has defined my actions over the past few months. This process is unlike any other, for there are no set rules, there are no general principles that follow this, there is no logic to this process. A does not follow from B, there is little causality to how I feel from day to day, from how I see the world anew. Only attempts at discovering myself again. Un-chartered waters are where I go astray, floating on and on in search of some solid ground, of a new life, a new opportunity, a fresh start, and of a sound idea of who I am and who I am to be. This process is a result of moments, times of distinct and clear conclusions, of epiphanies, of the complete and infinite power of the will, and of sound reasoning and a wide array of emotions. Even if one of them appears to be logical, connecting these moments is where logic fails; where principles do not hold, where rules do not apply, and where there is no explanation of how one feels or what one does.

I am blessed for this. There is much that can be derived from my experience: This place, this world, this life of ours is for discovering, and is for making of it what you will. Do not bind yourself to the few, to the limited, to the bounds of insignificance. Embrace limitlessness, the idea that in this life you will never run out of things to find. Discover. Move out. Experience everything before you define anything. Open your mind, open your soul, open your heart to all that the world has to offer. Discover your dreams, and let no one tell you that they cannot be awoken. Trust everyone, trust everything, and forgive those who break your trust—but never forget.

We are all here for only a short while, and nothing is going to change that. There is only one immutable condition to this process, one that this process functions completely within and could not transpire without. Time. This experience is unique to everyone, except for time. Give yourself time for everything. Give yourself the focus and attention that you deserve. Nothing happens overnight, but that does

not mean you should not aspire for whatever cause or change you believe you should be aspiring for. God has blessed us each with time on this earth, in this state of existence we call living, and to waste it is to waste this gift. Do what you want, do what makes you happy, do what brings you excellence, love, and a purpose. Care not for things that are immaterial to who you are and who you wish to be. Realize their unfortunate necessity, but do not focus your life around them. Focus your life around you, around things and people that bring you to where you want to be, and to where you will live fully. Explore different avenues of thought, different means of becoming who you want to be. Live. Get up and live. What is stopping you?

Time is present in life, always. Time makes possible the one maxim for life that holds to be true regardless of experience: it goes on.

Untitled
Rachel Dieringer



Jane Thissen

we rise above physical structure
it is our nature
ascending above
mediocrity
we soar towards the unknown

fly until something intriguing
brings us to rest for awhile

we learn
we delve deeper
we never stop
but always together
rarely in the same place
always in the same state

For Mature Audiences Only...

Ben Beine

There is a hunger in today's youth. A rolling, fighting, twisting, gnawing, trying to find your place in today's society hunger. The hunger of knowing you have to be tough to survive in this world, but I'm inexperienced and still kinda young, so this new independent world is a frightening, intriguing place. And in this new world I need to gain my own competitive edge to dust out the empty obscure niche of this world I was made for, so that I can find my place in the jigsaw puzzle of humanity. But boy, do I feel like sleeping some days, and nowadays, some days feels like every day, and so many of my days end up being nothing days. So my corner in the cupboard of humanity is occupied by only a vacancy sign, because its resident has yet to come home.

But yet, when I trace my footsteps back through the flowing and branching veins of my life, I have visited many dusty corners in cupboards. I have climbed fiery mountains, I have explored the deepest raptures of the ocean, I have brought death and destruction to the inhabitants of a quiet vale of oaks, and I have protected humanity against a covenant this world has yet to see. All of these adventures, and yet I am still lost, still attempting to find out who I am. Because I have yet to decipher "individuality", it seems to come easier to others than to me, and although there are other things in life which I need, none are more important to me than individuality. Because, being a man today is not the same man as it was yesterday, so to find your individuality in the shelves and cabinets of today's society is a much longer process than it used to be.

And this road to find one's self has been traversed many times before, so it is now riddled with potholes and road kill, making the journey of today's youth quite a bit bumpier than that of our forefathers. New side roads and detours have been created, and 18 is no longer a simple fork in the road, no longer a choice between scholar and soldier. 18 is now an aggravating roundabout down the path of life. Some people find their way to be swift and simple, while others go in circles for what feels like years. Some even encounter

bumper to bumper standstill traffic in their roundabouts, the product of an accident or their own personal inability to move any faster than the crawl of a sloth in a tree, with nothing to do and nowhere to be. And with that reference to the animal kingdom, I bring you this observation. Why is it that a lion or a tiger or a bear (oh my!) is deemed adult when they can hide away in a cave and do it like they do on the discovery channel, while if a human (oh my!) a Homo sapien did that, well that would be just wrong. Because as Homo sapiens, we are more than simply flesh and blood and primal instincts; we feel, we hurt, we love, we create, we aspire, we dream. Being human is much more than being able to “have a good time”. Being a mature individual is not a defined line of age or ability, it is a multifarious knowledge and comprehension of the world around you, and your place in that world.

Why Must Life Throw Lemons at You?

Jordan Raether

This poem was submitted with a prelude honoring the author's mother, the inspiration of this work...

Why must life throw lemons at you?

How can I succeed with an anchor of worries?

When the sun illuminates rays of peace and hope and joy,

It is but a disguise covering up the essence of the despair we call life.

If God molded man in his own image, then why?

Does pain have purpose or misfortune have a cause?

The view from the clear vast square hospital window mirrored bad luck.

Gazing toward God's creations twelve stories high,

Ever-changing weather, first snow then rains then again the beautiful sun.

As days turn to weeks which turn into months, nature's leaves colors alter but the hospital room remains still.

Is bad luck fate, never having a chance for prevention?

You said if you de cease, don't make a scene or dwell on the past but rather celebration for new life.

Falling down and falling behind are learned lessons only when you return to your feet.

How can you stand full of courage in quicksand with loved ones in dire need?

Finding an answer to these questions; to destroy the lack of understanding is the answer.

The gravity of a stare from Death's face confronts the heart of your soul with these burning questions.

Hurting to move for your bones ache, with each increment of movement, joints sloshing with friction.

Words are a gift when the tens of cold sores inhabit roof and bottom of your mouth, causing pain from battling your pronunciation.

As your outer beauty is continually stripped in a daily haze, with pale face, and cold hands,

Reaching further to show your outpouring folly, you quiver a loose smile my way.

For, with each yellow lemon of animosity follows a blessing that cannot be described by words.

Bed stricken, nurse on command, with wire after wire streaming from arm to machine.

As I read the monitor and decipher the heartbeats, I know you will be fine and your soul be free.

So now I know, with each yellow lemon comes a message as elementary as such,

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Untitled
Katie Nolan



Tomahawk

Laura Imming

Once a year I go fishing in Tomahawk, WI. It's a ritual. When the naked trees started wearing their green undergarments I headed up North from my senior year in college to visit the last of my relatives, Grandpa John. The trip in my 1997 Ford takes about six cd's of Brecker Brothers and Ellington before the streets are bordered by bluffs and lakes; Nothing but browns and blues pass by in the thick miasma of morning smog. I've been driving since midnight and everything seems a bit hazy to be honest, but Grandpa enjoys fishing off the lake when it's just barely six am to watch the fog rise from the water. He says it's like watching clouds migrating from the earth to the sky as if they were fish jumping up to reach the rusty rays of a darkening sunset. His metaphors are always grounded in fishing like it's a spiritual guide to living a good life. I shake my head and laugh. Last year I told him I only had one trip left in me and after that, I'd be heading to the East coast pursuing graduate school in Boston. Grandpa just smiled and said I'd be here right on schedule; I'd get sick of the accents or something. Something tells me this is the last fish and fog story I'll hear though; the finale to grandpa's lonely tradition.

At the six hour mark "Some Skunk Funk" starts playing over and the engine starts fussing. I play with the gas to keep her moving and she goes on by pure will power. This car has never quit on a ride to Tomahawk. It must crave fresh air and bellied-up Burger bars because that's all Tomahawk is known for: 1 church, 5 bars, and grandpa. What do you do in a town like this besides fish and drink?

My Ford skirts past the old Dogs and Suds drive-in, boasting double cheeseburgers, fries, and root-beer for 4.95. It's nearly up 50 cents since I've been here last; a sign of a dying community. Perhaps they'd built a nicer church in the town a few miles over with nicer schools and nicer brand name food, but my Grandpa John is loyal to his root-beer joints. He says it tastes like sassafras, but I've never tasted a difference between Dogs and Suds and any A&W. Grandpa has a knack for being sentimental about things though. He's the type who holds on to stacks of newspapers and first date mementos in a chained box older than himself; it would seem the memories are

equivalent to dead people, his wife, our family. I fiddle with my phone to keep it from jabbing into my thigh while I look out the window. Grandpa's fence is crooked and blocking the mailbox, but it's gotten a desperately needed paint job. My car just barely squeaks into his newly tarred driveway before the engine dies on cue. Yellow fishing boots in hand, I head up the sidewalk to see he's already staring out the blinds. I wave as the blind snaps and the front door opens moments later.

"Angela! You remembered your boots this time." He winks before embracing me in a one-armed hug.

"You think I'm going to sit with soggy shoes again? I see you painted the fence. It looks nice." He lets go and looks at me with a solemn face.

"Did you see Dogs and Suds' dinner has gone up 50 cents since last year? I can barely afford a large root beer." I frown with mock anger.

"That's ridiculous."

"Doctor's been saying I need to be eating better nowadays, but I figure I've been around this long." He pauses. "Are you ready to get out on the lake?"

"I brought some night crawlers so you wouldn't have to stop by the store."

He nodded and shuffled over to his Chevy before patting the passenger's side and mouthing "get your butt in." Cash's "Rhythm" is halfway through the chorus when we reach Lake Tomahawk. It's about quarter to six and right on schedule. Grandpa John whistles while he eases the boat into the water and knots up the fishing lines. I squeeze a night crawler in half, its middle oozing brown waste onto my fingers as I tie them on our hooks. I can hear the frogs and crickets still singing their blues as the sun begins to peak through its blinds before hiding in a fresh batch of fog. My grandpa paddles us out to the middle of the lake before laying his paddle down and stretching his feet out over the side to dangle in the water.

He asks me, "Do you remember what I said about lake fog trying to act like fish?" I smile and ask him to remind me

