

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

VOLUME 7 – FALL 2012



Photo by Jainfei Fei

“THE CHOICE IS YOURS”

A publication of *The Catalyst*
Volume 7 – Fall 2012

STUDENT EDITORS:

Carly Frerichs
Lauren Ihrke

FACULTY ADVISOR:

Dr. Natalie Eschenbaum

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

Hello all! Well, another semester has flown by us. This semester's theme brought in interesting and varied submissions. We loved seeing how people conceptualized out theme of choices. We make choices on a daily basis, some big and some tiny. No matter the size, they are all important to our life experiences. Even those small, daily choices can affect us for the rest of our lives.

We would like to extend a warm "Thank you" to everyone who submitted and supported us in this semester's process. Though we weren't able to make the dramatic changes we were hoping to display in this issue, we are definitely learning a lot through this experience. Again, thank you all for your support through the years. It is much appreciated!

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this or any other volume of *The Catalyst*, please feel free to email us at catalyst@uwlax.edu. We would love to hear any and all feedback you have for us. We are always looking for areas in which to improve.

We hope you enjoy!
The Editors

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POETRY

I'll Stay Away from this One Ethan Bietz	14
Saved Emily Stacken	19
Ode to the Computer David Briggs	21
If You Want to Make a Blues Song David Briggs	22
infatuation extraction Jon Lendrum	24
addiction to god's gift Jon Lendrum	25

PROSE

La Vía Trasnochadora Kat Klima	6
How to Speak to Daddy Jessica Haugen	10

PHOTOGRAPHY

Untitled Photo Eric Skadson	8
Farmers Market Benjamin Barlow	9
Untitled Photo Jianfei Fei	11
Untitled Photo Jianfei Fei	13

Life is Long Kacey Harasimowicz	15
Untitled Photo Michael Knapik	16
Sculpture Garden Benjamin Barlow	16
California Iris Nicole Feldmeier	17
Bee Haven Nicole Feldmeier	17
Floating Nicole Feldmeier	20
Untitled Photo AJ Heil	23

ART

Falling Leaf Avery Velo	18
-----------------------------------	----

VIDEOS

Lake Superior Timelapse Jianfei Fei	13
---	----

La Vía Trasnochadora

Kat Klima

With the streets bathed in the dim, omnipresent light of the faroles, she made her departure. And despite the wagging fingers, wrinkled brows, testimonies of horror, and pleads to take a taxi, she prefers to walk the night alone. It speaks to her. The way the shadows move and take shape. A sense of danger, a sense of hunger, a sense of desire.

To the newcomer, the foreigner, the disillusioned or the overly accustomed, these streets are nothing but a place of pollution, defecation, and misery. Yet they have so much to show—their stains, like scars too have a story. These streets have had the run of it. They're broken, but beautiful.

Look at the people: the couple, walking with their equal, practiced stride, gemelos in their matching leather jackets. Look at the women: oh, the women. How could you possibly miss them? Clad in black, sequined cloths, they saunter their way through the city in spiked 13-centimeter perfectly manicured heels. They toss the mina curious, haughty stares as she passes through their long, blonde hair. Mira a la esquina. The old man selling flowers: he sleeps, but with one eye open for the inebriated pendejo eagerly trying to prove his masculinity. This is their city, los porteños, they own it. Or so it seems.

The girl continues and finds herself at wide open intersection. So much action, noise and motion. Isn't it supposed to be morning? The taxis slow, watching her. Their deep brown eyes reflect nothing of the fare they would offer. In the mirror of their pupils she sees but one thing: hunger. They're looking, desperately searching the corners of every street for the answer to their satiations. She breaks their gaze. They won't find that here.

But the whispers of the viejos verdes come at her from all directions: qué linda cola, mina linda vení acá, ay mamita qué pecho tenés, qué lomo, hermosa...and they don't stop. The lips of the porteños were made for passion and piropos and puteados. But a mina walking alone at night disturbs the water. Like a speed boat screaming through a no wake zone, her presence has created ripples in the atmosphere. Everyone is looking. Everyone is watching. Eyes from every auto, rincón, y árbol. She crosses the infinitely wide intersection and once she reaches la mitad, it feels like an age has passed. Like standing on a stage with nothing to say or sing in front of an arena of avid, impatiently waiting fans, she feels entirely alone.

The bulevar is empty and stretches for as far as her eyes can strain into the night. Anything could happen here and no one would know the difference. She could disappear like a wisp of smoke into one of the leering taxi drivers' cabs or fall through the deteriorating street grate in the bowels of the sewer system.

But nothing happens. She steps back onto the curb and every blood cell raging though her veins is at peace again. And that's the funny thing about fear, isn't? It bangs through your body, making your lungs swell, heart palpitate, hands sweat. Fear says, "No, you can't do that." She looks fear in the face and scoffs: Watch me.

A sense of comfort and calm overcomes her as the buildings become familiar. She's almost home. The damp air kisses her skin and she knows she has defied the night once again. With one last look over her shoulder, her boots trudge up the steps to her glass apartment door. She slides in the key and with a solid, mechanical 'click,' she's in.

Farewell, Buenos Aires, I bid you sweet dreams.

Untitled Photo
Eric Skadson



Farmers Market
Benjamin Barlow



How to Speak to Daddy

Jessica Haugen

When Daddy says “Which one from ‘Ol Blue Eyes tonight?” you know exactly what he means because Frank Sinatra is your favorite singer and you’re his little girl. It’s February, so you choose “My Funny Valentine” and Daddy takes your hand so you can stand without stumbling and feel like a grown-up, like Mommy does when she wears heels and pink lipstick. You’re sure he is the only man you could ever trust, so you make him promise he’ll always dance with Mommy and he’ll always dance with you. He says nothing will ever change.

Then one day Mommy sits you down and tells you Daddy has to fight in some country called Iraq and he won’t be home for a while. You ask how much “a while” is but two birthdays pass and you begin to miss all the dancing and you stop asking.

Then one night Daddy will come home and you’ll dust off the old records without a second thought, but downstairs you’ll overhear him telling Mommy he saw too much. He’ll tell her he keeps having the same nightmares and he’ll start sleeping on the basement couch every night because that’s where the war can’t reach him. You wonder why Daddy has stopped dancing with you and why he keeps coming home late smelling like beer and waking Mommy up from all the stumbling in the kitchen.

Then one night you’ll hear screaming and swearing and the sound of shattered glass. Then you’ll hear that someone gets slapped. It immediately grows quiet but you’ll run downstairs because you’re confused. Mommy will say, “Daddy’s just upset, sweetheart. Go to your room, sweetheart. Go draw me a picture of a castle. You love castles, don’t you sweetheart?” You wonder why she has scrapes and why she is being so brave. Tell her to not be so brave.

You’ll learn that castles aren’t for fairy tales. You’ll learn that castles can hold people prisoners and that the princess isn’t always rescued. You’ll ask fewer questions but wonder more. Eventually you’ll stop dancing and drawing altogether, and you’ll begin write because words are all you have.

One morning you’ll see flashes of red and blue lights outside the living room window, but you’ll refuse to draw back the curtains to see anything more. You hear a couple of men at the door speaking with Dad about his “rights” and Mom about calling a lawyer. You don’t speak or ask anything anymore because Mom’s face said everything.

Tell her to be brave. Oh, for God's sake, say something. Don't ask, just say.

After that morning you'll move to an apartment on 3rd St. with Mom and attend high school and prom and English club. You'll visit him only through metal bars and you'll only be allowed ten minutes at a time to tell him to get better. You'll tell him how easily he could change and move back in and you'd help him through, and so would Mom, but you weren't sure about the Mom part. You'll learn to compromise.

At the high school commencement ceremony, you'll graduate with honors but you'll keep wondering why he didn't try harder to behave and get out and see you. You'll get a call that day saying he was rushed to the hospital and you'll rush to see him because you still see something in him. You'll pray because words are all you have.

When you walk through the door to his room, play Frank Sinatra's "The Way You Look Tonight" in your mind. You will remember how Daddy took your hand, how you would use his feet as your feet, his steps as your steps, his hands as your heart, and before you step back in time to the harmonies and melodies and beautiful days of dancing as Daddy's little girl the needle in your mind will scratch off the record and end the song. Beyond the coldness of the air and the colorless walls and the IV drip and Dad's old blue eyes, you will hear your voice telling him it is time to get real help, and you will hear his voice telling you he is sorry. Sorry for going to war, sorry for hitting Mom, sorry for the divorce, sorry for the alcohol and missing graduation and the empty memories and broken hearts. You say you're sorry for pretending to see none of it. You'll wonder if he's still strong enough to keep promises and mend the scratches. You'll wonder if he'll learn to dance again.

Untitled Photo
Jianfei Fei



Lake Superior Timelapse
Jianfei Fei

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4nblpG3yrc>

Untitled Photo
Jianfei Fei



I'll Stay Away From This One

Ethan Bietz

Politicians bother me. How can they
live with themselves?
But I shouldn't be quick to the trigger.

After all, I've never met one before.
Not that I'd want to.
They wouldn't be interested to meet

Me anyways. All they care about is
Who votes for them.
Vote for me! Why? I promise you this!

Everyone turns their heads, expecting
Something great,
Someone to rescue them. Finally.

Four years later, utter disappointment.
When will we be
'United' once more? It's been too long.

And I'm not going to associate with one
who fails again.
Where is the incentive? I'm not fooled.

After all, politicians are just waging the
Civil War of the
modern era amongst themselves.

Apparently, the way to win an election
Is by slandering
And attacking an opponent, rather than

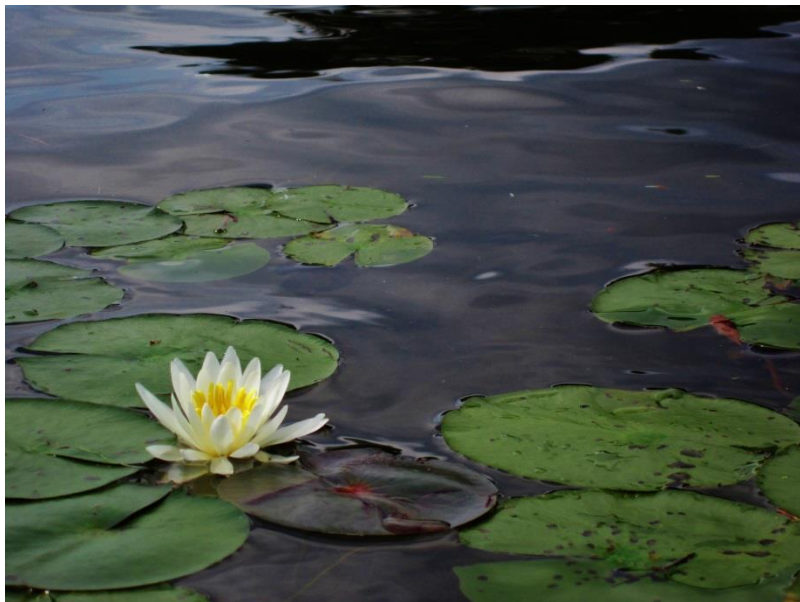
Promoting the views and ideas you have.
Seems to me a bit
Backwards. And I don't know about you,

But I don't like war very much.

Life is Long
Kacey Harasimowicz



Untitled Photo
Michael Knapik



Sculpture Garden
Benjamin Barlow



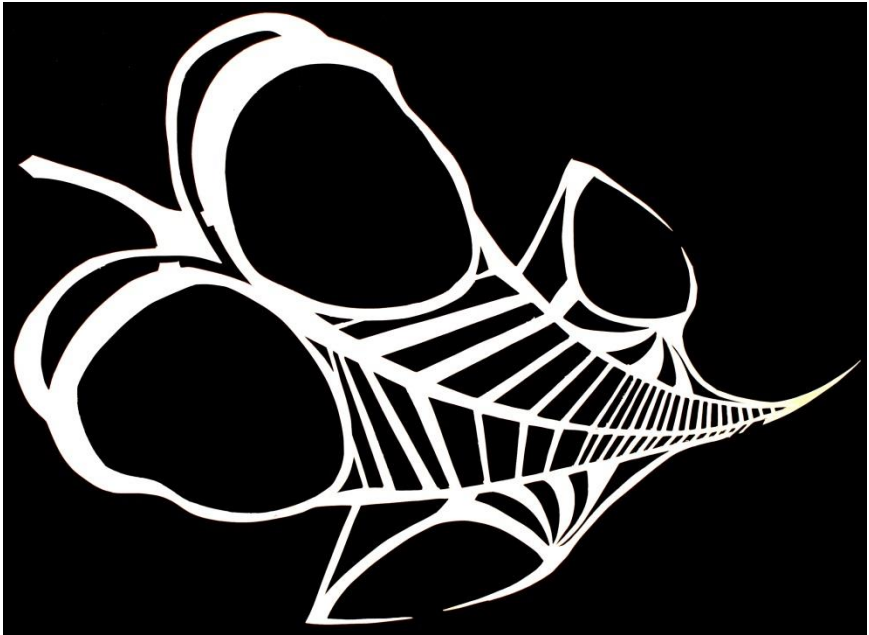
California Iris
Nicole Feldmeier



Bee Haven
Nicole Feldmeier



Falling Leaf
Avery Velo



Saved

Emily Stacken

You can chalk the streets with powdery pleas to save them
Climb the highest tree and scream to the heavens you hear them
Plaster the towns with photos of sad eyes and young frowns
The man in the jacket may stop to tie his polished shoe,
He may take a glance at the sad photo put up by you
He'll tilt his head and scratch his nose
Stare into the eyes of the child he already knows
Just another poor boy in need of his hard work pay
He'll say a prayer tonight he thinks,
As he turns to walk away
You could even join a group
And feel united in your righteousness
Knowing together, you can save them.
But at the end of the day
When the sun dips low,
You walk home under the moon and its glow,
Beginning to realize what you already know-
Under the sky's spot light your truths are revealed-
You are the one who needs to be saved.
You are the one who needs to be healed.

Floating
Nicole Feldmeier



Ode to the Computer

David Briggs

Hail to the computer!
Your screen, it shines night and day
A beacon of yellow and bluish light
That strains the eyes
And draws the mind
And tells us,
“I will never leave you,
And you should never leave me.”

O computer, of thee we sing!
We sing praises to your processor,
Dual-core and contained inside.
We raise toasts to your memory,
Only read and randomly accessed,
Without which we would be lost
And confused
And unable to play Starcraft
Or make spreadsheets.
We dance the foxtrot to your modem.

Computer, thy star shines bright!
Oh how we gaze upon your browser
That helps us explore the internet,
That chrome-colored opera of fire and foxes on safari
That leads us to greener pastures of
Electronic mail and electronic commerce
To tumble and stumble upon
Forums and Facebooks
Where the virtues of nettiquette are extolled
And then ignored.

Tell, O Muse, of the wonders of computer!
Without thee we could never do our work.
Without thee our work could finally get done.
Without thee how else would we watch Avengers
Without paying fourteen bucks in a smelly theater
I mean I'm not made of money and it made
Like a zillion dollars I mean come on

Who's gonna care if I just open up Pirate Bay
Or U Torrent for just a moment
Seriously dude how bad could it be.

If You Want to Make a Blues Song

David Briggs

The first thing you must do
is get up this mornin'.
And if you get up this mornin',
it will probably be like
You can't hardly get out of your bed.
That could just be because
sleepin' ain't been easy,
but it is best if, perhaps,
you feel as if you were dead.

Now once you drag your self
out of your bed,
you have to pack your things and go.
This is the most important thing,
to pack your things and go,
because without doing this,
You won't be able to walk on out the door.

Once you pack and go and walk out the door,
you have a number of options.
You can leave your home
and never come back no more
or you can go back home
to where the people all love you so

Or you can go down to the crossroads
and make the devil give back your soul

Or you can go out and find that
low-down, dirty-rotten, no-good,
not-worth-a-damn son-of-a-bitch man,
and you can finally tell him no.

Untitled Photo
AJ Heil



"Enjoying a fantastic morning in downtown La Crosse that included a memorable breakfast and bakery visit to Fayze's.

This moment captures an example of the options and choices that face us in our daily lives, even something as basic as choosing a sweet treat from a local restaurant. We live in a wonderful region with many unique and extraordinary destinations."

~AJ Heil

infatuation extraction

Jon Lendrum

have you ever wanted something so badly
that when you didn't get it, it almost broke you
that you spend every moment consumed in the cyclic obsession
the thing about manic depression is that you need hope to survive
the intangible, almost ineffable desire for something greater than yourself
for me its a delusive necessity, "this is going to work out for me"-allegedly
i tell myself this time and time again,
and time and time i watch myself turn back to my ball point pen
and fill the page with the words of unappreciation
that i don't deserve what i placed upon that pedestal,
decremental distortion feeds from my minds insecurities
and it leads me to believe that i just need time to grieve
a moment of sick leave from the reality where i can pity myself
and tell myself it'll be okay, that you like it like this better anyway.
and so the cycle continues its succession; the self lies begin to take shape
and pave way to future mistakes wrapped in red tape
signifying it'll be long before you find your true escape.
and i tend not to put myself into situations ill lose
cuz im gettin' sick of tending to the chronic bruise
id rather hide away from all that destroys me:
girls, drugs, and a consistent lack of apathy
but truthfully, these are my normalities.
my broken mind, the casualty-
so i dilute my memory to atrophy in order to mediate the insanity.
i wear my headphones regularly to block out the population
cuz every time i hear 'you fucked up',
it'll end in frustration-and there is so much confusion in explanation
id rather just get lost in the directions.
and more times than not it comes back to my expectations
why i cant teach myself how to let it go i don't know
so for now...i'll scapegoat it on misinterpretation

addiction to god's gift; a dream of ecstasy

Jon Lendrum

i saw you, just sitting there,
just sitting there so elegantly.
i didn't know it was possible to have so much class in so little action
just wanted to make you my distraction for days; I could have done it too
my eyes didn't stray once; i swear the world could have crumbled beneath
my feet, but my eyes
would have committed adultery to have left your beauty.

you didn't even say anything, but i already knew
that you were far beyond anything i thought was cool, you and your beautiful
tattoo.
i could see that face next to mine for the rest of my life and never resent it.

those lips couldn't possibly tell lies.
surely those eyes aren't capable of deceit.
before I get too far ahead of myself, I suppose we should actually meet.

Bonneville
Nicole Feldmeier



