Editor’s Note and Acknowledgements

Last year, I was surprised when the staff opened the doors for me to become Editor-in-Chief of *Digressions* and allowed me the honor of introducing this magazine for the first time. This year, I am grateful. Out of my four years at NSU, *Digressions* is one of the things I am proudest to have been a part of and my experience on the staff is one I will never forget.

Just as when I first began working with *Digressions*, the quality of work expressed in every issue keeps on getting better and better. Every year, the amount of submissions we receive goes up and more unexpectedly, the pieces we receive are completely different than the batch from the previous years.

I couldn’t be thankful enough to the students who contributed to this year’s issue and to every issue of *Digressions*. More than anything, this magazine is supposed to provide an outlet for you to be able to put your creativity out there for the world to see, so even if you have not been chosen for this year’s issue, please continue to submit to *Digressions* and support it as you have for the past year.

Dr. Ferriss, once again, you have shown that the *Digressions* staff would be lost without much of your guidance. I know we were fairly difficult to deal with at times, but you know we couldn’t have done this without your enthusiasm and courage.

Dr. Santos and the rest of the Humanities Department, your continued support for this magazine, the staff, and the students who have contributed is invaluable.

Bret, I couldn’t have asked for a better-organized and more thoughtful Managing Editor. Your effort and encouragement throughout this whole process is priceless and means a great deal to the entire staff.

Kary, Ed, Chris, Sue, Daniel, and Brittany, your ongoing commitment to *Digressions* still astounds me and I’m so glad I had the opportunity to work with you all once more.

Samantha, Darlene, and Amanda, even though you were new to *Digressions* this year, you were still willing to jump right in and help whenever we needed it. I hope you will continue to work with *Digressions* for as long as you can. I promise, you won’t regret it.

Finally, it is the readers of *Digressions* who make every ounce of effort the staff puts into producing *Digressions* worth it. So, readers, for the second time and the last time, I encourage you to explore everything this magazine has to offer and enjoy the distinct voices of your classmates.

Stefani Rubino
Editor-in-Chief
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Femininity’s Funeral

Nichelle Farrington

We are gathered here today to remember Femininity. She was beautiful inside, sad to say she had no dignity. Femininity died today, but she will not be missed. No, I’m not a feminist, just a woman who’s quite pissed! I didn’t know Femininity that well, but since I hold the mic, I should tell you this lady believed that women were wrong and men were right.

Femininity was a stereotype of the past. Thank God Almighty, she’s dead at last. Now, my daughter can live in a world of equality and success; And not be told by society that she ought to wear a dress. Femininity may have been a role model back then; But I am the author of my life, I hold the pen. "Women are to be seen and not heard." In my honest opinion that’s quite absurd. This is not a wedding. But I’d like to make a toast: To Femininity! Long live your wretched ghost!
the bookstore here is nearly four stories in height, and about as wide as two apartment buildings placed side by side. There are thousands upon thousands of books, all piled on top of each other, some thrown into corners, and almost entirely forgotten. Occasionally, people walk by them and I can feel it as the books are sort of begging for attention, begging for someone to bring them home, and love them as their first owners did. Mostly, I thought about how a person could die in this bookstore and nobody would find them for days or possibly weeks at a time and they'd be left to rot like all of the unwanted books in New York City.
Every world must end once it finds the end of time
When there’s no ocean left to cross nor any summit left to climb
When all the Earth is spent and the sky hangs weary up above
When humans lose their hearts and cannot remember love
Witness the doomed land of Tyde, a mighty kingdom once before
Where happy people laughed and played on every sunny, sandy shore
But now no land remains for the water’s risen high
And now only the ruined rooftops ever remain dry
The most magnificent of buildings, towers beyond compare
Once standing proud on sandstone streets in the bustling city air
Are now but weathered ruins, their foundations long since drowned
Their roofs the only solid footing in a land without a ground
Here the people live, the last descendants of the masters
Who built their island homes out of stones and bricks and plasters
But that greatness is forgotten, the glory could not last
And now the people can only wonder at the genius of the past
The kings of Tyde were not content, seeking always to build more
And so the land gave way beneath them with a fatal roar
The ill-fated builders are survived by the guardians they constructed
Their latest, greatest achievement, before they self-destructed
The golems were designed to guard against all disaster
Ten times the height of any man, and ten times stronger and faster
They oversaw the peace and patrolled the streets at night
And when invaders threatened, they never lost a fight
But during the great upheaval, the golems all were cursed
To stand helplessly fixed in place while the water did its worst
For no golem can survive once submerged beneath the sea
And in the spot where their feet were drowned, forever they must be
This is the end of time, in the flooded land of Tyde
Where the hopes have long since vanished and the dreams have nearly died
But two bright young people, walking hand in hand
Are destined to destroy the ruins and bring back the fertile sand
Wicked
Santiago Vidaurri

A rhyme, a sound
a wicked crown
you wear,
a facade of a halo.
Two sharpened horns
many times have torn
this beating chamber.
To be naïve,
easily deceived
or is it love that blinds?
The truth be told
it’s wicked cold
those words were never mine!
Wicked ways,
wicked plays,
foolish words that have no meaning.
Upon that sound
from a bejeweled crown
drips from his lips, I am believing!
Wicked falls to wicked calls
wicked caresses to wicked kisses
never love the wicked blessings
for what wicked touches
with carelessness
wicked dismisses.
Blind Death
Juan A. Miranda

I call your name, 
do you listen? 
My words echo perpetually 
across the sky,  
failing to provoke a response.

I am in need, 
do you lend a helping hand? 
I wait, but in vain;  
muttering to myself, 
you never came.

Alone, and straying from the path,  
I needed guidance, 
did you offer any?  
Foolishly I hoped you would,  
waiting from sunrise to next,  
searching for some light in this engulfing darkness;  
I never found any.

I was a slave, at your will,  
to do your bidding,  
follow your preaching.  
Now, with no shackles holding me down,  
I have learned from my mistake:  
why blindly believe,  
why blindly act,  
if all that it brings  
is false hopes, false promises,  
delusion?  
Why search for a false beacon of hope  
that plagues man with ill-filled hate?

I admit,  
at times I wished you answered,  
at times I wished you came;  
but you never did.

Blind belief is dangerous,  
blind actions fatal;  
belief in you is death in life.
Alice at the Hat House
Teresa Clune
Pencil, Charcoal, Microsoft Paint, Adobe Photoshop
The veil covered the lurking shadows behind your eyes, as the ring placed on your finger only served to widen your aspirations, and in the process you bore parasites, one by one crawling out of your womb, relentlessly begging to taste the bitter thickness of warm, bubbling blood.

As the ring placed on your finger only served to widen your aspirations, those festering parasites sank their teeth into man's riches, relentlessly begging to taste the bitter thickness of warm, bubbling blood, slowly draining the life out of his body, that which was his sanctuary.

Those festering parasites sank their teeth into man's riches, doomed to carry out your will upon Earth, slowly draining the life out of his body, that which was his sanctuary, leaving behind a shriveled corpse, resting in silent retribution.

Doomed to carry out your will upon Earth, slithering away from the scene before the golden rays of dawn, leaving behind a shriveled corpse, resting in silent retribution, and calling out to his God in unspoken prayer.

The Devil in White
Karysabell Murgas
Hiding within these four walls,
Wondering if these structures can cast out the questions and concerns:
I keep my thoughts to myself.
Depression along side of suppression, indifference and apathy swamp my being;
Those that reach out are rejected,
Those that care are turned away.

My mind is my sole companion,
And only he can know the secrets of my heart.
The sorrow and pain entertain him as days swiftly glide away,
Never to return again—wasted.
Yet with those deranged thoughts comes a peace of silence,
Voices are quieted and the faces disappear.

I find relief in this rejection,
The numbness kisses me softly and keeps me warm at night.
Content with this state of being, a marriage has been made,
Can I find the strength to make an annulment or is this my happy ever after?
My white knight imprisons me within my own cadaver,
This must be love, because I’m falling hard for it.
Boot Sculpture
Grace Cox
Sculpted Wire
Red Emotion
Flor Aramburu
Acrylic and Black Pencil
Mystic Moon

Yitan Li

Mystic moon lead me on.
Shepherd me across that bloody channel
Of sin and regret, and
Of passion and violence.

Mystic moon is where my eyes turn to,
As I trudge across here, the skull strewn path
On my retreat from the coming nights of decadence.

Mystic moon is my herald,
My arbiter of approach
Where my openly exposed heart lies.

Mystic moon rain down upon me your blessings!
Courage, in the face of defeat.
Strength, where none exists.
Lay on me your protection from the coming darkness.

The darkness of my nature and soul
Always prowl at the heels of the moonshine,
Daring to breach into my mind
When the moonshine runs out.

But she's Infinite.
Infinitely there.
Infinitely shining.
Infinitely holding back the consuming darkness.

I point to the mystic moon
And cheer Whooop Whoop Whooop!
In celebration of her Infiniteness.
Breaking the cold sleeping silence.
I dance with the Mystic Moon.
Drunk on the potency of failure.
High on the purple fumes of eventual success.
Fucked up, knowing one day there will be a death and an answer.

I ask the Mystic Moon, "Can I know you better?"
She just winks
And replies, "Maybe one day."

Mystic Moon watches over me,
And I don’t know if she’s actually
Looking at me,
Or some other fool.

Jealousy plagues me for the Mystic Moon.
I want her, need her.
To be one with the night, and just wrap around her.
I can’t have the Mystic Moon.
I can only watch her twirl and swirl and shine.

Great Poets of the Sky and Purgatory
Advise
That I just walk on
And die.

They say it’s better to die unfulfilled
Than die wanting.

Dear Infinites of Life!
Reincarnate me as a flaming comet,
So I can dance forever in the heavens
With the Mystic Moon.
Reincarnate me as a man again so I can love
The Mystic Moon even more!
I'll die with prayers in her name
On my lips.

Dying would be easy
If she took away my last
Dedicated
Breath in a single kiss.

Reincarnate me as a cricket
For I have sinned so, so much
And deserve nothing more.

Winter nights will ring with my
Redemption songs dedicated to her.
Mystic moon, I'll reach you one day.

I grow old, I grow cold,
So cold not even your warmth can reach me.

I lie back watching you shine.
Dreaming of you and dance
Until I wake up
And trudge on.
Self Portrait
Grace Cox
Photograph
Who Are You
Ashley Chang

Am I black or white?
Can you define me by the shape of my eyes,
Or the thickness of my thighs?
Will my vernacular give me away?
Or just confuse you when I switch up the dialect each day?

Am I black or white?
Since my moody eyes transform daily like the façade of a mood ring,
Will my ethnicity also do the same?
Shall deciding to tan or hibernate determine what racial box to check that season?
Or shall you judge me by my heart not my pigmentation?

Am I black or white?
Does my category change because of my food preference,
Since it varies from continent rather than national region?
Shall my choice of dance be limited to the ignorant views of this country?
Should I close my eyes to my cultural diversity,
And consume the filthy lies and ignorance that is before me?
I choose to remove myself from the danger of these comfort zones…
I choose to leap off this cliff into the unknown where ideal Truth is found.
Falling Promise
Santiago Vidaurri

I broke my own heart
'cuz i let myself down again
in all i try to achieve
i lose faith
and spiral down
down from heights that i should have never been flying
down
down
down
and the promises i held
fall faster than i
my gift of self destruction
weighs me down
and as i fall from these heavenly heights
to where i belong
i see that all was never right
for promises, my sweet
are never to be kept as tokens
and hearts are meant to be broken
Togetherness

Nergess Taheri

Five Paper Cutouts
In a world where competition was everything, you didn’t even have to compete. Your lyrics glided up the charts, just as you glided across the stage. Making every top story, magazine article, and newspaper ad, selling more records and selling out arenas, silently yelling, “Who’s bad?”

While others tried to take that first walk on the moon, you took the further step and made the moon walk. Honestly, I always thought that there wasn’t anything that you couldn’t do!

with everyone falling at your feet, it was unbelievable to hear you ask the question, “Who’s loving you?”

But I guess so constantly judged and disrespected, for no reason, just as a mass group of individuals in the situation of treason. Making human nature not only the number one lady in your world, but also the lady of my life.

Served as a father, but known as a king.

Died at the age of 50? I can’t believe what I had just seen. How can this happen? just leave me alone! Beat it!

This thriller! Shocked not only me but the world!

Forced to remember the times, we salute you, for you served our country well.

Breaking the barrier on not only black and white, but each and every color.

You healed the world, with just the tip of a hat, kick of the leg, and scattering of the feet, teaching ones with no rhythm, how to grasp it and flow on beat.

I don’t know who got it faster, was it Billie or was it Jean?

Living in My Home

Opal Owens

I don’t know who got it faster, was it Billie or was it Jean?
You were able to turn dirty Diana into a Liberian girl, then face the man in the mirror, and get the reflection of the world. The hurt in all these pictures make me upset to the extreme, making my earthly vision go out in space, as you did in scream. Looking into your eyes, you seem as if you were in discomfort, beat up by words and burned by actions. You looked as if you were going under….. This picture makes me cry, because now your name lies within a stone, but I promise you will never feel like this again, for you are not alone. So no need to be worried, because I’ll be there as you will be, Forever, living in my home!
The Ballet
Sonya Chacko
Oil Pastels
Where I Am
Stefani Rubino

sitting alone in an empty newsroom
helped me realize that there is no place for
people like us anymore,
people who care about the well-being
of other people,
people who care about the well-being
of other animals,
people who are trying to save this
planet from complete destruction.
our observations and empathetic intuitions
have been replaced by numbers and machinery,
spitting out results and statistics
that are easily digested by the minds
of scientists and social workers.
after all, numbers printed on a
clean white page with sharp black ink
are much more appealing than the
reality of suffering and irreversible damage.
For as long as I can remember my Nana has called my brother and I “Cookie”. No one is really sure why she calls us that, but no one dares to argue with her. Considering the life she has lived, she can call me whatever she wants.

We began our conversation by sitting down together in her kitchen. The smell of Sunday Sauce danced through the house. Her home here was a flashback to her home in City Island, probably mid 1970s. Plastic stretched over her leopard print sofas, the fabric of which had never seen fresh air. A mish-mash of avocado-colored rugs covered in yellow geometric shapes reached across tiled floors. Empty, never-used, amber ashtrays in groups of three crowded together on yellowed fabric end tables. The mismatched furnishings were, for the most part, clean and well-maintained; they were just older than I was, and I knew Nana would keep them forever.

My Nana is your typical Italian grandmother: stout and dressed in a black housecoat with matching slippers, her hair done up in pins. I began by asking, “So, Nana, will you tell me about when you were a little girl?”

“Cookie, you’ve heard it before,” Nana replied very matter of factly, placing her hands on her hips.

I asked again, “Please, Nana?” I knew she couldn’t resist her Cookie for much longer. Her love, which had never been easy to come by, was a given when it came to her grandchildren. She always hesitated when talking about her past, but she always gave in.

Even though I have heard most of her stories many times, Nana’s mannerisms remain the same. Whenever Nana tells a story about her life she gets a look in her eyes, a glimmer, almost as if she’s looking for a page in a book. Her gaze is intense and when she figures out what she is going to say to you she folds her slender fingers together and closes her eyes.

“Back when I was little we lived in Storno, Italy. Nobody had anything. The years during the war, it was very hard to find work. No food for anyone; we’d eat rotten potatoes if we could find them.” As she said this she glanced at some chocolate chip cookies she had laid
out for us on a thick glass plate that was most likely from the 1960s. I knew she was thinking about how fortunate we were to have those and the fact that she had never laid eyes on a cookie until she came to America.

Life in Italy seemed so hard to me, not quaint and picture perfect like on TV. I wanted to know more about the hard times during the war so I asked, “Did you ever get scared?”

“The only time I was ever frightened was when the planes were bombing. The town was filled with smoke and debris. I remember my brother Nicky and I walking from town one afternoon and we saw a man riding a bicycle. A shell hit him and decapitated him, but his body was still on the bicycle, the wheels still turning.”

As I listened to Nana I imagined an innocent man going about his normal business and in a flash his life gone. I gave her a look as if to say “honestly?”

Nana took a deep sigh, and with the wrinkles on her face deep and profound said, “Believe me, it happened.”

I didn’t want her to dwell on such a sad memory. “Well, then, how did you and everyone make it through and come to America?”

Before she answered, Nana searched deep within her memories, furrowing her brow. “During the war we had gotten our paperwork together and were approved to go to New York. I remember arriving in Ellis Island and I wondered if everything would work out. Ellis Island was very busy. There was always a commotion. People had not only their lives, but their dreams and hopes packed into their suitcases. I thought we would never make it off that island.” As she told me this she handed me an old, faded photograph of her family. In the picture she was no older than 15 or 16. I couldn’t help but think how similar we looked in the way she held herself, her facial features, and even her hair color. Her eyebrows arched like mine and her hair fell in long dark curls to her shoulders. As I looked up at her I saw she was smiling because she realized the connections I had made. Nana said, “Cookie, I didn’t always have so many wrinkles you know.”

She continued her story, “Living in America was hard. Not only was there a language barrier, there was no money either. I always wanted to be a nurse, but I worked in a ship yard. I filed, I answered
phones, and I did everything to earn a living. I used to work ten-hour shifts, go home, clean, cook, and then leave to work nights at the local laundromat. Sometimes I wouldn't get home until two or three in the morning.”

I asked, “Is that how you met Papa, while working in the ship yard?” Nana answered, “Yes.” As she replied, small tears appeared in her eyes. I missed Papa as well. It had been almost five years since he had passed from cancer. She lived in solitude and grief every day. Every time someone mentioned Papa, Nana would cry. In her large house that used to be filled with love and pictures of her and Papa, they were now gone. Her walls were barren.

Nana collected herself by brushing invisible dust from her housecoat, dabbing her eyes, and refolding her hands. She continued, “Papa was in the Italian navy and their ship had docked in America and that’s when we met. We got married, moved into a house with my father, and then had your dad.” My father is an only child so I asked, “Did you ever want any more kids?” Nana answered, “Papa always did; we both came from big families, but I wanted to work. I always feared we would never have money.”

It is a well known fact in our family that Nana values money even above her health. This fear of not having any seems to consume her. “Okay, but how about the last 20 years of your life? Papa retired, but you kept working, even though you had so much. You do know money isn’t everything.” As soon as I said that I wished more than anything I could take it back. She got up, moved into the kitchen and began stirring the sauce, adding basil and salt with great intensity. Nana always became defensive when money was involved. She gave me a dirty look. Her eyes were dark and serious and put fear into me, she said, “What do I always say? Money talks and bullshit walks.”

All the sacrifices she had made, now she could afford to buy anything she wanted, but didn’t. Her excessive greed had caused pain to those she loved. After she and Papa were settled in America she only let him visit his family in Italy once, claiming it was just too expensive. She drives the same car she had while in New York and never turns on her air conditioner, all in an effort to save money. I knew it was coming; the braggart in her was awakening.
“You know, Cookie, I had nothing and now I have everything. I have money in every bank in this town, and every bank knows me.”

I began thinking to myself that they knew her for all the wrong reasons. Every time I had gone to a bank with her it was a very unpleasant experience. Nana always asked for higher percentages, pens, coffee cups, anything she could get her hands on. She played the sweet old lady card but as soon as you crossed her she spit venom. She was rude on countless occasions to bank tellers and managers. She was counting money once and a bill fell on the floor. The woman tried to help her get it but Nana began shrieking that the lady and the bank were trying to cheat her out of more money. One time she tried haggling for a higher percentage rate on a CD. The woman left the room to consult with her manager and while she was gone Nana stole multiple pens from her cup. I was ashamed and amused all at once.

As I reminisced, Nana went on to say, “Cookie, some day when I die this will all be yours.” She looked at me and, as I have a tendency to do, I was making a face. I had rolled my eyes and she had caught me. “Cookie, are we done here?” I hoped to never inherit her lack of love and compassion for people. I’ve always wanted to help people, even if I wasn’t being repaid for it and that is something she looks down upon. I replied nervously, “Um, I guess so, unless you have anything to add to our interview.”

She shook her head and passed me the plate of cookies. I took one and I wondered if this was my destiny. Everyone always says Nana and I are very much alike in appearance and character. We both are sharp tongued and always figure out a way of getting what we want. As much as I love her, I would never want to be like her. Her greed is all consuming, but it liberates her and gives her power over her poor past. In her world she sees it as if she has everything; she may not have happiness or my grandfather any more but, although she doesn’t always realize it, she will always have her Cookies.
How could I have been so naïve?
but it seems I am so
in the presence of soft words.
though steel skin I may present
strength is somewhat absent
I am tinkered with like a brand new toy
played on regularly by little boys
then intrigue is lost
to my dismay
surprise me not
with extra time at play.
should I allow these foolish hands
to stir a shred of doubt within my mind?
is there something faulty in my design?
heading now to troubled lands, it is not me!
oh! it cannot be!
for I tried too many times
to not be this naïve.
yet again, I succumb
to the warm words
of another’s tongue
just to have a little spark
to cause a twitch within this heart.
I give into falseness
and fall to break
never bouncing off the ground
then off to weep into the dark
no ones there to hear a sound
to numbness went that little spark.
oh, here we go again.
i’ll remember you just like the rest
left a painful mark.
put up my guard
put on a shield
to another’s soft warm words
i shall not feel
on my knees i will no longer yield
to soft
to warm
into new thick skin
i am again reborn!

Witness
Juan A. Miranda

Witness a power that strikes more fear in the heart,
more chaos in the mind,
than a falling bomb.
Burned and decaying flesh is but child’s play
when compared to hatred flowing through a man’s veins.
The stench of sulfur slowly fades,
the sight of destruction lingers,
but what truly horrifies,
is that this man, engulfed in hate,
can find peace at night and wake up the next day,
absolutely apathetic,
and ready to direct his hatred once again.
Joy
Grace Cox
Photograph
Me
Nergess Taheri
Ebony Pencil
I feel the cold breath from your icy lips kiss my body, 
tainting my mind and soul.  
Your love chills my spine,  
sending messages of awkward delight up and down my living corpse.  
The hairs on the back of my neck prickle,  
I feel your presence in me.

A sensation so halcyon, so wonderful,  
fills my heart with glee.  
The emotion of your imperfection caressing my all bewilders me;  
I sense your sins become my sins,  
our hearts forever tied, forever one.

A union like no other this is;  
two lost souls,  
wandering aimlessly, condemned to damnation,  
touch,  
unleashing all kinds of lust.

Oblivion is the fate that awaits us,  
yet no remorse or grief is heard;  
only sounds of bliss fill the air,  
For our love surpasses all.

Chance chose us,  
eternally blessing us with company;  
all the damned and condemned of the world.
Ballad of Wind and Daisy

Yitan Li

A single daisy stands there
Swooning lightly in the air.
The wind arrives and stops to say,
“Little flower, come my way,”

“Surely you know I can’t fly.
I’m just a daisy. I’d die,”
She said, to which he replied,
“Let me take you, be your guide.”

The wind plucks the pale flower
Away to the empty towers,
Surrounding the harvest moon,
And the two step into tune.

The wind leads on, carries her,
Leading daisy on to err.
Daisy floats and spins sweetly,
Trusting the wind completely.

And on the waltz perseveres,
From hell to icy frontiers,
Till the ashen daisy falls,
Lies there like a broken doll.

The wind moves on coolly,
He's just seen another daisy.
Empty  
_Grace Cox_  
Charcoal, Chalk, and Colored Paper
Psychosomatic
Lacrima Nemulescu
Acrylic
Is this heaven or hell?
Beauty surrounds me: magnificent trees and a stunning sky illuminate behind me;
tranquility is in the air and harmony fills my breath.
Yet, a burning stench and appalling screams pierce the ambience.
Slowly, my world spins out of control; my grasp on reality weakens,
it slips through my fingers as warm blood drops from the sky.
My sight begins to blur; the surreal and actuality fuse as one,
occulting the truth.

I feel a mystical presence caressing my spirit as it slowly penetrates my thoughts.
I struggle for freedom, but immobility is all that I reap;
vain are my efforts as I succumb without hope.
I feel chaos and the malicious aching to be let loose;
the shackles that hold them prove too weak.
I feel a slither crossing my path,
hissing at my sight, provoking fear in my heart.
I shudder at my spectacle,
trying to escape my torments.
A fiery sensation consumes me as I feel my flesh boil.

Hallucinations blurred my truth,
while my eyes deceived me.
Slowly, I regain my senses
and all that I see vanishes;
my imagination loses control.
The illusions fade,
much like hope after long-suspected disenchantment.
I see clearly
for the first time in my life,
knowing that what I saw was no heaven or hell,
only life itself;
how gruesome, no?

How wretched must we be, committing such acts of inhumanity against our very flesh and blood. Searching indefinitely for stability, but waging violence, destruction, war constantly amongst ourselves, under the false flag of serenity; not considering how we annihilate the bonds that tie us mutually, not caring about the suffering we convey upon each other.

How could such “civilized” beasts commit such atrocities? How could such sophisticated beings demean themselves to such animalistic acts? Aren’t we the superior inhabitants of this world? Must we assume that what we do is right? I am appalled at our nature: violence and death. If only we had enough common sense to realize how we slaughter ourselves from within, in such an abhorrent manner.

Why not live a harmonious life, one filled with splendor and tranquility? A life where embraces and caresses are our weapons of choice, where the battlefield is our heart and mind, where the only devastation is zeal; how pleasant, no?

But alas! we are but human, and as they say, our nature is barbaric: kill or be killed.
Don Quijote’s Sunset
Alexis Irias
Acrylic
Metamorphosis
Sonya Chacko
Fine Point Sharpie
Barnaby Stevens

Christopher Garcia

Barnaby Stevens had only one goal in life,
To reach the summit of Mt. Everest.
At the age of 43 he lived his dream,
And climbed to the top of the tallest mountain in the world.
Realizing his life’s goal had been met,
He jumped off the highest point on earth.
And with his pen and journal at hand,
Penned his thoughts on freefalling.
For the entire three minutes to his death.

This is Barnaby’s retelling as it was found:

Fear can only force a man to scream so much, before he realizes it
will do nothing to stop the outcome of what is going to happen.
I have often wondered why people scream in the face of uncertain
death, and have come to the realization that death draws on
a certain instinct humans have that they are immortal. And
screaming is the product of this sense being taken away. Having
stopped screaming I am overcome with a sense of realization
that this is it, the end of the road for my life and that I am going
to die. It is a rarity to come to this conclusion, many people die
without ever realizing it was going to happen. I am the master
of my fate in this way, unless I survive. I think many people will
pose the question of whether I regretted my decision to jump, as
I freefall to my death, and I would like to respond that I do not. I
feel just the same as when I awoke this morning. At this moment I
actually feel nothing and can only attribute this to the adrenaline
coursing through my body, preparing for the outcome of my fall.
As for what it feels like to fall I can only describe it as a feeling of
buoyancy. Were it not for the mountain rushing past me or the
wind, I would say I feel like I am floating instead of falling. I can’t
help the fact but wonder if humans were ever meant to fly only
because it feels so natural, and I can only hope that birds enjoy the feeling of being airborne as much as I do right now. As for the saying that your life flashes before your eyes before you die I would have to agree, as I am writing this, images of my life continue to flash in my mind as if a silent movie of clips and flashbacks were playing. I see myself as a child being hugged by my mother, I see my father crying at his dad’s funeral and my first love, the one that got away, smiling at me. I only miss the feeling of not knowing when my life will end because according to my watch and calculations the life of Barnaby Stevens will end right…

Ghazal for Paola
Daniel King

Gone are the fearsome flames, slashing, piercing blades of heart Where once reigned despair within, now rests only gratitude

Lost are the anxieties, fits and flights of terror fancy Fear flows not through these veins, I’m breathing only gratitude

Loss and loss, that future loss, fighting always dread foresight But now I walk the long road calm, singing only gratitude

I will not doubt, nor anger send, nor leave words soft unspoken I will give my eyes, and she will find, in them only gratitude

I’ll not curse my stars, nor lament, the coldness of the depths And as for God, I have no questions, my soul is only gratitude.
Midnight Splendor
Sonya Chacko
Acrylic
Towards a Freedom (Faith's Falling, It’s Failing)
*Christopher Lancaster*

Lord, of your lackings, my laborings have not lapsed.
Though your kingdoms, nude of truth,
of images that distend, impede this heart, its yen.

The ceasing shape of belief;
the infinite feeding of tease, of all.

To piece the each severance of scripture and dream
I must cede this self...

and of your worth, I am unwilling.

The spirit has known shadow and string, hope and hymn.
Enough of each to swim existence.

As I vanish the votive mouth of nursling,
I envisage ignorance and incertitude;
all that it needs to assemble anew...

O deliquesced dove, remit me this revelation.
Jenny Harrington felt as if she were about to explode with the force of a small atomic bomb. She couldn’t believe that she had once been a petite 110 pounds. Nine months of pregnancy had given her thirty more, and she could feel every one of them weighing her down as she moved millimeters at a time on her dining room chair. Her husband Keith was in the kitchen around the corner of the wall that her chair was leaning against. She and Keith had thought of breaking down the wall to unite the kitchen and the dining room and make the house look bigger. But when Jenny became pregnant, it didn’t seem like a good idea anymore. Instead, they had painted it a bright lemon yellow that matched the apple green of the rest of the dining room.

“Yeah, Mom,” she heard Keith say. “She’s all right. She can hardly move, but she’s all right.”

Jenny scoffed. “Out of all the understatements I’ve heard in the past nine months, that one has to be the biggest,” she said, raising her voice so he would be sure to hear her.

She heard him chuckle. “Yes, Mom, I’ll call you and Dad when we’re at the hospital . . . Okay . . . I love you too . . . Say hi to Dad for me.”

“Tell her I send my love!” Jenny said, again raising her voice. “Jenny sends her love,” Keith reported. She heard a plate being set on the kitchen counter and smelled cinnamon. “Bye.”

Jenny straightened in her chair in anticipation as Keith came around the corner and placed a bright red plate before her. It was the only plate of the set of eight that was chipped on its edge, a memory of Jenny’s first dizzy spell when she had almost collapsed against the wall with the plate in her hand. Keith had caught her but not the plate, and it hit the corner of the wall, leaving a red mark that had since been covered with the yellow paint. He never understood why she had held on to the plate but had let herself go. Jenny’s only answer was that she felt she needed to hold on to something.

“Two delicious square-shaped blueberry and blackberry waffles and a ton of raspberry syrup,” Keith announced proudly, as if he had won a cooking competition. When Jenny became pregnant, Keith had
started doing as much cooking for her as he could. He would ask the doctor what it was that pregnant women needed to eat, then go home and muster all his creativity into one meal. The aromas of his first few culinary attempts had made Jenny throw up, but he had persevered and had even bought a cook book. As she became less sensitive, he became a better cook, and now, homemade waffles were his specialty.

“Thank you, sweetheart,” Jenny said, stroking his cheek and laughing at the cheesiness of his announcement. She pointed at him, mocking sternness. “You know, you’re still making these after I give birth.”

Keith smiled and cocked his head as a line of white shine from the lamp above whipped across his black hair. “I wouldn’t have it any other way.” He sat at an angle from her at the head of the table.

As he put his elbows on the table, Jenny closed her eyes and took her first bite. Blue and black fireworks of juice exploded from the berries but were subdued by the warm, soft waffle. With her second bite, the syrup overpowered the other tastes, injecting its sweetness into her taste buds and making her crave more of it.

“She was asking if we had decided yet,” Keith said, interrupting Jenny’s reverie.

She opened her eyes. “Decided what?”

“Oh, just about everything that we haven’t decided yet,” Keith said with false casualness. “What we’re going to name him. If he’s going to be Catholic like me or Jewish like you. You know, the now infamous questions that we just had to wait until the last minute to answer.”

Jenny whimpered—half from the pleasure of tasting the waffles and half from frustration. “Oh, Keith, we’ve been so busy,” she said with her mouth full.

Keith nodded. “Yeah, what with starting up the catering business and emptying out that room for the baby and turning the den into an office.”

“All our friends coming over and buying all that baby stuff for us,” Jenny added, joining him in justifying their actions.

“And with your mom staying here to help out.”

“Mmhmm,” Jenny mumbled, nodding. Then she shook her head despondently. “But you know, there really is no excuse, Keith. We’ve just put it off for no good reason.” She scoffed. “It’s shameful to think
that we haven’t done our first duty as new parents.” Keith raised a finger. “That may be true, but we do have one credible excuse. At the beginning, you were way too hormonal to talk about anything.”

Jenny dropped her head and chuckled with him at the memories of her first few months of pregnancy when she felt terrible all the time, even while she slept. “Yeah, that’s true,” she said, bringing her head back up and combing her light brown hair back into place. Keith laughed harder at her admission. “Who would’ve said we’d be laughing about those days now?”

He shook his head. “Not me. You’d never had mood swings like that. I think all of St. Louis heard your yelling.” Jenny laughed harder and took another satisfying bite of her waffles.

“But seriously, Jenny,” Keith said, crossing his arms and propping his chair on the two back legs. “It’s almost time.” He raised his eyebrows at her. “And we still haven’t decided.”

“Well, I said that the name could be your decision. If you haven’t come up with one, then I’m not to blame.”

His eyebrows went down suddenly, the way they did when he couldn’t believe what he was hearing. “Jenny, every time I come up with one, you don’t like it.”

“Well, maybe if we flip a coin or something like that. I don’t know.”

“Jenny,” he groaned. His sigh was heavy with the frustration of her answer. “You know, if we were having twins this would be easier.”

“What do you mean?” She bit into a blueberry.

“In that old TV show, Little House on the Prairie there was this girl—the mean one. I forgot her name. Anyway, she married a Jew. Both their parents were arguing about whether the child should be raised as a Christian or as a Jew, and they decided that if it was a girl, she’d be a Christian and if it was a boy, he’d be Jewish.”

“And it all worked out because she had twins? One boy and one girl?”

Keith nodded. “Benny and Jenny.”

“But, sweetheart, we’re only going to have one boy, and I’m still not sure I want to raise him with both our religions and—” She took another bite, tasting more raspberry this time. “I just don’t know, Keith.”

“I think you two should come up with a name first,” Jenny’s
mother Geraldine exclaimed, stepping out of the den where she had been sleeping for the past two months. “Jew. Gentile. Circumcision. Baptism. You have time to decide all that. Right now what that baby needs is a name!” She nodded forcefully, making her white, wiry hair bounce against her small shoulders.

Jenny sighed as Geraldine sat across from her. “Yes, Mom, a name.” She felt the weight of the decision as she rolled her eyes. “At this point, I think I’d pay someone to come up with the right one.”

“I have one, honey,” Keith said, leaning forward and resting his elbows on the table again. “Nathaniel Conrad Harrington.”

Jenny’s face twisted. “I don’t like Conrad, and we’re just going to end up calling him Nathan or Nate. Why give him a long name that he’s never going to use? Look what happened to me. My name’s Jennifer, but I’ve always been Jenny.”

Keith cocked his head. “Okay, you’re right about Nathaniel, but Conrad was my grandfather’s name, and I’ve always liked it.”

“Well, my grandfather’s name was Carl, and I’ve always liked that name, but you don’t like it.” She took the last bite of the last waffle.


“Too common,” Jenny answered. “But the length is good.” She pointed approvingly at Geraldine. “I’d like a short name since Harrington is a pretty long last name.”

Keith shook his head and took Jenny’s plate as he got up. “Besides, Luke was the name of the kid that used to bully me in third grade. I don’t like that name.” He disappeared behind the corner.

“Then how about a nice sensible name like John,” Geraldine said. “Many great men were named John.”

Jenny shook her head. “Many weirdoes were named John too, Mom. Besides, it’s plain boring.”

“Blaine,” Keith shouted from the kitchen.

Jenny tilted her head as she considered it. “That one’s . . . interesting I guess.”

Geraldine frowned, accentuating the wrinkles on her forehead, which were as deep as her life of seventy-five years was long. “It’s strange. It sounds like a brand of—” Keith came back into the dining room. “Breath mints.”

“Breath mints?” Jenny and Keith questioned simultaneously in surprise as their eyebrows came down quizzically.
Keith shrugged as he sat down at the head of the table again. “I heard it once and thought it sounded classical.”

Jenny shook her head vigorously. “No, we live in the year 2010. It has to be modern, not classical. But not too modern, I guess. And not bizarre like some kind of alien name.”

“As if we would ever do that, Jenny,” Keith said. “I’ve only given you names you consider boring. Far stretches from any alien names.”

“Yeah, but you’ve heard some of the other names people have suggested. They sounded like nicknames for E.T. ”

“Or maybe they were just alien-like to you,” Geraldine said dryly.

Keith chuckled. “Someone suggested Hamilton Harrington. That was pretty funny.”

Jenny laughed. “And weird. The perfect name for this baby has to be somewhere between Gabriel and Ethan, but not Gabriel or Ethan and definitely not Kevin or Paul or John or anything remotely close to those names. And not Jacob like I’ve heard four million times in the past nine months.”

Keith groaned and rubbed his face. “We haven’t even started to think of a middle name.”

“Oh, Jenny, why are you so picky?” Geraldine exclaimed with all the disapproval of a mother who can’t reason with her daughter. “What’s in a name after all?”

Jenny rolled her eyes in exasperation. “If I hear that one more time,” she said, dropping her elbow forcefully onto the table as she pressed her forehead against her clenched fist. “A lot is in a name, Mom. It can’t just be anything. It somehow has to represent Keith and me and our faiths. It has to contain all the things that make up this household. Plus, it has to have a good meaning. Not one like ‘dweller at the court’ or something silly like that. It has to be—Ah!” Her face contorted and her hands shot to her stomach.

Geraldine jumped up, and Keith bounded out of his chair, knocking it to the floor as he reached for Jenny.

He touched her shoulders with more gentleness than his urgency demanded. “Jenny! What happened?” he asked, even as he became fully conscious of what was going on.

Jenny inhaled deeply and touched his hand on her shoulder. She couldn’t describe the relief she had just felt. The small atomic bomb had gone off and released a liberating aftershock that made her body
feel loose and tight at the same time.

“I’ll get the suitcase,” Geraldine said with a shaky voice as she ran to the den.

“Honey, talk to me!” Keith half-yelled desperately.

Jenny squeezed his hand and looked at him, her joy shining through her eyes as she smiled victoriously. “My water broke!” she exclaimed breathlessly as she started to feel the pain. “Whatever his name is, and whatever he believes, he’s not waiting anymore!”

Keith squeezed her shoulders. “Honey, listen to me. We can’t let our son come into this world without a name. Think of one. Quick!”

Jenny groaned loudly and started to sweat. Then the answer came instantly, yet so naturally that she hated herself for not having thought of it before.

“Isaiah,” she said in a whisper as she exhaled hard through her teeth.

He smiled. “Isaiah Conrad,” he said firmly.

She relented with a groan full of pain and frustration and happiness. “Isaiah Conrad.”

“Harrington,” they both said.
Awakening through salty, glittering tears,
With the echoes of your heart still pounding in my head,
And realizing that you’re my greatest fear,

I remain isolated in the thickness of your breath,
While seeing the warm clouds of smoke escape your curved lips,
And gently rubbing my hand against the smooth roughness of your chest.

There is a gathering storm in your eyes
That sends an icy shock coursing through my veins,
Paralyzing me, despite the hot, anticipating flames that consume us by surprise.

And yet, in surrendering to this beautiful fate,
I am left with both blessings and burdens,
I am left with both heaven and the hell we call eternity,
And I am left with everything and nothing in the end.
DIGRESSIONS
IMAGINE
CREATE
INSPIRE