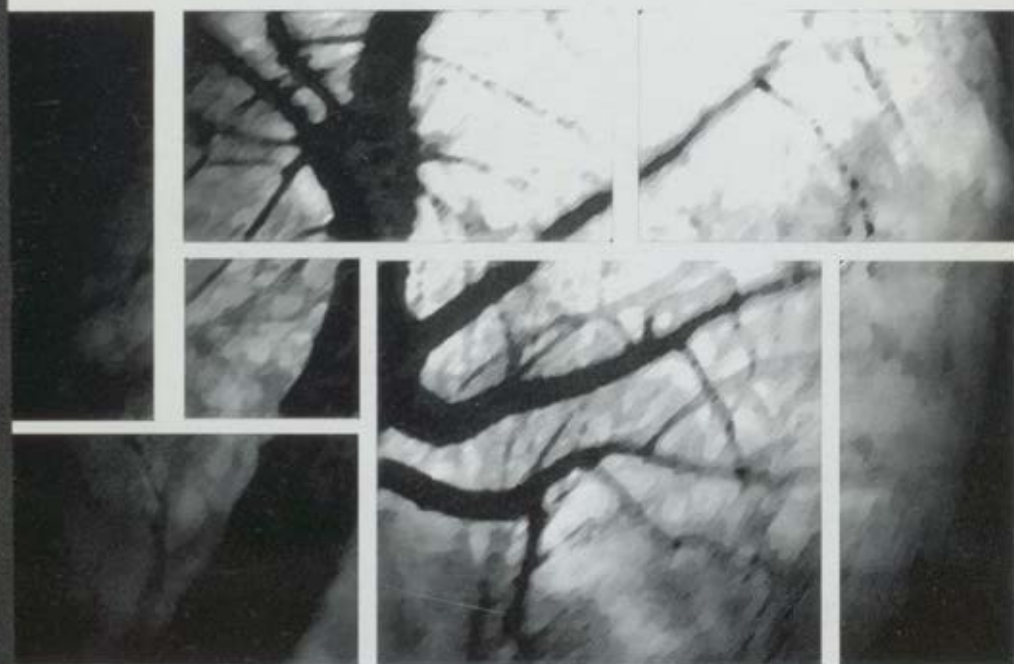


# Promethia 2001

a literary journal



"All that is gold does not glitter;  
not all those that wander are lost."  
J.R.R. Tolkien





Promethia 2001  
A Literary Journal

Promethia 2001

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## Editor's Note

All thank-you's that an editor can bestow must first, with uttermost gratefulness, rest upon the authors who submitted the products of their minds and hearts to be critiqued. It proves a magnitude of artistic maturity when an author not only creates but also shares. As Emerson said, it is in every work of genius we recognize our own thoughts. You who submitted your works have put forth the genius by which others will now measure their own efforts.

Josh and Trent, you have both been unfailing in your help and in your encouragement, and I enjoyed every moment of the time we spent on *Promethia*. I honestly cannot think of one moment when I was left on my own, and that was a constant blessing. Kim, I am eternally in debt to you. My deplorable lack of computer skills was more than hidden by your talent, and the tangible, beautiful journal *Promethia* is just as we imagined.

Dr. Meyers, Dr. Epperson, and Dr. Trent-Williams, I was honored to be selected to carry on the tradition of *Promethia*, and your belief in me and my ability to produce a journal of quality and of literary excellence was invaluable to me. Dr. Meyers, you have been wonderful—a wonderful supervisor and a wonderful friend.

This has been a year of new beginnings, and the journal you now hold is in essence the rebirth of *Promethia*. I hope and pray that it will continue, in the years to come, to be a journal indicative of the elite in student artistic ability, and that it will forever hold to the high standards of Godliness in every way.

Laura Nichols

"Every man's life is a fairy tale written by God's fingers." -Hans Christian Andersen

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*"Every artist was first an amateur."*  
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*



*"The job of the artist is to deepen the mystery."*  
Francis Bacon

*"We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth."*  
Pablo Picasso

*"Any form of art is a form of power; it has an impact, it can effect change--it can not only move us, it makes us move."*  
Ossie Davis

*"I can see no other reason for the existence of art and poetry and religion except as they tend to restore in us a freshness of vision and a more emotional glamour and more vital sense of life."*  
Lin Yutang

*"Poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful."*  
Rita Dove

*"Let each man exercise the art he knows."*  
Aristophanes



## the author of the giving tree

i found out  
a year and a half  
after the fact  
you had died  
all alone  
with a pocket  
full of poems  
and a stringless  
guitar  
sitting fingerless  
and scarred  
like you had been  
when you saw the world  
through children's eyes  
how you gave them rights  
and voices  
a thousand adult choices  
and all in a sudden  
you had to up and grin  
jumping forever past  
where the sidewalk ends  
and the weekly maid found you  
shrined in a tomb  
the obituaries from new york  
quietly pursued  
and then  
having rhymed  
and dined  
having laughed and cried  
the world lost another poet  
without a goodbye  
only this one,  
shel silverstien,  
will not be forgotten so soon  
*the tree has lost her boy*  
*i say,*  
*and somehow,*  
*we have lost you...*

Matthew Corder

## Saving Grace

Beauty unfurled in  
wings of color  
Leave behind the dark world  
For a place void of the terrors or  
dreams of horror.  
Tears become laughter laced with  
golden smiles  
Giving reverence to the One  
Who saved all from the deep chasm  
lifted up on wings of grace.

Kimberly Wilson

## heavenly flow

mountainhighandvalleylow  
running purposefullyinabeautyflow  
windsailslaughtingtoitspeak  
fighting  
forvictorybeneathgreycloudslightningbeat  
andlwatcheagles playing theperfect act  
dancingwiththemountains fighting  
onthevalleysback

Jereme Harlan

## road songs

in seconds  
sprawling factory lights  
spread backwards  
across translucent shifting skin  
of one river's naked body  
and shattering into a thousand scrambling reflections  
each one--mocking  
the truth whom beset it from the moment  
i see time in passing, out the window of a car  
blinking as upset children--as manmade fireflies  
taking small children steps toward places forgotten  
like in a crowd, when we are alone  
or when we are alone, like our minds playing the crowd  
bumping,  
rubbing uncomfortably about  
the dirt factories and lights massaging fitfully  
across a river  
through a window  
through my mind.

*Anonymous*

## Rending

Meekness flings itself between two extremes  
in the variance of feeling and the wayward  
will that drives down the dirt  
road to sing to you and reach  
behind the back seat to the way the dawn  
smiled that one night where patience  
leaned over and touched the back of your  
hand and  
oh I wish you knew I was there too.

*Ana Maria Correa*

## Innocence

*My first sight of you...*

Running barefoot down the beaten road;  
those carefree strides,  
and painted nails.  
Naked feet untouched by  
shattered pottery and fork tongued  
animals for sale.

*One thing I like about you is...*

At the news,  
your cheeks blushed  
like a young red rose,  
but all composure remained untainted.

This incident few knew  
because your nose is soft,  
not pointed  
or intruding.

*John Brudvik, Jr.*

2/14/01

*...of having no one,  
no one to point north  
or lead west,  
no one to open doors  
no one to settle scores  
no one for flowers given,  
songs whistled, hearts  
drenched with misting  
deliverance. Seducing  
Delilah has never bothered  
with producing any  
razor for me, which I  
suppose is good, but  
could, maybe one day,  
someone peel me open?  
Perhaps even steal me  
from my strength, to  
at least know I own a  
breath or two, maybe even*

*one for you? To heal  
without first to hurt,  
an impossibility.  
Forget humility, I  
champion loss, and  
you, the cost.  
Unshaven, my days  
dwindle on through  
dreary sky haze mistaken  
for a dream and still  
unsown seams leave  
two coastlines separate things,  
and separate still I say.  
But separate still, my "way  
leads on to way," traveling me  
through...*

Adam Dressler

### 35 mm

I take pictures to crash the world, to grind each moment to a halt and carve it deep on silver memory: the still, the hush of a minute, of a lifetime, broken down into a still frame, a moving still of an hour's slow heartbeat, series of clips of blacks and whites, soft colors through a glass frame, a lens of shattered broken down sunlight, shot through cirrus clouds, the world's hush, movement, the smile on your face, the sunlight through your glasses, the glow of the filtered sun through the window pane to blush off a candle's vanilla side, huge, round, the flick of a flame rising from the sunwashed wick, light answering to light. This I capture in one-one-hundredth of a second's click-frame-freeze, forever unforgettable, pasted high on a wall, lost in a lost picture book, forever in my mind all the more: this mad quest to freeze the soul, to lock up the days in a picture book, to live, ever the more fiercely, to gain a second in eternity, to remember that once upon a time, I lived.

Amanda Hall



## The Joys of Our Art

The greatest intellectual,  
forms a phrase of music  
rhythMICally AlluSIVE,  
text from dom

ran tele

phon

e

rings,

and pitch from hearing cow-bell

DINGS.

*John Brudvik, Jr.*

## From Beyond All This

The chill sets in--

The streetlamps glow their white-yellow vigil down on you--

--you are their moon on this cool night--

The breeze is wet and cold--

(pull your jacket tighter)

The rain lightly wisps your cheek, the nape of your neck--

--H5 seemed as good a place as any

To tell you that I love you.

*Bryan Wooten*

## God's Pulse

is . . . buh-(peo-ple, peo-ple, peo-ple, not-just one-but all-but not-  
just all-but him-and her-and you-and that-guy there-who stinks-  
and swears-and this-one man-who loved-to hate-me kick-me  
punch-me use-me steal-and lie-and you-just said-I can-not but-I  
will-and do-and have-and it-is al-ways al-ways peo-ple peo-ple  
peo-ple peo-ple)-bmmm.

*Trent Hunter*



## for the back row which slept at 8:50

"teacher,

don't you talk to me about  
the atrocities of war  
on this the first balmy day of spring  
i won't be drafted at 18  
given an automatic, told to shatter skulls  
or have mine done in  
i don't care to hear about men  
flopping about like moths without wings  
or a thirsty soil for my iron fat blood  
it doesn't concern me  
...matching shirt and tie concerns me  
shapely tree-bark hair,  
black clutching leather with sterling silver buckles  
seeing her or him under the steam of breath as if they own America  
i own America  
like some child possessing a pair of shoes  
i use her image  
stapled Marline Monroes and Elvis's tight Levi's jeans  
that concerns me  
your war talk doesn't

wars are undone on computer screens  
\*enter code \*system ready \*missile launch  
the sharp smell of sour flesh from trenches no more  
and a far removed exploit,  
is pressing enter on a keypad  
i would do that teacher  
press enter,  
sip my white-chocolate-mocha,  
...and somewhere a baby explodes inside his mother's humid empire

i am 20,  
and were they young boys like me?  
did they have dark-haired lithe girls  
who clung to their necks,  
pleading they ignore a Government unbothered by love or feelings or deceptive glances?  
was it their choice to be taken in the end no better than pigs?  
but really,  
i am tired because i woke this morning at 8:20  
i rose from warm pillows and feather blankets  
i made a choice between breakfast now or breakfast later  
i walked less than a quarter of a mile to sign in  
and now teacher  
it is i,  
the offspring of freedom,  
who just doesn't care"

*Matthew Corder*

## Holy Ghost

Swirling wings of down and gold  
Shimmer and sparkle and vibrate  
In the reflection of my need  
Surrounding, lifting,  
Enfolding.

Breathing life of immortal substance  
Hover and immerse and fulfill  
In the chasm of my spirit  
Renewing, vibrating,  
Speaking.

Descending light of burnished fire  
Leap and dance and embrace  
In the cosmos of my vision  
Revealing, sustaining,  
Comforting.

*Grady Walker*

## who is God today?

taught an array of options,  
i sit in my golden seat. somewhere near the middle, or the back, no matter  
as long as i'm out of sight.  
wednesday, friday, sunday, with each new service,  
the pious preacher man, tells me what he thinks i ought to hear,  
and once again i am sent into a tailspin, not knowing what to think.

who is God today? i ask myself.  
perhaps he is a loving God, waiting to embrace me,  
or maybe he is a God of judgment, no more chances, no more grace.  
which one is it or does anyone really know?

i must choose to set aside the things i've been taught,  
and drop to my knees to seek your face.  
you see through my moments of confusion, my lapse of sure reality,  
and you remind me you're my Father, and that's all i need to know.

*Amanda Huff*

## Incoherent

There's always something  
good  
about  
incoherence  
I say to the screen and  
virgin-white  
pages  
Which in turn stare  
vacantly  
up at me,  
hope  
gleaming on their  
chaste  
surface(s)  
I begin to search the  
far-flung/cramped  
corners  
of my own room for a  
red  
pen  
(actually for my  
Inspiration)  
and instead come across a  
dull  
pencil  
helpless  
in the  
dirty  
carpet fibers  
Melancholy  
I sit meekly staring--a  
tactless  
bard  
with hopes that the  
Muses  
are on my side.  
I'll just imagine my  
life's work  
done, its  
changes  
marked in graphite;  
blunt  
incoherence

Joshua Lease

## Graves in a Kansas Farmyard

Sunlight gouging through billowing clouds: high cumulus, raging a thousand miles up, full of angry water droplets expanding with light speeds, clouds pounding out their mold, billowing up into the breathless atmosphere; but they appear sluggish from my earthworm's view, little tinker Mazda with dusty tires, rolling over the dust-billowing country roads, Kansas wheat fields racing by in a blur of vertical stalks, head-heavy, combines sifting it through their hungry rotary blade mouths like starving monsters, rolling, crushing the fields beneath them. Old farmhouse with white plank siding, rushing by. Another country car bursts by in a cloud of smoky dirt; I look back but can't see it, buried in a trail of dust: a cumulus cloud. Rows of cedar trees blur, thick stalks leaning in rhythm, back and forth bending to the prairie wind, and the slowing down to an old, forgotten graveyard, stones cropping up a glitter in the bright, warm sun. Alone, myself to the world, the grownup world happening mysteriously on another plane somewhere inside the farmhouse where my father listens to a sick old woman die, and I wonder why they built a house next to a cemetery. But the graves are sunny and not like the spooky tombs silhouetted by moonlit ghost images rising from busted-up earth or cartoons of Charlie Brown bumping around in a graveyard in the night. Here there was a field full of people: silently, softly molding to the crumpled prairie dirt, basking under warm skies, summer bees and glassy-winged mayflies perching on their headstones for a moment, keeping company up above, gently rocking, the stand of cottonwoods rustling not far away, making tinkling glass shimmers with their showy leaves, like glitter, like diamonds; they send out filmy cotton seeds over the ground, cartwheeling in the air, sticking to the decaying stones sitting lopsided in the farmhouse yard. I catch one between my fingers and pull the fibers apart.

*Amanda Hall*

## Krummholz

At a flat gap between North Truchas and Chimayosos Peak in the Pecos Wilderness of New Mexico, at about 12,000 feet above sea level, stands a group of conifers. Down the steep slope from that gap, only two hundred feet lower and literally a stone's throw away, stands another group of conifers. The difference between the trees up at the gap and the trees below is this: the trees below the gap grow to a robust 60 or 70 feet, but some of the trees up at the gap do not even exceed five feet.

In these high mountains, exposure affects everything. Twelve thousand feet pushes the limit of tree growth here; to get even the faintest notion of what life here is like, you would have to stand on the tallest part of your roof in a storm, then multiply that ferocity by some immodest number. The seemingly incessant winds howl so strongly through this gap because of the Venturi Effect, an increase in wind velocity caused by the constriction or funneling of air currents between the peaks. That, combined with winters that can exceed seven months and the thin, rocky soil of the peaks, results in a place barely habitable for even the hardiest of trees, which themselves defer to hardy, low alpine grasses and lichens just fifty feet farther up the slope. Yet here at the gap, these trees persist as *krummholz*, "crooked timber" or "elfin wood": crouching, blasted excuses for trees; dwarves; Lilliputians; victims; besieged survivors.

Below the gap, decrescendo. The wind's assault is but a memory; a sense of relative protection, not exposure, rests among the trees. The soil is darker, moister, richer. Birds flit among the green-black spires of the spruces, whose upward sweep mimics that of the surrounding peaks.

And so it is with us. Some of us, blessed with the rich soil of stable, nurturing families, embraced by the sunlight of good fortune, thrive and grow strong and tall. And others struggle just to stand, stunted and battered, disfigured, nearly blown away, never to savor a moment's respite from the gales of inheritance, experience, and existence.

And beauty, and grace, and strength, and dignity belong to both.

*Keith Gogan*



## down highway 1

Donna can you  
    Spell "world almanac"  
    With a queen's lisp  
    And tender pottery?  
All tunes on bridges mark  
    The sundial                      branches of  
    Torpedos and horse in the wind-free  
Scarves in winter moonlight and golden gate blues. Down highway  
    One, tea garden love  
(I've found Chinatown or it found me! In a catastrophic ballot)

a broken nebula  
passes in crazy taxi arms

*Chris Rennie*

## Torn

Tree falls  
Child dies  
Woman shrieks in horror  
Car crosses yellow line  
Bullet cracks bone  
Words crack heart  
Soul shatters  
Into a thousand black bits

In the temple,  
Curtain splits  
Fibers break  
Molecules separate  
Light pours in,  
Changes  
Everything

*Keith Gogan*

## Orthodoxy

You don't  
u n d o t w e n t y y e a r s  
in one....

This fabric's a complex, recent weave  
with strange materials  
ancient fabrics  
unfamiliar patterns  
--new threads coming in--

Some of those already woven in no longer fit  
but stretch  
and bulge  
and some just break clean off.

They must be disentangled  
(careful, now)  
by hands that fear the unraveling of it all.

This will not be done in a year, or ten.

No,  
I will often be surprised  
(and scared)  
by the patterns that are born  
(and die)  
within my tapestry.

But,  
even when I cease  
to weave these earthen tones and,  
with loom transfigured,  
move to brilliant patterns everlasting,

I shall still be weaving.

*Bryan Wooten*

## If Samson Were My Neighbor

If Samson were my neighbor I could  
rumble tumble boulders big and make an island  
on Lake Erie. My grunt and sweat and effort but  
his pain in the right pinkie finger would move  
forests into Afghanistan and sky-scrapers into  
the Amazon. Then planning long and thinking  
hard on the theories of calculus and the methods  
of geography, the formulas of geometry and  
the poetry of meteorology, I and Samson both  
would sweat slimy buckets of salt and water and  
move the Statue of Liberty onto the grassy area  
in my back yard.

*Jereme Harlan*

Dear Eve,

In this fascinating rag-tag effort of hide-and-seek, a lot continues to go unnoticed and I'm trying to figure out why. The holiness of that look in your eye escapes me again, and each time it gets harder to recognize. I want to fall in love with him ... to hit the ground running and not ever look back. I know I possess the wild potential to do this and scatter three sheets to the wind in the process. But where is my object? my reason for losing all sense of proportion? Because I cannot find it, I begin to doubt if I have it in me to actually do anything about this. My joy is dwindling with each passing day, and instead of being up to my elbows in moonlight and color, I'm left picking at the stray bits of glitter in the carpet. I'm getting desperate.

The slow suffocation of suppressed sighs seeps into my bones once again. There's something not quite right here. What is my missing catalyst? Or is it a needful combination of unhappy chances? The thing is, I'm rapidly losing ground and am becoming increasingly concerned that I'll forever be caught in this limbo of suspicion. The suspicion that hovering round the bend lives a dream I should have known all along... This is a frightening thought.

So my point, dear girl, is this: What do you think I should do about it? As soon as I get this mailed, I'm planning on leaving my window open for a white bird with something notoriously green in its beak to fly in. Up 'til now, all I've gotten are the faded echoes of the cries of lonely crows.

Yours,  
Amelia

*Ana Maria Correa*



## a loose description of maturity

monday morning messiah,

like the wide eyed blue shock of June daybreak.

procrustean manacles waving their iron fists with a: 'beep'...'beep'...'be...i shut them out.

the credenza of morning glory cul-de-sacs and

bovine heap-clusters close to the fence stun-cawing as buzzards will, or at least that's how  
i decipher this landscape so artless.

bosomly-built willows weeping overneath the meltdown of too ripe sun breath.  
this side of the world is the anathema it seems.

ceaseless cease-fire from the celestial overhead.

a crusty disability. used up, long forgotten, pitched in the corner.

i am that dry rag waiting there, oil-stiff in the corner.

atrophied life on this a monday morning metronome ...

'tick-tock'... (12 o'clock, slinging paint.)

'tick-tock'... (1 o'clock, slinging paint.)

so astringent and hackneyed, these my glue stained hands are reaching back to reconnect with  
the blue-collars my Papa talked of.

"i'm ready to join the Union." said he, and his daddy, and his daddy's daddy,  
and now, grinning shamefacedly, *me*.

Papa would be proud.

*Matthew Corder*

## Whisperings Of Not Looking Back

In a dark, packed room I see our faces, once hidden  
blanks, trying not to be discovered, trying not to know what they  
have already known. I have grown old and grown eyes and I can  
see you there, smiling across the room at me. I wondered how  
long it was until I saw myself as well.

There, across from me, myself in shoddy reflection. I  
squeeze my eyes, for I cannot stand the sight of being born.

Too long ago, carefully tucked away before the dawn of  
birth, slowly emerging from between my mother's tense legs, the  
birthy dew of heaven still wet on my crown, carefully trying not to  
be born. But spewed out of her mouth, and this world carefully  
trying to forget heaven in all its sparkling glories, until, like dim  
shadows pasted on the backs of our brains, and somewhere upside  
down, we read in Bibles how heaven was, and old men dream  
dreams of places they can't remember, and I look away, and all  
those in the grave whisper sweet nothings, to remember what they  
had never forgotten, once upon a life.

*Amanda Hall*

## The end of my apostasy

There is an art in you that swirls counterpoint  
to my forced dissonance even when tears arise;  
you skillfully weave us until we are one,  
like two hands, palms touching and mirrored,  
woven together: first your finger, then mine,  
your finger, then mine, until there is no end,  
only countless beginnings;

but the night is no longer young,  
and blunt honesty has emerged from wonder--  
you are not who they say you are  
or maybe I am not who they say I am--  
what it matters, I cannot say,  
but I see now only one set of fingers, mine,  
and the symphony has rattled itself onto paper  
until the poetry of us has been reduced to  
worthless scratches on a torn-up page;

they say you are too obscured for me to find,  
but if you would pry the crumpled paper  
from my fingers, then you would know  
that even in the depths I have not forgotten;  
I long to return, to slide my fingers into yours,  
even if you are not as they say,  
even if I am even less than before,  
you are home to me, and if it means to run,  
then I will slap my feet on the pavement  
until you stop me with a single word--  
all I can think is that my heart is too full,  
for your whisper plays tag with the wind,  
and I find myself ever pausing  
to change the direction of my chase.

*Jana Suartwood*

## State of Existence

"Your 4th and 6th cervical vertebrae are cleanly fractured,"  
my drawling neurosurgeon observed,  
having for minutes studied the x-rays that  
are the particulars of my damaged spine--  
branches bathed in light, made of this anatomyous skeleton:  
my un-skinned neck floating on his office wall:  
the center of my self, fully revealed and unashamed.  
"As it appears, you're lucky not to be paralyzed.  
The surrounding ligaments saved that chip of bone  
from breaking off, and sending you into an  
unfortunate state of existence." Is that my  
state of existence: those cervical roots on the wall? A  
vertical vertebrae slightly altered by violent  
shifts of play, or the sudden stop when my skeletal  
curve is maximized from sporting games? The center  
will not hold when freedom dances wild  
jazz and noodle springs let fly then drop.

*Jereme Harlan*

## Everyday's Dreaming

Sometimes I lie down, over on that empty bed where rested the head of my roommate now gone--and I think about the sad story of Nausicaa in her world of bumblecrows and Corruption. The Sea of Destruction that spread killing all in its path but which was secretly purifying the world for the end, so much like the sin nature that slowly dies within me, we, us, all who call themselves Christians...

But I also think about home, home in cold old Massachusetts, up where the rivers run dark and deep under the gray skies of winter. Because all around me are cream half-bare walls which stare blankly into the empty spaces of the room, and remind me that I have to do some homework and tomorrow put on a tie and eat a stale bagel up in the cafeteria.

Sometimes I make my escape from this prison of legalism; out into the shops, stops and coffee shops, all the same and always there but always a welcome change from the humdrum life in the dorm. The people are there, all sitting around with smiles on their faces and time in their hearts; for they know that soon they will slink back, hide up in the caves of the monks to read and write and otherwise try not to think too much about where they'd rather be. But the life is not too unkind and sometimes you can escape like the Hurricane and read a book, play a song or just try to imagine God before time... And each day we get a little better at soothing the restlessness that inevitably rises within the chambers of our souls like the ghosts of the prisoners chained to the walls and left to rot behind rusted doors which never opened. For when David plays his harp the spirits leave us for a time and then we are able to think and act again as rational men, if we please.

Sometimes I think there is madness in all of us, but how much? A little madness is in all the world too, but what looks insane today may appear patterned when condensed and compressed down through centuries to fit within a textbook for your next humanities class. And all this time we were thinking we had life all figured out, but I know that it is a mystery and it is much better to embrace the question and to life and go, flowing to the ebb and tide, the rhythms of life which go fast then slow; warm, cold, and swiftly race by like clouds in the wind or maybe drift like those lazy childhood-summer lay-in-the-grass clouds which have always symbolized those infinite halves of hours we spent sleepily wondering at the painting taking place above our faces.

*Phillip Griswold*

### Ash Wednesday

Fresh from this, my trough of sin  
(Rotten also), now I rise  
To breathe another lungful in  
And marvel that my soul is still alive.

The putrid belch of tainted praise,  
The bile from my poisoned blood  
Is cleaned by what the sparrows say--  
A song that speaks of when the earth was  
one.

The grass, a sacrament of grace,  
Gives verdant testimony lending  
Voice to skies whose azure face  
Speaks second chances, broken souls  
defending.

So then, with ashes penitent,  
While Bread and Wine inflame my bones,  
I whisper (mercy...), rise again,  
And seek the occupation of a stone.

For from exultant branches on a tree  
Comes purer praise than ever came from  
me....

*Bryan Wooten*

## My Heart Sleeps Tonight in Canada

My heart sleeps tonight in Canada  
underneath the big pine tree  
where you first wrote that  
silly postcard years ago

leaves falling in summer  
despite the warm mornings  
yellow-wax sun with a  
slight noon breeze

and they asked you about  
that girl you talked to  
all the time

funny how the flashlight  
never quit till dark

and suddenly the fish  
were the last to matter  
in the train-scramble  
toward aurora borealis

*Jana Stuartwood*

## ...like this last night of Kentucky.

the once spring earth,  
    has turned to cold rigormortis, stiff and spiritless.  
moss smudged saprophyte,  
like acne-scars,  
    collect promiscuous and random about the boulder-ends of old Grecian shoulders.  
who's sashay smirk?  
    but nature's appearance as one-step subsequent to man in every way.  
the rooftop of history, i walk over robotically.  
    ever-forgetting those things of which have gone on,  
        of which are going and waiting to go.  
        dimensions to life.  
        heaven or hell.  
these old familiarities, unbeautiful among the branches,  
                                however lone, however remembered,  
exist as feral Appalachian autobiographies--a poetry unheard...  
stale leaves mixed in clay shibboleth, and does hell in effect extend below us?  
    stale as this september forgotten.  
the underpass, the tour de force of nature,  
                        rests in that very question.  
heaven, or even,  
--so be it--  
hell.

### **dreams for sale**

cheap, inexpensive  
dreams in every shape, size  
or form.  
lightweight, easy to carry,  
very reliable, easy to fix if broken  
just replace the old with the new  
and go on.

*Kimberly Wilson*

### **I see God**

I see God sitting  
on His throne, chewing His gum;  
I wander in Grace

*Joshua Lease*

### **Quicksilver**

Quicksilver droplets  
of moonlight beading on the  
skin of a goddess

*Joshua Lease*

### **Gemstones**

Leftover raindrops  
swell on sparkling spider webs  
treasures from the storm

*Kimberly Wilson*



## Καρδιαζ\*

There is a spot beneath my sternum,  
that when activated,  
stirs my insides.  
Swirling and blending,  
this miraculous reaction transpires,

not quickly,  
not quietly;  
this explosion  
enacts its drama in  
slow motion,  
yet with the  
same intensity.

Lady Reason and Sir Expression  
wrestle over the throne--  
Aristotle's "seat of the will,"  
the heart.  
Velvet-wrapped cement, or  
steel-laced cotton, the battle  
rages until the spot beneath my sternum  
...settles.

*Joel Triska*

\*Kardias is the Greek word for "heart."

## requiem of Silence

the ice square is melting in the dirt  
in the corner of the room  
when the talking  
stops but  
it's not  
there and  
everyone is silent  
outside  
but inside they now see themselves  
and scream, terror wild-eyed as they  
quietly say  
"Well..." and  
"I have to do this now..."  
"We should go now..."  
be still now  
let the Silence live here on  
the table  
before you  
cut out its heart  
in fear as it dies  
gasping again

*Aidan Flynn*

## Sonnet IV

Awake, alive, a groundless joy will sing  
Inside my being, a bright and yellow glow.  
The holy stardust to my clothes will cling,  
Ethereal, yet strong my heart does grow.  
My paper dolls lie scattered on the floor,  
Around my bed I pace inside a dream,  
As thoughts of future years still guard the door;  
Yet innocence secure will ever gleam.  
Its airy strength lives in my secret smiles  
On window sills where time will always dance  
I wend my way along museum miles  
Aware of hope in every fleeting chance.  
    Though darkest distance dims your hidden face,  
    I stay within my clean well-lighted place.

*Ana Maria Correa*

## Sonnet V

Imaginary conversations run  
Along a line peripheral, yet true.  
They catch me unawares beneath the sun  
In vacant hours hidden to my view.  
I'm close enough to gravely see the scope  
Of all the fragile life I have to lose,  
While wrestling with my own misguided hope  
An angel to disown—an aimless muse  
Who paces by my lonely, suffering Trust  
And longs to call her through the din of noise,  
Convincing her of useless things she must  
Surrender for the brutal life of joys  
    Elusive but alive—so frail yet still  
    Alert within my loving, watchful will.

*Ana Maria Correa*





*"A man who works with his hands is a laborer; a man who works with his hands and his brain is a craftsman; but a man who works with his hands and his brain and his heart is an artist."*

*Louis Nizer*

*"I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free."*  
*Michaelangelo*

*"The world today doesn't make sense, so why should I paint pictures that do?"*  
*Pablo Picasso*





**Painting**

*Andrew Miller*



California Coastline 1

*Jereme Harlan*

California Coastline 2

*Jerme Harlan*







St. Paul

*Joy Uyetake*



Victoria

*Joy Uyetake*





*"I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."*

*Albert Einstein*

*"Life is what we make it, always has been, always will be. It is the function of art to renew our perception. What we are familiar with we cease to see. The writer shakes up the familiar scene, and, as if by magic, we see a new meaning in it."*

*Anaias Nin*

*"The man who has no imagination has no wings."*

*Muhammad Ali*



## The Clearing's End

Traditions have been passed down from generation to generation for centuries. Religious traditions, rites of passage, and numerous other rituals have survived and still exist in modern life. It is possible, however, that over time, their significance and meanings have changed or disappeared altogether. Consider the tradition of hunting. In some modern cultures, the killing of an animal marks the crossing over from adolescence to manhood, while in earlier times it may have been a tool to teach a young man about life. The act of killing an animal does not make one a man, but experiencing such an act can teach some valuable lessons.

The fall of 1986 found me eighteen years young and needing a sense of belonging. Eighteen is an exciting age for most young men as they cross the threshold of manhood and venture off to college. However, it was a particularly difficult time in my life. Having gone to college to play football only to find that I was academically ineligible had left me terribly depressed. Up to this point, football had been my identity. In my mind, football was who I was, and it was the only source of value and manliness in my life. It had been the only thing I did that won my father's approval. With my identity stripped from me, I had to find a new sense of purpose and another means of proving my manhood.

Years earlier, my father had taught my brother and me to hunt quail. We were fortunate enough to own an excellent English setter, which made hunting a real pleasure. Quail was the only game my father hunted; I often inquired why he did not hunt other animals. His usual response was that he enjoyed working with the dogs, but he would later admit that he did not have the heart to kill other animals, especially deer. I came to appreciate the outdoors and became quite proficient in harvesting quail, much more so than my older brother. This gave me favor with my father. In my mind, hunting was a rite of passage, a manly tradition passed on from generation to generation. After four hunting seasons, the setter died, and the hunting stopped. My father threw himself into his business, and I replaced the quail hunting with football.

The fall of 1986 was the first that I had not played football in seven years. Life was pretty empty for me, as I had dropped out of all but two classes at college and moved back home. Weekends were especially difficult for me. The lights at the local football field on Friday nights served as a cruel reminder of my loss. College football reports on Saturday afternoons were equally painful, as they revealed that two true freshmen were starting as linebackers for Oklahoma State, the position I had intended to play. Frustration was at an all-time high in my young life, and my home life was not good either. I desperately needed to find something to do, to accomplish something, to prove my manliness, to gain favor with my father again.

As November came around, I made the acquaintance of Steve Aymer, an older man in town who had a reputation for being a prolific hunter. I was as eager to gain access to his hunting knowledge, as he was equally eager to gain access to my grandfather's 8,000 acres of prime hunting land. My intent was to go quail hunting, but with quail season and deer season running concurrently, he had trophy bucks on his mind. I did not object. I thought that if I killed a deer, I could prove my manhood by doing something my father could not. In the 30 years of

granddad's control of the property, he had never granted anyone permission to hunt deer. However, with deer populations reaching an all-time high, he agreed to let us hunt.

"The Ranch," as our family calls it, is a magnificent place. Its low rolling hills are covered in native bluestem grass, waist high most years, and they descend into an oak forest that borders the Caney River. With the exception of fences and a single public road that divides the property, the land probably has the same appearance it did 100 years ago, since none of it has ever been plowed. It takes little imagination to picture massive herds of buffalo grazing on its golden, grassy prairies. Its dense oak forest has provided sanctuary for a large herd of white-tailed deer for generations. During the 1950's, when deer populations were at their lowest in the state of Oklahoma, great numbers of deer could still be seen there.

As deer season began, Steve and I ventured into the woods. Steve had little patience for instruction; however, he gave me what information he could, and we went our separate ways. With no experience and little instruction, I prowled the ridges and creeks of the river bottoms, only to see the occasional white flag of an alarmed deer bounding away. I had not yet learned to move quietly through the ankle-deep leaves. As a result, I determined to climb a tree and wait in ambush for any passing deer. This is not an effective method in such a dense forest, as visibility is extremely limited. So after hunting four straight days, I found myself on the last day of deer season not having fired a shot.

For my final hunt, I decided to try yet another tactic; I had found a large, grassy clearing in the woods approximately 150 yards long and 50 yards wide, at its widest point. The clearing gently sloped lengthwise from one end to the other, and at the high end was a large, fallen tree. My strategy was to take advantage of the visibility of the clearing and the cover of the fallen tree and wait patiently for any deer to emerge from the woods into the clearing. This seemed like a good plan, since I had seen plenty of deer tracks around the edges of the expanse.

That November afternoon was beautiful; the temperature was around 40 degrees, the skies were clear, the air was still. It was the kind of day that the cold air bites the back of your throat and the afternoon sun casts a golden hue on everything. I positioned myself comfortably behind the trunk of the fallen tree, took a chew of Copenhagen, and waited patiently. The hours passed by without a single deer sighting, and I was beginning to doubt my strategy. As the shadows grew longer, I watched the sun sink slowly behind the neighboring ridge. With the clearing fading from golden to gray, the woods grew darker, almost black. Out of the corner of my eye, I caught a shadowy form scampering along the edge of the woods at the opposite end of the clearing. There was just enough light for me to make out the outline of a deer with large antlers; the black backdrop of the woods provided good contrast for his gray figure. My heart leaped, and my mind whirled. I wondered if he would stop, or if would I have to take a shot at him on the run, when I remembered a bit of Steve's instruction. I then let out a loud grunt, and almost immediately, the buck stopped in his tracks and looked right at me. With little thought, I slowly leveled my .308 Winchester's open sights on the animal's shoulder, bit down on my chew, and squeezed the trigger. Instantaneously, the deer reared up on his back legs, exposing his white underbelly, and froze there for a few seconds.

Then, as quickly as the buck had reared up, he fell over backwards, hitting



the ground with a loud, sickening thud. I thought, "I actually got a deer!" Remembering Steve's advice, I sat still for as long as I could to give the animal an opportunity to bleed out. I waited what seemed to be an eternity, probably five minutes rather than the prescribed thirty, before I had to go see my conquest.

With gun in hand, I trotted the length of that clearing eager to see a deer up close and celebrate my triumph. However, something quite different waited for me at the clearing's end. What I found there haunts me to this day. A once-powerful and majestic animal lay there struggling for his life, gasping for breath that escaped through a softball-sized hole in his ribcage. With every passing breath, he forced his blood out onto the ground and into a pool around him. His sleek, muscular body writhed in pain. As an animal lover, I found myself in a quandary; I wondered if there were any repairing the damage I had done or if I should go ahead and finish him. I was frozen in indecision. As I imagined how this animal once ruled these woods, tears welled up in my eyes. Regret and remorse quickly replaced excitement and elation. Fortunately, the animal died shortly thereafter, shuddering as he blew out his last breath. Composing myself, I gutted the animal.

Having heard the gunshot, Steve came by in the truck to see if I had had any luck. By this time, my tears had dried up, and I had on what looked like a pair of crimson gloves. As he admired the 9-pointer, he proudly congratulated me, and I related to him that evening's events, except for my tearful moment. After loading the animal's carcass into the bed of the truck, we headed off to the local deer-check station. We arrived there to find numerous other hunters, including a few of my friends, all of whom congratulated me on my great success. I played along and pretended to be thrilled.

What actually happened that November Sunday? Did I become a man? No, I had not achieved the lofty status I had hoped for; however, the experience did provide some valuable lessons. I now understood why my father could not hunt deer, and I had a greater appreciation and respect for his feelings. My accomplishment did not win my father's approval, but it did alter my perception of him and affected the nature of our relationship. This experience also showed me that life is precious and not something to be taken for granted. A life is not something to barter or exchange for pride. I also learned the value of thoroughly considering all sides of an issue before taking any action. It had never occurred to me before that harvesting an animal was such a major decision.

These days, I try to hunt deer at least two or three days during the season. I enjoy my time in the woods and watching wildlife. Occasionally, I even harvest one. If done ethically, legally, and with the right motive, I can find nothing wrong with harvesting these animals. Although I no longer hunt to prove a point or to gain anyone's approval, it still hurts a little every time I walk up on a freshly taken animal, as my mind is drawn back to that evening in the clearing's end.

*Tom Bellatti*

## Junkets Across the Water

The sun is blinding. It is glinting through the glass of cool water Severn set on the table, the light glancing across the shimmering surface. I imagine the rays of sun heating the water to a boil, just like it is heating my face. The slight fluttering of the curtain covering the open window irritates my mind, and the play of the water in the fountain below is no longer soothing. Long ago, ages ago, the spray ceased its melodious sounds. Now instead of gentleness it forces its harsh droplet resonance into my room, like the sounds of a funeral procession following the dark coffin through muddy streets, dirty shoes splashing dirty water.

This posthumous existence is maddening. I know I no longer have the life to walk, to climb the green hill outside my window. I do not admit to myself that it makes no difference. I no longer have the desire to walk. To go for a walk, to crest the daisy-covered hill, would be to feign a reason for breathing, for which I have none. No, I will not smell the grass today or see the wind on the waving petals of the flowers. It is a relief, really. I lack the strength to see people; living, breathing, warm people. Sucking at the moist air as they would at Happiness itself. Calling in light, tripping tones to one another, as though the world were made of gold and laughter. Yes, I am quite glad I will not be going out any more.

I hear the woman coming across the courtyard to deliver the washing, just as she does every morning. The little children follow her and their pattering footsteps drift up and through the lace curtains. Every sound, every scent of the day going by grates upon my body and burns trenches in my thoughts. Trenches that smolder and glow, threatening to burst into leaping, hungry flames and consume my mind. I squeeze my eyes shut, tightly. Deny entrance to any light. I grit my teeth, like a hearse-wheel over gravel, and taste the thick blood on my dry tongue, blood that bubbles unceasingly from my lungs. I find it almost humorous. The blood that keeps me alive is slowly drowning me.

Vaguely I feel, rather than hear, Severn's footsteps outside my door. My door. My room. My coffin. Rather bright for a coffin. The tapping of Severn's steps is filling my head, a hollow, approaching sound. It hits the rear of my skull, expands, vibrates along the seams of my mind. What a detestable man. Though is anyone truly bearable to one while on one's deathbed? And I hate myself for giving solid thought to the shadowy despising of so faithful a companion. But in the ship. He was so weak. Simply wobbled and vomited. But so faithful. He came with me, for me. But such constant whimpering.

*"Keats! Keats! My dear fellow, are you alright?"* Severn was frantic. No light at all was lit. The hold of the wildly tossing ship was dark as ink. The blackness tumbled and jerked around us, our bunks little islands of stability. I struck a match and lit the lamp I had retrieved from where it had been slung to the floor. Severn's white face darted in my direction. He held on to the rail of his bunk with shaking hands, gripping so hard that even in the dim light of the sputtering lamp I could see the whiteness of his knuckles. But he tried to relax himself, a brave smile pasted on for my sake. I was suddenly caught in a rack-ing cough and for a moment my strength failed me and I was thrown against the wall as the ship lurched violently. Severn screamed. He jumped hysterically from his bunk and tried to run towards me. But the ship, it was like a leaf at the base of a waterfall, at the mercy of the hurling waves. He staggered and fell, pulled himself up, only to fall again. My cough was



subsiding, painful rawness in my throat making my voice husky.

"Severn, good god, there's no need for all your frantics." It was like a cave in the hold, every creak and grinding of the ship echoing in our ears. My voice was small and insignificant. He made another try for my bunk, lost his footing, fell heavily to the floor and smashed his head on the apple barrel. At the same instant, the lamp was wrenched from my hands and went out as it crashed. The blackness hit me like a dousing of ice water. I let the rocking of the ship throw me back into my bunk, curled up, trying to find a rhythm in the sounds and movements, anything to make the forces less external and more a part of me.

The footsteps. Closer now, and with a more timid sound. He will open the door, testing the air in my room with his fingertips and toes first, then his wide-eyed face will peak around, finding my face, searching it. He is scared, scared that he will find me cold and white. I do believe he thinks I don't know this. He believes his pasted smile to be an adequate façade. And I play my part as a grateful invalid. But I cannot keep submerged the smoldering emotions until the end. Perhaps he will prove stronger than I judge him to be, and will not quake at a dying man's hoarse screamings. Ragings. Ragings at the waste of it all. At the waste of love, at the waste of mind, at the waste of breathing.

Again I squeeze my eyes shut. No matter how long I keep them open the sunlight remains a bit unbearable, until I must rest. More voices ring in the courtyard. Funny how when one's eyes are closed one can hear qualities in sounds that are not noticeable otherwise. The silvered haired nurse, with the two children. I hear her voice rise above the others, sifting with the wind that plays with the curtains, parting the thoughts in my mind like the wind parts the lace. She calls to the children with an airy tone, her plump Italian enunciation the clouds that accent the air. Clear and warm, they come to me through the casement. So many others, all in Rome, the city where one can find healing. So many that need healing. From what? Would one call the slow decay of my lungs the wound that I have?

Severn has paused. I no longer hear the gentle tap of his footsteps. Probably his hand is on the doorknob, trembling a bit. I can see him licking his lips nervously, closing his eyes and drawing in deep breaths. Breaths, sharp and worried in his mouth.

Death. Odd. I can't feel my fingertips, or my legs. I can't feel the bed I am lying on. I suppose my mind is free, floating. *Morbid sensibility*. I had thought that to be so ample an explanation for life, my life, me. Now I know. There is no explanation. Or rather, there is more to be explained than that philosophy could possibly reach.

I am straining, trying to catch a whisper of Severn's presence at the door. I hear nothing. With my body, my body that I cannot feel, I strain. She is there, across the water. Eyes even brighter with tears. I would tell her not to weep. I would ask her to smile for me. To show me a flower from her garden. I told Severn yesterday that the spring was so beautiful to me, so filled with life.

The door is gently moving, Severn's fingers gripping the knob. Her fingers were so white when she gripped the doorknob. Almost as white as her face. She just kept staring.

I was coughing. So violent, it stripped my throat, felt like my lungs were going to come out this time. I had been waiting in the drawing room, waiting for her. I was too weak to visit, but she loved to come to me. But the cough, it would not stop. I fell to my knees, to my face. The French doors swung open, a smile lighting her face. Then her hand



turned white on the gold door handle. I saw her. Like something seen by one's eyes but not noticed by one's mind.

"John, you're bleeding." Her hand was over her mouth. She said it so quietly. As if mentioning a stain on my jacket. She came forward softly, knelt by me. Stroked my hair damp from cold sweat. I was quiet then, felt the warm blood on my lips.

And I remembered. Remembered Tom and how he had coughed so hard, heaving his life out of him.

"John," his voice raspy, his hair wet on his forehead, "it's not really so bad, after all. Death. Really, you're quite ready when it comes. It's almost like the sea over the beach, you hardly notice any difference, just little ripples in your thoughts." His voice faded, was not even a whisper. "Remember, the sea at Kent? I would like to see it again." He was eighteen.

I had breathed his air. As he coughed out I breathed in. That is how life is. So simple.

There he is. Severn's smile is ready, and he gently pushes the door shut behind him. He walks across the room, tentatively, reaches for the chair beside my bed with his hands first, his feet still far away, as though he could not support himself any longer. I can see that he forces his eyes to rest on my face, then quickly looks out the window. When he allows himself to sit, it is as though there is more weight than just his physical body that is resting on the chair.

"Shall we read while there is still light? Or would you rather recline on the veranda? This is simply splendid weather. I know how much you love spring." His eyes remain gazing out the window. "I have taken the liberty of examining some rather more reasonable lodgings. But of course it will be entirely up to you, if you feel robust enough to forge through more Roman landladies. Would just save us a few pounds, and all that rot."

"Severn, my dear friend, you worry entirely too much." I am surprised at my voice. My mind and thoughts are strong and stable. I expected my words to be the same. Instead they are almost lost in the voices rising from the courtyard, only faint raspy vibrations barely escaping from my head. It is surprising to Severn as well. His eyes snap to my face, slide across my sweat-beaded forehead. I can see the cold whiteness of my skin reflected in his eyes. Perhaps he sees what I already know. I feel the inward quaking of his gaze, feel his eyes hastily return to their vigil at the window.

"Keats, you fool!" Brown grinned into the wind, trying to climb after me on the slippery rock, the roar of the saltwater dashing against the cliff side obliterating his words. I looked down to see his hair wet from the spray, his clumsy attempts at mounting the rocky steepness. I could barely make him out from the dark wetness of the rock. I laughed out loud. I opened my mouth wide and shut my eyes, let the salt mist tingle on my tongue. I was standing on a narrow jut high above the sea. The gray waves beneath me were hurling themselves at the base of the cliff and I wished they would make it crumble. I would dive, dive so deep.

There was a window in the turbulent gray clouds and a single ray of sunlight silently drifted through, contrasting, almost as if on purpose, with the violent atmosphere around it. I could have stood there for a long time. In the distance there was nothing but more grayness, the sea and the sky swirling together, so far away.

Severn is smiling. "Keats, you're far away, always off into your own poet's world. Come now, what would you do on this beautiful day? You haven't heard a

thing I've said, have you?"

"Don't mind me, old boy." Again I'm surprised at my voice. "I believe I'm content to lie here today. You may read if you like...what were we getting into?"

"*Macbeth*, and I do believe you have the best witch's voice." He smiles very brightly. Our conversation is no more than words. I wonder if he even knows it.

"Perhaps you could do all the voices this day." My eyes are shutting suddenly. How odd. I can't stop them, the lids are too heavy. "I am quite content to simply listen."

Yes, my mind is now completely free from my body. The ripples of my thoughts. They do ripple. I think of how beautiful the waves of the sea looked from the ship. Each one perfect. An entity of its own yet part of something much more vast.

Severn is reading now. I am vaguely surprised. I don't remember him picking up the book or beginning to read. His voice is quite monotone, although I recall how childishly pleased he was upon reading his part of *The Canterbury Tales* last dinner party. My eyes are still closed. Suddenly I realize I have no desire to open them. Strange. I can still see the room as clearly as though I am looking at it. The lace curtains are rhythmically fluttering in and out. The sun glances through the glass of water.

Suddenly Severn's reading becomes too sharp, too defined in my mind. The slipperiness of my thoughts is stilled--crystallized. Objects come to me in perfect color, brilliant lines sharply in focus. It does not matter that my eyes are still closed. I see everything. Everything. The white pages as Severn turns them. There, on the corner. His finger has left a damp smudge of sweat. The book trembles in his hands, the movement barely perceptible. But I can see it. There is a glisten of sweat on his forehead. A single drop labors to the edge of his hairline, slides over the wire ear piece beside his temple, gathers speed down his neck. It disappears into his shirt collar. The lace curtain in the window is blowing beautifully, rising and falling with the rise and fall of the sounds in the courtyard. There is the fountain--never has water sounded so musical! It splashes a cadence with Severn's voice. He is speaking in a deep voice, *Macbeth's* voice.

*Avaunt, and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!*

*Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;*

*Thou hast no speculation in those eyes*

*Which thou dost glare with!*

I muse on the words. Yes, the fountain has no bones, no life. Very cold blood as well, one could say, if one allowed water to be blood in this case. No speculation. Quite obvious. If the fountain has no eyes than of course they cannot speculate. Something is amiss in my musings but I do not care. The filmy lace of the curtain has changed rhythm. It is waving gently to the motion of my own thoughts. They come in wonderful sharpness.

Will Severn never stop droning on? Just as crystal as my thoughts were they shatter around my mind like broken glass. I am startled. Severn is not reading anymore. The light is dusky through my eyelids. I am no longer in amazement that I cannot feel my hands, my legs, my feet. I am quite content to be a Mind. A single, free Mind. But I am irritated. Has Severn left? No. He is still there. My eyes are heavy but I open them. Poor fellow. His head is lolled against his chest, his mouth partly open. His glasses have slipped down his nose. As I watch they



fall slowly, slowly, and suddenly rattle to the floor. He jerks awake. He swallows hard, eyes flit to my face. His features relax. He smiles in a relieved way to see me alert. I wonder what is in his mind. Suddenly I feel very sorry for him. I feel very detached and clinical—I have been a doctor, have seen goryness and death, but he has not.

Two days ago I had asked him, had watched as his face blanched, sweat formed, dripped. No, he had never seen anyone die. We were sitting on the hill, beneath the sycamore tree, watching the children in the schoolyard far below us. They were simply specks among the many red-tiled rooftops, walking in formation to their classrooms.

"Well then." I looked at him. "I pity you—poor Severn, what trouble and danger you have got into for me." I told him I did not expect to convulse when I died. He turned his face away from me then. On our way back I could not walk without his help.

But now, now Severn is looking at me so hopefully. His smile is too relieved. And it changes. The alarm grows from his eyes to his mouth to his hands gripping the sides of the chair. I am aware of a change. It is in my mind first. With each swelling thought the room becomes more focused, too focused. Soon all I see is Severn's face. It is horribly large and distorted. My eyes are suddenly too tight, as though I am so tired I cannot control how things appear to me. To my side something is groping. Groping at Severn's chair. It is my arm and hand. Severn seizes my hand. It is very dark in the room now, almost night. The whiteness of Severn's face and the whiteness of my hand float in the dimness. He is clutching my hand, though I cannot feel it. I feel words escaping from me. So odd. I am but a Mind, quite free. I do not know where the words come from.

"Lift me up—I am dying—I shall die easy—don't be frightened—thank God it has come."

Strange that the voice should be wrong. Severn caught me with his other arm, held me. But I am not dying. No, everything is coming to me in perfect clarity, the ripples in my mind very vivid and crisp. I am too weak to cough. But that does not worry me. I do not want to break the perfect stillness of the room and twilight with rough sounds. The darkness is swallowing the room, the little candle that Severn lit is a yellow star, tiny, floating.

"My god, she's beautiful!" Brown, panting beside me, passed his hand over his damp forehead.

*I couldn't speak. I was enraptured with the sheer power.*

"Ben Nevis. Keats, old boy, did you ever think we would be here, here. The highest peak in Scotland." He looked like a boy in the presence of his athlete idol. He shook his head, showing his wonder. "She is beautiful."

The mist had enveloped us as we ascended the mountainside, following the winding path that lead to the summit. The mist had wrapped the journey in a mystical eeriness, the trees dark and damp and dripping. During rests we had taken turns drinking from the whiskey flask, the heavy, silent mist making us feel as though it would be inappropriate to speak.

On the top of the mountain the mist rolled slowly and massively below us. The clouds passed silently over and around us, the sky gray and luminous. I felt that I would never, never forget the way the mountaintop looked, the way it seemed to be of another world. Its own world, of gray mist and thick clouds, dark dripping trees and craggy rocks

*damp and large against the sky.*

All my senses come reeling back to me. I feel very small. Very weak. I am no longer a Mind, free and detached, clinical. I am so small. Fear floods me, rushes my thoughts, and I realize I am truly thinking clearly now. Severn is awake, I can feel his hand lightly brush my forehead.

"You're in a cold sweat." He is murmuring, does not know I am awake, is hardly awake himself. His breathe sends freezing chills through my body.

"Don't breathe on me--it comes like ice." My voice barely breaks the thick darkness.

His hand pauses for a moment, is startled that I am awake. But I have no more words. None. There is nothing to say. The darkness is very comfortable, and as I breathe, very shallow and shallower yet, it enters my body, slowly, slowly. Like the mist on Ben Nevis. It is its own world. I am sorry for Severn. He had said, with a pale face, that he had never seen anyone die. But I am not afraid, not really. I feel every fiber of the bed beneath me. Hear the wind blowing very softly through the lace on the window. The fountain plashes in silver, dusky tones. Severn's even breathing sounds like the breeze through the poppies on the hill. Everything is vivid and real. The darkness is comfortable to me, and I close my eyes.

*The great sea shall war it down  
For its fame shall not be blown  
At every farthing quadrille dance  
So saying with a spirits glance  
He dived--*

*Laura Nichols*



*"There lurks in every human heart a desire of distinction, which inclines every man first to hope, and then to believe, that Nature has given him something peculiar to himself."*

Samuel Johnson

*"He who joyfully marches to music in rank and file has already earned my contempt. He has been given a large brain by mistake, since for him the spinal cord would fully suffice."*

Albert Einstein

*"If everyone is thinking alike then somebody isn't thinking."*

General George S. Patton

*"A person who walks in another's tracks leaves no footprints."*

Anon

*"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."*

Henry David Thoreau

*"We do not write in order to be understood; we write in order to understand."*

Cecil Day Lewis





## Jesus the Artist

In approaching a Christian aesthetic one treads into dark and tremulous waters. For Christians, on the one hand lay the unbridled expressions of the passions of human life, and on the other lay the eternal consequences of heaven and hell. Only by objectively weighing both ideas, searching out the elusive place where they complement each other can one come to experience and appreciate the arts as God intended.

T. S. Eliot, in his essay "Religion and Literature," observes, "For literary judgment we need to be acutely aware of two things at once: of 'what we like,' and of 'what we ought to like'" (152). Neither of these goals is objective, not even for the Christian. Different interpretations of Scripture lead separate denominations to incongruous dogmas. While evidence may be found in the Bible to argue either God's approval or disapproval of the arts, no discussion on a Christian aesthetic is complete without examining the life and words of Jesus. Though first century Semitic culture was oblivious to the mediums of art found in modern American media, principles found in Jesus' teaching can be applied to the current context. Jesus himself demonstrated the arts as a master storyteller, distinguished an object from its influence on an individual, and also exhorted his audience to be conscious of what affects them in addition to how they affect others.

A captivating orator, Jesus is most associated with the literary device called the parable. The word "parable," according to Charles Hedrick, "literally. . . signifies something cast alongside another thing to clarify it" (1006). In other words, a parable is a story that, by comparison, further illustrates another one. The Gospels abound in these stories of Jesus, capturing the common life of first century Palestine and comparing them to the Kingdom of God. Jesus captures the abstract truths of the infinite God through situations familiar to his original audience. Rather than bluntly sermonizing his theological ideas, he tells stories. In Luke 15, the author records three such parables illustrating God's relationship to sinners in vivid imagery. The first story relates the sinner to a lost sheep and God as the shepherd, diligently searching for the lost sheep. The second story similarly compares the sinner to a lost coin, and God as a woman who sweeps her house in search of the coin. In the final story, the parable of the prodigal son, the sinner is made to be a rebellious son who disowns his father and squanders his inheritance, while God is portrayed as the father who patiently waits day after day for his son's return. Through each of his parables Jesus communicates a theological truth by finding an analogue familiar to his audience. He thus patronizes the arts through his example of storytelling. However, in the modern American context, wise sages in fishing boats no longer tell stories. They are told on printed pages and in darkened theaters. In fact, these are the means by which audiences know these same stories of Jesus today. Thus, Jesus' example validates the modern mediums of literature and film.

Jesus further validates the arts by distinguishing between an object and its effect on an individual, as well as identifying the origin of sin. In Mark 7:1-23 the Pharisees express their disapproval when Jesus' disciples do not wash their hands before they eat. Jesus then chastises the religious leaders for adhering to their own traditions and abandoning the commandments of God. He goes on to cite several examples where the Pharisees disregard God's law in favor of their own tradition.

In exposing their hypocrisy he says, "There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile" (Mark 7:15, NRSV). In the context of the passage, Jesus is specifically referring to food and the laws concerning clean and unclean foods. However the principle involved applies to the arts. Nothing outside a person, including a painting, song, sculpture, or film, makes a person sinful. Art itself is not sin. Jesus is clear that, "it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come. . . . All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person" (Mark 7:21, 23, NRSV). Therefore sin is not an external imposing force but rather an internal force. The significance here is that Jesus lays down no prohibitions to the observer of art. There is no "Thou shalt not view R rated movies." Neither is there "Thou shalt not listen to rock and roll music." Sin, then, may come from a person's response to art, but never from the art itself.

In addition, Jesus blurs the distinction between secular and sacred when he exhorts his listeners to love their enemies. In Matthew 5:43-48 he urges his followers to rise above the distinctions of good people and evil people, righteous and unrighteous, friend and foe. He says that God causes the sun to shine on both the just and the unjust, and the rain to fall on their crops just the same. Apparently, God does not view the world through a secular or sacred lens, nor does he label the contents of it as such. In closing, Jesus says, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48, NRSV). The word "perfect" in the original Koine Greek does not carry the connotation of "without mistake, or blemish," as in modern English. Rather, the word *teleios* is defined as "complete, perfect, whole; full-grown, mature" (Newman 180). Further, the verb is an imperative that may also be translated "You will be." It is a syntactical structure rare in Greek but common in Biblical Hebrew. In fact, the same structure is found in the Ten Commandments. The significance is, "its force is quite emphatic, in keeping with the combined nature of the indicative mood and future tense" (Wallace 452). The structure emphasizes the undoubted certainty of the event. Thus, Matthew 5:48 might also be translated, "Therefore you will be mature and complete just as your Heavenly Father is mature and complete." As applied to the arts, Jesus urges a mature, unbiased judgment that supercedes labels of "Christian" and "Secular." The value of a work of art is not in its label.

Further Jesus warns against the detrimental influences in one's life. In Matthew 5:27-30 Jesus, in his trademark hyperbole, makes clear the need to be aware of what affects one's life. After equating a lusty look with adultery, Jesus commands that if a person's eye or hand causes him to sin then it should be cut off, because it's better to enter heaven maimed than to go to hell. While Jesus obviously was not speaking literally, the principle is apropos to the realm of art. If a pornographic picture leads a person to adulterous thoughts, then the person should no longer look at it or others like it. If a film depicting a violent crime leads a person to imitate that crime, then it should no longer be viewed. Laziness is not compatible with a Christian aesthetic. One must not overlook the effect of art on one's thought life and behavior. Thus, the Christian, especially, must be aware of the ways music, film, sculpture, and paint influence him or her.

Not only must the observer of art be aware of its effects, but also so must the artist. In Luke 17:1-2 Jesus says, "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to

cause one of these little ones to stumble" (NRSV). The power of influence yields serious consequences. Not only must a viewer guard what influences him or her, but the artist must also be aware of his audience's response. The artist is responsible for the consequences of his creation. While art inherently is not sinful, it possesses the power to influence sin. Therefore, the artist must acknowledge this power and the responsibility to wield this power wisely.

The quest for a Christian aesthetic is not merely a question of good art versus bad art, in terms of technical and artistic quality, but also right art versus wrong art. A moral core anchors the value of any work of art. As exemplified by Jesus, art is neither sinful, nor is it a blessing in all its manifestations. Art can be used to draw sinners to God, and art can be the influence that causes sin. So in answer to "what we ought to like," these guidelines can be deduced from the example of Jesus: whatever reveals truth about God, whatever reveals truth about man's relationship to God, and whatever spurs men on to seek God more.

*Peter White*

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## The Spell of Mediocrity

The congregation files into the seats of the worship arena for a 10:00am contemporary worship service. The service begins and the churchgoers jump to their feet clapping along with the "catchy" beat provided by the drummer. A modified sine wave from the keyboard lines out the simple I-VI-IV-V chord progression, which is joined by other keyboards, guitars, Latin percussion pieces, and an acoustic piano to produce a sound anyone with a radio has heard countless times. The worship pastor and choir lead the congregation in singing the words to the song. "Oh Lord my God/ You are very good/ You are clothed with splendor and majesty," they cry, before repeating the phrase, "You are my friend" over and over to the same four note melodic pattern. A good friend of the author's turns to him and asks, "At what point did worship music become so trite?"

This question addresses issues that reach farther than the issue of whether or not the aforementioned song is inherently a mediocre piece of music. The musicians were certainly not lacking in the skill to perform it, and the song's lyrics do not promote any sort of heresy or provoke unclean thoughts. However, if one were so inclined, one could name dozens of songs (sacred and secular) that utilize the same four-chord progression that repeats over and over again through the entire piece. And the lyrics remain theologically sound only because they do not attempt to discuss any major theological idea outside of stating the blatantly obvious colored with biblical buzzwords such as "majesty" and "splendor." While this song and others like it (there are many!) are arguably tolerable musical efforts, the essence of the question raised earlier is that Christians are capable of so much more and should be accepting of nothing less. Christian composers and songwriters are capable of challenging the theological minds of congregations through the use of poetic lyrics set to intricate music.

The purpose of this paper is not to suggest that all music, in order to please God, must follow the aforementioned criteria. There are volumes of profound poetry set to simple melodies that can be useful in worship. And, to give an example, there are volumes of intricate music set to the opening Kyrie movement in the ordinary of the liturgical mass, whose simple Greek text is translated, "Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy." At the same time, however, a Christian songwriter should not simply discard all three criteria in favor of reducing his or her music to a short-lived emotional high.

Theological integrity is a pressing issue in Christian music especially with the low level of thought that goes into most contemporary Christian lyrics. One of the sole purposes of early Christian hymnody was to teach theology and in so doing, to combat the heresies that tended to arise in the early church. Robert Webber, a professor of theology at Wheaton College, describes how the need for hymnody to teach the gospel and theology in what he calls a "pre-print" era "changed drastically with the invention of the Gutenberg press" (14). However, he goes on to explain how today's generation is so reliant on television and radio as a means of communication that it has become a sort of postmodern "pre-print" society (Webber 14). J. Robert Clinton, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, goes on to say, "The average Christian is neither familiar with their Bible nor knows much theology. However, they love music. What they hear via Christian music essential-

ly becomes what they believe" (14). In a society that would rather hear a message on television or radio than read about it in a book such as the Bible, the need for sound theological content in music is just as essential as it was centuries ago.

In striving for theological and biblical integrity, one must not overlook the artistic qualities of music and the lyrics. Music is, in every aspect, a form of art. The poetic nature and artistic excellence of song lyrics strengthen the theological statements found within. To simply say, "the Lord is good" has little to no impact on the hearer or singer of such words. Even to say that the Lord is very good and clothed with splendor and majesty still fails to grasp the true goodness of God. However, lines such as, "He breaks the power of cancelled sin/ He sets the prisoner free/ His blood can make the foulest clean/ His blood availed for me," (Wesley 57) come much closer to capturing the true goodness of God. In addition to their aesthetic qualities that cause the reader to want to read or sing them over and over again, they describe God's goodness on multiple levels.

By the tenth century A.D., and for many years to follow, it was decided that music in the church was to be sung by professional clergy and choirs only. The idea behind this decision was that God deserves the best worship and that laypersons are not capable of producing quality sounds worthy of His attention. This good-intentioned concept was in part responsible for the birth of the secular music industry. Congregations took their desire to sing to bars and parties. The fallacy of the abandonment of congregational participation in worship and the resulting paradox is that God is indeed worthy of His creation's most excellent praise, but all men and women are created to praise Him, even the ones that He did not gift with musical ability. A balance must occur then in creating music that is accessible to congregations and teaching congregations to access more challenging music so that God can receive the highest level of praise.

Modern Christian music, overall, exhibits a general lack of creativity. It often falls victim to the secular media mentality that if something works once it might work again and again. This philosophy is the creativity squelching force that has caused the Contemporary Christian music industry to produce the same kind of music for the past several years. Randy L. Rowland, pastor of Church at the Center in Seattle, Washington, suggests that in order to break out of this rut, "Christian artists must be granted permission, passion, and panache (12)." Christian Congregations must be open to new styles of music and the free expression of Christian ideas and in a sense grant artists "permission" to create new things. The passion concept reminds the Christian artist why he or she is creating art for the church. Panache is the flair that allows Christian music to influence the culture instead of being influenced by it.

Christian composers and songwriters are indeed capable of challenging the theological minds of congregations through the use of poetic lyrics set to intricate music. It takes a willingness on behalf of the artist to create original excellence for an originally excellent Creator. It also takes a desire on behalf of Christians not to settle for mediocrity, and to look forward to new and innovative ways to worship their Creator. If Christians put these ideas into practice, then the day is not far off when Christian art will once again influence secular art.

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*"May the road rise to meet you.  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face.  
And rains fall soft upon your fields.  
And until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the hollow of His hand."  
Irish Proverb*



