A diverse collection of short narratives, poetry, photographs & illustrations, courtesy of the creative minds that attend Auburn University at Montgomery
FEAST YOUR EYES ON THE
2014
FILIBUSTER
AUM’S OFFICIAL LITERARY JOURNAL
CALLING ALL CREATIVE MINDS

Meet Our Staff

Poetry

Something You Already Know

"...So You Will Understand What I Mean When I Say—"

Sister Song

The Old Man

The Duchess's Perspective

The Dig

Time

Linoleum Sirens

Black Heart

Feeling of Nature

The Monster & I

From The Eyes Of The Innocent

The Wake

After The Rush

Right Turn Days 1-365

Wrong Turn

Writing Like Doing Black Right

The Artist

All You Can Do.

Is All That You Can

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I HAVE TAKEN UPON MYSELF AN OCCUPATION FOR THE DELIGHT OF THE WORLD
AND FOR THE COMFORT OF NOBLE HEARTS

–GOTTFRIED VON STRASSBURG, TRISTAN

Dear Readers,

My vision for this year’s publication was not only an outlet for the creative minds of AUM, but also a look into their identities, into the pieces that come together to form a strong community of educated minds. My commitment to this edition, as well as my overall goal, was to highlight the unique lives and passions of our writers and artists. In addition, I have strived to show the evolution of the journal’s identity. With each new year comes a new editor, and each editor has contributed to the journal’s amazing growth. This year, I am proud to say that we have added several new features; we have designed the first Filibuster t-shirts, conducted the first Filibuster Facebook Contest, held the first Filibuster Poetica, and, as a result, have had a greater variety of submissions than ever before.

I could not have produced such an outstanding publication without our graphic designer, Rachel Odom. She has an amazing eye for design and extraordinary patience for withstanding a bombardment of emails from me. Our co-editors, Katie Lindgren, Tori Boyd, and Eden Arsenault, were also invaluable for their support, knowledge, and creativity. Lastly, but certainly not least, our faculty advisor, Dr. Klevay, supplied us with superb wisdom and illimitable support.

The Filibuster 2014 is indeed a labor of love. Our commitment to the journal required long nights, countless emails, tough decisions, and many, many cups of coffee. In return, we ask that you delve into this year’s issue with a thirst for imagination and discover the unique creative minds that call AUM home.

With best regards,
Ashley Stanaland

ASHELY STANALAND
Though Ashley loves to edit, read amazing fiction, and occasionally write her own, she also loves to craft, throw themed parties, and can jams and jellies. When Ashley is not reading, writing, or running around frantically with a grandé Starbucks, she enjoys spending time with her son, Evan, her fiance, Michael; her English bulldog, Willis; and her cat, Edward. Ashley received her undergraduate dual degree in English and Secondary Education/Language Arts with a minor in Theatre from AUM; she is now working towards her MLA with a concentration in English. She is the President of the Omicron Psi Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, and the Vice President of the Pi Pi Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi.

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With best regards,
Ashley Stanaland

KATIE LINDGREN
Katie is a senior at AUM. She’s majoring in English Secondary Education with a minor in Theater. When she isn’t studying she spends time cooking, sewing, or gardening. Her favorite authors include Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen, Lord Tennyson, Harper Lee, and Kathryn Stockett.

EDEN ARSENAULT
Eden is a senior majoring in English. She is the mother of four four-legged fur babies and is a proud crazy cat lady. In her spare time, Eden loves to read and spend time with her niece and nephew. Some of her favorite authors includes Harper Lee, F. Scott Fitzgerald, the Bronté Sisters, and Kate Chopin.

RACHEL ODOM
Rachel Odom is a graduating senior. She has earned a Graphic Design degree with a minor in Photography. Her hobbies include collecting inspiring art prints and singing while driving. Her biggest dream includes working for a major, magazine firm. After graduating, she hopes to travel somewhere she has never been. She is constantly inspired by the quote: “Never let success get to your head and never let failure get to your heart.”

TORI BOYD
Victoria Boyd, formerly Spencer, started her own magically perfect fairytale life March 16, 2013. She will be graduating in May of 2014 with a degree in Secondary Education/Language Arts. She has a life that is busy no matter how much she tries to slow it down. She has two small pups that are the love of her life, aside from the husband. She has an obsessive fondness for antiques and turns into a stunt driver when she sees an estate sale sign on the side of the road. She crochets, decorates, bakes, and reads, all in excess because she has no internal gauge to make her do things in moderation.

ASHLEY STANALAND
Though Ashley loves to edit, read amazing fiction, and occasionally write her own, she also loves to craft, throw themed parties, and can jams and jellies. When Ashley is not reading, writing, or running around frantically with a grandé Starbucks, she enjoys spending time with her son, Evan, her fiance, Michael; her English bulldog, Willis; and her cat, Edward. Ashley received her undergraduate dual degree in English and Secondary Education/Language Arts with a minor in Theatre from AUM; she is now working towards her MLA with a concentration in English. She is the President of the Omicron Psi Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, and the Vice President of the Pi Pi Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi.

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As the Internet begins to take over the literary world, many journals now publish completely online. While we still love our paper copies of the Filibuster, this year we wanted to see what would happen if we used social media to further promote the magazine. Consequently, we held our first Filibuster Facebook Contest. Contestants posted their writing and artwork on the Filibuster Facebook page in hopes of getting the greatest number of “Likes.” To stay true to the philosophy that AUM students make our publications possible, we encouraged everyone to become involved in the selection process. The winners not only won a $50 gift card to Starbucks (Awesome!), but they also were the first entries chosen for this year’s publication! Our winners this year included Meggy-Kate Gutermuth with her poem, “I. Am. Woman.” and Amy Osgoode with her drawing, “Narcissus.” Congratulations!

“I. AM. WOMAN.”
Meggy-Kate Gutermuth

I am not a disciple of Nefertiti but I am a disciple of Willendorf
I am the ugly
I am the anti-art
I am anti-convention
I am my own grand design
I am a child of Venus
Venus is in my blood, in my bones, in my pregnant flesh
In the blood I excrete, precious and holy and blessed
I am ever bearing fruit
The fruit of labors
The labors, the second class death sentence being a woman
Being a nigger
Being devoiced by man
The mud under his shoe
Yet I am the gum that will always stick to you
Yes, I am the guilt, the guilt you will always carry in you
The guilt from the first monk who damned woman in Genesis
It had to be a man, it had to be a snake
It was my own wisdom I ate
In Catholic books I am not allowed to grow
But baby, I create
Two thousand years later since the first written word of God
and I am still marching
I am the tribal warrior forever kicking
All that women have endured and baby we’re still peaking
The eternal prime of our youth
Our youth, our curves, our lips, our vulva, our heavenly nodes
and divine motherly love
It never disintegrates, ever it blooms
The egg, it creates
In nature, in the trees
In the seas of possibilities
In the trees that make the paper, that made the scrolls
Wisdom is ours, words aren’t forgotten
Mary Magdalene is still a prophet, a heroine, and as long as her name is alive her Gospels are thriving
And I am a derivative of her
Her pain is my pain
Her discrimination is my discrimination
When they call her a “whore” they call me a “whore”
And through the wars we rage on
We will never stop giving you hell
Our tribe doesn’t disintegrate, baby it swells
Marching on
Past the rape
Hanging you by the nape...of your neck
In Egypt female officers arrest you
They live through the circle of hell
Karma snaps back
What do you expect?

There will come a day my daughter and her daughter can lie peacefully
Lie peacefully beside a man and not expect him to have the upper hand
Benazir Bhutto grew up in a home where she didn’t have to eat the leftovers of a man
Of her brothers, of her fathers
Why should she? Why should we? There’s two of us in this town and baby we can get along
These will come a day
Women are respected more for their minds
Than they are their flesh
Than their skirt size
The moisture between their thighs
Baby we are more
We are more than babymakers and heartbreakers
We are soul takers and earth shakers
There’s more to me
Than what you see
There’s more to the land
Than the green under your feet
There are the roots
Underneath
I am the blood
In the roots
In the sea
Of possibilities
I am the heart
Ever the beat
Of Mama Gaia
I am the womb
Where it starts
And when we’re together
With your seed and my egg
We are one
We are equal
Remember that
When you see me
On the street
We are equal
When we speak
Remember that
I am more than what you see
Remember that unlike a man
I wasn’t born free
But I set myself free
I am woman
I am you and I. Am. Me.
He squirms in his seat, toes tapping in time with his fingers that drum the tabletop. He wrinkles his nose, scratches his left knee then his right shoulder. He tugs at his shirt collar while recrossing his legs in the opposite direction. He glances at the door, then his wrist watch and finally gives the waiter a nod. The face in the mirror looking back at me is someone I find difficult to know. Some days are easy and I think we are friends my buddy from long—long ago. Other days aren’t so easy, I must admit for me and that someone I don’t know. The look on her face of loss and defeat leaves pain and hurt in my soul. Her eyes are my father’s, I remember well—his look of kindness and care. The smile is my mother’s, full of mercy and grace—her love will always be there. If I look deep enough—I see them all there my family looking back at me. That girl in the mirror— I know very well is loved—so unselfishly.

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**AGITATION**

LeeAnna Bonner

I tried to get the love of you from inside of me The tears wouldn’t drain it and the screams didn’t release it So I searched for freedom from you in the form of blood And as the blade traced my arm and my vein burst open I felt the captive feelings of you explode from the trap of my mind and flow freely down my wrist I felt my soul thanking me for no longer forcing it to act prison to those feelings I felt my body tire from the celebration and fall limp onto the floor I felt my heart give me applause Slow and steady Slower Lighter As the curtains that were my eyes drew closed

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**THE FINAL ACT**

Deidra Allen

Deidra is a senior majoring in English. Her additions include Facebook and sitcoms.

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**THE FACE IN THE MIRROR**

Phyllis Burton

Phyllis is a MLA student. She loves the beauty of the changing seasons and vacationing in the Smokies.

The face in the mirror looking back at me is someone I find difficult to know. Some days are easy and I think we are friends my buddy from long—long ago.

Other days aren’t so easy, I must admit for me and that someone I don’t know.

The look on her face of loss and defeat leaves pain and hurt in my soul.

Her eyes are my father’s, I remember well—his look of kindness and care.

The smile is my mother’s, full of mercy and grace—her love will always be there.

If I look deep enough—I see them all there my family looking back at me.

That girl in the mirror— I know very well is loved—so unselfishly.
All agreed that she was looking well that Sunday morning: a simple, red dress that provided for a slight swing of her hips, without a compromise to dignity. Her hair was lifted in gentle waves, allowing me to notice the back of her dress as she kneeled for prayers. There was no hook at the top of her dress. He was not there. He was not there to assist with dresses with sly hooks as she put her earrings in—before they rushed the boys to the car on early Sunday mornings. She did not have him to help with hooks. If she could not do it herself, it could not be done.

Of all the difficulties she faces, the frayed, uneasy feeling as she must ruthlessly scan bank statements…the complications that breed more complications…the carefully pleasant face that she must maintain for all the prurient eyes…Of all that, it was the lack of a hook that made me ache for her. No small moment where she leaned into the warmth of his hands and breath along her back, knowing she did not have to take care of everything. I cannot tell her I notice the lack of a hook. Composure is a necessity for her. She cannot afford to fall apart, not knowing for sure how to put back all her pieces into a recognizable shape.

I tell you all of this so you will understand what I mean when I say—

She wears her courage like a red dress that bares her lonely place for all to see and admire.

"...SO YOU WILL UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN WHEN I SAY..."  
Shannon E. Capps

Shannon received her bachelor's degree in English and Religious Studies from Auburn University. She is currently a graduate student in AUM's School of Education.

THE ARTIST
Brandon Burrell
Brandon enjoys photography and writing fiction in his spare time.

ALL YOU CAN DO, IS ALL THAT YOU CAN
Corey Carr

In Corey's spare time he enjoys exercise of all sorts, studying the Bible, and spending time with family and friends. He challenges himself daily to be better, compassionate, and thankful for life.

I live and die for the things that I conspire, And it's drawn a small circle that now seems to be my outlier. I rise for what flies and falls for what crawls, Chasing what floats and releasing what draws. I cannot stand this place, I cannot love the way of such a deceitful race. I heard them say, 'someone searched for you,' Whether they ask or tell, is a certainty I can't conclude. I don't know what else to say, Other than to do it too late, I'm going and I hope the place I'm headed is where I calculate. Flying in an open abandoned ship, I feel like oh, oh, oh. My confidence continues to ruffle like a flag when the wind blows, Utterly speaking ideas I'm unsure of how to propose. I try to add meaning without ever really wanting to know. When you get to a sign that says 'this way closed,' I truly hope you forget which way to go. All you can do, is all that you can, When you hit a wall, step back and hit it again.

CONSTELLATION
Corey Carr

Grab my hand and run with me, For where we go, we outrun the sea, Nor boats can sail, nor eyes can see. We disappear like a twisting funnel that loses feet, But where we come, we come in peace, Like the Sun that shines the Moon to sleep, My grip is strong that secures your reach, I offer a solace of love where your heart is bleak, Dispersing an index figure over harsh mouths that speak, And on all of your pain in confidence you gave to me, Ecstatic for cornered cheeks you praise at me, I guide you up steps of clouds that fade to leaps, Pouncing on darkness, creating bright sparkling lights that greet, High up, where all who look up at the sky to see, And curious minds ponder over hearts that meet, As we shoot across the night confirming hearts that beat. 

Inspired by Robert Frost's "Two Tramps in Mud Time"
When I wake and find him sitting At the end of my bed, unkempt, shabby I know he'll stay with me, unremarking. Those funny, big ears, black and shaggy Shedding his rough coat all over the quilt He's lumpy and chubby and downright flabby. Through his years, as a flower, he has wilted All he does is lay there, all curled up, snoring Should I wake him up? I am still filled with guilt. When he was young, he loved to go exploring But now, my friend, the Old Man seems to be quiescing I suppose life, when you're an old dog, must be boring.

I am Magellan I move ahead to move ahead I walk these long forgotten, long ignored roads in search of something new, something unique something grand I have a folded paper map it shows me where not to go it shows me where all of the cannibals live I have a compass it is on my hand it always points ahead

I am Dominic Loricius I castigate myself for my sins as a sign of my penitence as a sign of my humility as a sign of my suffering as a sign of my contrition I scourge myself with invisible whips invisible bars drawing invisible blood invisible chains leaving invisible scars I break my flesh and my spirit for want of a new beginning for want of new memories

I am the Old Gunslinger I mosey into town with nothing but my name and my tools I pay no heed to anything around me what was the name of the town? anywhere? everywhere? neverwhere? I pretend not to see the church and laundromat on the corner and the coffee shop and the park I ignore the school and the bar and the clinic I am the wanderer I am the flagellant I am the faceless one I am...

I took a ride to Alabama. It may as well have been to the moon. I could have gone to Georgia, but it would have been too soon. I fight, exhaust my will and might. But here you still remain. While I drown, aspirating pain, blinded by your games. I am aware that something within me has torn, but I lack the will to survive anymore. Anger, failure, and somehow glee; rage and spite and hate. You clawed them all out of me. But for what? I can't relate. And when I thought I could feel nothing more, you are there again to bore and bore. But when he came, I was brand-new. His mere months demolish your five years. You ripped and shredded. He only repairs. Where you faltered, he steps, steady and aware. You were a callous cad, and he is nothing but care. Still, my devil and my angel sit here upon my lap. The angel beckoning me forward. The devil pulling me back. In front of me all love and light-- to the back only regret. And every day I linger, just a moment, on what could have been. those stupid thoughts running, bounding, wasting, through my head. But every day tis the same conclusion (as it was the day before). You are far and away, without a clue. And I am grateful for every day that does not include you.

In open eyes that which I peer The mask you hide beneath is sheer Blithe expressions you show to lie Outside lit aflame, within you die The hollow bell, your heart, rings Only for chorused echoing brings Desperation and tears self-betrayed Internally, I see, you scream and bray Why conceal from the world such truths? For what result shall prove your ruths? Discern the place true beauty resides! Pretense is not, in you, where it bides. Disregard their ill u...erances and actions Heed mine and stride away in satisfaction New self revealed sparks life in embers From which, it is you, I will remember.
SISTER SONG

Meggy-Kate Gutermuth

Meggy-Kate is a punkstar provocateur, truthwriter, actress, heartdancer, redesigner, gypsysoul. Co-sibling of the GutermuthGirls, ever conquering the Meggy-Kate Gutermuth world. GUTERMUTH UP!

Today our world is a crisis of police state
Men kick us down, down to the ground
Men in suits plant hate, and rape abounds
Not the world I want for you
Not the things my generation wanted you to see
Not a world easy for you
It’s heartbreaking, disarming and no one knows what to do

I wish I could’ve taken you under my wing long ago
When I was your age I graduated from the school of girl power
So many goddesses to choose from – new ones by the hour
A time of inspiration, regeneration and motivation, all was yours to find
In the 90s anything was possible, no limits to the creative mind

So come here, take my hand
There is a better way
And if Jill Stein can plan a better USA
And more hope is only a day away
Proud of yesterday
So we can go to bed tonight
Let’s make a new way
End the war, farewell to ba...les
Let’s nurture this world

Once there lived a little boy, who was near the age of four. Now this young child lived out in the country with his family. He had a mom, dad, two brothers, and seven sisters. One day he had fallen off his bed and started to cry. Once the cry was heard, everyone came to his aid. Things like “What happened?”, “Are you o.k.”, “Where are you hurt?”, “It’s all right, don’t cry,” were said and so on. Anyhow, whenever the “little mister” was, in any way, hurt he had all the sympathy that anyone could wish for. But, best of all was the sympathy from mom. She had just that way of making everything all right. His daily life was very simple. If he wanted something he just said the word please and it was his. He had all the attention he could have ever wanted. If not, he put his chubby little hands on their face and got their attention. He lived practically like a king, only he was shorter. Not only did everything revolve around this little boy, things got even better when he started saying clever little things. At one point, he was sitting at the table playing with some toys, all of the sudden he started mimicking some voices he had heard. He said them in the exact same way; those who heard tried not to laugh. At night, once he was in bed, the story was spread to all who had not heard it. Other things of the same manner continued to happen. Along with mimicking voices, he had two words that he often said, “ashley” and “liles.” His family thought they were, simply adorable. These stood for “actually” and “it’s like.” He used the words all the time, they got used to this like. It’s like, it’s like, actually it’s like this, and he would give his explanation. That is a part of what his life was like. After all, he was just a little boy.

JUST A LITTLE BOY
Charisa Hagel

Charisa is a sophomore majoring in English. She enjoys photography and writing short stories.

I I wish you could’ve taken me by your wing long ago
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So many goddesses to choose from – new ones by the hour
A time of inspiration, regeneration and motivation, all was yours to find
In the 90s anything was possible, no limits to the creative mind

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I can’t say to you, honey dear
Is look inside yourself
Here are my heroes
And here’s how to tune in
Here’s a book written with you in mind
All the answers are in your heart
I’ll be by you every step of the way
Let’s work together
Make this world a better day
One day we will be mothers
And as women, we must bond together
Attune to our inner Mother
Let’s nurture this world
End the war, farewell to battles
Let’s make a new way
So we can go to bed tonight
Proud of yesterday
And more hope is only a day away

If Isak Dinesen could make it out of Africa
And Camille Paglia become our backbone
And if Jill Stein can plan a better USA
There is a better way

So come here, take my hand
We’re in this together
I’m here for you
You’re here for me
Let’s build a better world
A better way
For you, me, our daughters to come
Beginning today.

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To my Love, I this do write
That you may remember after this night
Although condemned by judges decree
And sentenced to die upon a tree

For you to sleep and never wake
Doth plague my soul, my heart to break
If I can but save your life
I will make the sacrifice

Fear not beloved, an exchange is made
With my life the price is paid
The law demands a death to give
I lay down mine so you may live

For you alone, I’ve signed my name
You no longer must bear the shame
I will go and take your place
I will meet death face to face

Soon I begin, agony to suffer
But have no choice to save another
I weep alone, no rest this night
No friend to join the fearful flight

Alone I struggle, spirit on fire
All I have is one desire
for you to live this life to grace
I plead you not, our love replace

Shouts and cries the sentries make
As they come for me to take
Torches flicker, steel swords shake
I am captive when none do wake

To my Love, I this do write
That you may remember after this night
Although condemned by judges decree
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Shouts and cries the sentries make
As they come for me to take
Torches flicker, steel swords shake
I am captive when none do wake
You’ve willed yourself
to suppress shame and contrition.
Disciplined your mind
to never regret a means to an end.

You think you’ve risen above
and covered your tracks,
but your glass foundation
will not long bear the accruing falsity.

The early cracks are creeping into view,
soon they will splinter,
and you know you can’t
build a life on shards and dust.

You’ve pieced together
an acceptable shell
to flaunt your false piety
but substituted a blank void for character.

Your creations are vacuous and empty,
evidence only of a trained hand
which receives nothing more than circulation
from your heart.

You unwittingly weave your poison
into barren, young minds
which hold you in their trust
and look to you for guidance.

You are a terribly artificial thing
in a world desperate for veracity.
But conscience possesses
its own pressure points.

Deep in the pit of your stomach,
the spot that catches in the back of your throat,
that dull ache behind your eyes,
that’s where the sickly pus born of lies is slowly
building.

You’ve suspected the conclusion,
ignored the whispers in your head
that it will consume you.

But fire spreads.
And you’re only the core of the flame.
The heat is racing outwards,
sooner or later everyone around you will bear the
scars.

Are you prepared for the
degree and intensity
at which
it
will
burn?

Can I be greater than a spitting image,
Above “his father’s temper,” too?
After our daily verbal scrimmage,
I know I’m more than you.
We speak with fire on what seems mundane.
Usually, just a misunderstanding.
While we are harsh, quick, and profane,
You handle the reprimanding.
But we share more than shouts.
Though constant, these fade away.
In daily life, I have no doubts.
What you made stick, will stay.
I’m more than you. That’s what you wanted.
When life shouts back, I will not be daunted.

The sun breaks through the clouds,
drying the earth from the passing rainstorm.
My icy, wet skin begins to warm.
I am surrounded by
blooming flowers,
singing birds,
growing grass.
The rain has brought life
to this small park I love.
A smiling mother and her little one
stroll past my bench
hand in hand.
I am reminded.

Does it still hurt?
Always.
Will I ever forget?
Never.

But the time comes
when we gather up
the fragments of our lives
and we find that
life goes on.
I am my own artist.
On the edge of the cold vinyl chair at the end of my kitchen table, cigarette twitching in my fingers, I examined the second hand in its dizzy spinning around the clock. I waited. When the door opened, I did not move. He came to me unprompted. Through pursed lips, I said, “You’re late.” I did not ask. With fiddling hands, he stared silently at the floor, shifting his weight from one foot to the other, looking as if he felt an unsteadiness in the floor beneath him, as if the thin sheet of linoleum below our feet rested on unquiet water.

I thought that I had willed it. When I told him, “I know,” I expected the linoleum to swallow him whole, dragging his body down into the cold, sunless abyss. In truth, though, He never looked up.

LINOLEUM SIRENS
Steffany Moyer

Steffany Moyer is a graduate student in the School of Education. She currently works as a research fellow for Teaching Tolerance.

Stand still and let my youth live, stand still and let my memories remain and everything I love stay the same

We grew up young and scared, Neither father nor mother was there. The streets, the battles, the fights, growing up riding bikes. The struggle, the curse of the fear, getting home before the street lights. The bums, the cops, the gangs, smelling pot and beer. The beatings, the crying, the pain, we always hated when it would rain. The family, the BBQ’s, the fun, wait who took the last bun?

Linoleum Sirens

Steffany Moyer

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Wild Child
Leshaun Murphy

Hayley M. Moon

Hayley loves cats and star gazing.

Time

Hayley M. Moon

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HUMANITY
Steven Parker

Steven is a poet, writer, procrastinator.

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Wild Child

Leshaun Murphy

HUMANITY
Steven Parker
Saying "...whatever"

In the form of the simple words of a layman’s Voltaire

And I’ll counter with mediocre procrastination

Then come at me with your boomsticks of condemnation

And if you’re here to shoot me down

I am here to write, to speak

The entropic denial of rudimentary reasoning

I am in this place for the breakdown of static formation

I’m not here for a showdown or turf war of prolific theorization

Into ‘meter and measure’

For you to try and cordone me off

And activation of my trap card

For you to try and corstee off me into ‘meter and measure’

Here is my drattee of rebellious heiniosiety

I’m not here for a showdown or turf war of prolific theorization

I am in this place for the breakdown of static formation

The entropic denial of rudimentary reasoning

I am here to write, to speak

And if you’re here to shoot me down

Then come at me with your boomsticks of condemnation

And I’ll counter with mediocre procrastination

In the form of the simple words of a layman’s Voltaire

Saying “...whatever”
My regards to Robert Browning

Paintings are mere illusions. If one finds the Right artist, the whole world may be deceived By a simple smirk or a dainty hand. Fra Pandolf, We are friends, are we not? Our years Together go back many. Here, I believe the Duke will favor me sitting in front of The window. Quite a beautiful night, is it not? Immortalize me, sir, for I fear I do not have Many tomorrows. Oh my dearest, do not flatter Me so like one of your Apollos or Dionysuses. Some may wonder why I have the look Of one of those ladies who frequent the night. Rouge and powder shall hide his wrathful markings And in this image, I shall at last please him. I watch how other men act towards their wives, A stark contrast to my monster, my master, My love. I try to be thankful for Everything I am given, but only a scowl Graces his handsome face. And when those women Leave our chamber, I swallow down the blood From biting my tongue. Only once have I Wandered, in my days of a careless youth. The Count gave me but a fleeting passion, Now a lifetime of regret smothers me. I hear His daughter is a pretty talented thing, quite Believable since my blood flows through her veins. Oh sweet friend, the Duke vexes me like no other. Often times, I find myself dreaming of a Rope or a river. You like games! Shall We bet what will end me first? The illness Which my husband so graciously shared with me, The cliff which I fantasize about daily, or The Duke whose contempt knows no bounds? Yesterday, I visited an old witch who promised Me that if another should ever take my place, A deadly curse will seize them both. I will Sit swooning in this painting as vengeance stoops For me and takes his breath. Darling, you have Dropped your brush. Tell me, does this smile show Contentment? Do you find me enchanting in the moonlight?

THE DUCHESS’S PERSPECTIVE
Amber Vance

Amber thinks that to live would be an awfully big adventure.

THE DUCHESS’S PERSPECTIVE
Amber Vance

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DOUBTER
Ashley Warren

engine screaming through curves, still on the high road rocketing by buicks semis hatchbacks toyotas stationwagonsandbuses cookie cutter coffins carry them but i’m right behind and feeling left out flicking bright lights in this directionless vehicle with nothing but fuckin push -- didn’t stop to consider not breathing and can’t stop now gotta catch this and slide into a slip stream ...trade this noose for a necktie, this piece of shit for a beamer and a house with a mortgage... then i’ll be them and the burden of me is decided cause i’ll be coasting back here on the coattails drinking cocktails clinging like a parasite to the great white hope of stuff and buying and owning and having being the answer then i can wear loans like shackles my credit rating like a purple heart i could demand admiration by plastering my office with framed receipts then i can drive this car like a commercial instead of a fool who can’t read her map.
“Unhappy with your body? Tired of the fish? Want a ‘new you’? Then come to The Body Shop and trade out that tired, fat body for a new, young, thin version! Happiness is found at The Body Shop.”

Margerie heard the commercial for the thousandth time. “Happiness is found at The Body Shop.” She had been saving the money to go for years now. The Body Shop was her dream. Margerie hated herself, her lank hair, her chubby body, her crooked teeth, her pimply skin. She wanted to be beautiful. She wanted to look like the women on The Body Shop advertisements; tall, thin, blonde, with big bosoms and perfect teeth.

Her sister, Charlotte, was against the idea. She called The Body Shop women fake. Margerie could hear her now. “You know nothing about these women. They could be stupid, dull, mean and nasty. You are kind and thoughtful, brilliant and witty, why risk changing all that for some idealized version of beauty?”

But Margerie didn’t care. Who cared about being smart when you’re wearing a size 22 jean and had bad skin? She didn’t. And as for men, they never looked either. Well, some did, but she knew they could never really love her, looking as terrible as she did. She couldn’t love her, how could anyone else?

So it was settled. She had the money and no one could stop her. She found herself standing at the door of The Body Shop, ready to go in. She took a deep breath and opened the door. “Happiness is found at The Body Shop,” she told herself. A gorgeous woman opened the door. “Hello. My name is Marina. I can see why you came to us,” she said with a sneer. “Let’s look at the catalog and get you set up. You can’t go around looking like that anymore,” she said as she laughed.

Margerie laughed too, although she knew that she was the joke. Still, if she could be beautiful it would be worth it. To look like Marina, she would endure it. She looked through thousands of racks and catalogs. Body types and shapes, breast sizes, bottom sizes, hair color, eye color, even skin color. She could be anyone she wanted to be, the choices were endless.

She finally picked out her new body and entered her choices into the computer. Marina led her to the pod where the transformation would finally take place. Margerie lay down and Marina strapped her in. “Now,” said Marina, “you will walk out of this pod a different person. You will look exactly as you wish. All you choose to be you will be. However, sometimes unspoken personality changes take place. We don’t know why, but sometimes, when we change the outside, we also change the inside. You may lose some of who you are. If you do not wish for this to happen, then now is the chance to change your mind. Of course, that means you will also change the way you do now. You must choose.”

Margerie thought. She did not like the idea of losing who she was, but she desperately wanted to be beautiful. She knew her sister, Charlotte, would tell her to get out of there and would tell her that nothing was worth losing herself. But Margerie wanted beauty, not personality. She wanted the ideal, not the real. So she chose.

The pod closed leaving her alone for the last time. She closed her eyes as the pod filled with bright light. It shimmered and shook, it rocked. The pod got hot, then cold. And then it stopped. It was over.

Marina opened the pod and a new Margerie stepped out. She was tall, blonde, and gorgeous. Her blonde hair fell in waves to her waist. Her blue eyes were stunning. She had no freckles, moles, or blemishes, her skin was perfect. Her lips were pouty and red and behind them were perfectly straight, white teeth. Her legs were thin, tan and long. Her waist was small, her breasts were big, and her back end was perfect. Everything was perfect.

But she could feel the change within herself as well. She felt droller somehow, less intelligent, less connected to reality. It was like her mind was a dull knife that once was sharp. She felt plastic inside, as if all that was once her was now artificial. Any empathy she had for others, any compassion, or humor or wit, it was all gone. All of it, gone. She was no longer herself. For a moment she felt panic, but then she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror and it took her breath away. She was beautiful, gorgeous, stunning. There were not words enough to describe her delight in her new look. It was worth it, she thought.

Losing herself was worth it. Who cared about all of those trivial things anyway? Who cared about being smart, or kind, or compassionate when one could be beautiful and thin and physically perfect?

She thanked Marina, paid her bill, and walked out into the world. She did not realize that she had sold her very soul. But if she had realized, she wouldn’t care anyway. She was beautiful and that was all that mattered. “Happiness really is found at The Body Shop,” she said and in her heart, sadly, she believed it.
When she looked in the mirror, she barely recognized herself. Deep circles underlined her eyes, making her once beautiful face gaunt. Her eyes, her fiancé had once called striking, were sharp and cold, like she’d seen one too many people killed – and she had. She’d seen more violence than any woman of her era had a right to, but then again, so had many in their small town. Montgomery Valley had once been peaceful, but that era was long gone with the introduction of the railroad. With the sudden burst in business came the criminal activity she’d heard rumors of in other depots, and had her brother still been alive, she might’ve been justifiably in saying, “I told you so.”

But he wasn’t.

That woke her up, though, for sure. If she could have seen it coming, if she’d been given a chance to say goodbye, there would’ve been so many things she would’ve said – “I’m sorry for telling you to leave.” That would’ve been the first thing. “I was wrong, but you were wrong about him.” Diers was the reason they’d been fighting, the reason her brother had stormed out in the first place. The rancher who’d been counting last for the part year now was tall, dark blonde, and incredibly handsome – and according to the woman of her era had a right to, but the only property her parents had ever invested in had been the black of his fingernails.

He noticed where her gaze fell, and when she reached for his hand he held it up to meet her. Black, black tips, like he’d slammed his hand in a door or been stepped on... Instead, it was a chaste kiss he pressed to her forehead before he began pulling away. “I’m headed to town, got some business to handle.” He must’ve seen her hesitation in her eyes, must’ve seen the warmth that promised relief – that was her Diers. They’d met when she and her brother had moved out to Texas from Alabama after the death of her parents. The move seemed odd, she knew, but the only property her parents had ever invested in had been the black of his fingernails. Diers Langford was the only son of a cattle rancher on the opposite side of the valley, and their first real customer. He’d only visited in passing through the first year of Hal and Sage’s settlement in the area, but it was obvious to any who looked that he was smitten with the younger Danvers. When Sage was twenty-one, Langford asked Hal’s parents to let her be the only property their son ever the gentleman with her, never the gentleman with her, never alone and unsupervised. But Diers, he proved when he stepped into her bedroom. In the reflection she saw him, the hint of warmth that promised relief – that was her Diers. They’d met her scrutiny and when she raised her hand to caress the side of her face, questioning her own gut. With a deep breath to steady herself, the blonde reached into one of the dresser drawers and withdrew her .45 revolver, methodically checked to be sure it was loaded, and placed it solidly under the waistband of her pants – a dress was socially acceptable but impractical in her work with the horses - before readjusting her top to conceal it. Once she’d finished, she met her own eyes once again in the mirror and studied herself for one long, hard minute.

Hal stared back at her. It didn’t take long to get her horse, a sorrel mare, saddled and within ten minutes she was up and astride and galloping into town. “In the back door of the saloon,” the prostitute had told her, “and he’ll be the blonde. Meets every Thursday with his gang of cattle thieves.” Under ordinary circumstances, Sage never would’ve spoken to one of those women, much less have met with one in secret, but to quote the prostitute herself, she was “especially fond of Hal,” and frankly, it was the only real promise of vengeance she had. It saved awkwardness all around that Sage didn’t reveal Hal to be her own brother. “Hal saw Dee,” that was the blonde’s name, “downstairs with some of our girls and they had words over something, and then later on when Hal left Dee met him in the street and shot him clear through the heart.” Sage remembered the conversation word for word – since it’d been the only thing she’d promised herself following her brother’s death.

Now, racing towards her revenge on the back of a red mare, Sage couldn’t help but marvel at her own crystallization. Years ago she’d run from her parents’ death. Today, she ran to her brother’s.

Black Heart
Cassie Daniels
Cassie is a pitcher on the A&M Softball team.
She wasn’t quite sure why she’d come back, other than some recently unearsted sense of nostalgia that drug her back to the start. She wasn’t sure what she was looking for, either. Closeure, maybe? In life, she’d never actually forgiven the eccentric woman who’d moulded her into the proud, heartless bitch queen she’d become, but at the word of her death she’d been...stung. Perhaps that was the word. Unsettled was more like it. Sheerly that the idea of an ungrateful wretch she’d been warned with the sentiment that she’d paid her dues more than once or twice. She’d become her adoptive mother’s creation, and all right – but then again, what child wasn’t in some way or another? Estella had no doubt about what she’d been made to do – even after she’d known the stories and Miss Havisham’s reasoning. She’d be less than honest if she said she hadn’t enjoyed it, too, but it had been made to her reason. She’d be less than honest if she said she’d never known the stories and Miss Havisham’s reasoning. She’d be less than honest if she said she’d never enjoyed it, too, but it had been made to ensure her words did not pierce the sentiment that she’d still so hopeful? Did those great expectations he’d once held for the world that he’d trod down the refined planes of her childhood castle – Estella couldn’t swallow the tears that threatened to drown them. “I have very often hoped and intended to come back, but have been prevented by many circumstances. Poor, poor old place!” She could not admit the stories behind such circumstances, couldn’t admit all the times that Bentley had made it so that she couldn’t go home or the times where she’d be in such a fury over an old memory that she’d sworn never to return. Now, though – sitting here in the ruins of what was once her childhood castle – Estella couldn’t swallow the tears that trod down the refined planes of her childhood castle. She only hoped Pip wouldn’t notice and if he did, he wouldn’t ask. Surprisingly enough, he remained silent, and the quiet stretched long enough that she felt she was forced to speak. “Were you wondering, as you walked along, how it came to be left in this condition?” “Yes, Estella.” Even now, he said her name like it was a physical caress, like just uttering the word alone was enough of a pleasure for him. It was then she knew he’d never truly forgotten her, and her heart throbbed painfully. “The ground belongs to me. It is the only possession I have not relinquished. Everything else has gone from me, little by little, but I have kept this. It was the subject of the only determined resistance I made in all the wretched years.” The last statement was uttered with as much bitterness as her breeding would allow, the resentment rolling off her tongue in much the way a snake uncoils – cool and slow, but venomous nonetheless. Pip chose to ignore it. “Is it to be built on?” “At last it is. I came here to take leave of it before its change. And you, she paused then, taking the chance to meet his eyes, “you live abroad still?” She half expected his reply. “Still.” “And do well, I am sure?” It was a lie. She was not sure. However, she could hope, and judging by the state of his clothes he wasn’t working in a forge. “I work pretty hard for a sufficient living, and therefore – Yes, I do well.” Her next words were not altogether planned, but somehow they fell past her lips without her even registering the admission. “I have often thought of you.” Not a lie, not at all, but vulnerability was not such a pleasant state for Estella Havisham and as of late she’d found herself in its clutches more than she liked to recall. The experience had served its purpose well, though, and such hardship had shown her the follies of her youth with a clear, brutally honest eye. “Have you?” She supposed he thought she was planning an ambush, planning to entrap and snare him as she’d once spoken of doing to others, but no, she was no longer so cruel. “Of late, very often. There was a long hard time when I kept far from me, the remembrance of what I had thrown away when I was quite ignorant of its worth. But, since my duty has not been incompatible with the admission of that remembrance, I have given it a place in my heart.” The pause between her words and his seemed to stretch across the ages, across time itself, but finally he spoke. “You have always held your place in my heart.” “The painful throrn in her own breast ceased just enough to make it doubly cruel when the pace began again. “I little thought,” she spoke slowly, deliberating on each word, “that I should take leave of you in taking leave of this spot. I am very glad to do so.” “Glad to part again, Estella? To me, parting is a painful thing. ‘To me, remembrance of our last parting has been even mournful and painful.” When she found his eyes again, her own gaze shone with a remainder of the fire he’d once known. “But you said to me, ‘God bless you, God forgive you!’ And if you could say that to me then, you will not hesitate to say that to me now – now, when suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be.” Oh, did she understand? “I have been bent and broken, but – I hope – into a better shape. Be as considerate and good to me as you were, and tell me we are friends.” At this point there was no looking away, no chance to withdraw her honesty as she watched him. “We are friends,” he replied, and the sigh of relief that passed her lips was audible. As he stood, she found her legs and followed him up. “And will continue friends apart.” When he took her hand, she gripped him lightly, but with the same resolute firmness she’d possessed throughout her life. As they left the ruins of the once grand estate, she couldn’t help but to wonder that it all began and ended there, with the house and the boy who first found her within.
Every night it’s the same; we’re crammed into adjacent cells, deep in this evil being, this Monster. Every night it’s the same: the darkness, followed by the rattling, next the sound of all my companions drowning, and last the burning heat. I wish I could close my eyes and ignore it all — sinking into the corner — but how can I? How can I ignore the Monster?

But it always starts calmly enough, as they divide us into groups, smooth or sharp, round or not. Sometimes they throw us in willy-nilly and I have to deal with the barbarisms of those who are not my kind, the smooth and the round. But there we are, huddled together as we are closed into this dark, gaping hole in the wall. At first all is silent, as the Monster has not awoken. There we wait, in his servitude, back into the Monster’s mouth. But I know that a day filled with light, with the smell of his flesh burning off, will come. There is always further terror as the Monster begins to heat up, warming his insides, and us within him. It is as if a great furnace was lit all around us, in the Monster’s skin, above and below him.

I remember that once someone fell down to the bottom floor. We all learned that this was a terrible fate, for I can still recall the smell of his flesh burning off.

I am trembling in the morning when light breaks into the Monster’s mouth and they take us out. Our tears have been all dried away by the sweltering heat, but I know that after a day filled with servitude, back into the Monster’s mouth we will be sent.

Oh, my cowardly heart desires to be left in the drawer, but the love I have for my people causes me to want to fight. They think I am a fool to dream of this, but they don’t know who I am, they know not the spirit that dwells within me. Someday I shall drive my shiny metal into the Monster, and drawing out his white blood, I shall slay him! For this Monster -- the dishwasher -- will never defeat me.

I am the almighty spoon.

My companions, the fools, shout for joy, thinking that it is all over. But I know better. There is always further terror as the Monster begins to heat up, warming his insides, and us within him. It is as if a great furnace was lit all around us, in the Monster’s skin, above and below him.

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The wind, the birds, and the water almost seem as if they all know just the right songs to sing for the flowers, the trees, and the grass to start dancing along, losing themselves in it. Nature is the sound of water washing the shores away, so free of worries, or even the sound of leaves falling down one by one. It can be a silent, sad sound that fills you with the fear of time.

Growing up in Eastern Europe in the countryside, I have learned to love nature. It can be a silent, sad sound that fills you with the fear of time.

Every time I wanted to get away from the world, I would take a book and climb a tree. I would read and get lost in the story, or more likely, find myself in a story. Being in a tree gave me a sense of inner peace and a sense of safety. I knew that someone bigger than any human being was in control. The nature belonged to Him. In the summer time I would sleep outside, and I would spend hours looking at the sky and the stars. I would let the moon shine through me, taking me into the deepest sleep and the sweetest dreams until the cold breeze woke me up in the early morning.
FROM THE EYES OF THE INNOCENT

Jacob Lambert

Jacob M. Lambert lives in Montgomery, Alabama, where he teaches music and is an editorial assistant for The Scribnerian and the Kit-Cats, an academic journal pertaining to English literature of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century. When not writing, he enjoys time with his wife Stephanie and daughter Annabelle.

Falling through what felt like an infinite loop of darkness, which even my own light could not illuminate, consciousness seemed to drift into a separate state of being—offering me a void, a tasteless destination that assailed my curiosities, but of which end I would suffer eluded me. My past life always remained visible behind—regardless of the increasing depth—not only tormenting with illusions of my once eloquent and distinguished existence, but also to bring remembrance of the embarrassment I suffered at his decision. For because of his anger, I now fall eternally to some unknown destination, wandering through the abyss, condemned to the fates and bereft of any form of peace.

I, at some point in my agony, became aware of a light ahead, which, as I saw the one, millions of these fiery spheres began to appear all around, surrounding me in strange warmth.

While I marveled at their presence, suddenly, in a flash of crystalline white light, I stood in a barren wasteland—no longer bound to the darkness but allowed to gaze above, yet instead of just the smaller spheres there was a colossal glowing light separating the chasms of where I stood and where its family shimmered around it. I felt peace in the heaving and growing of mind for the first time in what felt like eons of eternally to some unknown destination, consternation and to bring remembrance of the embarrassment I suffered at his decision.

The path ahead began to solidify to the point that I realized I had been cloistered, for about half a mile away, I could see movement coming from its mammoth cylinder like green towers that resembled the ones I slept under, but larger in scale. In that instant, I felt a wave of remembrance spread throughout my entire body, as though I had seen this place before but couldn’t quite remember when and where.

2

I wokened by an invisible warmth so soothing that I could have sworn I was back in the illusoryness of my former kingdom and as I opened my eyes, all of the light above had changed completely. What I saw before I shumbered had been replaced by an even more intense and glorious sphere. Though it lit the landscapes in every direction rather perfectly, I felt an almost ominous presence from its heat, as if it might consume me entirely, and when I tried to look at its shape, my eyes averted from its gaze. Fire seemed to burn away at my eyes every time I tried to grasp it. When I turned away, I felt something I have never felt on my immaculate features before: sweat and sediment.

3

The silvery sphere above was there to greet me when I woke, but this time something was different: I saw the last remnants of my race falling in its deceptive light and, before I could identify who they were, they disappeared into the inner caverns of the oasis that I now occupied. Watching this treachery, I began to ruminate on my former life and its deceptive light and, before I could step into the vision in the distance, and when I began to walk out of the shaded area and into the heat, I saw multitudes of creatures running and moving through the water. Some of them resembled forms of the old kingdom while others were completely new to me, yet as I continued to walk toward the vision in the distance, more and more of these beasts began to materialize to my left and right, causing me to stop and watch them in utter bemusement.

The sheer size of these monstrosities was something to behold, even for myself. Of what race of beast they were, I could not know nor guess, and as they became aware of my presence, I knew their nature was benign. Their speed and agility was of something that had no bound or limit. I admired their existence in wonder of their purpose, for simple word couldn’t describe the entirety of their immensity and splendor.

4

I felt compelled to explore, compelled to know—to understand. And even if I have to search an eternity for answers, I will find the reasons behind my master’s design, whatever the cost.

5

Darkness began to fade as the light drowned it out, giving view to something in the distance that, from where I stood, seemed to distort and lack complete definition due to the over encumbering heat that had begun to develop from the blazing sphere. My eyes fixated on the illusion as my body began to feel almost pulled in its direction, and when I began to walk out of the shaded area and into the heat, I saw multitudes of creatures running and moving through the water. Some of them resembled forms of the old kingdom while others were completely new to me, yet as I continued to walk toward the vision in the distance, and when I began to walk out of the shaded area and into the heat, I saw multitudes of creatures running and moving through the water. Some of them resembled forms of the old kingdom while others were completely new to me, yet as I continued to walk toward the vision in the distance, more and more of these beasts began to materialize to my left and right, causing me to stop and watch them in utter bemusement.

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6

The sudden feeling brought me to my knees, causing the landscape to spin and sweat to pour over my face in an almost never-ending fashion. Dropping to my back, I stared up at the sphere above, covering my eyes from its fire—trying to organize the assortment of thoughts that were flashing through my mind like fragmented memories looking for order and placement. With each thought that bombarded my mind came more and more unwanted realities. And just as quickly as they began, they ceased, leaving me laying on my back dambounded by the truths that suddenly breathed new revelation to my existence. Beginning to pick myself up and come out of my stupor, I finally realized where I was, but the true reason of why I was there couldn’t be more obvious. No longer was I ignorant to the world in which I now stood, but its conception and function still eluded me, leaving only frustration in its wake.

The sky was beginning to dim as I continued to move forward. How long had I laid there on the ground drifting in and out, trying to make sense of the
From a young age Tony always had a nervous disposition. Repeatedly blinking his eyes was common for a stretch of time between six and eight years of age. It was a curious sight to witness because while he was aware it was happening, he was seemingly unable to control it. A few years earlier this idiosyncratic “tick” manifested in a continuous sniffing sound with his nose after every sentence he spoke. This phase actually came on the heels of an earlier peculiarity where he would grab at his lips incessantly between words, often drying them out to the point of peeling. His older siblings were well aware of these involuntary behaviors and commonly made whoever happened to be around that day aware as well. Mocking laughter followed, which spawned an even greater rate of sniffing and blinking, and almost always ended with Tony’s eyes welling up and tears spilling over.

Anthony Samuel Richardson was born just before the dreadful summer of 1992 in San Antonio, Texas. The extreme heat and severe drought that affected this part of Texas is still talked about to this day. Tony, as he was to be called, was the youngest of four siblings, and thus was often referred to as “the baby” of the family. As a matter of fact, this title still attaches itself to him, despite his turning 20 in a couple of months. While it is true that the order of birth prescribed him literally as the baby, the parental techniques implored were as gentle as his skin was soft. Nurtured and coddled to infinite lengths, he slept in his parents’ bed until the age of 8. His eyes were dark like chocolate and his hair only one tone lighter. This was no doubt due to the Mediterranean genes from his mother’s side, however his closest sibling in age looked as if she had fallen off a boat bound from Norway or any other of the Scandinavian provinces. It is true that his three other siblings peered out from icy blue eyes, barely visible under each one’s yellow bangs. All of the kids featured the same light skin complexion, however Tony’s seemed even paler because of his other darker features.

Tony enjoyed all the amenities growing up that would be expected as the son of an established physician. He always had the new video game title and every available remote controlled device. Kids from school gawked at these items when they came over to visit and catered to Tony with some sort of misguided reverence. Never starved for a talent, he was obvious to those closest to him. Posture needed work, but the notes spoke to themselves. Just as impressive as his raw talent was his ability to internalize each song and express it visually to his audience. Lowering his head with the slower bars and then suddenly looking up as the tempo increased. Often serious, sometimes smiling, Tony always commanded his spectators’ attention.

Tony continued to grow as an artist and as an individual. High school had arrived and so had puberty. He was tall for his age with a slender build and pleasant face. The friends he grew up with were still around but had found other interests. They would carry on about cheerleaders and football; meanwhile, Tony remained focused on his music and scholastics. One day Tony had been informed that the school would be having a talent show – all students were encouraged to perform. He doubled his lessons for the next two weeks, and his practice sessions at home lasted longer than usual.

On the night of the show, Tony wore a nice rented tuxedo with his black dress shoes. His cheeks were full of color and he brimmed with fervor. He waited patiently in the crowd as the other kids took their turns one by one. Some of the performances were fun, some dull, while others can only be described as courageous. An hour into the show, Tony’s name was called. A teacher rolled a beautiful Steinway onto the stage and Tony took his place on the small bench that was placed in the front. The applause from his introduction quickly faded and the room fell silent. Tony sat with his back straight and his eyes closed. His upper body shifted up as he took in a breath and then it dropped the moment his fingers hit the keys. He spent hours working on this original piece, his fingers skipped from one key to the next, nearly pausing for a second. The song’s jazzy beat was a perfect representation of the fun he was obviously having as he played. His motions were fluid and were in perfect accompaniment to the music. Quite simply, he was on fire! The song ended as abruptly as it had begun and a huge applause filled the gym. He stood up, turned towards the crowd with a smile as big as the ocean, and humbly bowed.
Behind a drinking hall, the gold seeker approached an animated crowd of men standing around a corral. Two years ago, when he had heard that the Californian mountains had birthed gold, he was compelled to seek fortune out West. Private letters and newspaper reports fed the dreams of many. However, these accounts, fragmentary and sometimes contradictory,roused sweeping skepticism. The gold seeker’s wife was among those who had doubts, which he could not erase with visions of a possible new future. But when President Polk confirmed that indeed California teemed with gold, his wife gave in to his plan.

She came to his mind as he stood at the center of the crowd. He wondered how many of these men standing at the planked corral had left their families at home in another state or another land, how many sold part or all of their property to search for gold. Livestock and land were sold to fund his trip. He traveled light. He was game enough to spare himself the six-month trip around Cape Horn, instead sailing to the Isthmus of Panama and crossing to the Californian mountains. Two years ago, when he had heard that the Californian mountains had birthed gold, he was compelled to seek fortune there over to a ship in the Pacific. It was quicker but no less dangerous; malaria and dysentery took more lives than he had found likely to result. Without taking the coin out of his pocket, he asked God’s hand before putting it on the line again. The Hatch made quick work in finishing the Grey, still stabbing the motionless mass of feathers, meat, and blood before being declared the winner. The handlers separated the birds, the Grey connected the first significant blow and from inside his jacket he removed a listless signal. The man walked away, laughing. The gold seeker turned to look after him. The man met a lady just outside the drinking hall’s backdoor, and from inside his jacket he removed a pouch and sprinkled gold dust across the woman’s breasts. She giggled and then offered him her arm. He escorted her inside.

In the corral a referee scored two lines in the dirt and motioned the handlers to their positions. The gold seeker loosened his grip on the coin as his beak touched the ground.

A man several feet in front of him turned and answered. The gold seeker held one finger up and the man gave a look of disappointment but agreed.

The handlers cradled a Hatch under his arm, massaging its neck and speaking what the gold seeker took as soft words of encouragement. The gold seeker took the Grey’s aggression as a sign of promise. “Grey!” yelled the gold seeker, joining the shout.

The Hatch’s handlers separated the two lines in the dirt and motioned the handlers to their positions. The gold seeker wiped his palms on his soiled and bloodstained trousers. Back home, he had never gambled on anything other than friendly wagers, only then betting small, insignificant amounts. He believed that money should be spent on productive endeavors, things that were not ruled only by chance. Since venturing west, that had all changed. When the signs became inevitable, he began visiting gambling halls and stopping at any type of fight where betting took place. Some bets were won, but most were lost, and sooner than expected he was left with the last of his money. The gold seeker squeezed the coin in his pocket as the handlers met in the center to thrust the birds repeatedly toward each other. The birds struggled in their arms, taking failed pecks at the out-of-reach foes, and after both birds were warm with rage, the handlers set them on their lines and held them by the tail.

“The Hatch connected the first significant blow under the Grey’s wing and continued to assault its chest until the gaff stuck in the Hatch. The handlers separated the pecking birds and placed them back on the lines.

After a couple of separations, the referee called for a rest. The Hatch’s handler, taking the bird back in his arms, whispered once more, sponged the bird’s face and spurs. It trotted a few steps when it was placed back on the ground. The gold seeker’s betting partner, with his arms folded, looked back and gave a nod of surprise. Squeezing his coin tightly, the gold seeker subtly pumped his fist. While making his way to this location, the gold seeker happened upon a Chinese mining camp along the Yuba River. It was near night and three men had stayed back, panning a little more before retiring for the day. The gold seeker caught them by surprise and demanded their gold at gunpoint. None of the Chinese men moved, none said a word. All three returned the same intense stare that the gold seeker gave them. Eventually, he shot at their feet, but none moved to give up his gold. The gold seeker knew he could kill them all with impunity. The Chinese had begun to squeeze gold out of sites white miners had determined were dry. The gold seeker carried the same resentment toward them, yet he could not shoot them, a decision he regretted more and more as his pockets grew emptier.

“Pit!” From his line the Grey once again lunged forward, but this time the Hatch merely sidestepped and waited. It landed in common dirt strewn with torn feathers. Oblivious to its value, several men scrambled for the tossed coin.

In the front of the hall, the tall man unhitched a horse. The gold seeker stalked toward the tall man, whose back was turned setting up to mount. As the man began to turn in response to the approaching footfall, the gold seeker took the revolver from his jacket and fired, first hitting shoulder and then chest. At the sound of the shots, the horse sped up the street, kicking up a wake of dust. Pulling the coat away from the wet mess, the gold seeker searched the jacket for the pouch of gold. Once found, he inadvertently glanced at the dead man’s eyes.

He staggered backward and up, wide-eyed the body, the gun lolling at his side. He had seen dead people before, back in New York, even more on the ships he took to the West. But none had lost their life because of his action. It seemed to the gold seeker that the man’s flabby eyes turned to glass, that the inert body was already being claimed by the dust. He scanned the dust-bitten faces of the bystanders. Their mouths moved as they talked among each other, but he could not hear anything they said. But he didn’t need to. He knew word of the unprovoked murder would soon reach the ears of vigilantes.

THE WAKE AFTER THE RUSH

MeKoi Scott

The gold seeker reflexively caught it.
By mixing the abstract with hints of reality, Josiah’s art cogitates the subject matter & creates a void for viewers to create their own story while leading them with a hint of reality. He adds depth to his art with varying ink & drawing techniques along with other media.

JOSIAH ALMOSARA
“Warai”
Braxton is an industrial design major with quite an eccentric side & literally paints pictures from his dreams.
KELHI DePACE

“Holywell Cemetery”

CHARISA HAGEL

“Day Dreamer”
MARK HARSHA
“Beach Chairs”
Mark is a senior majoring in Psychology. His goal is to become a child/family counselor.

KAYLEE HOBBS
“Bhajola”
A dual major in printmaking and photography, collects vintage cameras like it’s a religion and makes art like it’s going out of style.
KAYLEE HOBBS
“Ford Tough”

KAYLEE HOBBS
“Lana”
KAYLEE HOBBS
“Marilyn Monroe”

KAYLEE HOBBS
“The Musician”
KAYLEE HOBBS
“Vogue”

SARA HOMSHER
“Chernobyl”
Sara is a senior graduating with a studio degree in Painting, and is inspired by Cold War imagery.
SARA HOMSHER
“Fort Morgan”

ALEXANDRA JURUS
“Companionable Ills”
Associate Professor of English at AUM & a cellist in the Montgomery Symphony. She hopes one day to retire with her family to a writer’s cottage on the Isle of Skye, in the company of several large friendly dogs with names like Auntie Muriel & Uncle Hubert.

DR. JOYCE KELLEY
“Heaven”

DR. JOYCE KELLEY
“Portree Harbour”
KIMBERLY McGUInty
“Forced Employment”
Kimberly. many masks and she knows.

KIMBERLY McGUInty
“Wherever You Like”
Shelby enjoys traveling abroad, currently she’s planning a trip to Amsterdam in April of 2014.

Lance’s artistic goal is to make mathematics more visually pleasing.
MATT ROBBINS
“Film Shooter: I”

MATT ROBBINS
“Film Shooter: II”
MATT ROBBINS
“Pence”
Matt is an Information Systems major. He works at a local film lab and enjoys shooting film. His most recent hobby involves shooting his Polaroid SX-70 land camera. He also plays intramural basketball.

SHAYNA ROLDAN
“Summer Day”
Shayna is a 23 year old graphic designer major that is ready to graduate & go out & pursue a successful career.
FEODOSIA ROSCA
“An Early Morning Surrounded by Nature”

FEODOSIA ROSCA
“The Warm Sunset of California”
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WANT TO JOIN IN?

We are already accepting submissions for the 2015 edition of the Filibuster. Think you have what it takes to roll with us? If so, send your creative works to: FILIBUSTER@AUM.EDU. Don’t hesitate to ask us questions!

Want to be apart of our stellar staff? E-mail Dr. Robert Klevey at sklevay@aum.edu and ask him about available staff positions! We’d love to have you.