

THE  
Autumn 2010

QUAD  
of Grove City College



# THE QUAD

**Senior Editor**  
Hannah Schlaudt

**Junior Editor**  
Andrew Walker

**Managing Editor**  
Philip Gruber

**Editors' Assistants**  
Annelise Brinkerhoff  
Josiah Cavanaugh  
Nick Oxford

**Department Editors**  
James Brinkerhoff (Essay)  
Tyler Estes (Creative Nonfiction)  
Joey Retucci (Reviews)  
Faith Thompson (Short Story)  
Rachel Werner (Poetry)

**Assistant Editors**  
Keely Breen (Creative Nonfiction)  
Elliot Dunn (Short Story)  
Caitlin Friihauf (Poetry)  
Noah Grissett (Poetry)  
Brittney Todd (Reviews)  
Amanda Windes (Essay)

**Production Director**  
Emily Perper

**Layout and Design**  
Emily Mishler

**Art Director**  
Natalie Gregory

**Art Team**  
Philip Edwards, Christina Jones,  
Maria Lawson, Louis Petolicchio

**Style Chief**  
Anna Tracey

**Distribution Chief**  
Henry Yukevich

**Distribution Assistant**  
Sam Bovard

**Publicity Manager**  
Keely Breen

**Marketing Consultant**  
Megan Markley

**Webmaster**  
*position open*

**Secretary**  
Laura Hermesmann

**Treasurer**  
Mary Rimi

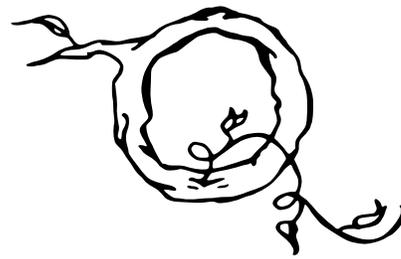
**Conundrumer**  
Doug Smith

**Copy Editors**  
Anna Tracey, Rachel Werner, Andrew Walker,  
Ethan Kreineyer, Hannah Schlaudt

**Faculty Advisor**  
Dr. H. Collin Messer

**Editorial Advisory Board**  
Dr. Joseph D. Auspurger, Dr. Daniel S. Brown,  
Dr. James G. Dixon III, Dr. Joshua F. Drake,  
Dr. Michael F. Falcetta, Dr. Gillis J. Harp, Dr.  
Steven L. Jones, Dr. Charles E. Kriley, Dr. Julie  
C. Moëller, Dr. Jennifer A. Scott, Dr. Kevin S.  
Seybold

**Cover Art**  
Gusty by Caitlin Jenkins



## EDITORS' NOTE

We are people motivated by what we love. We reason and justify what we want to ensure the things we love high priority in our lives. And we do this not so much because these things are best or right, but because we want what we desire. Ashley Null writes: "What the heart loves, the will chooses, and the mind justifies." St. Augustine's story of his struggle to surrender to Christ because of the "weight" dragging on him — his addiction to sexual pleasure — confirms this. If we love something, we will hold on to it no matter what.

Cultures function this way, too. The beauty or squalor of a culture's art is perhaps the most honest barometer of the health of a people group's affections. Technical rationalizations aside, a culture's artifacts often distinctly represent what a culture loves.

The pieces in this issue of *The Quad* gather around this idea: culture formation and the motivations that drive it. We feature poetry in the book reviews [inspired by the 2010 Festival of Faith and Writing at Calvin College] and in the Scholar's Armchair section [Dr. Potter], for poets are the most sensitive representatives of a culture. Their affections and poems will most naturally give an honest voice to who (or whose) we are as Christian scholars.

Dr. H. Collin Messer addresses this issue head-on, in his piece "The Education of Desire." He reviews *Desiring the Kingdom* by James K.A. Smith. Smith suggests that we rethink our approach to Christian higher education in light of Augustinian anthropology, which recognizes the precognitive power of our affections.

Justin Olson's review of *Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America*, "It's Simpler Than You Might Think," analyzes the recent housing mortgage collapse, and explores how racism may have affected this crisis, especially in urban areas like Chicago, IL. Here is a situation where unruly or misplaced affections led people's sense of reason, and the damage was crippling. Again culture follows desire, justifying itself after the fact.

Enjoy,

Hannah Schlaudt  
Senior Editor

Andrew Walker  
Junior Editor

Volume 3, Issue 3, Autumn 2010. *The Quad* is published quarterly by students of Grove City College and funded by the college. The works in this magazine, however, do not necessarily represent the views of Grove City College, the editors, the advisor, or the editorial advisory board. The editors are responsible for the selection of articles; responsibility for opinions and accuracy of facts in articles published rests solely with the individual authors. *The Quad* grants permission for any original article to be photocopied for local use, provided that no more than 1,000 copies are made, are distributed at no cost, and *The Quad* is properly cited as the source.

Anyone may submit to *The Quad*. Submissions must be sent to [quad.submissions@gmail.com](mailto:quad.submissions@gmail.com). Include what department you are submitting to, year, campus mailbox number (or address) with your name and use 12 pt Times New Roman font, double spaced; when citations are necessary, use Chicago style. Any rejected submissions which are not returned will be destroyed. Accepted submissions may be withdrawn at any time. Anyone interested in writing a review should contact Managing Editor Phil Gruber ([MEditor@quadmagazine.org](mailto:MEditor@quadmagazine.org)) for review copies. Further guidelines for submissions are on our website, listed below.

*The Quad* is available online at [www.quadmagazine.org](http://www.quadmagazine.org)

# THE QUAD | AUTUMN 2010

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

4

## THE CULTURE OF DESIGN

The Education of Desire	5	<i>H. Collin Messer</i>
<i>The Glass Room: A Review</i>	10	<i>Brittany Todd</i>
It's Simpler Than You Might Think	12	<i>Justin Olson '10</i>

## SCHOLAR'S ARMCHAIR

<i>Rising From the Dead</i>	15	<i>Eric Potter</i>
At Least I'm Seeing It Whole	17	<i>Hännah Schlaudt</i>
Vegetables From My Neighbors' Garden	18	<i>Eric Potter</i>

## SOLILOQUIES

In the Mind's Eye	19	<i>Ethan Kreimeyer</i>
Flip-flops and Fostering	23	<i>Annelise Brinkerhoff</i>
Indecision	25	<i>Joanna Lawson</i>

## POETRY REVIEWS

<i>A Pentecost of Finches</i>	29	<i>Josh Mayo '10</i>
<i>What the Light Was Like</i>	30	<i>Caitlin Friihauf</i>
Christian Wiman: Poet and Christian	33	<i>Rachel Werner</i>

## POETRY

White Horse	11	<i>Alison Angell '07</i>
On Having Never Been to South Jersey	14	<i>Philip Gruber</i>
My Father	24	<i>Keely Breen</i>
Tibet	32	<i>Noah Grissett</i>
Protanomoly	34	<i>Sam Perry</i>
Boys of Summer	35	<i>Sam Leuenberger</i>

## CONUNDRUMS

36

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I got bored.

I got bored reading the articles in the previous issue. That's not to say that the articles themselves were boring, far from it. The articles are written with skill and creativity. However, they are so ridiculously long. I start reading and then...well... I get bored. We live in an age where speed is essential. Such long articles are not conducive to my need for speed. I flip through web pages. I scan articles quickly. Two or three pages of reading is just too much.

These long articles are exactly the type of reading I hope to avoid by using services like Yahoo news. I have trained myself to not pay attention for more than a minute or two. I don't know why I did this. Everyone else is doing it though.

The stock market has been gaining ground lately. It has reached some of its highest levels in months. This is good news for the investor, but little of the benefits have actually been felt in the marketplace. Thus, many analysts fear that the market will experience a double dip.

Anyways, when I read a Yahoo news blurb I have to move on for fear of actually reading an entire article and wasting my valuable time. I haven't figured out what I do with all this time I save, but I'm sure it is something useful.

A double dip is loosely defined as a second recession coming at the tail end of the first.

It's really hard to pay attention for long periods of time. I think attention spans are getting shorter.

A second recession could be worse than the first.

On second thought, please continue to help us maintain our attention spans.

With much need,  
Sean Sullivan

Dear Editor,

I have been recently introduced to *The Quad*, and while I appreciate the quality of the poems, essays and book reviews, I have found myself increasingly distracted by the inconsistent and seemingly random layout and organization of the magazine.

The reasoning behind organization of the pieces is elusive to the point of abstraction, and while the sprinkling of the poems throughout the magazine provides a welcome break from the prose, the connection between the subject matter of the poems and the surrounding pieces escapes me. I do not doubt the existence of a brilliant organizational method, but perhaps the staff could consider a method slightly less rarefied?

Also, the placement of the book titles and information boxes in the book reviews seems to irrationally vary. Granted, this is small area of the magazine, but I believe that *The Quad* has the potential to become an outstanding publication and to achieve such standing, no area of the publication is too small to be overlooked.

Congratulations on your Autumn issue of *The Quad*, and I look forward to seeing this year's improvements and contributions.

Sincerely,  
Emily Kramer

# THE EDUCATION OF DESIRE

H. COLLIN MESSER

*The heart has reasons of which reason knows nothing.*  
Pascal

*What the heart loves, the will chooses, and the mind justifies.*  
Ashley Null

*If Christian colleges are not about Christian formation, there's really no reason for them to exist. There are much more efficient ways to pick up "a Christian perspective." At the end of the day, I think those who resist the notion of Christian formation as integral to the Christian college do so because of a commitment to liberal autonomy. Christian education for Christian formation is "illiberal," but that doesn't make it wrong; it might just make it Christian.*

James K.A. Smith

A good friend of mine who teaches at a Christian college was recently removed from his post as head of the institution's undergraduate honors program. The reason? In the college administration's opinion his work with honors students put too much emphasis on spiritual formation. It's important to note here that this happened not because my friend was being academically lax. As a senior member of the English department he has long been known for the rigor and delight that characterize his work in the classroom. During the four years that he directed the honors program, his students read extensively in their respective liberal arts fields, participated in small seminars tailored to their scholarly interests, and did significant senior projects. Along the way, though, he continued to remind them of the connection between scholarship and discipleship, between intellectual passion and worship. Moreover – and this was probably what did him in – he emphasized formation over information. That is, my friend dared to treat his students not merely as thinking beings but as embodied souls living in the glorious particularity of their corner of the world. Taking his cue from St. Augustine (whom his students read and discussed with him at length), he recognized in his young friends the truth that they (and we) don't live solely from the neck up. Rather, we are creatures created by God in such a way that our life is necessarily material, involving not only our cerebral cortex but also what the New Testament refers to as our kardia, or guts. Inescapably

and blessedly, our humanity is both cognitive and affective. For the college administration who reassigned my friend, this was all well and good, but it ultimately didn't fit the college marketing plan. I just sent my friend a copy of Jamie Smith's new book, and I'm frankly tempted to send one to his boss.

Calvin College philosopher Jamie Smith describes his *Desiring the Kingdom* as an exercise in cultural anthropology. With admirable faithfulness to the Christian scriptures,

*Desiring the Kingdom: Worship,  
Worldview, and Cultural Formation*

James K.A. Smith  
Baker Academic, 2009

Smith premises his book on three main ideas. First, he asserts that human beings are primarily liturgical animals. That is, our "fundamental orientation to the world is governed not by what

we think but by what we love, what we desire" (215). Our desires, he contends, are shaped primarily by habits and practices by which we pursue a particular vision of the good life. For Christians, of course, the good life is defined in light of the kingdom of God as Jesus taught about it, but Smith argues in the middle section of *Desiring the Kingdom* that some habits and practices in our culture are "thicker" than others. Perhaps a strange word to our ears, "thick" in Smith's parlance is an oft-used descriptor, describing practices that deeply move us, engaging not only our intellects but our emotions and even our spiritual sensibilities. (In other words, the kinds of experiences that sometimes give us goose bumps.) To the degree that they engage our kardia or guts/heart/soul, many rituals and practices in secular culture are strikingly liturgical. Affectively and precognitively,



they powerfully influence what philosopher Charles Taylor calls our “social imaginary.” An essential concept for Smith, “social imaginary” denotes “an understanding of the world that is precognitive and prereflective: it functions on an order before thinking and believing, and it is carried . . . in images, stories, myths, and related practices” (133). As Smith provocatively demonstrates, thick secular practices too often trump or simply overpower our cognitive commitments to “worldview” and instead shape our allegiances and desires in ways that are rebellious against God’s kingdom. In light of these observations about human nature and the often subversive ways that culture competes for our allegiances, Smith in the final third of this book pursues a substantial reconsideration of Christian worship and makes a persuasive (if too brief) case for its utter relevance to how we should understand anew and perhaps reconfigure our work in a Christian scholarly community.

Before coming to the forthrightly philosophical and theological elements of his discussion, Smith presents an imaginative and captivating exercise in discernment that illuminates the stakes of this enterprise. In his introductory chapter, Smith performs what he describes as “A Phenomenology of Cultural Liturgies”<sup>1</sup> in which he deconstructs one of the dominant secular liturgies in our time: “I would like to invite you for a tour of one of the most important religious sites in our metropolitan area. It is the kind of place that may be quite familiar to many of you, but my task here is actually to try to make this place strange” (19). Over the next several pages, Smith analyzes the American shopping mall as a site of profound liturgical activity. “The site is throbbing with pilgrims every day of the week,” he begins. Noting that the architectural “mode of enclosure and enfolding offers a feeling of sanctuary, retreat, and escape,” Smith suggests that “the pilgrim is also invited to escape from mundane ticking and counting of clock time and to inhabit a space governed by a different time, one almost timeless” (21). Beyond its unique sense of time, this

<sup>1</sup> As this heady section title suggests, Smith is a serious philosopher. Nevertheless, readers shouldn’t be put off by his judicious use of what most of the time is an accessible philosophical lexicon. In fact, at many points in this book, Smith states his forthright intention to be useful and accessible to student readers.

site of worship is also notable for its unique use of space:

The layout of this temple has architectural echoes that hark back to medieval cathedrals—mammoth religious spaces that can absorb all kinds of different religious activities all at one time. And so one might say that this religious building has a winding labyrinth for contemplation, alongside of which are innumerable chapels devoted to various saints. As we wander . . . preparing to enter one of the chapels, we’ll be struck by the rich iconography that lines the walls and interior spaces. Unlike the flattened depictions of saints one might find in stained-glass windows, here is an array of three-dimensional icons adorned in garb that — as with all iconography — inspires us to be imitators of these exemplars. These statues and icons embody for us concrete images of ‘the good life.’ (21)

His good-natured playfulness and irreverence aside, Smith helps us to recognize that many of the cultural institutions that we frequently inhabit are not at all formatively impartial but rather are religiously charged.<sup>2</sup> He sums up by stating a conviction that might well serve as the thesis for the entire book:

Looking at the mall through the eyes of worship and liturgy, with attention to the concrete material practices that are part of the experience, gives us an angle on this cultural institution such that we can see that the mall has its own pedagogy, and interest in the education of desire. If it’s not quite *The Education of Henry Adams*, we might think of it as *The Education of Hannah Montana*. So we can at once appreciate that the mall is a religious institution because it is a liturgical institution, and that it is a pedagogical institution because it is a formative institution. (23)

In a marketplace hell-bent on educating our desire, we must recognize that liturgy shapes pedagogy, and few places

<sup>2</sup> Even more provocative than this analysis of the shopping mall are the two remaining excursions into a couple of the most powerful liturgies of our time: the stadium and the frat house. Smith sees the prowess of the stadium (think Friday Night Lights, NASCAR, “Please rise for the National Anthem”) as often cultivating in us unthoughtful and unbiblical civic religious instincts. His discussion of the liturgy of the frat house (think raucous Greek week in the shadow of the Cathedral of Learning) offers a searing critique of the secular university’s contradictory vision of human flourishing.



in contemporary culture are “religiously” neutral in what they aim to teach us about ourselves and the kind of life we should pursue.

What is at stake in *Desiring the Kingdom* is nothing less than the vision of human flourishing around which we orient our lives. Is that vision biblical? Or does it animate within us a desire for individualistic liberal autonomy that looks very little like the New Testament vision of the Church? More broadly understood, this vision is crucial not only in the lives of individual Christians who are trying to live faithfully in this age, but also in the shape and spirit of Christian colleges like our own. If the kingdom of God is radically counter-cultural, do we have eyes to see the ways in which we are too often caught unawares by the formative power of secular liturgies that seek continually to redirect our heartfelt loyalties to the worldliness of the world? Smith’s philosophical forerunner, St. Augustine, pioneers such questions, and he often ends up lamenting what he calls the “river of custom”: “Who can stand against it?” Augustine asks in *Confessions*. “When will it ever dry up? How long will it continue to sweep the sons of Eve into that huge and fearful ocean which can scarcely be passed even by those who have the mark of the Cross upon their sails?” (*Confessions*, 1.16). Standing squarely in this tradition of philosophical fretfulness, Smith wonders if we in Christian higher education are cultivating formative practices that are thick enough to be counter-formational. His frank and somewhat discomfiting question is whether or not the evangelical emphasis on “worldview”—a Christian intellectual framework that is prominent at Grove City and most other Christian colleges—is truly adequate? Do the “Worldview Academy” and the “Truth Project” (not to mention Grove City’s own HUMA curriculum) take into account the sad truth that the spirit of the age is much more interested in our hearts than our heads? When you enter the shopping mall, let’s face it, no one is much interested in engaging your intellect. Is our anthropology as insightful and formative as Abercrombie’s?

In the latter chapters of *Desiring the Kingdom*, Smith turns to the hard work of proposing practices that he believes might be up to the task of counter-formation in the face of cultural pedagogies that often too easily get hold of

our hearts. Laudably, the foundation for this section (and the book’s longest chapter) is a rich and lucid phenomenology of Christian worship. In counterpoint to the secular liturgies that he deftly unpacks in Chapter 2, Smith in Chapter 5 demonstrates how Christian worship has the power to stretch and shape us into whole persons whose hearts, bodies, and minds flourish in this world in lively pursuit of God’s kingdom. Smith has a high view of the Church and its historic richness, and he is unapologetic in asserting the need for Evangelicals to look beyond themselves, the tyranny of contemporaneity, and the narrowness of sectarianism when it comes to the Church:

Here I try to explicate catholic (universal, historical) elements of Christian worship that, over time, have been judged as essential aspects of the gathered body of Christ in its praise and worship of the triune God. . . . These elements are deemed crucial parts of Christian worship precisely because they are essential showings (rather than tellings) of the gospel of Christ and because they are crucial aspects of training-by-doing, opportunities for practicing and rehearsing what it means to be the people of God, who desire the kingdom of God. To lose any element is to risk losing an element of the gospel of grace — and so to lose an opportunity for counter-formation vis-à-vis the secular liturgies we’ve described. (153)

Smith’s emphasis here is decidedly on the capital-C Church — that is, the visible and invisible people of God across history and the globe. Certain practices in worship have characterized God’s people for centuries. From Call to Worship to Confession, from Creed and Sermon to the Sacraments and the Sending out of Witnesses, Smith evocatively discusses Christian liturgy and explores how each of these elements contribute to our becoming God’s people, or the *ekklesia* — those that are “called out” of the world to gather for worship and then sent back into the world as witnesses.

Importantly, Smith recognizes that Christian colleges aren’t churches, but he doesn’t shy away from the implications of the truth that God’s people, wherever we are, are part of the mystical body of Christ as it exists



around the world. Any Christian community, including the Christian college, should embrace a rich understanding of the vocation of worship, whatever the work at hand may be. In many ways, Smith can be best understood as taking his cue from St. Paul in Romans 12:1-2. A favorite scripture passage for communities like ours, it exhorts us “in view of God’s mercy . . . to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.” This “spiritual act of worship,” as Paul describes it, is wonderfully bound up in God’s great concern with our minds. However, Smith won’t let us forget that our minds are shaped, and our desires honed, by the wonderfully thick practices that characterize our being together as God’s people, both on Sundays and throughout the week.

So, finally, what does this have to do with our life and work in a Christian college community? In his regrettably undersized final chapter, Smith confesses his fear that “Christian colleges, universities, and schools have unwittingly bought into a stunted picture of the human person and a somewhat domesticated construal of Christian faith” (217). Aiming at practicality and concreteness after 200 pages of theory, Smith also shifts into prophetic mode:

To be blunt, our Christian colleges and universities generate an army of alumni who look pretty much like all the rest of their suburban neighbors, except that our graduates drive their SUVs, inhabit their executive homes, and purse the frenetic life of the middle class and the corporate ladder “from a Christian perspective.” . . . By reducing the genius of Christian faith to something like an intellectual framework – a “perspective” or a “worldview” – we can (perhaps unwittingly) unhook Christianity from the practices that constitute Christian discipleship. And when that happens we end up thinking that being a Christian doesn’t radically reconfigure our desires and our wants, our practices and our habits. (219, 218)

How then should we live? If Smith’s strong words here ring true to us, what would he have us do? His answer is at once inspiring and deflating: “If something like Christian universities are to exist, they should be configured as

extensions of the mission of the church – as chapels that extend and amplify what’s happening at the heart of the cathedral, at the altar of Christian worship. In short, the task of Christian education needs to be reconnected to the thick practices of the church” (220). Even as we cheer Smith here for his affirmation of the Church, we might immediately feel discouraged as we imagine the seemingly impossible challenge this poses to schools like our own, and indeed to many of the most prominent Christian colleges in the country. Neither Grove City nor Wheaton, Westmont, Gordon, or Taylor, just to name a few, have defining relationships with any one ecclesiastical body. Moreover, the list of church-related or denominational schools that have long since repudiated any kinship with their church roots would by any impartial account be very long. In the face of such realities, it seems unrealistic to discuss or consider “church colleges” in any meaningful way.

In spite of these seemingly impossible historical barriers to achieving what Smith admits is an elusive ideal, his final chapter ventures suggestions for how we might yet benefit from some of the thick practices that the Church embodies. In this chapter, winsomely entitled “A Christian University is for Lovers: The Education of Desire,” he offers a sketch of what he hopes will grow into a more substantial conversation. Smith proposes “A New Monasticism” that embraces practices of living and learning together in the Christian college in such a way that breaks down some barriers that might have (wrongly) become second nature to us. Among the most challenging of these for me as a faculty member is Smith’s insistence that our campus community is often bifurcated – chapel and classroom, student life and academic affairs – in ways that work against what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls “life together.” For example, “Given that human beings are liturgical animals, and given that the Christian social imaginary is absorbed and formed in worship,” Smith writes, “campus worship becomes an integral element of the academic project. . . . Insofar as Christian teaching, learning, and scholarship are to be formed by a Christian social imaginary, the rhythms and rituals of campus worship provide welcome opportunities to continue to



form and reform our imaginations” (225). Perhaps chapel should be more central to the weekly rhythm of life for those of us who inhabit Hoyt, Rockwell, and HAL. Chapel attendance isn’t required for me as a faculty member, but Smith has convicted me of my need to be there if I hope to escape a lop-sided existence as a member of our Christian college community.

Another “new monastic” practice that Smith suggests for Christian colleges is the intentional cultivation of Christian community across intergenerational lines. Smith proposes creating on-campus living arrangements for faculty and staff, or encouraging students who live off campus to do so in close proximity to faculty families, “building a neighborhood nexus of friendship and common practice” (227). Whether through shared meals or time spent together in Bible study and worship, opportunities for faculty and staff to mentor students, or for students to mentor the children of faculty and staff, we might discover numerous opportunities to live and learn in transformative and counter-formational ways. Lest we worry, Smith maintains that such practices are “not a covert way of having faculty function *in loco parentis*; rather it would be an opportunity for faculty and their families to function *in loco amici* — as ‘wise friends’ who are sisters and brothers to our students,

engaged in the common project of trying to be the people of God” (228). As Smith admits, this chapter is a too-brief glimpse of what it might look like for us to connect Christian education with Christian formation, but this shortcoming is surely a sin of omission rather than commission. I look forward both to reading what Smith writes next on this crucial subject as well as joining him in the good work that he has begun.

*Desiring the Kingdom* is a book that will make faculty and students alike wiser for having encountered it. Loving well both the university and the church, Smith risks the discomfort of pointing out ways in which we haven’t flourished as well as we might as Christian scholars and neighbors. Because of God’s grace to us, Martin Luther often remarked, “to progress is to begin again.” In this rich, inspiring, and hopeful volume, Smith offers us the gift of a fruitful discontentedness. In view of God’s mercies, he exhorts us to have our imaginations, our hearts, and, yes, our minds, recaptured by this rich reconfiguration of the wonderful labor to which God has called us in the Christian college. 

H. Collin Messer teaches American literature and humanities at GCC.

# THE GLASS ROOM: A REVIEW

BRITTNEY TODD

The Landauer house was to be a pinnacle of achievement for art, for architecture, and for modernity. Built by a visionary architect for newlyweds Viktor and Liesel Landauer, the house is a miracle of glass and light that, in Viktor Landauer's words, proclaims by its very being "the openness of modern living rather than the secretive and stultified life of the previous century." Its creation supports Viktor's strong belief that in the modern 1920s, "art and science would combine to bring happiness to all people." A creation of both airy beauty and careful precision, the glass house was to be a place for the bright honesty befitting the modern family.

And yet.

The Landauers' optimism, if not their house, is shattered by deception and by the advent of World War II. Modernity does not succeed as the bright cure for the darkness of the past. The Landauer home becomes a harbor of secrets as Viktor finds his life split between the ethereal world of Liesel and their glass home and the earthy world of the city and the woman Kata. Liesel feels herself distanced from her husband and increasingly closer to her bisexual best friend Hana. As the Nazi regime comes into power, the Landauers are forced to leave their home, because Viktor (rightly) fears that his Jewish heritage will endanger them. *The Glass Room* tells the story of the Landauers only insofar as they are irrevocably connected to the glass house, for the story is that of the house itself. After the Landauers' evacuation, the focus shifts back and forth between the Landauers in exile and the varying occupants of the house.

After the Landauers flee, the house is used in various capacities. In the big glass room once celebrated for the glory of its modernity, a measuring station is established in order to further the work of scientifically qualifying and quantifying human worth and striving to prove that "Jew"

is a genetic disease. After the war, the house is used as a gymnasium for the physical therapy of young polio victims. Each stage of the glass house's story has a common theme: a supposedly noble purpose and an underlying secret, usually involving a societal and sexual transgression of some kind, whether "love" or mere selfishness is the motive. In fact, in many ways, *The Glass House* is the same story on a loop. Optimism, deception, sex, and disappointment cover up failure that leads to the next occupant obtaining the house. Identical chapter titles punctuate the long novel, indicating that the future is not, as Viktor learns, something to be manipulated.

*The Glass Room* was shortlisted for the 2009 Man Booker Prize. Reviewers more experienced than I praise it for its beauty, sophistication, and symmetry. There were moments that led me to heartily agree. One of my favorites is a description of an orchestra seemingly "suspended from [the conductor's] raised arms as though by puppet strings," moments before performing a piece composed of "the liquid runs of the woodwind," a swirling river of music. It's beautiful. The deliberate symmetry of the storytelling is also beautiful as a parallel to the impeccable symmetry of the house. But if there is a dark side to the glass house, the parallel may also be true of the novel itself. Mawer seems to be attempting a hard, honest look at the true condition of modern humanity's search for meaning. This seemed noble until the moment when I began to suspect that his attempted honesty was an excuse to dwell on and revel in the natural depravity of humanity. I finished *The Glass Room* not with an impression of sophisticated beauty, but in the midst of an internal debate over the responsibility of an artist to realize the particular impact of his medium. What struck me most about this novel was what I see as Mawer's irresponsible use of detail. Sex is central to the

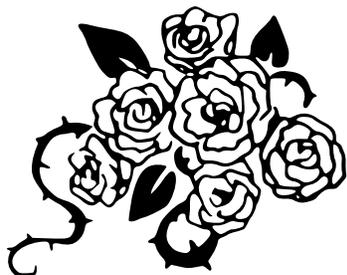
*The Glass Room*  
Simon Mawer  
Other Press, 2009



novel – it is even described as the basis of architecture – but it is not sacred. Mawer may reflect the mindset of much of modern culture accurately by his depiction of sex as the only meaningful connection between people, but he does it in a way that both endorses the viewpoint and draws the reader into dark situations. Even assuming Mawer’s purpose was to not shy away from the facts or the truth, I see no justifiable reason for his gratuitous presentation of sex and his pornographic use of words. Moments of beauty

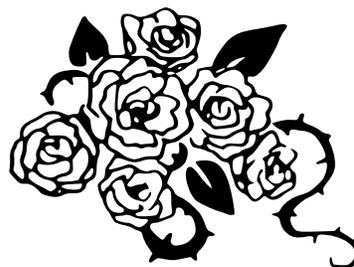
and careful symmetry are overshadowed by the darkness of deception and the detail in which the reader is forced to encounter that darkness, leaving the novel, like the house, a failed attempt at hope in modernity. Q

*Brittney Todd is a senior English major whose mood is noticeably improved whenever the cafeteria has grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup.*



## WHITE HORSE

ALISON ANGELL '07



*I stared and stared. - Elizabeth Bishop*

We stopped the car across the road to stare;  
it must've been his angle, back to us in the bend  
between one short, steep hill and another.

The wind blew his tail to strands,  
crows' shadows flitted over him,  
and his head was lifted high without a flinch.

Roses fell around him like laurels,  
clouding the air with too much sweetness,  
the ground with overdone colors.

As we walked up, there he was:  
just a horse, thinking of something insignificant,  
like the fence's shadow, and how to trample it.

*Alison followed her degree in English Education from Grove City with a Master's in Creative Writing at the University of St Andrews, and a year teaching at Wears Valley Ranch in TN. She has recently moved to Scotland with her husband, Walker.*

# IT'S SIMPLER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

JUSTIN OLSON

There were many causes to the sub-prime mortgage crisis. Economists continue to debate just what happened, and many of the victims struggle to understand exactly why their plans were so drastically disrupted. Whether one blames predatory lenders, nearsighted mortgage companies, or credit-happy thirty-somethings with two children, the crisis was bad, real bad. Yet for all the foreclosures and evictions, few Americans blamed racism as the source of their housing woes. Forty years ago, however, many Americans could do just that and have little doubt as to the sufficiency of the explanation. Beryl Satter tells a story of real-estate exploitation in black urban America, attempting to give us new perspectives and new explanations for why the inner city is as gritty as it is today. For Satter, the facts are many, but the story is quite simple: exploitation explains a lot of what we see in urban slums. These and the insights we can glean from the past help us explain more than we realize about the recent housing crisis.

Satter is more of a storyteller than a historian. In fact her whole book is based on the experiences of her father, Mark J. Satter, a Chicago attorney who represented many blacks when few were willing to do so. Much of the book is his biography. Mark Satter witnessed his south side Jewish suburb of Lawndale, Chicago morph from a homogeneous European immigrant community into a multi-ethnic borough. The transition, however, was eventually total. Lawndale became an almost all-black community by the middle of the century. The drama of this metamorphosis and the prejudice and tragedy that went along with it is contained in the personal records of Mark. Much of Satter's research comes from these records, supplemented with personal interviews and secondary scholarship. The personal quality

of the book, is at times, uncomfortably intimate. Satter's work advances as a series of up close and personal episodes, punctuated with the bare historical narrative to provide us with both much needed emotional relief and the "big picture" perspective.

After the Great Depression the black communities of West and South Chicago declined into the projects that remain today. As many southern blacks migrated to northern industrial centers to take advantage of the jobs created by World War II, black populations increased substantially, especially in places like Chicago. As racial intermingling increased, the demographic of many neighborhoods slowly underwent ethnic and cultural transition. The housing market into which blacks entered eventually adjusted to reflect racial tensions that were emerging. This large demographic shift provided a context for prejudicial lending and real-estate extortion on a broad scale.

For Satter, there is no better example prejudicial lending than the policies of the Federal Housing Administration. The FHA was created in 1934 to insure the mortgages of banks and savings and loan companies. Insurance lessened a bank's risk of lending to lower income families, thereby making home buying more affordable during the Great Depression. However, to ensure that newly mortgaged homes would maintain high property values, the FHA redlined interracial and black neighborhoods and refused to insure mortgages for homes in these areas. Moreover, it encouraged the use of racially restrictive covenants (deeds that stipulated the owner was not to sell the home to a black buyer) in order to preserve homogeneous white neighborhoods. The FHA was willing to insure the mortgages of black home owners who wished to live in all-black

*Family Properties: Race, Real Estate, and the  
Exploitation of Black Urban America*  
Beryl Satter  
Metropolitan Books: New York, 2009



neighborhoods, but it was reluctant to insure aging properties. Quite convenient, since after all was said and done, aging properties were often the only real estate available to blacks.

In this mortgage vacuum, speculative contracts emerged as the only viable option for blacks who wanted housing. These contracts weren't leases; rather, they were more like an installment plan, a kind of rent-to-own agreement in which the tenant made a down payment and then monthly payments toward final ownership of the property. The only catch was that if the tenant missed even a single payment, the contract gave the property owner the right to evict the tenant. In this frequently recurring circumstance, the landlord kept the down payment and then contracted to another potential occupant who could give him another steep payment. Because this was often the only option available for many blacks in urban areas, property owners were able to raise monthly payments to astronomical levels, ensuring that the turnover rate of occupants was high. To offset the high costs, many blacks sublet their flats and ignored necessary maintenance. Over time, the segregated black communities deteriorated and became the slums that we observe today.

The thesis is convincing enough. Unfortunately, it doesn't explain the Chicago of the twentieth century. As an account of the personal tragedies that are the victims interviewed by Satter, the book is priceless. It also exposes facts about our federal lending policies that have remained unknown to many. As an account of the "exploitation of black urban America," it's ironically prejudicial. It's not so much what Satter says, as much as what she doesn't say. Begging the question most of the time, Satter leaves the one crucial question unanswered: is it truly possible to explain the plight of an entire race of people by the housing policies to which they were subjected? From reading her book, one would imagine that Satter would answer, yes. Such nearsightedness ends up destroying the narrative she attempts to write by making the subjects of her interviews mere characters in a B-rate epic, hapless victims whose lives can be sufficiently understood by parsing the federal

lending code. No human story is that expendable.

Racism and extortion only explain so much when it comes to understanding the story of those who fall victim to the latest exhibition of inequity. The late sub-prime lending crisis provides only the most recent opportunity for bleeding-heart liberals to defend the uneducated, underprivileged, and hopelessly optimistic who suffer for not being able to read the fine print on their mortgages. This is largely the stance that Satter takes in her concluding comments about the predatory lending of the sub-prime mortgage crisis. But before champions of human autonomy and responsibility berate Satter for her naïve optimism and victimization, one has to remember that it takes responsibility and initiative to manipulate a system of laws for the purposes of maintaining "high property values," no matter the era. Satter does prove this. And if we are to learn anything from Satter, we would do well to recognize that what creates our definition of "value" in an economy is usually much more primitive and banal than we are willing to admit.

Allow me to offer a few words to reconcile predatory lending with the exploitation of black America and redeem Satter's book, in part. Homogeneous, white communities were in vogue fifty years ago. Two-story homes in quiet neighborhoods are *à la mode* today. The reason we choose to run to the suburbs today is because of a fear of poverty, a fear that we mitigate by accumulating wealth for no apparent purpose that achieve the status of "well off." Is greed any better than racism? Wealth for its own sake is no more justifiable than racial homogeneity. We are often blind to our own motives. Satter may not provide a complete explanation for America's past and present tragedies nor the fates of those they hurt, but she can help us expose some of the irrational instincts that we acted upon to create them.

Q

*Justin R. Olson ('10) is currently studying law at Indiana University. Post-cafeteria life for Justin is difficult but rewarding. The most recent culinary experiment was home fries.*



## ON HAVING NEVER BEEN TO SOUTH JERSEY

PHILIP GRUBER

Why is the Great Egg Harbor River great?  
What can be there? I'd estimate  
It's just third-rate. Well, Ocean Grove  
Or Long Branch, Amboy, Red Bank, those  
I could in detail circumscribe  
With values I've too swift descried  
In two or three. North Jersey, then,  
I name a worthless wasteland when  
My life up there's been chance few drives.  
But what's South Jersey's crime? That I've not come?  
What henbane's there? What wormwood's dirt  
Can poison land with such a curse  
That never I've attended there?  
Well, Cumberland, I will beware  
Your deadly nightshade's touch, and Salem, I'll  
Avoid your 'hazel tracts. For all these miles  
Of planted death, I must to some  
Degree be right. Can I succumb  
To those five counties' blaring wane  
That makes the sequined dusk profane,  
Atlantic City?

*Philip Gruber imagines that South Jersey is a nice place.*

# ROISING FROM THE DEAD

ERIC POTTER

For readers who fear that contemporary poetry offers little more than solipsistic journal jottings, confusions masquerading as profundities, or language experiments yielding much distress but little discernment, Paul Willis's recent collection of poems, *Rosing from the Dead*, proves to be a delightful exception as well as an exceptional delight.

Most of his poems begin with a descriptive or narrative impulse. He uses plain language and precise detail to render his scene in a tone that is generally conversational. This is not to say that his work is prosaic. Willis delights in language without permitting it to become an end in itself. Rather, he allows the play of language to serve the subject, letting the play lead toward further insights.

The title poem exemplifies qualities found in many of Willis's poems. It begins with an incident: the speaker and his family on the way home from a Good Friday service. The poet describes the drive as "dark" and "silent," details that are factual and suggestive. During the drive, the daughter says that on Sunday "Jesus will be roising / from the dead." The poet, alert to the possibilities of language, seizes on this grammatical "error" and begins to play with images of roses and rising, so that the phrase becomes a link to biblical imagery and a lens through which to see the resurrection anew.

"It must have been like that," the speaker exclaims in the second stanza, imagining Christ as a blossom

pulsing  
from the floor of the tomb, reaching  
round the Easter stone  
and levering it aside  
with pliant thorns.

This resurrection seems as natural as flowers blossoming and yet so large and powerful as to be miraculous. The sense of uncontainable life is reinforced by the line breaks. While the lines in most of the poem coincide with syntactic

breaks, highlighting each unfolding detail, in this passage the enjambment of "pulsing" and "reaching," where the sense of one line spills into the next, parallels the resurrection life that cannot be contained.

In the final stanza the speaker continues seeing the Easter story in terms of flowers. He imagines the soldiers having fainted because they are "overcome / with the fragrance," and he sees Mary "mistaking the dawn-dewed / Rose of Sharon / for the untameable Gardener." Tomb and garden, rose and gardener – the images bounce off

one another in a way both familiar and strange, reminding us of connections we know and hinting at connection we have not yet made.

*Rosing from the Dead*, Willis's second full-length collection, is divided into three sections. In the first, "Faith of our Fathers," he focuses on memories from his childhood, many of them church-related, though he includes poems about his parents and children. In "Faith of our Fathers," he describes the faculty members gathering in the chapel after lunch to sing. (He is a professor of English at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California.) As he listens to the men's voices (the faculty is predominantly male), he notes how they "bellowed like bass organ pipes." Such singing joins them to their "forefathers" and Willis finds "great comfort" in their company:

to be still a child after all, still surrounded  
by grown men growling low  
in their unmistakable harmony.

While this experience reminds him of his childhood security, Willis does not offer religion as nostalgia or saccharine innocence. Instead, in his understated fashion, he acknowledges the the sin and suffering of people, even those in the church. One poem, for example, recalls a pastor who used to visit his father and who ended up dying young. In "On Time" Willis describes a railroad official who attended

*Rosing from the Dead*  
Paul J. Willis  
WordFarm, 2009



his church and once visited the Sunday school, showing off his railroad watch and telling the students it was most important “to keep time with eternity.” Each Sunday he arrived on time and sat with his wife and daughters, until one Sunday he stopped showing up, having, the congregation learned later, run away with his secretary.

Willis presents such stories without shirking from the unsavory details but also without judgment or hand-wringing. He does not rant about the hypocrisy of Christians or condemn his church upbringing for having damaged him or look down on such believers from heights of intellectual and theological superiority. Instead, he writes as a man of faith, still struggling to live out the faith of the fathers in a broken world.

In the second section, “Higher Learning,” Willis ranges over a variety of topics, his children, aging, death. In “What I Will Want” he realizes that some day in the future he will want to recover the details of an ordinary day: his children getting up, his wife arranging rides to school, the dog wanting to be petted. Several of the poems link directly to academia, including one in which he and his students feel compelled to escape their smart classroom. A number of the poems exhibit Willis’s wit. “Higher Learning,” for example, is about his efforts to house train a puppy, though he draws a number of humorous analogies between that process and the world of academia. Despite his having taken the puppy out several times, it still “peed twice on the kitchen floor.” The puppy looks at him “with the eyes / of an assistant professor up for tenure.” Although the puppy seems to be pleading for lenience, the poet realizes he “is merely plotting where to poop next.” Willis concludes wryly,

No limit to the academic freedoms  
of a dog these days, no end  
to the publication of alimentary happiness.

An avid outdoorsman, Willis has written often of nature in poetry, essays, and fiction. (His series of eco-fantasy novels, *Alpine Tales*, is being re-published by WordFarm this fall.) Nature poems feature prominently in the third section, “Signs and Wonders.” Many present scenes at various national parks and indicate the range of Willis’s approaches. “Storm Clearing,” for example, describes a storm via an extended metaphor of gambling. The more technical language of “Telescope Peak” reveals Willis’s scientific knowledge. In most of these poems he resists the romantic tendency to find in nature analogues of his inner state; instead he focuses on the scenes, revealing their beauty and worth independent of human existence or scales of value. At times, nature in its very separateness can offer an implicit critique of human choices. In “Still Here,” for example, he contrasts the tenacious hold on life exhibited by some lilies “crowding out of the garden” with the refusal of life of a man “found hanging after church, uprooted, / all uprooted from our common longing.”

Whatever the subject, Willis’s poems use a language we know to provide an entry into a world we recognize. Once we are in that world, his best poems use those very words and details, familiar as they are, to invite us further in toward places we may not know yet but are anxious to visit. 

*Eric Potter is a professor of English at Grove City College, where since 2000 he has taught courses in American literature, modern poetry, and creative writing. His poems have appeared in such journals as The Christian Century, First Things, and 32 Poems. His first chapbook, Heart Murmur (Twisted Tree Press), was released last spring; a second, Still Life, is due later this fall from Franciscan University (Steubenville, OH). He lives in Grove City with his wife and three children.*

# “AT LEAST I’M SEEING IT WHOLE”

HÄNNAH SCHLAUDT

Dr. Eric Potter, affectionately known as “Saint Potter” among his students, has been Grove City College’s resident poet for a number of years. He teaches a creative writing course, poetry classes, and various period courses in American literature — but he always has a poem or two simmering in the back of his mind. After years of publishing poems here and there in various journals (including *Christianity and Literature*, *First Things*, *Ruminate*, and *Rock & Sling*), Dr. Potter has finally put some of his poetry between the covers of a chapbook, *Heart Murmur*. This collection contains both new material, and some of the old favorites he has read aloud at *The Echo*’s annual poetry readings.

Eric Potter’s literary fame doesn’t interfere with his methods of teaching — he is well-loved and respected by his students. As a professor, he delights and instructs his. He keeps his students wondering what goes on inside his head and engages them with his quirks — muttering witty remarks in-between lecture points, and quietly cancelling one poetry class every fall for the opening of hunting season.

*Heart Murmur* clears away some of the distractions set up by Dr. Potter’s status as professor and lets the reader into his world with unclouded sight. The poems here display Dr. Potter’s poetic wit and thoughtful insights, while drawing out the wisdom of a man who understands the human heart and the absurdity of human dignity apart from grace imparted in the mundane.

The title of the collection, which suggests poems drawn from the meditations of the heart, is taken from one poem in particular. “Heart Murmur” dramatizes a father’s sickening realization that his new child has a heart murmur and needs a corrective surgery. Potter employs varying line lengths to mimic a heartbeat and to draw in the reader to the intense pace and feel of the situation.

Dr. Potter’s poetic voice is measured and ruminating. In each poem, he mulls over a situation (often one that seems mundane or homely) with the gentle humor and wisdom of a man who has lived and loved, and is aware of what he doesn’t know — and is glad to chuckle at his own humanity. Many of his poems seem to grow from little moments of epiphany (when he realizes his body

is fading, in “Judas That I Love,” or the futility of his relationship to his aging grandfather, in “Square”). Here are poems that reflect the gravity of life and relationships lived out in community, for good or ill.

One such poem, “The Ones Who Fell Asleep in Class,” touches on a common scene from a college classroom: in the middle of a dull afternoon lecture, some over-tired students in the back row doze off. The poem focuses on the professor’s side of this situation: the compassion he feels for those who need to be sustained by more tangible things than his lecture can offer on this day, and the frustrating feeling of being a mime, unable to reach into their world and touch those listening. Dr. Potter’s sympathy for the drowsy students comes out here, clear and tender in three short verses.

In another poem, Dr. Potter pokes fun at himself a little, while still soberly acknowledging the seriousness of his own absurdity. “Presbyopia” talks about how the speaker’s eyes have aged, needing glasses to combat the shrinking sphere of his clear vision. He then wonders about those who have always been like this, and if he will join their ranks, and go through life unaware that the blurred world he sees isn’t the whole of reality. This whole poem is perhaps a metaphor — suggested by the made-up word in the title — for the single-sided views that many Christians assume when they get too comfortable with their denominational affiliations. The corrective here is softened by his gentle humor and acknowledgement that he, too, is prone to this flaw.

As a whole, this collection could easily be called tender, but never saccharine. Dr. Potter weaves his web to draw you into a world of reflection, tinged with some regret, much laughter, and a sacramental enjoyment of life itself. Read these poems slowly, lingeringly. Dr. Potter’s work gives you the grace of a moment to slow down and wonder at yourself and the world, to amuse yourself your own undue earnestness, and to grieve a little over the fragility of beauty. 

*Hännah Schlaudt wishes this didn’t sound like a Facebook status.*

*Heart Murmur*  
Eric Potter  
Twisted Tree Press, 2010

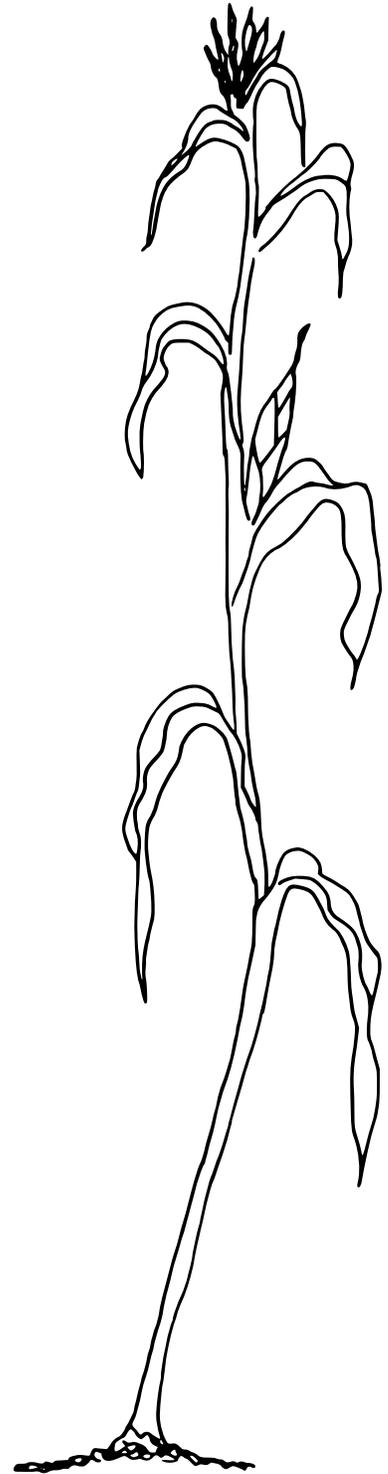
# VEGETABLES FROM MY NEIGHBOR'S GARDEN

ERIC POTTER

They come as gifts,  
green beans and broccoli,  
yellow squash, torpedo-like  
zucchini, sun-ripened  
tomatoes, cucumbers with thin  
waxy skins and ears  
of corn like silky-haired  
papooses in green blankets,  
things to slice, to sauté  
in olive oil with onion  
and garlic, the full flavor  
of freshness, nothing canned  
or frozen, nothing picked  
unripe and shipped long  
distances, no cellophane  
or chemicals designed to deliver  
what we want  
whenever we want it.

They come as reminders  
of my youth, the rototiller  
gnawing the clay-rich soil,  
stake and string lining  
out the rows of lettuce  
and beets and Swiss chard,  
musk of tomato as I tied  
the vines to splintery poles  
with strips of terry cloth  
towel, the cool summer  
mornings when I hoed row  
after row, the dew-soaked  
leaves sprinkling my ankles.

They come as testimony  
of our dependence  
on the seasons, the alchemy  
of sun and soil and rain  
falling like grace  
that to accept what's given  
is not to give up  
but to receive a gift.



# IN THE MIND'S EYE

ETHAN KREIMEYER

*"Many people ask me what it is like to live twenty years in confinement, and I can only ask them, what is it not to? That always seems to catch them unawares, and that is my goal. I must shake loose the comfort of those around me, in order to make them better and far greater than they could have imagined. Yes, I lived years in cold, with little food and hunger, and spent days, weeks, months trying to find a way to escape. I was beaten, imprisoned, and starved, and this is only part of all that I experienced. So when my liberators came, and freed me...I did not want to go. For in prison, in that quiet, I had found another world, another land that was in the mind's eye, one that beckoned beyond that which freedom could give. Or should I say: I had found a greater freedom than the earth could freely give."*

*- Aleksei Volya, gulag survivor\**

I can't remember how old I was. I can't recall what I ate during those two winters, or how I prepared for another day of life. I can't bring back my loves, sympathies, or even depression of that time. What I do remember is I gained a new understanding of beauty in life. When I was younger, beauty was measured by what we could see and hear. No longer could I see a friend or hear their voice.

Walls had been built up around me, cold and hard as the broken and cracking cement of my glass and stone city. They could not be broken down by any sheer might. I know because I have tried, flinging myself against chains that fettered foot or wrist, steel forged by a human hand, and against the fear that is built within the mind. I allied with frustration, anger, even desperation to help me break out of these bonds. I attempted to court these objects, as a man would seek his devoted love, but they brought only emptiness. So my focus was given over to words and their meaning, the complete use of their flow and rhythm. They became the devotion and pursuit of my life within those cold, gray walls.

At nights when sleep would not come, I would remain awake and call them forth from the depths of the night. I asked them to my side. First they came as strangers, then as simple companions, finally as old friends. I do not expect many of you to understand that which I speak. My words

are borne by the sweat and toil that I feel, words and whispers I can hear when all is silent, when no one is at my side.

The words take the shape of an old man, deemed wisdom. I speak to him often I must admit, for I had no other companion with whom to converse. But from it I have gained much. The walls became the canvas for my art, upon which my soul could splash its life and feelings. But I am in jail, you say, so I must be a criminal. And I am . . . delightfully so.

Ah, but don't be quick to turn away.

Continue forward and judge me according to that which you hear.

~

A wind lightly jostled the old withered leaves that lay on the trees just outside of M----, and a man walked under that old tree. A martyr, Bronislav, planted it years before they said, when revolution was never dreamed of, never even imagined by the wildest of souls. Days were simply the passing of time, a slow drifting of years, as a wooden plank that rides the gentle waters of life. The man was a poet, and for his profession was perceived in two different ways: by the poor he was viewed as a fool who dreamed too much, and by the wealthy he was seen as a lazy man who worked too little. But the man did not mind much the ways and words of others, but would sit on a crooked bench in the center of the old dead city's park, as the people rushed by. Not old and dead in that it lacked life, for thousands colored the village, but it was the soul that was no longer breathing. The trees would sway gently in the wind, the laughter of small children ringing from inside their homes. The smell of bread drifting from a bakery beside the dry brook. All were a part of the song that was being revealed anew every moment.

Each person's verse in the song of life had become empty and colorless, void of all will and meaning. This man had decided to become the song for each and every one of them, to write down what that they could not find with



their voices. So the man bore the brunt of all their suffering

I was that man, that fool, that man who was too lazy to do any work with his hands. And that song rose up hard within my throat, pressing to be let free on the pages of a book, free of all law and refinement.

It was a late summer day when I found myself pacing through a small park beneath a tree and peering up at a statue that had been cast down. A poem had been carved into it:

*Слава мы искали в сражении,  
Торжествующие дела человека,  
Но настолько больше в мечтах,  
Мерцающая тень любви.*

Reading:

*“Glory we sought in battle,  
The triumphant deeds of man,  
But so much more in dreams,  
The glimmering shadow of love.”*

“Glory.” I felt the letters gently, tracing them, the curving lines and soft edges. A banner had been erected in its place, and a mustached face under a steel gray hat had been crudely painted on it. The statue represented the forgotten; the banner revealed what had taken its place. The man who had written the poem was gone, but he had left his permanent mark in time. A name none can recall, but his words will live on for centuries carved in stone. “As a man I am just one, but as a poet I may become many.”

As a nation our dreams had changed to become those of a single man. But I wanted the voices to rise again, and words became my weapon.

I began a paper after that day, “illegal”, but I believed in its justice. *Правосудие* — justice, I had decided to name the paper, and I began the printing in the spring of the following year. As a Russian proverb states, “An icy May fills the granaries.” I looked to be that falling rain that calls the nation to its consciousness and senses, awakening it from the tangles of a dark and dreary slumber. I wanted to become that “voice calling in the wilderness,” for even when my words fall upon deaf ears, I may judge myself in

a righteous struggle. The paper was ignored at first; a small printing done in the cellar of a bakery near the hard grassed edges of Lubertsy on the eastern borders of M----. The baker was an old friend named Demyan, a calm, balding man, as warm as the summer breeze and sturdy as the rocks holding back the Black Sea. The scent of the bread covered the smell of the fresh ink that poured from my hand onto the iron plates and from those plates, the emptiness of a nation was to be satisfied.

For two weeks I attempted to give Russia just a morsel that would cause her to desire more, and I began to see the sparks from my fire take flame with the youth on the streets. I could see their bright eyes as they conversed on corners and in alleyways, feet propped up upon the metal stairs descending from tenements, voices speaking quickly in hushed whispers.

My name they did not know, but my words they spoke with a reverence.

My poetry was on the edge of their lips and on the tips of their tongues.

My paper did not bring a revolution of blood and steel, but a revolution of the soul. That all changed in an instant. A single knock upon the door of my flat, a dim room in the apartment of Mrs. Elizaveta, was all it took.

She was a kind old lady of graying hair, a woman always arrayed in a creased yellow print dress, a smile forever gracing her gentle face. She had become like a mother after the passing of my own. But it was she who turned me in I found out later, it was her innocence and sense of devotion that hurt me. I do not blame her, for some time I would have been found out, but it saddens my heart that it was she. I held her in confidence, trusting my fate to her prudence. She told a man visiting the boardinghouse about my talents and work with words and poetry, and he put the pieces together, reporting me to the secret police.

Their knock became the end of my revolution.

I was thrust out of that apartment and sent to a gulag, a confinement of writers and poets like myself. We formed a community; close in life, closer in writing, and eventually in our freedom through death. Our deaths, however,



did not separate us from life, but from pain. Working on poems together, we studied both what we held in mind and heart. We conversed on Turgeon, Tolstoy, snatches of tales and myths, bits and pieces of ourselves, but most of all we spoke of religion. There is something in death that causes a man to want to understand who he is and what he may leave behind when he dies.

My closest companion was Fedya Illarion, a middle-aged man, old to my scarcely thirty years. As we became gaunt in color and complexion, we became filled and nourished on the history we could tell one another. "There is no fear in love; for perfect love casteth out fear," we could hear in the clang of the hammers upon the railroad. "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself," became the tempo of our axes on the logs. "Art is not a handicraft, it is the transmission of feeling the artist has experienced," was the rhythm of our shovels plunging into the earth, and flinging its life across the sky. Words became our life, the reason for which we lived.

One by one though, we fell to the emptiness that consumes each man, and the words left us to be swallowed by hopelessness. They could not break our spirit so they stole us from one another. I feared that we would be lost forever, condemned as the rest of the world in eternal constriction of law and force. That summer we were all separated and confined to cells of rock and steel, far away from the encouraging voice of a brother or even the simple reassurance of a man at your side.

We were made to sit and wait for the judgment of a man who was not God.

~

I taste the hard, cold bread that has been shoved through the door, and sip gently at the bitter water. But the meal cannot break my spirit; I refuse to be condemned by the standards of the world. A philosopher once said, "If you don't like wolves, stay out of the forest." Therefore, I charge into the forest's shadows, brandishing the light of my speech, begging the lost to come and listen. I resolve to not allow my soul to fall to the bitterness of malice toward my captors. So I begin to dream, not only the wild and

fabulous fantasies of my foolhardy childhood, but also the dreams of a foolhardy man.

Food will not fill the constant hungers of life; dreams have become the dearest taste for my tongue. I will die to life so that dreams will consume my life, so that the pleasure there will open the eyes, close the ears, and release the mind. The wall that stands across from me is gray and solid, bland to any other, stone in need of whitewash, an emptiness in need of painting — even crooked or cracked, anything that might return me to home, to freedom and love.

Soon I find that freedom is not beyond me in that small cell. Friends begin to visit me: old poets and writers, men from ancient times long since dead, and once or twice I see a familiar face or hear a well-known voice. And with the dreams come words that I have not touched in a wearisome year. They are as luscious and satisfying as fresh fruit, and far more nourishing. With the charcoal from the dying embers of my single weak fire I write upon the walls. I sip glasses of plump phrases and sup upon succulent sentences. The sole meaning of living is to serve humanity. Without knowing what I am or why I am here, life is impossible." A pause, a puff from the pipe of thoughts, the voice of my pen now soft and deep, rumbling as a gentle, far-off thunder and pure as rain upon the horizon. "Now we are only lost, because we tell ourselves we are lost." A man calls you a fool, so you believe him. A man refers to you as being poor, so you allow yourself to become impoverished not just in appearance, but also in word and deed.

"Open the mind, and you will see valleys, open the ears and you will hear the warm breath of angels, release the eyes and peer upon wonders of the world, and break open the heart to discover love." A mad man I may seem, but in my madness I have become even more lucid than the common and confined man.

I could glimpse little at first, struggling for the slight touch of a dawn or the briefest glimmer of the sea. The smooth touch of sand, however, began to filter in through my mind, changing the cold stone wall to the brightly lit and warm-rayed fields of the sea. The walls ceased to be



stone, but became the world beyond my confinement. The sweetest colors, as pure as the laughter of a river, fill the walls as in a gentle patter of rain. I have become the friend of birds that sang the song of my life, the companion to fish as they discover the depths of the unknown sea, and the soul of countless men who wish they were as me. I have risen to a mountaintop before the rising of the first dawn, and there I watched all rise anew. My words tell the story of my past life, but reveal what I desire others to become. "Though he were dead, he shalt still live."

For two years the gulag has been my home, the small cell of confinement, my monastery. I have become close to it as I had to no human, my hopes and dreams, every thought and word that I had for that time, etched upon its walls. And when it has been decided I am no longer to be estranged from society, that freedom has come for me . . . I will attempt to refuse the offer.

But I know I cannot. For while my heart aches to remain with my words, I know that there is much more I need to reveal to the world before my death. So take this paragraph as the final words I will ever write on this wall.

See the innermost feelings of my heart and soul splashed on these walls now living and breathing with life. I am dying to remain with my work, but I know there are other works to which I am called.

I will say farewell to these words and return to the world of the living.

Even to this day you may see the words of Volynsky written upon the walls of K---, the gulag for rebellious artists in the region of Lubertsy. Though he has faded with time, those words have lived on that cold, gray stonewall. They speak of freedom, and a love for words that surpassed all other desires, love that braved both life and death. 

*\*Aleksei Volya, meaning "defender of freedom"*

*\*\*Quotes borrowed from the writings of Tolstoy and the Bible.*

*Ethan Kreimeyer has decided that if he ever gets the chance, he will one day gain control of the DeLorean and find a way to travel back in time. There, with much delight, he will visit the Inklings and take part in a good cup of English tea.*

# FLIP-FLOPS AND FOSTERING

ANNELISE BRINKERHOFF

“Where are my flip-flops?” I yelled for the tenth time that day. I knew they were somewhere in the house, but not having time to search under toys and rugs to find them, I slipped on my sister’s pair, grabbed my keys, and ran out. They will turn up sooner or later, I thought. Sure enough, it was not long before naptime was over and I heard the now-familiar sound of rubber strips slapping our wooden floor.

She reminded me of a diver walking along in flippers, with her little feet nine sizes too small for my shoes. I could not help but smile as she pointed down and said a long, drawn-out “Mine!” My claim to ownership of the everyday black flip-flops was received with a shaking of her head and a giggling smile which revealed perfect rows of white baby teeth set between her chubby yellow cheeks. As I watched her delight in the simple pleasure of looking like a “big girl,” I recalled a picture of me at the same age, about two years old, playing in my mom’s shoes with a similar expression lighting up my toddler features.

But my thoughts on common childhood experiences, particularly girlish ones, were cut short as the reality of this little girl’s situation struck me with new force. For the shoes she plays in are not her mother’s, nor are they an older sister’s. She does not live in her own home, or even wear her own clothes. I thank God that she is yet too young to understand when we introduce her and her three-year-old brother as our “foster kids.” In her mind the caseworker is just another visitor wearing pretty jewelry and nail polish. “Mom” is the word she often uses to catch my attention, even though she knows that is not my name; sometimes she says it to herself, evidently relishing the feeling in her mouth, as one does a tasty treat. Will she ever be able to call someone “Mom?” Maybe, but not until her case is settled, which may take months or it may take years. After that, she and her brother will either be reunited with their family, including two more brothers living in another foster home, or they will be put up for adoption.

My family tries not to think too much about the future

of the children we are caring for. It is too uncertain, and besides, there is enough to keep my parents busy with paperwork, home visits, doctors’ appointments, discipline, meals, and the biggest ordeal of all – bedtime. Time for contemplation was scarce during the hustle and bustle that accompanied this first placement at the end of the summer, but moving away to college has given me the opportunity to reflect on what exactly this change involves.

In catching up with friends about their summers, which often included short-term mission trips to other countries and helping orphans, I realized the ways in which the nature of fostering sets it apart from other ministries to children. Many challenges result, for instance, from the fact that the children are actually wards of the state (or county), which places restrictions on their care and makes routine visits to the foster home. Then there is the emotional burden of parenting children who are not your own, uncertainty regarding the duration of their stay, and always lurking in the background the dreary probability of future separation.

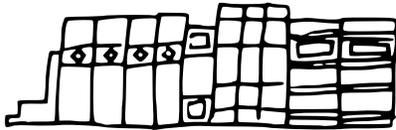
But what struck me most about the way in which my family has chosen to care for the “least of these” was that human nature is most truthfully on display. During week-long trips to orphanages both the children and the youth tend to be on their best behavior, and likewise during the first week or so of our taking in foster children (with the exception of trying to get them to sleep). But toddlers are sinners, too, and although this particular brother and sister are uncommonly cheerful, they share in the inheritance of our first parents’ willfulness. Then again, being a foster family has never made anyone a saint, either – the effort is constant, day in and day out, and requires that we face our own failures and impatience through the spiritual ups and downs, rather than the spiritual “high” often experienced when ministering outside the home.

The hardest lesson to learn was not that these children need grace (and loving care and security) but that I need grace . . . for every moment of every day. And when I failed



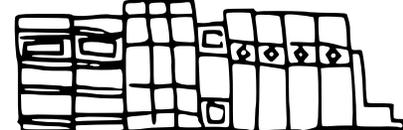
in my love for these precious children, God not only freely forgave me, but invariably added a special blessing in the form of a smile, a laugh, or a hug from an adorable toddler in flip-flops. Q

*Annelise Brinkerhoff is a sophomore studying English, but so far has taken as many music, history, and French classes as those in her major. She likes to pretend it is the nineteenth century by keeping up written correspondence, but has recently given in to the twenty-first by finally getting a cell phone.*



## MY FATHER

KEELY BREEN



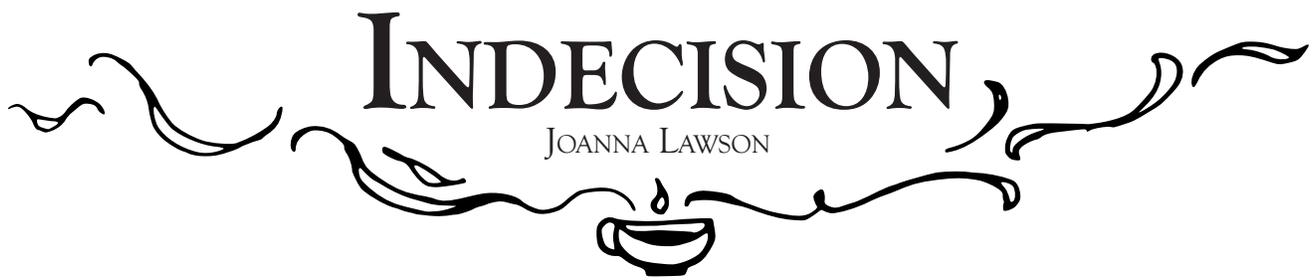
He's a room I adore but rarely complement.  
 Simple, structured, reserved rectangle.  
 Twin bed, sheets of hunter green, box-stitched duvet  
 Tucked at military angles.  
 Black bookshelf in the right corner,  
 Utilitarian, books like small soldiers in single file with Bible as commander,  
 White walls, interrupted by two photo-copied pages of favored Text  
 Floor patterned by grayed, linoleum tiles  
 That have shown the same faces for years  
 Simple, structured, reserved rectangles.  
 From the corner, the desk whispers ORDER in maple tones  
 It mutters PURPOSE in maple tones  
 It declares ORTHODOXY in maple tones  
 With a mug on customary coaster next to book in customary spot on customary desk calendar.  
 And when I visit, I bring the misshapen floral mug that tends to dribble on the desk  
 And the circular, balding blanket that sheds strands of red and orange  
 And the leopard print heels that clomp on the linoleum tiles  
 Wearing them down with dings and dents and streaks of black rubber.  
 And the off-tune hums of pointless prose to meaningless music  
 In voice too loud for the room to bear.  
 Intricate, chaotic, loud circle.  
 So I keep my visits brief,  
 And try to wipe my coffee rings off the desk,  
 But a milky residue always remains.



*Keely Breen's ideal post-graduation plans involve the cohabitation of a brownstone apartment on Boston's Commonwealth Avenue with William Shatner and Betty White and the adoption of the abandoned infant she hopes to find on her doorstep. Keely believes that Betty will be the ideal nanny while she attends graduate school, encouraging the development of a legendary sense of humor in the aforementioned child.*

# INDECISION

JOANNA LAWSON



With a *ting* and a stomp, a man walked into the coffee shop, where the colors were warm, even if the temperature was not. The door shut with another *ting*. The man stomped again.

He thought about saying that it was cold out there, wasn't it, but he thought better of it when he saw the long line in front of the bar. No use making friends in a coffee shop, anyway. So instead, he stomped his feet for a third time. He didn't manage to get all the snow off his shoes, but he decided it would be overkill to stomp again. He walked to the back of the line.

Coffee today, he thought. He squinted at the board above the bar. Two bucks for a black coffee. Hell, if he was paying two bucks, he might as well get something that tasted good. He squinted again. Caramel vanilla delight? As if he didn't look gay enough coming into an overpriced Starbucks-wannabe coffee shop. Damn, and he was wearing his pea coat today, too. No good. Pea coat and coffee equals well-dressed. Pea coat and caramel vanilla delight equals no flirting with the barista.

"Oh my Gawd," said the woman in front of him. "Are you serious? He wouldn't. No. Why would he do that?" The man in the pea coat thought about stealing the wallet from her faux alligator bag. Not that he would ever do that. He liked to think that being eyebrow-deep in debt was the sign of an honest character. Still, he wondered what the woman would say if she noticed her wallet was missing. Oh my Gawd. Jenny. I'm gonna have to call you back. I can't pay for my caramel vanilla delight because my wallet was just — he what? No. He wouldn't.

Definitely a negative on the caramel vanilla delight. He might like to dress well, but he was not yet frou-frou enough to buy a designer drink. Or buy a faux alligator purse, for that matter.

The man put his hands in his pockets and looked at

his feet. The snow was melting. It must have been slightly above freezing inside, after all. Hot chocolate, maybe. That would be deliciously cliché on a day like today. It might even remind him of the halcyon days of his childhood — make the weather seem quaint, instead of malicious. At least it would taste better than coffee.

Not nearly enough caffeine in it, though. After three nights without sleep, caffeine was not negotiable. Don't be melodramatic, he thought. He'd had a couple hours last night. He'd lived on less. Besides, maybe if he put enough cream and sugar in the coffee, he wouldn't mind so much.

*Ting*, went the door. The man looked over. A puffy pink coat toddled in, followed by a mother with a slightly smaller purple bundle on her hip.

"And then Andy put the marker in his mouth!" said the toddling pink coat.

"Oh, did he?" said the mother.

"Geehee," said the purple bundle on Mom's hip.

"Yeah, and then he walked all around with the marker in his mouth and it was a green marker and he ran around chasing all the girls and he even tried to chase me!"

"Is that so?"

"Gerrrrrrbul," said the purple bundle.

"Yeah, and I didn't like it at all so I ran away and then me and Katie we ran and hid under the table in the craft corner. And . . . Mom. Hey Mom. Mom."

"Yeah, honey?"

"Bbbbbbrrrrah!" said the purple bundle with a spit bubble.

"Don't you wanna know what Miss Baker did?"

"Sure, sweetie. What did Miss Baker do?"

The purple bundle hiccupped.

"She didn't even stop him. He ran all around and around and me and Katie we were hiding under the table, but she didn't even take the marker away, even though it



was green and it didn't have the cap on it and we're not allowed to eat anything except at snack time and we have to play only quiet games at recess."

"Oh, I see."

The purple bundle hiccupped again, harder this time. The man looked around at the bundle, which looked back at him with raised pink eyebrows. It hiccupped. Its eyebrows came together, scrunching tighter, tighter, until its mouth finally opened and it began to scream.

He had apparently overrated the halcyon days of youth. The man took his cell phone out of his pocket and pretended to answer.

"Hello? Oh hi, uh, Jenny. Oh my Gawd, he did? You're not serious. No. He wouldn't." So much for not being gay today. Hopefully the barista hadn't noticed. He got out of line, as if afraid to disturb the customers around him. He found an empty corner table. He set his bag on the chair next to him and pulled out *Confessions*. What would Augustine have ordered? Stupid question. Augustine wouldn't have ordered. He would have just broken into the store, stolen some coffee which he wouldn't have liked, and then he would have whined about it later. Thank goodness there weren't coffee shops in the fourth century. Pears made for much better literature.

The man flipped to the section labeled "Death of a Friend at Thagaste" out of habit. Chai. Maybe a chai. Still sweet, but without all of the gayness, as long as he didn't get whipped cream on top. Or maybe a cappuccino. That was more manly. But it was really more of a date drink. Not effeminate, but definitely not a man beverage. What was he thinking? He was in a coffee shop, wearing a pea coat and reading *Confessions*. There's no man drink to be had in a place like this.

The couple that had been in front of the woman with the alligator purse came walking toward the corner table where the man sat. No, a little to the left. There's an empty table over there. No, you missed it. Just not the table in front of mine. No, no, don't sit down. Not there. I'll have to watch you flirting. For the love of all that is good and holy in the world . . .

The couple sat down.

"No, I'm serious. Coffee is the new alcohol," said the boy. The girl giggled and took a sip from the cup she hadn't paid for. "I mean, think about it. People used to talk about their lives and ideas over a glass of wine. Now, everyone goes for coffee." The man stared down at *Confessions*. It wasn't a bad point, really. It was a bad topic of conversation on a date, sure, but the guy had a point. Coffee and alcohol have a lot in common. They keep you warm, taste awful, go well with poetry and women.

"That's why we should change the drinking age in this country. I mean, if you can go vote and fight for your country, you should be able to have a beer while you do it. You know what I mean?" The girl giggled again and shifted a little in her chair. The boy didn't notice. "And I'm like, it's not like Jesus never got drunk. You think he turned water into wine so that people could have a sip and then be done? You've gotta be kidding me. That's why all of these Christians going off on underage drinking is so stupid. I'm like, you believe in Jesus, right? And when you think about it, we're not even underage in most countries. The whole thing is weirdly arbitrary." He paused a little, but not long enough for the girl to think of something to say. "So, yeah, that's probably the thing I most regret. I don't regret going, even after we got tipped off that the cops knew about the party. But I really regret getting busted because that stays on your record forever, you know what I mean? Everyone knows it's stupid, but still, if you're applying for a job they're gonna go for the person that's got a clean record."

Ah, young love. Blossoming romance in the midst of snow flurries, cappuccinos, and chai. Dear God, how he hated dating. Flirting with the barista was the fun part of the dance. I push against you, you push against me, we feel the tension and let each other go. The problem is realizing that she's waltzing while you've been doing the salsa. It's almost always over a cappuccino that the problem begins, even though that's never where it ends. But the slow realization that there's a difference in tempo is almost worse, isn't it, than finally calling the whole thing off.

He turned in his chair to avoid facing the couple. No cappuccino. No chai. He didn't need to be reminded any



further of the horrors of dating. Maybe some tea, instead. Tea was warm. It had caffeine. Not enough, maybe, but at least it didn't taste as bad as regular coffee. He looked toward the bar. There was still a line. He let his gaze wander.

There was a girl across the room, sitting with her legs folded under her, eyes on her laptop, stack of books to the right, and a cup to the left. Venti. He squinted to see the book titles. Something about Byzantium. Something else about Turkey. Constantine and Constantinople. The books looked dismal. The girl looked like she needed another venti. She took a swig from her cup, set it down, stretched, looked over, and gave him a little smile. The smile departed, and she returned to her computer.

History major. No one else in her right mind would write about Byzantium. She'd probably been there since six with her Earl Grey and her library books. He decided to forgo the tea.

The man looked down at *Confessions*. "I had remained to myself a hapless spot," complained St. Augustine, "where I could neither be, nor be from thence. Whither should my heart flee from my heart? Whither should I flee from myself?" It sounded to the man like Augustine needed a pick-me-up. Some espresso to take the edge off.

Espresso. That wasn't a bad idea. I'll take seventeen shots in a cup, please. To go. He was probably going to be up all night anyways. Might as well be a little perkier than Augustine while he was at it. He'd ask for a couple dozen packets of Splenda to take the edge off the taste. He looked over at the bar again. No line. Espresso time.

He closed *Confessions* and stuck it into his leather side bag. Half briefcase, half man-purse. He was in a coffee shop, wearing a pea coat, and carrying a man-purse. He'd forgotten about that. But he thought he was still fine as long as he stayed away from the caramel vanilla delight. He slung the bag over his shoulder and walked toward the blonde barista.

Ting, went the door. A man in slacks and a tie slipped in front of him to the bar. Damn him.

"The usual. To go," said the line-cutter, adjusting his tie.

"Yep, we got it all ready for you, Dr. Schwartz." The man with the tie took the cup and passed the barista a twenty.

"Keep the change," he said without looking at her. Stride, stride, sip. Ting.

That was why he was in med school, wasn't it? thought the man in the pea coat. To become Dr. Schwartz. One day, he'd have a tie to replace his pea coat, a Blackberry at his side instead of *Confessions*, complete disregard for humanity in place of mere dislike.

"What'd he get?" he asked.

"Dr. Schwartz? That guys comes in here every day like clockwork. Always gets big cup of nothing but espresso and sugar. Hates the taste, needs the caffeine. Awesome tipper."

The phone rang.

"You go ahead and get the phone, honey. I got this one," said a second barista. "What can I get for you today?"

He looked at the second barista. No good. The flirting he had been looking forward to was not going to happen. Not only was this one not blonde, but it was not a woman. This barista was a young man, thin, apron over a collared shirt, combed hair, dark-rimmed glasses.

"Just . . . coffee," answered the man. "Large."

"You want cream and sugar, honey?"

"No," he said. "I drink it black."

"Yeah, you're sweet enough without sugar, aren't you?" The barista winked. Oh, good heavens.

"Uh, two bucks, right?"

"This one's on the house. Anything else I can get for you?"

"Not right now, thanks. I'm straight." I think.

"Nobody said you weren't, sweetie. One black coffee on the house, just for being fabulous."

"Thanks." He smiled. "Have a good day."

The man took the cup, warm beneath his fingers, and walked out of the coffee shop. With a ting, the warm-colored world closed behind him.

He took a deep sip from the cup. The black heat and energy of the coffee sank into him and expanded from within, while the frozen white wind pushed at him from without. On the boundary between within and without rested his gray pea coat, which he clutched to him as he strode away from the coffee shop. Q

*Joanna Lawson is a junior philosophy major and a big fan of select varieties of legal stimulants.*



# CHRISTIAN POETS

The following reviews are selected from the poets who participated in the Calvin College 2010 Festival of Faith and Writing back in April. The Festival honors writers who seek to incorporate elements of faith in their writing, and the poets highlighted in this issue of The Quad are men and women who engage their poetry and culture-making as Christians.



While Christian art is often poor quality art, these artists demonstrate that this must not always be the case. Here are three Christian artists who demonstrate with their skillful use of words that Christians can write something better than sentimental drivel.



# A PENTECOST OF FINCHES

JOSH MAYO '10

The somewhat elusive question of “what makes good religious poetry?” may be approached, at the first, as the old “horse and cart” scenario: Which is the adjective, “religion” or “poetry?” To any humanitarian aim, there is ever the dangerous twist of swapping liturgy for lyric (critics like Terry Eagleton and Gauri Viswanathan remind us of those deleterious effects impressed on colonized cultures in the humanities pseudo-crusades); even the converse proves noxious (Christian poets may make a not altogether dissimilar reversal in using poesy for preaching). But those of us made squeamish by the solemnity of Matthew Arnold’s “high seriousness” may still find something galvanizing in “Love (3)” on a lean Tuesday night after online poker and a bowl Chili Mac. Surely, excellent verse does not exceed its own terms; it is didactic, but never delphic. We are forever reminded in the greatest craft and crafts(wo)men: poetry always makes for poor religion; religion can make for promising poetry. When the right order is established, the product is often something of true savor and delight. Fortunately, even today, there is the occasional artist who understands that relationship exactly.

*A Pentecost of Finches: New and Selected Poems* is poet Robert Siegel’s literary tour d’horizon of faith, fauna, and human fraternity—an important and mature treasury in today’s religious genre. Published by Paraclete Press, this book is yet another literary touchstone in an already bright career; for Siegel has commanded and is commanding the attention of highly regarded artists (Robert Lowell, Dana Gioia, and others).

This body is a mixture of placed and placeless poems (in time and location). Works like “Peonies” deliver an almost iconographic impression; others, like “Lazarus,” present the imagined thoughts of a historical person. The richness of these pieces, then, is found in a deliberate dance between the artist’s mimetic and mythopoetic expression. Sometimes, in a single poem, both are found . . .

You have heard the expression, “No writer works in a

vacuum.” Siegel is no exception; with a timely voice, has much fun answering his poetical predecessors and benefactors. In “Going On,” the poet responds to the chilling and understated opening of Philip Larkin’s “Church Going” (“Once I am sure there’s nothing going on / I step inside . . .”):

Once I am sure that something’s going on  
I enter, tired of mere ritual,  
of liturgy where no work is done,  
of punctual repetitions . . . (14)

This fabulous inversion of the churchly interior with the worldly exterior only welcomes the reader into the mystical activity. Siegel employs Larkin’s nine-line stanza (in its original context, a possible variation on Spenser’s stately nine-line in *The Fairie Queene*), and only occasionally wanders from the rhyme scheme. The tone is refusing, but kind. It sums nicely in a call to “Let no elegy hang . . .” to “. . . let the walls tumble, altars grow wild . . .” (42-43). This passage represents a great quality of the poet’s posture: Faith need not be militantly guarded; it will, in its own way and timing, defend itself. Therefore, the strength of these poems shines through even the humbleness of its presentation.

It only takes the perusal of a few poems to be hooked on Siegel’s color, wit, and probity. After reading, I found my copy heavily dog-eared, smudged, and looking like a field guide. As far as the “essentials” in life go, I suppose it is one.

This collection is something of a small miracle: a volume of subtle, balanced, and comprehensive verse – truthful without being truistic, sound without being sermonic. These poems are a bound companion; something rich and digestible to slip in the backpack, carry-on, or glove compartment of any and every everyday pilgrim. Q

*Josh lives in Oxford, Mississippi with his beautiful bride Bethany. He loves fishing, avoiding rattlers on his daily 5k, and this-and-that’n with his good friend Billy F.*

*A Pentecost of Finches*  
Robert Siegel  
Paraclete Press, 2006

# WHAT THE LIGHT WAS LIKE

CAITLIN FRIIHAUF

According to the masters, poetry is “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth), “a momentary stay against confusion” (Frost), and “news that stays news” (Pound). While I enjoy contending with these apologies in classes, I often wonder what it is about a poem – that elusive arrangement of words and line breaks – that so easily captivates the mind and soul. What is it about that blue, wintery night that stirs my pen (err... keyboard)? Why do glistening mornings, mundane weekdays, and even my shortcomings beg to be recorded in poetry?

In her foreword to *What the Light Was Like*, Luci Shaw reveals one of her purposes for writing poetry. For years Shaw and a close friend, Margaret Smith, have exchanged postcards describing “what the light was like” in exotic or ordinary places, and those ideas have often bloomed into poems. “Images . . . tend to attach themselves to nouns and verbs and adjectives,” says Shaw. Judging from the variety of images in her poems, anything—a tsunami, a painting, a phrase, a color—can inspire the poet to awe and meditation.

*What the Light Was Like* is, for the reader, a dark room full of windows to be opened, each window full of thoughts, full of light. The book’s four sections – Outside, Inside, Downside, and Upside – consider light and its counterpart, darkness, both physically and symbolically. With sensuous imagery, lighthearted wit, and meditative looks into natural beauty, Shaw explores those moments of illumination that beg to be recorded in poetry.

The book’s first section, Outside, explores motifs of natural beauty and spontaneous meditation. In “The Simple Dark,” the speaker watches as a night, which at first appears blank, “develops like a print in the chemical bath.” The speaker must be patient in order to truly see and hear; the dark at first appears “subtle,” but with time becomes “intricate” and “infested with pricks of light.” The poem, like the darkness, is simply beautiful at first glance. Upon

further readings, however, “The Simple Dark” presents thoughtful reflections about what it means to truly see. Shaw concludes by calling her “whole body an ear, an eye,” suggesting that poet transcends the physical senses and sees (or hears) more than what is plainly apparent.

In “The Blue Eyeball,” Shaw continues her exploration of what it means to truly see, citing Christian faith in an omnipresent and faithful God. The speaker imagines the leaves of a eucalyptus tree to be God’s eyelids, and a sliver of light between the leaves to be “the gaze of God peering through the eye of a needle.” As wind shuffles the leaves, the speaker laments her obscured view of heaven,

but then realizes that God’s view “will not be held back / by clouds, two leaves, a forest.” Although His gaze may feel, to us, as remote as being hidden beyond the eye of a needle, God’s loving presence and light

never cease – “even the darkness will not be dark to you; / the night will shine like the day, / for darkness is as light to you” (Ps. 139:12).

In the second section, Inside, Shaw explores Christian truths using commonplace images rather than striking images from nature. In “Manna,” Shaw meditates upon God’s promise of provision. When the poem begins, the speaker considers the example of God’s provision of quails for the Israelites in the desert, noting lightheartedly that “if they flew in my window . . . I would think / aggravation, not miracle.” However, the poet next considers the fluidity of time and God’s power to operate outside of it. Finally, the poet remembers God’s promise to provide, and instead of asking for unnecessary things (because “You never know what a simple request / will get you”), she waits for God’s provision:

perhaps a minor wafer tasting like honey  
that I can pick up with my fingers  
and lay on my tongue to ease, for this day,  
my hunger to know.

*What the Light Was Like*  
Luci Shaw  
WordFarm, 2006



Shaw's poems about the Christian faith fall into the category of reflective musings (rather than moralizing proclamations), which is what makes them so edifying. In her exploration of light, both physical and spiritual, Shaw encourages the reader like a dear and thoughtful friend.

The third section of *What the Light Was Like*, Downside, contains poems such as "Storm at La Push, Olympic Peninsula" in which the speaker feels folded into the "deep unknowing" of a storm, and "Tsunami," in which laptop-clad passengers on a plane seem unreal to a speaker who feels the "seismic moan" of the globe. Downside collects poems marked by absences of light; the poems include topics such as fear, perfectionism, and forgiveness.

In "Tolerance," Shaw bravely attacks this new "virtue," noting that "The maxim / Always Be Nice instructs us to ignore / iniquity." Shaw makes a powerful comparison between the cross and love (we tend to diminish the power of each by misrepresenting them) finally noting that love "glows through" tolerance. Christian love must be sincere and willing to rebuke in order to help the lost; the poet stresses that "love is made for something dire."

Finally, Upside closes the collection with the inspiration of nature, lighthearted meditations, and revival. Two poems, "Revival" and "Light Gathering, January," discuss the promise of spring and the rebirth of creation. The brief poem "Wrong Turn" considers the speaker's unexpected encouragement and joy when her day does not progress as planned. One of my favorites, "God Speaks in Blue," discusses the richness of color, springtime, and companionship. Upside counters the darker previous section with hope and light.

In "Christa's Apples," the speaker visits Christa's house and sees "the windfall apples from the yard, bruised, / some a bit wormy, but all glowing as if lit from inside." After traveling through darker corners of Shaw's book, I was struck by this image of sacrifice and its power to revive:

. . . apples ripen  
from blossom to green fruit, distilling the sum  
of summer until they're ready to give  
their crimson selves away, the way light  
offers itself without measure . . .

The smallest light can illuminate a vast area. Shaw plays with this physical quality of light by personifying the light and the apples. Like apples fall and light spreads unrestrictedly, Christa's sacrificed time and love spread to others through the tangible token of apples.

*What the Light Was Like* ends with a brief and forceful poem, "Without Regret," in which the poet surrenders her faults and regrets to renewal, remembering that "Glass has no memory. Drops / track down and vanish, leaving no stain." Shaw does not attempt to make shadows artificially light by softening the reality of struggles; instead, she offers hope through God's promise of renewal. Nestled quietly at the back of *What the Light Was Like*, "Without Regret" gives the reader the feeling of having ambled down a dusky, wooded path dappled with revival and light, ending with hope in Christ's power to renew his children.

*What the Light Was Like* not only encouraged me with reminders of God's promises, but also explored my simple thirst for poetry. At their core, Shaw's poems arise from her observation of light—that unrelenting, beautiful, and often enigmatic sheen that glistens at the edge of our vision. "Look, I can't find the words for it" she says in "Without Words," "All I have is this golden fullness / rising in my chest, flooding my throat / like a pool of honey." Such seemingly inexplicable moments are those that beg to be recorded, cherished and meditated upon. The poet must see, hear, feel, and write beyond words, using words as stepping stones across deeper waters, listening "not for the words" but "For a translation. For some meaning / to settle, in the still air, like dew." 

Caitlin Friihauf is delighted by the autumn breeze, fallen acorns, and cozy afternoons for reading. In the words of a very wise bear, "Poetry and Hums aren't things which you get; they're things which get you. And all you can do is go where they can find you." (Guess who? Winnie-the-Pooh!)



# TIBET

NOAH GRISSETT



Burgundy blazes bright on the Roof of the World:  
A land of mystique and majesty swirled.  
Plains are vast and mountains abound,  
Welcome to the realm of God's Playground.

The land up here is part of their prayer;  
They pray for an answer, the reply unfair.  
Young and old on knees in the mud,  
Bruised and battered in burgundy blood.

So high you can almost touch the heavens,  
But faces are turned in constant rebellions.  
With broken hearts and spirits of stone they pray;  
They weep and cry as dreams decay.

Burgundy burns bright when you're way up here;  
Why is heaven over-cast yet the sky so clear?  
Elevated above the remaining mere mortals,  
Yet so far from the hope of heaven's portals.

A hymn of sorrow rises up from The Cross:  
A lament for the sin, a lament of this loss.  
This was a land the Lord saw as good,  
Turned to evil by the desires of mere man.

A slash of color, the wound delves deep,  
But their turn of the back makes the injury cheap.  
A single drop, a single burgundy tear  
Mixed with the words of a final prayer.

*Noah Grissett enjoys bandanas, bananas, and wandering savannahs. He can often be seen strolling around in rolled-up pants, suspenders, and possibly a red hardhat . . . "I've thought about it a great a deal."*

# CHRISTIAN WIMAN: POET AND CHRISTIAN

RACHEL WERNER

Christian Wiman's poetry collection, *Hard Night*, should not need much selling, particularly here at Grove City College. As the editor of *Poetry Magazine* since 2003, Wiman has already earned the respect and attention of the literary community. A protégée of poet Richard Wilbur, Wiman maintains a high standard of artful poetic craftsmanship in his own writing. Particularly when combined with these traits, Wiman's Christian faith makes him a poet worthy of thoughtful consideration. After reading *Hard Night*, I read Wiman's essay, "Notes on Poetry and Religion" (found in the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Vol. 35, No.1. Available online). His thoughts on the relationship between faith and words are fascinating and provoking.

The subject of Wiman's poems varies from childhood memories, to the histories of Herodotus, to an elderly couple at home during a snow storm. All of his poems draw the reader into their world. The monolith of this collection is the twenty-two-part free-verse poem, "Being Serious." The poem takes up a third of the book, and presents the life of Serious from birth to death. As his name suggests, Serious finds no comfort in the pleasures and distractions of the world, but from infancy to old age searches for meaning and reality. Even on his first day of kindergarten (part 4), all Serious sees is meaninglessness:

It's hard to understand  
Why they keep taking a break  
From taking breaks . . .  
Or what, finally, is at stake  
In a game of kickball.

With the character of Serious, Wiman has created a universal human story. He presents everyday, mundane things such as paying bills, reading a newspaper, and going to the gym and considers them "Seriously." Serious

questions the meaning of everything he experiences, from marriage to the internet; "All this wilderness of sites and useless links . . . so far from where you started, / with no way back. And what does it all mean? / Serious hits the button, and it all goes black" (part 14). In the last section of the poem, having lived a life of futile searching for answers to his questions, Serious questions God and finally finds his answer.

Wiman's attention to detail (prominent throughout his poetry) causes the reader to immediately engage and identify with Serious and his life story. Serious's thoughts and responses, while profound and thought-

*Hard Night*  
Christian Wiman,  
Copper Canyon Press, 2005

provoking, are often full of character and humor. The language and form of "Being Serious" is smooth and lyrical, yet very accessible and direct. Throughout the twenty-two sections, Wiman explores a wide variety of verse forms and rhyme schemes, yet the tone and character of "Being Serious" is strong and consistent. Unsurprisingly, "Serious" conveys strong emotion with very little sentimentality.

Wiman's poems show the meaning found in real life, as in the poem, "Darkness Starts." Here Wiman plays with the dual meaning of "darkness" as both physical lack of light and spiritual depravity. His word choice is concise and direct. The images easily come to mind, yet always with a fresh perspective: "A shadow in the shape of a house/ slides out of a house / and loses its shape on the lawn" ("Darkness Starts"). Wiman's unsentimental yet carefully crafted lines are delightful to read and draw the reader into the story of the poem. But as my favorite childhood book reviewer, LeVar Burton, always said, "you don't have to take my word for it." Literary critic and poet Clive James says of Christian Wiman's poems, "I find [them] insistent on being read aloud, in the way that so much from America is determined not to be. His rhymes and line-turnovers are

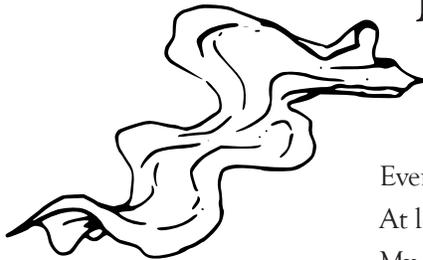


all carefully placed to intensify the speech rhythms, making everything dramatic: not shoutingly so, but with a steady voice that tells an ideal story every time” (www.clivejames.com/poetry/wiman). Wiman’s care in his writing draws out the power of his words, rather than overwhelming the reader with rhymes and patterns.

The appeal of Wiman’s poetry is the combination of accessible and artful writing with an intense depth of story and meaning. In Wiman’s worlds, even the most frivolous events such as a phone ringing have intrigue and purpose. While his poems are not obviously “Christian,” narratives

such as “Being Serious” give the reader a strong sense of ultimate redemption. Many Christian writers in all fields may be tempted to value the Christian message of their work above the form and craft of their words. Christian Wiman sets an excellent example as a Christian poet who communicates his view of the world through potent and excellently crafted poems. 

*Rachel Werner is a junior English major who discovered elderberry jelly over the summer, and is now living the Redwall fantasy of her 10-year-old dreams.*



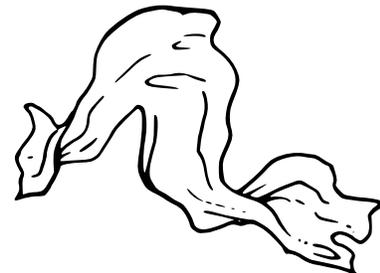
## PROTANOMALY

SAM PERRY

Everything’s so green  
At least, that’s what it looks to me  
My eyes must need to see  
these things so despondently.

The purples and the blues  
become interchanging hues  
It seems nothing that I knew was ever  
what it seemed to be.

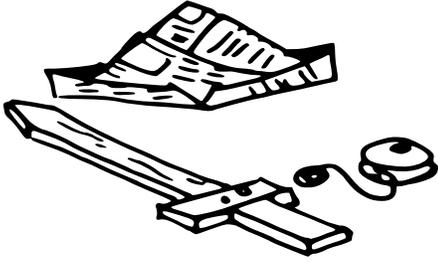
I need that red, it bridges  
Gaps and filters my incorrect lens  
Justifies the present tense  
I need red more vast than sea.



*Sam Perry is a senior communication studies major who realized he was color blind when he had increasing concern in the fall of last year because the trees were covered in green moss. Then he found out he just couldn’t see brown.*

# BOYS OF SUMMER

SAM LEUENBERGER



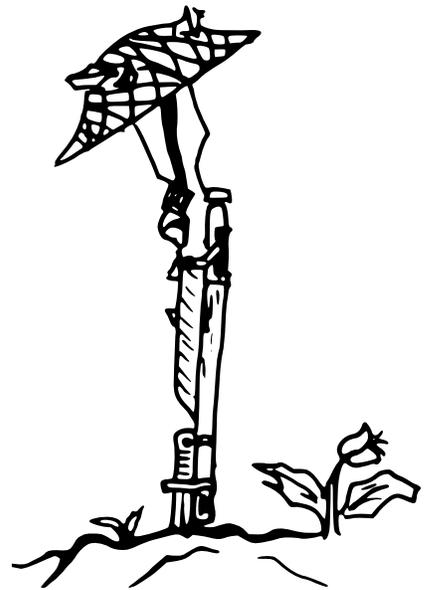
Thick though summer spreads it,  
Her boys will find it sweet –  
Churning all the buttered years  
Beneath their muddy feet.

Home as the brave  
In the days of the free,  
Boys sneer at fear  
For searing flashes  
That slash the sky  
With white-hot heat.

By night, boys mock weak dreams  
That drink from draughts of sleep.  
Carelessly, they drape their sheets  
From tops of trees that line the streets;  
For though spurting shadows warn them –  
Summer's sons will not sleep –  
Poking holes into tomorrow,  
A memory youth cannot complete.

But boys' laughs wither to wails  
For dream boats with sunburnt sails.  
In the sagging summer hours  
Teeth gnash and butter sours;  
Straining eyes flicker,  
No sun's poison quicker  
Than the sweet vices  
That clot the coming years.

And boiling blood mixes with mud  
To burst their bloated dreams.



*If Sam Leuenberger were really good at golf, he might let you be his caddy. Maybe.*

# CONUNDRUMS

I. Sarah has an old digital calculator, which uses up to seven electronic bars to form each digit. She adds two four-digit numbers, carefully checking the screen to make sure she entered them correctly. Only after hitting the equals button does she see that two bars are fading in the ones place, two are fading in the tens place, three are fading in the hundreds place, and three are fading in the thousands place. Out of curiosity, she punches in “8888” and finds an additional bar fading in the hundreds place and two fading in the thousands place, none of which she had seen in the addends or in the sum. What two numbers could she have added initially?

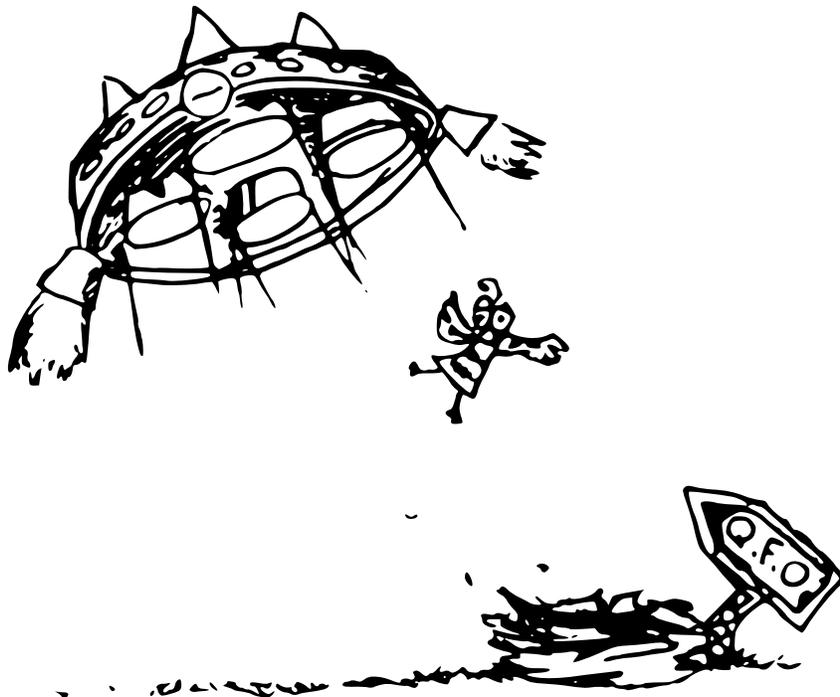
(Note: Her calculator uses only three bars to form the number 7.)

II. Find the next numeral in this sequence:

6 7 1 9 4 5...

If you'd like to submit an answer, please email our conundrumer, Doug Smith, at [smithdp1@gcc.edu](mailto:smithdp1@gcc.edu). There will be a \$15 prize for the first correct answer to Conundrum I, and a \$5 prize for the first correct explanation to II.

*Congratulations to Andy Falcone for solving the first conundrum from the last issue. The maximum length is  $3 * 4 * 5 * 7 * 11 = 4620$ . For more information, see Landau's function. Each word in the second conundrum can be used in two opposite ways (for instance, "bound in chains" vs. "bound for New York").*



Mid-summer showers dust  
on young and old alike.  
They hear the bloom, the leaves  
to frame their sky-starched minds  
In making early singers, begin  
only through their solid veins  
do trees scratch the backs of stars  
Mid-summer showers dust  
crops, diminished motors  
sound in the distance. Reaching  
too high too soon too poorly  
only leaves one rootless in the dust  
The spinning world on Atlas' back  
Knows not its brutal end,  
Whose tremblings rock to wreckage  
To nether depths descend.  
But secrets stir and lies deny the

stand, guiding the serpent.  
Verdant carnage. Inevitably, all  
Those that stand firmly only buy  
Scant seconds and scorn from the  
One thick young sapling is sawed  
The whip slowly sinking deep  
Wet green guts and dew slide out;  
The body is blown away, the legs  
They were all there for the killing  
Summer day, sun pouring out  
I wield a weed whacker against  
That dare stand before me in bloom  
A white and orange Stihl, thin as a  
With a cute block engine in the back  
And a little black ribbon in front,

it's horrible. The spinning seems to  
Each time I rev the motor for more  
shrubs and stalks are torn to wet bits,  
Split back debris and hunks of hunks  
Blown into the wind, stripped sixty ha  
All to be cleaved down again.  
The engine provides a hot ambience  
While the mouth continues to cackle  
What does this sound like to some  
The dead metal grate, even at my scale.  
any plant it look like from down  
A man in some giant, wicked  
Toppling kingdoms as a breath  
A world indeed, whose p'd try  
Careens towards Sodom's lot  
And beckons to a sickly trance  
The life called home to rot.  
We speak of things observed, but

Look once, above the lowered  
As night dispels the day,  
For second life comes sheer and  
Past those who stare  
"The lighted world comes as dawn  
seeking

# the ECHO

once it starts moving,  
thing:  
bellant waiting fittest and woo without,  
histidings bear:  
pack of grass?  
of light so fair.  
Great trains collide and conflagra

## YEARLY LITERARY MAGAZINE

With lightning bright  
See worlds turned 'round in two,  
For gleaming like Ramandu's kin  
Constellations fly  
The heavens bow low to flood the  
and accepting YOUR SUBMISSIONS during the MONTHS of  
NOVEMBER & FEBRUARY  
& HOSTING a NUMBER of INTRIGUING EVENTS.  
LOOK for our FLYERS throughout the ACADEMIC YEAR.

for further information, contact Faith Thompson at

[THOMPSONFJI@GCC.EDU](mailto:THOMPSONFJI@GCC.EDU)

Eva always drinks tea  
lumps of sugar, dash of cream.  
For a while she sat in the kitchen  
muttering. But now the kitchen  
Not that it's quiet, though  
Spitting out reassurances.  
brows together as  
at me. Hateful, I call it. Like your  
of my skirts as I grow, but never the waist.

for further information, contact Faith Thompson at  
THOMPSONFJI@GCC.EDU  
hungrier. Next something starts  
That's annoying but not as annoying as Eva. Stupid Eva put duct tape and  
wooden boards all over the windows, so that my afternoon patch of sunlight is  
gone! I can't even look outside to watch the little birds and squirrels. I don't  
understand why Eva would start treating me this way. I hope she doesn't plan  
to make a habit of it.  
Eva emerges from her room with her shotgun in her hands. Let's see what they  
think of this.  
YELLOW, I say, leaping at her ankles.

He is an unsuccessful Cain every  
Jack Daniels on the tv rocks to  
Slender am I for a bruising  
I can not Abel!  
Eva's neighbors have stormed  
Eva's neighbors have stormed  
Eva's neighbors have stormed

Encouraged by their response, I bound out  
yowling my frustration. The water in the liquid  
wall shakes. I am bold and dangerous, hungry but undefeated. I fill my lungs for a really good yell, and  
the whole side of the house comes crashing down.  
A mass of people more people than I can count flood the room, lurching and stumbling over one another.  
They don't look like humans I've seen before. I jump from the bookshelf to the back of the grand piano,  
eyeing them in puzzlement. They aren't the right color. They don't have the right smell. They're even  
clumsier than stupid Eva, who can barely walk up a simple set of stairs. They wander as though dazed;  
their arms sway like tree branches with the movement of their bodies. Their eyes stare and bulge;  
their mouths gape.

# THE QUAD | AUTUMN 2010



Volume 3 ♦ Issue 3

THE QUAD  
c/o Hannah Schlaudt  
GCC #1303  
200 Campus Drive  
Grove City, PA 16127

