



The
Tau

*Literary Magazine of
Lourdes College*

2008





About the Tau

In its earliest years, Lourdes College was dedicated to teaching young women who were to become the Sisters of Saint Francis. These talented and creative women loved nature and the world around them and often expressed themselves through poetry and prose. Their beautiful works were collected and printed in a volume that eventually became known as *The Tau*.

Today, the Language & Literature Department faculty continues to encourage the creative efforts of Lourdes College faculty, staff and students. The only major difference is that the department has adapted *The Tau* to an up-to-date online version; nevertheless, it continues to be the same positive outcome of a very talented campus community. Congratulations to all who are currently published!

Associate Professor Barbara J. Masten
Chairperson, Language & Literature Department
Lourdes College

About the Name

Origin of a Tau as a Franciscan Symbol

On November 11, 1215, Pope Innocent III assembled, from Europe and the Near East, members of the opening session of the Lateran Council at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. Historians agree that St. Francis of Assisi was very likely to have been there. The purpose of this gathering was to inspire reform in the Church and improve the quality of Christian living. In his opening words, the Pope quoted from the Prophet Ezekiel who, in his day, was directed by God to warn the people of Jerusalem about impending punishment for their sins. Only those were to be saved whose foreheads were marked with the Tau, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Pope Innocent proclaimed the letter as the emblem to reform in the Church of the twelfth century. For Francis, it became the symbol of his mission to preach the gospel. He used it as a signature, painted it on his door, and placed it on his writings. Today it has a special meaning for thousands of Franciscan men and women.

Credits

Nancy Brown, *Editor*

Carla Leow, *Designer*

**Members of the
Language and
Literature
Faculty, *Judges***

**Members of Literati,
*Judges***



Table of Contents

<i>The Ox</i>	4
- Taralyn Armstrong	
<i>Reflections in One Boy's Eyes</i>	6
- Benjamin D. Brockway	
<i>Childhood Adventures</i>	8
- Amy Gilles	
<i>The Gathering</i>	9
- Amy Gilles	
<i>Movin' On</i>	10
- Fran Hendren, staff	
<i>Lampposts</i>	11
- Angela Jankowski	
<i>Mirror</i>	12
- Angela Jankowski	
<i>Portraits of a Mother</i>	13
- Angela Jankowski	
<i>[fresh compacted sand after a rain]</i>	14
- Angela Jankowski	
<i>[my mother told me never]</i>	15
- Angela Jankowski	
<i>The True You</i>	16
- Katalyn R. Lemle	
<i>Confusion</i>	17
- Jeanie Lisk-High	
<i>Leaves</i>	18
- Jeanie Lisk-High	
<i>A Raccoon at the Road's Side</i>	19
- Amanda May	
<i>Aurora</i>	20
- Amanda May	
<i>Living Road</i>	21
- Amanda May	
<i>Practicality</i>	22
- Amanda May	
<i>Jenny</i>	23
- Linda Newlove	
<i>A Fun Time</i>	24
- Lisa Syroka	
<i>Winter Colors</i>	25
- Beth VanRheenen, faculty	
<i>The Horses Were Running</i>	26
- Stacey Webb	

The Ox

The devil in the ox came lumbering through the streets, wandering while the villagers stared. He moved slowly from one location to the next not really looking but searching for a place to rest. He was so very near the end of his life, but there was a bigger purpose to his meandering. All the while he's moving about, thoughts are in his head about what it meant for him to be here so long, and the fact that he would be returning again, and again, and again, and again, and again until finally his wandering would end and then this back and forth motion would end and his searching would end and everything would end altogether. There's that echo to consider; the villagers can't hear it but they can see it on his face. He can hear it inside his head and every time he wanders, that is exactly what he hears and every time it ends it starts again. But it will never end, and eternity is a long time to die and live again.

The village itself was a wasteland, poor and dirty. The villagers had dirty hands and faces because their streets weren't streets at all but dirt roads. What looked like pollution was actually a piece of every life that everyone lived everyday. Humidity hung in the air and swallowed the ox whole on his walk. The rack on his head was caked with mud, but the weight on it was the echo that never left; that filled him with guilt and doubt and fear and strength and prayer and thought. The villagers knew who he was and why he was there, but

anything they wanted to say was already a jumbled mess of piety that he had heard over and over again for so many thousands years. He thought he might be closer to reaching the end of his servitude, but as soon as it stopped he would have to start over because that's the way it had always been and that's the way it would always be. He made a mistake, that's all. Just that one mistake and he's been paying for that one mistake for centuries, and he doesn't have a choice because that is his punishment.

His face was long and his skin was loose on his body, but vanity had left him so many years before. His nose was wide and even though he could smell the dirty water and the dirty roads and the dirty people, the only thing he could taste was his own stench. He carried it like a flag with every single step forward, and it crackled in the air and it tasted like death. He was so close to finding a comfortable place to rest, but he couldn't find it yet. His feet ached from carrying thousands of years of remorse, but it was only one mistake! His anxiety subsided every time he thought he had found that one place where it would be over for just a moment. But it rose up again when he knew he had to keep looking for that one place to sit and wait. He just wanted to sit and rest and think

about sitting and resting. He wanted to get away from the flies buzzing around his body waiting for him to sit and rest. His legs wanted to stop and sit and rest. But he wasn't there yet, and he didn't know when he would find that comfortable place to sit and rest and wait.

The villagers followed him as he wandered, but they kept a fair distance because they didn't know what he could do. They didn't



what he would do. Even though he was old and decrepit and heavy, there might still be some force inside him. They lined the roads and the fences and the buildings while he lumbered by, and they didn't look him in the face because they were afraid. They watched and he walked and they stared and he slouched. His head was heavy and he didn't have the strength to look up, but he knew the sky was there and he knew the sky could see him wasting away just trying to get there. He didn't want this, but he didn't have a choice so he just

(continued on page 5)

The Ox

let it happen as it always did and as it always would. He was going to die.

Again. And once in a while, like that time, there were witnesses who didn't really know what to make of the scene at all, so they just soaked it in and remembered every detail even though they weren't doing it on purpose. It shouldn't be easy to forget a miracle, but they will.

And finally, there he was. He moved past the dirty fence that held back the villagers, and his head fell closer to the ground. They watched through the holes in the wooden planks while he made his way to the dirty water. It was shallow water, and it was cool despite the heat. His feet stood in the water and he tried to walk, but his legs had had enough, and he stumbled over himself and fell on his left side. His face was wet and he shifted his head so he could breathe what little bit of air he would need until he would go. He looked thinner and his bones were poking through his hide, and there was no shame in the staring villagers. His body was finally dying and he was relieved to not carry this skin anymore. No matter how long it would take, he could sit and rest and wait it out like he had done so many times before.

While he waited in the water, a heifer came walking with purpose looking here and there until she found him. She felt a responsibility to be there because one ending

means another beginning somewhere else. He was quiet and didn't know she was there at all. She heard her voice in her head but wouldn't open her mouth because opening her mouth wouldn't affect anything at all. She touched him and he shifted, but he didn't raise his head and he didn't make a noise. She bent her front legs and was curled into the dirty water behind him then settled into the curve of his bones. He tried to see and his strength was all but gone, so he could only imagine how she looked – soft, heavy, complete, and there at all. He was thankful to know she was there and she was thankful she made it there in time. Until that moment she was just a heifer with no purpose other than the natural purpose of heifers everywhere. She worked, she lived, she breathed, she slept, and every day was the same from start to finish. Until that one day when she knew he was there and she went to look, and she found him all but dead in dirty water. She was afraid because she knew who he was, but she pushed her fears aside and she touched him while he was lying there.

The quiet hung heavy in the air and it was so thick that nobody breathed. Nobody made a sound. Nobody moved. He made it there and he didn't put up a fight. He didn't want to put up a fight anymore, so he said his prayers and he opened his eyes and he looked at the sky and he remembered the first time and he tasted the

water and he felt the heifer and he remembered it all and then he let it all go and then he was gone. The sky doesn't move and eternity happens while everyone breathes underneath it.

The noise came back and the breathing started and the wind was moving and the water rippled and the villagers walked and lived and carried on without any permission. The guilt was gone, the weight was gone, the wait was over, the hurry was past, the righteous was gone, and the miracle was over. There was movement and there was life and there were goings on and the heifer just sat and waited. The good, the bad, the right, and the wrong were all together in one place, and while they could still taste the end in the air, it tasted familiar. They rolled it around in their mouths, it sat on their tongues when they spoke, and they breathed in its vapors when they moved. Everything would be the same and everything would still be dirty and the water would still be shallow and soon enough everyone would forget what they thought they saw, and it would happen again in some other place, at some other time, and somebody else would witness a memory.

~ *Taralyn Armstrong*

Reflections in One Boy's Eyes

Chief spoke in a calm and collected tone. He reminded us again about the area we were responsible for. My heart was pounding out of my chest as I heard the helicopter thunder to a start. The feel of my cold rifle reminded me of the cold steel lying in its full magazine. The thoughts of what might happen gripped and tore my insides out. The hanger doors opened, and as I hurried to the helicopter, the Caribbean heat blasted my face. I looked out over the dark ocean. It reminded me of the wickedness I was about to enter. The next five minutes lasted for an eternity. I stared into the eyes and faces of my team. Some men looked scared. Some looked nervous, but all were telling a story. Everyone was reaching for sunglasses as the sun shattered the night; I finally saw Haiti in all its destruction for the first time. I kept reassuring myself “simple mission; easy day.” Then like a screaming bell, chief yelled out, “ONE MINUTE; ONE MINUTE”; the roar of the helicopter died in my ears. I focused; it’s go time. Then chief’s face dropped. His level of calm had vanished into a strict and disciplined demeanor. He barked out, “THIRTY SECONDS! WE GOT A HOT LZ!” My heart sank in terror. No more easy day, no more simple mission. Our landing zone had 300 rioting Haitians.

As we eased to the earth, the dust blew like a hurricane. The smell of dead animals, human feces, rotten food, and overall death flooded my nose. I moved with precision to my post. I could feel the wind from the helicopter against my back

propelling me forward. My radio cried out with commands from every one. “MOVE! MOVE! CLEAR THAT DITCH!” I looked at my partner; he nodded with enthusiasm. As we approached the ditch, I realized what we were clearing. It was sewage and fresh water running through the city, and it was one in the same. As we slid down the side of the ditch, the stench of feces grew stronger. Upon completion of checking the ditch, we were reborn into a whole new bee’s nest of problems. Our supplies and reinforcements were delayed. Thirty men against three hundred. Fear and a



sense of overwhelming anxiety filled us all. All we could do was hold tight and hope they did not revolt against us. I took the corner with most people by it. Why, I don’t know. I felt as if I would see something or smell something better than what I was experiencing. As if there was a mirage in that corner, I sprinted to

it. After gripping air into my lungs, I regained my composure. The rush had finally died. I was calm. I looked into the faces of the crowd. My training took over. Watch their eyes; watch their hands, that would tell me what their intentions are. Are there intentions to accept us and our help, or cast us aside like they did the dead animals piled by the ditch?

The eyes of the crowd were mixed. Some had looks of curiosity, others of fear. The leading drug cartel was a block away. You could tell who they were by the clean, well kept look they had, their hands shaking nervously against their guns. The cartel cried out to the crowd in French. Our translator

(continued on page 7)

Reflections in One Boy's Eyes

told us they are trying to coax the crowd into believing we were there to harm them. Why are people afraid of change? Why do they fear new ideas? These unsettling questions pondered me as I watched the cold eyes of the crowd. Then out of this herd of people a small stark naked boy eased towards me. His eyes showed fear with a glimmer of hope. I wondered what this child saw in me. Did he see my gun, my uniform, my food? Was he in awe at my stature, my look of ice, or my look of not caring? I had to know. I had to understand. As he cautiously walked towards me he spoke in a voice of an angel, "HHHI...Are you here to, to, to, help my family?" I could not believe he knew English.

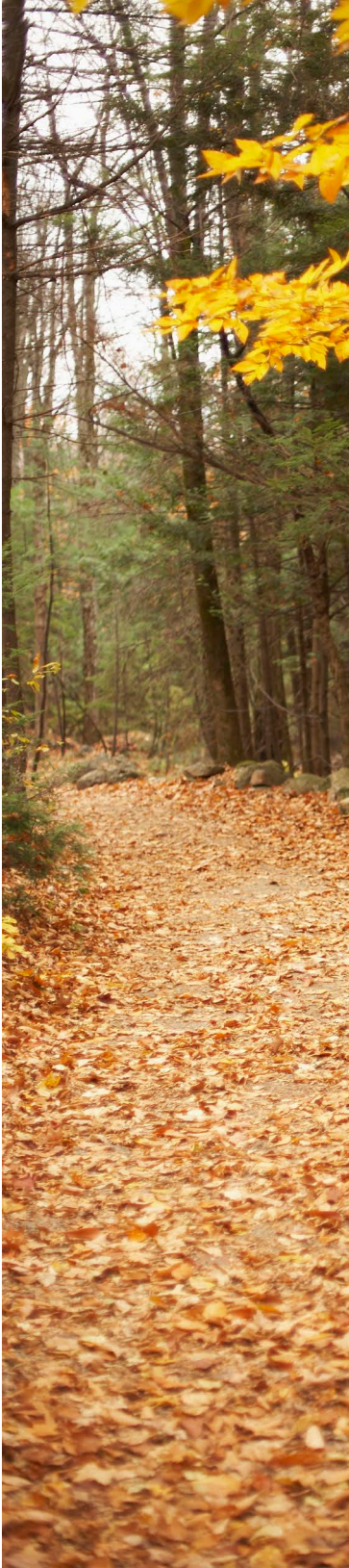
I hesitated but eased my sunglasses off my glistening face and knelt down in the soft dirt. His feet were small but had miles and miles of experience under them already. I told the boy, "Yes, we are here to help. We brought fresh water and food." He smiled but could not stop starring at my rifle. The once cold steel was now hot to the touch. The idea of the death and destruction he saw in this rifle blistered in my mind. All this boy knew was that guns are a sign of power and infinite control. He asked why I carried a gun in his back

yard. I told him that it is to stop the bad people. He asked another question. A typical kid, always wanting to know why. I guess kids are the same everywhere. His question was, "You won't hurt my dad?" I said no. I answered with no hesitation, only praying his dad was not part of the cartel we came to disarm.

That boy's eyes will always be a part of me. Not his questions, not his look, but his eyes. They told his story before he spoke. The struggle of each human in this world can be portrayed with a single look. The boy had been through so much. Two horrendous hurricanes wiped out his home and school. He watched his friends and family die a painful death of starvation. He watched his father forced into a life of drugs and corruption to feed him. The look of one small, naked, poor, pained, hungered boy describes struggles of so many. Do I give off a look like this when I walk down the street? Do you give off a look when you walk down the street? Or do you avoid eye contact and hide behind your sunglasses?

- Benjamin D. Brockway

Childhood Adventures



In the warmth of the South
When I was only nine,
Mom filled bright backpacks
With cold Kool-Aid and peanut butter
For Paula and me.

Ritual brought us every time,
When exploring the lands surrounding my home,
First to the barn,
To touch the lucky horseshoe,
Then off to the pond,
To skip stones and snap willows.

Small feet led us deeper
Into the woods
To my tree house high in a Pine.

But that day we itched
For something good to do,
So we climbed down from lunch
And wandered farther out.

She saw something
Scared her stiff

I caught up,
We both looked down
Down at brown and red pine needles
Packed solid in a mound.

It laid four inches about the ground,
This pile of pine needles,

IN MUMMY FORM!

It lay there still, we waited
For it to move.

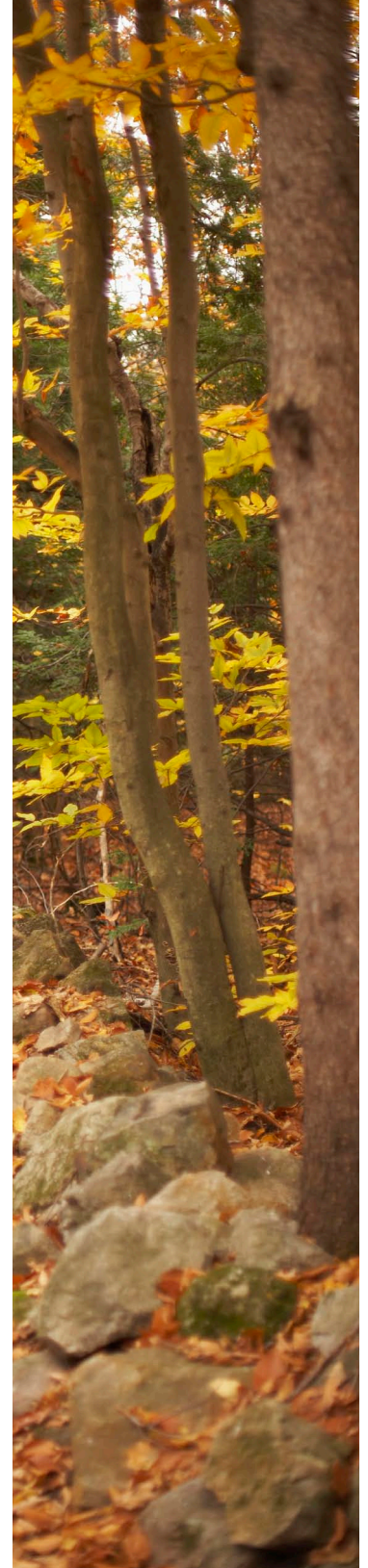
Tiny holes blended in the cover
As we stared, frozen still

But nothing emerged,
Just dead earth and wonder

Knowing we shouldn't touch it
We ran
Ran fast
Panting and screaming
And KNEW

Leave nature alone.

~ Amy Gilles



The Gathering

The summer darkness filled the air,
As odd weeds and strange flowers
Stood tall in the night wind.

Forgotten lives and new beginnings
Wandered through me
As I walked the unfamiliar path.

Bright-leaved plan
Tall trees
Carved Words
Whispered a song of long forgotten years.

I felt a sense of belonging
As I stood among their souls
With flowers in my hair.

The path split four ways
Where circles of blossoms
Guarded immense stones.

I saw a scene
A metropolis
Of tales
Adventures
That beckoned that growing wind

And I listened to the voices
Of those who had died
On the Titanic
Or in a war.

~ Amy Gilles

Movin' On

The house is sold
A new family will reside

It's only a house...
but her memories remain inside.

She's going through albums, files, boxes of "things"
Thinking about the history of that house as
she hears the telephone ring.

Friends are coming to help her pack;
No one understands the tears.
In this, the transient world of ours
it's been home for so many years.

She'll miss the memory of "things" ...

Gardening in the back yard with her son in tow;
fresh-baked cookies shared over the back fence;
the magnolia tree they said she couldn't grow!

The nuances, successes and failures of her family;
the sharing with her friends.
The powerful memories she'll keep close to her heart
She can never go back.

It's time to move on, she knows that's true.
How ever will she make it?
It's been the same for ever so long.

~ Fran Hendren

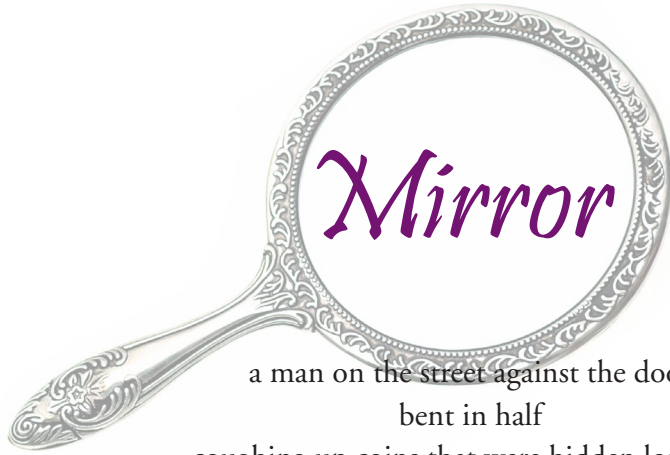




Lampposts

Some nights before falling asleep
in the blanket
streetlight amber glow on the night wall
she speaks out loud
I love you
to no response
does she speak it to God
or perhaps herself or the ghost next to her side
unbeknownst
feet together hair spread across the
white pillow like lemon frosting
only hearing one breath
sweetly constant
blood cells are the only ones working
in the night
except for the girls on the corner
under the amber light
she whispers I love you
do they hear?

~ *Angela Jankowski*



a man on the street against the door
bent in half
coughing up coins that were hidden long ago
from taxes and thieves with bloody hands
blistered from dragging across concrete
overwhelmed with starvation
three dollars and eighty two cents comes out
slimy and assorted
faces worn away from years of bile
suits and suitors walk past
and gentlemanly thoughts
go not to wallets
but up to their lofts instead
while wives are ignored
so they sit in cafes
conversing about the importance
of stockings and sewing their seams
and the mistresses are above their heads stealing their beds
not caring if his ring is on or off
on or off
on or off
on or off
faces worn away from years of apathy
she looks out eight floors above
everything looks perfect from here
unpainted lips
no one needs her now
time is a perpetual jar she attempts to fill
does she talk to you just to exhaust the hours
does she visit just to prove that she is more sociable than her father
a found remnant from the future left behind at the bottom of a water glass
she dives to retrieve but receives a different kind of prize
faces worn away from years of darkness

- *Angela Jankowski*

Portraits of a Mother



Portrait in a wall a stained glass window
blue is what she's wearing
the color of blood the instant before
the vein is broken
thick blue like blood
before the oxygen suffocates out the red
lead runs through her
it runs through you
engrained
she never leaves
trapped and exposed
but doesn't save from so high above your seat
veiled in a bridal lace
showcased inside by the sun of day
by candlelight at night
helplessly looking out into the darkness
over town
pale face of glass that cries with rain
pale face of glass that breaks with rocks

There are 40,000 others around the world
Life-sized but not life like
hair too blonde for a Nazarene
skin too fair for the desert sun
Life-sized but lacking life
the customary halo, aura, divine light
absent
but the heads of babies framed by wings
at her feet in a yellowed concrete cloud
eyes looking up to the ceiling
pleadings filled with piety
pulling at her cloak above her left breast
revealing a sorrowful heart
a bleeding heart
a stone heart

Our little mother
dangles round my neck
frozen in a blue transparent plastic
standing forever still
solidified majestic glory
tranquilized pedestal of grace
in the midst of nightfall
does she sleep when I do
or is she eternally watchful
my little mother
hangs around my neck
careful not to blink

~ Angela Jankowski

[fresh compacted sand after a rain]

fresh compacted sand after a rain
feet break the crust's surface into the soft
softest softest
beauty the lake brings the dead to shore
from the floor
the crescent's light attracting all attention
moths following it from each direction
flittering sage specs in the night
(but reaching the moon is a most impossible feat for these wings)
so one tires
which results in the quickness of falling
suddenly ending in a small splash
into a large bowl

morning walks
I will find the tired and drowned on the shoreline
dozens every step
some poor still conscious
struggling to use their wet wings
but efforts are defeated each time the
rolling waves come for them again
grounded
deserted
defeated

- *Angela Jankowski*

[my mother told me never]

my mother told me never
to dye my hair orange again
because people would die for my blonde hair
but I dreamt about orange creamsicles
the ice cream man still comes around our neighborhood
cause he knows our money is
good
but that's how the children develop into criminals
stealing a quarter to get a pop never turned to murder
though
but not on this street
someone would kill for that blonde



- Angela Jankowski



The True You

At first glance you seem so confident in every stride you take
And hold your head high in the public's eye

But you can't fool me
I know the turbulent emotions you feel underneath that shield of calm.

To the public, you seem to be perfect in every way
But, I know that under that confident façade
There is a longing to belong as you are.

So remember always, as you put on a show for the public's eye,
That I know the true you inside.

~ Katalyn R. Lemle

Confusion

It fills my mind with taunts of hatred, tormenting me –
Every word it throws pounds against the walls of my mind
Shattering all hope, leaving destruction in its wake.
Demonic yellow eyes scream with silent judgment,
This has become my life.
Sharp daggers shred my thoughts,
Littering my mind with confetti of self doubt.
Nothing is clear to me anymore, my sense of being disappeared,
As yellow eyes possess blue, and hatred spews from my mouth.
Nothing is left except a shell of venom and uncertainty.
My mission is to destroy, ravish and rape
For hatred breeds hatred –
And confusion is all I have left.

~ Jeanie Lisk-High



Leaves

As the wind blows through the forest,
The leaves whisper untold stories to all that listen.
They tell a tale of a young woman's fear,
So strong you could taste it,
Of the sound of striking fists that flutter around them.
Of a struggle for freedom, of a struggle for life.
They tell the tale of blood soaked ground,
And the smell that still lingers.
Of a body once young and beautiful
Broken_ bound_ breathless,
No longer living.
The leaves will tell you the story of past ghosts –
That haunt the lands we are in.
But who listen to leaves,
Who even tries to comprehend?

- Jeanie Lisk-High

A Raccoon at the Road's Side



You went to meet Miss Fortune in the night
While traversing a two lane asphalt stream.
Your reason maimed by two twin spears of light,
Escape was nothing but a deceased dream.
The monstrous wheels callously crushed your skull.
All in a heap, your organs lay outside
Their flat abode. The stars witnessed your fall,
And they alone wept at your final cry.
What's left of you now stews beneath the sun
Amidst a sea of gravel and smashed glass.
Flies flock to your remains to have their fun,
Summoned by an odor none can surpass.
Death's putrid declaration makes it known
That soon, new flies shall rise up from your bones.

~ Amanda May

Aurora

I do believe that I prefer
The eyes of night to those of day.
Better to be seen by countless
Company than by a single
Oppressor.

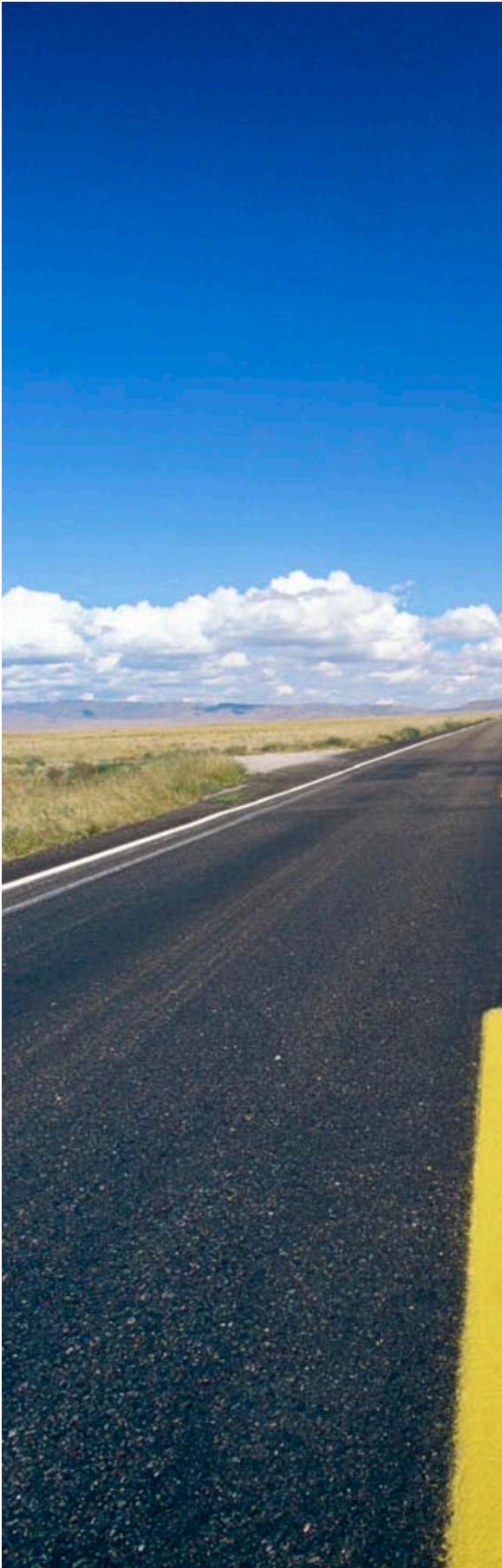
And as they gaze at me through webs
Of spiders that began as seeds,
I realize that I too am just
One of countless entities driven
By desire.

If I could only convey one request
To them though that will never come
To pass; they are just burning balls
Of gas who cast deceiving glances
Long since passed.

Furthermore, why ask such distant
Vapors when their cousins linger
Near? But oh, if they could grant one
Wish of mine, I'd wish to see a
Serpentine specter slither 'cross
The night sky

Just once before they put me in
The ground.

- Amanda May



Living Road

I was on my way
To class today
In a little teal Neon
On the verge of expiring,
Cruising hastily along the asphalt.
The morning sun dueled the
Gray clouds,
Which dispersed white feathery flakes
In countless number.

I was on my way
To live, to
Cultivate whatever future
This liberal arts degree will
Produce
When I suddenly spotted,
In the other lane,
Ambling in the opposite direction,
A small line of cars.

Flying
Orange flags.

I was living, still living,
And on my way to live some more,
To be buried beneath newly upturned information.
I would still be breathing
When class was over,
But for a moment,
I solemnly shared my
Living Road
With

The Dead.

~ *Amanda May*

Practicality

~ Amanda May

One evening during a rare and invaluable dinner discourse, the subject of art came up, mainly due to my insistence that my mother lacked culture insofar as she tends to forego educational television viewing and fine literature in favor of reality TV and the daily newspaper. Though I meant no insult in classifying her as such (and she thankfully took no offense to it), my father, who thought the label was intended for him, immediately proceeded to define art in terms of practicality. Being an English major, I spend a lot of time interpreting words, and such is the interpretation I attained from his: "Practicality, to me, means that the arts are there and have no bearing whatsoever on my existence." Of all the errors he made in his definition, one of his greatest rested in the words "To me." Saying what that word meant to him meant deviating from the standard definition of practicality and signified that the definition was personal, that it existed only in his mind, though from the way he said it, he had lucid intensions of applying it to all of mankind. Then, as if to add insult to injury, he said, "Shakespeare's plays didn't mean anything... they didn't put a roof over anyone's head."

"Yeah, they did," I hastily interjected. "The Globe Theatre." I didn't bother expounding the various meanings derived from Shakespeare, as from his definition, I knew he would have no appreciation for such things. "No, they didn't," he argued.

"All right, they didn't, but the actors made money to put food on the table for their families."

"Well, they made money." Of course, that implied they did indeed earn a few pounds, but it was nowhere near enough to feed a family. Frustrated to no end, I spent the following hour and

a half torn between writing an essay and ruminating over his words. He may not have realized it, but his words implicitly disapproved of the very thing I chose to immerse myself in upon coming to Lourdes College. He condemned my choice (he has never let me live it down that, despite my high marks in calculus, I chose to pursue literature over mathematics), insulted the very foundations on which I built my life, sullied the very art which, in my leisure time, serves as a splendid catharsis... in simple terms, he told me that my life was completely and utterly meaningless.

It should come as no surprise that I was angry and confused, and that I felt even more isolated from my family than ever before. Ever since beginning my academic pursuits at Lourdes, the language barrier between my parents and me has grown to the point that we hardly understand each other anymore. His definition of practicality did nothing to smooth tensions between us or to bridge the river that differentiates us. Instead, it seemed to make the river run faster and erode the very banks on which we stood, putting more and more distance between them. Yet it was by my choice that those banks came into existence in the first place, and even now, in the midst of that frustration, I knew I could never recant my decision because of my love affair with literature, which seemed to ground me even when I reached a temperamental state. Perhaps that is why, even now, I refuse to accept his definition of art as "impractical."

When I really sat down and thought about it, I first began wondering what art was. Then, I realized it didn't matter what art was, since people have ruminated for centuries about what exactly it is, and that whatever art was, it certainly existed very prevalently in the world: in print, in paint, in clay, in metal, in wood, in speeches, in songs... the list of forms could likely fill pages and pages by themselves. Art can

manifest itself in any way the creative mind sees fit insofar as other people can utilize or enjoy it. Furthermore, I realized whatever it was, I concerned myself with three branches of art: the existing written literature, the art of writing literature, and finally, the art of interpretation. After all, every piece of writing, whether poetry, prose, or a blend of both, can be interpreted in countless manners depending on the reader and his or her focus. I knew others who involve themselves with other branches of art, whether as a hobby or as an academic pursuit.

Then I made a decision: if living a life without art meant being practical, then I had no desire to be practical. It is an integral part of my existence in the very nature of being a literature major. In fact, when I stopped to consider the matter further, I came to the conclusion that the only impractical aspect of art is trying to live without it. One look around the Lourdes campus verified the very absurdity of segregating oneself from art completely. I considered its three main forms: written, visual art, and audible art, and how they applied to my father's life. I knew for a fact that he reads magazines periodically, which contain photographs, a branch of the visual category, and articles written by people that required said authors to arrange the words in an aesthetically pleasing manner appropriate for their purposes. And television, whether documentaries or cooking shows, combines all three manifestations of art: written art insofar as someone had to write the script, visual art insofar as camera angles, lighting, and the like have to be taken into account, and audible art in the composition of background music. Like it or not, art seems to be an inescapable part of all our lives in spite of whatever practicality (or impracticality) we accredit it with and whether we create our own art or indulge in that which already exists. Congratulations. You have just been touched by another piece of art.

Jenny

I always called her Jenny, never Mrs. Walz. She was the mother of my childhood friend, Lloyd, and just another farm wife in our small community. Her home was spartan and her barn filled with endless hours of pretend play and dangerous, dusty stunts.

In the days of my childhood, a farm wife had no time to volunteer on committees or have her nails done. Jenny worked long hours beside her husband and sons. Sometimes she drove a tractor or took food to the field during harvest time when work went on long after sunset. Jenny was a firm, loving mother to her four children. She washed clothes in a wringer washer on Monday, did ironing on Tuesday, provided three meals a day, and kept a clean house. She had a spark of mischief in her, too. One day she presented her husband with a plate of cow manure on the dinner table because he refused to remove his barn boots before coming in for meals! She took great delight in retelling that story!

Jenny was also the “keeper of the eggs.” Her hens provided many families in the area with fresh eggs for breakfast and baking. She kept the money from her sales in a cracked, brown cookie jar on the top shelf of a cupboard just underneath the ten-foot ceiling. It was so high, even she had to use a stool and stand on tiptoe. I imagine she used the money for groceries that the farm could not provide, or maybe the occasional “something special” for her children – some fabric to make a dress for a daughter’s high school prom.



Lloyd and I knew about the cookie jar. We knew, and we plotted. One hot summer day, the kind of day when you can actually see the heat shimmer over the pavement, we stole from the jar. It was Tuesday and we knew Jenny would be ironing the families’ line-dried clothes in another part of the house. We pulled a chair to the counter, and Lloyd climbed the open cupboard to put his hand in the jar. Grinning, he climbed down with cash! With hearts pounding and legs flying, we sped on our bikes to Fairbrother’s Store on a country corner a mile away. Jenny’s egg money bought Pez dispensers, Pixie Sticks, and toys from a machine that took quarters and delivered a “surprise” in a plastic egg. I remember feeling a twinge of guilt, but the thrill of hatching the plot and carrying out the evil – the adrenaline rush- was amazing and powerful.

Jenny passed away a few years ago after a long illness that robbed her of her speech and movement. Still, I could have confessed about the theft. I could have gone to the nursing home and explained my guilt and asked for forgiveness. Even if she couldn’t speak,

I know she would have understood and granted that forgiveness with her eyes.

Last week at a drug store the cashier gave me change for \$50 when I had paid with only \$20. For an instant I thought about my windfall profit. Then I flashed back to that cracked, brown cookie jar and saw the cash in Lloyd’s small fist, the gleam of childhood mischief in his eyes. The cashier was grateful for my honesty, and I went away with a peaceful heart.

~ Linda Newlove



A Fun Time

Tip tap hear the sound of my heart beat

Dance on a melody and float through the

Atmosphere in a star like dream and dream

Apart from one another and hope for a great

Celebration.

- Lisa Syroka

Winter Colors



Realtors delight in houses with
“a neutral color scheme throughout,”
But such paucity provokes
In me a hunger for color
That I must quickly satisfy.
The Home Depot in every new town
Rejoices over me and my
Requests for gallons and gallons
Of vibrant color, strong and pure.

Colorless houses I can fix,
But what of winter’s long wanness?
Leaden skies loom over pallid
Fields, inches deep in dull-hued snow.
Bare trees are fragile and forlorn,
Vulnerable in sickly hues
Of grey and brown, all brightness gone.

Yet

Winter does not defeat the need
For colors’ warm incandescence.
The mind, straining and unwary,
Finds color where the eye does not:
A tree, not brown, but sepia;
A bush tinged with soft ruddiness;
The snow imbued with mildest blue.
Search and stare: the colors are there,
E’en before the promise of spring.

- *Beth VanRheenen*

The Horses Were Running

The horses were running. Cari stood at her bedroom window, her face pressed against the cool glass, and watched as the three horses galloped along the top of a low hill in their pasture. Cari's eyes followed as the three horses – one red, one deep brown, and the other a gleaming gold – plunged down the other side of the hill and out of sight. Reluctantly, Cari turned away from the window.

The mirror showed her what she already knew. The hot throb in her cheekbone and the tender puffiness of her eye were bruises. There was a cut on the bridge of her nose; thankfully it didn't feel broken. Her lip was split, top and bottom.

"You look like shit," her husband commented from the doorway. A towel was swathed across his hips, and he looked clean and energized. "Don't go out today. I don't want anyone to see you like that."

Cari nodded, not daring to speak, and went to her dresser. She wouldn't meet his eyes. She wouldn't speak. If she pretended to be invisible, maybe he would get dressed and leave. The anger in her throat would be a death sentence if she ever uttered it.

"Do some laundry. You are getting behind again. I shouldn't have to remind you to do shit around here. What else do you have to do but keep this place clean? You can't even do that." He paused in his speech, watching his wife as she mechanically pulled jeans and a heavy sweater out of her dresser. "Put some makeup on or something. You look like shit."

And who made me look this way? She thought, but dared not say. Nod and agree to whatever he said. He'd leave soon, and the house would be hers until he returned in the evening. Hours when she could pretend that she was still the strong, intelligent woman she used to be, that her life was fine.

Her cheekbone throbbed again, reminding her that her life was anything but fine.

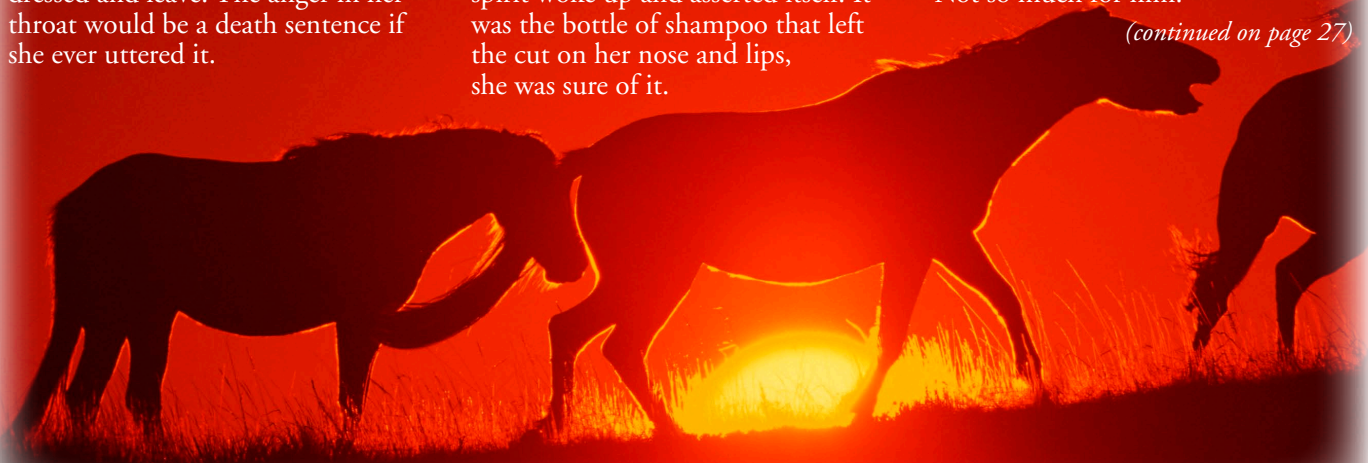
Drawers slammed open and shut. A ball of socks bounced off the back of her head and she didn't flinch, barely felt it. That was harmless. The last thing he had thrown at her was a bottle of shampoo. She had bought the wrong kind. She knew better, but sometimes her broken spirit woke up and asserted itself. It was the bottle of shampoo that left the cut on her nose and lips, she was sure of it.

"Have dinner ready by 5 today. I should be home early." He didn't wait for her to respond. He was gone, leaving behind the smell of cologne and soap. Cari breathed easier. It seemed the whole house breathed easier. Cari dressed quickly and went downstairs.

A chair was knocked over, and Cari quickly righted it. A plant had fallen. There were fewer signs of the fight than she had anticipated. Fight. It wasn't a fight, not really. Cari's lips quirked and although it hurt, she felt almost amused. It wasn't a fight; there were not two people trying to hurt each other. This was...something else. A fight might be fair; the combatants may be evenly matched. What she experienced weren't fights as much as they were ambushes.

You could kill him, you know, a voice said, and Cari recognized that voice. It was herself, but older, tougher, and unafraid. Battered women can murder their husbands and get away with it. Claim post traumatic stress syndrome, claim self-defense. Either way, kill him, cry on the stand, and life goes on. Well, life goes on for you, anyway. Not so much for him.

(continued on page 27)



The Horses Were Running

Cari shrugged the voice away, filling the sink with hot water and dish soap. She couldn't kill anyone. She didn't have it in her, and she knew it. She would not be able to pull the trigger at the last minute, or she would miss, or she would not feed him enough rat poison in his dinner. She had considered it, usually after she caught sight of her face in a mirror after one of his ambushes. She had considered leaving, too – just packing up and walking out. But inertia always overtook her in the end. She had nowhere to go; her husband had cut her off from friends and family. She was just happy that they didn't have children...Cari snapped off the water suddenly and was still, caught by a rogue thought.

She hadn't had a period this month. Had she had one the month before? Cari's mind raced and she went for a calendar, to try to get her bearings. This month was almost over, she knew. She hadn't paid attention to the dates, but she was fairly certain it was close to the end of the month. Cari rummaged through a desk drawer, even in her fear remembering to put everything back neatly, so that her husband wouldn't know she had been in his territory without permission. The calendar was tucked into a folder labeled 'Bills.' Hands shaking, she pulled it out and flipped through the pages.

There it was, in her husband's neat writing, the last record of her period. He always recorded it, for what reason she didn't know, except it was one more way to control her, to keep tabs on her body. Cari stared at the date with horror. She hadn't had a period in three months. She was pregnant.

"No," she whispered, and sat down heavily at the desk. "Oh please no." The tears came, and she felt like howling in her pain and fear. He wouldn't care that she was pregnant. But she was terrified. She couldn't bring a baby into this nightmare.

She sat at the desk for nearly an hour. Finally she rose and walked unsteadily down the hallway. She wouldn't bring a baby into this nightmare. She wouldn't. She wouldn't offer up a baby, a sacrifice to his rage.

Slowly, with no real thought of what she was doing, Cari opened the door to the garage and entered it. It was neat and clean, and she easily found what she was looking for. He liked his clothes dried outside during the spring and summer months and had put up a clothesline in the back yard. He had extra line left, neatly coiled in a plastic bag. Cari picked the bag up and felt its slickness. The rope was narrow and bright white, pretty upon closer inspection, with a pattern of threads crisscrossed into each other. It felt like silk when she ran it through her fingers.

Back into the house and down the hall. She couldn't do it in the living room, as they only had lamps, not overhead fixtures. She didn't know if there would be blood but she realistically expected to mess herself, so the kitchen was out. The kitchen was so white, so clean, one of her favorite rooms because her husband rarely entered it. She didn't want to mess up the white tile floors. That left the bedroom. Cari realized that it was fitting; she didn't mind messing up the bedroom, because it was the scene of most of the violence she had endured in the years she had been married to him. From their

wedding night when he raped her, to every night lying in bed, afraid to move, afraid to wake him up, the bedroom was a chamber of horrors. It would be a fitting place for him to find her.

Cari considered leaving a note for one mad moment, but realized he wouldn't need one. He would know. Of course he would know. She wished for a way to do it that would look like a homicide, so that he would be suspected and harassed, but she didn't have time to plan it out. The rope was easy to tie to the heavy light fixture. Cari hoped the fixture would hold. It was heavy and she was light, so she thought it would hold. The chair she stood on wobbled slightly, but it didn't need to be steady for much longer. She frowned, looking at the rope in her hands. How to tie it? She struggled until she had a reasonably good slip knot. She slipped it over her head, facing the window. The neighbor's horses were running again, gleaming in the sun, and Cari stood still for a moment, watching them. Such freedom! How her child would have loved watching them play. Cari slipped a hand to her belly and felt sorrow. I'm sorry, she thought. I'm doing this for you.

The horses ran and plunged and played, and Cari smiled at their antics, her hand warm on her belly. She hoped that her baby could feel her love in this moment, and she hoped that if there was a God, He would be compassionate. She didn't want to die. But she wanted this child to live in this life even less. She stepped off the chair. The last thing she saw were the horses, running.

- Stacey Webb