



the **Tau**

*the literary and visual art journal of
Lourdes College*

2010



LOURDES
COLLEGE



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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*.

The Language & Literature Department along with the Art Department collaborate to bring writing and art together in *The Tau*. The faculty members of both departments encourage the creative efforts of the Lourdes College faculty, staff, and students through submissions of poems, short stories, essays, and artwork. The literary and art works published continue to be the positive outcomes of a very talented campus community.

Congratulations to all the writers and artists who are currently published!

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

Our Lourdes College campus has individuals that are talented in so many ways and *The Tau* provides a vehicle to expose some of these talents to the public.

A wonderful thing. Congratulations on all of the hard work of those individuals that entered work as well as those whose work was accepted.

Associate Professor Erin Palmer Szavuly
Chairperson, Art Department

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PERFECT IMPERFECTION

by Amanda May

Winter – a dozing field
decorated by one tree
with naked branches



NONOBJECTIVE - *by Molly Miller*

RAIN ON THE WINDOW

by Amanda May

I'm sitting in statistics class
trying to find
the means

To pay attention

When suddenly, I notice the raindrops sliding
down
that median of glass that parts
the inside from
the outside—

What exactly is it that
makes these particular raindrops
hold my interest so cumulatively?

A few hypotheses:

The frequency with which they strike,
Their frequent distribution on the glass,
The range they manage to cover
during their descent?
Or perhaps the mode in which they fall...
because their deviation
is anything
but standard

SUBURBAN GOTHIC

by Vicki Davis

The window above my sink
frames my view of the world outside.
My hands swish in and out
of the sudsy water
and I smile a Mona Lisa smile
as I drink up my kitchen.

The cat curls around my legs
and begs for the buttery leftovers.
A forgotten ball cap hides
beneath the table.
Chocolate crumbs and pepper
speckle a masterpiece on
Grandma's tablecloth.

Be a dentist, my mother said.
Better hours than doctors and lawyers.
A bigger world maybe,
a bigger frame for the outside.
The dish soap feels silky between my fingers.
Desire for a life outside the window
washed clean in the fragrance and the bubbles.

ROCKS

by Stacey Webb

“What’s that noise?” my childless friend asks, and I pause, listening.

Thud thud thud.

“Rocks in the dryer.”

Her eyes are mystified.

“Rocks,” she says.

“Pretty rocks, shiny rocks, chosen with care and placed into pockets.”

“Rocks,” she repeats.

“Rocks from the forest and from the neighbor’s flower bed.

“Rocks that look like animals or clouds.

“Rocks that have stripes of color or no color at all.”

My sons rush in on a babble of noise. Smoothing wind-roughened hair, I listen while they tell of small adventures. Snails have been found, a snake seen in the grass. There was a new dog in the neighborhood. Someone had a new car, and a bird made a nest in one of the trees outside, but the squirrels were mad about it.

My childless friend listens with the patience of the childless, waiting for them to leave so we can discuss adult issues.

My sons’ wide blue eyes, copied from their father, sparkle as they tell news of the neighborhood, and when the news is told, they turn to leave. The smallest reaches a hand into a pocket and gives me his rock.

“Blue one,” he says with pride and satisfaction, as though he invented it personally for me. “I’ll find more.”

Gone, then, and silence fills the room. I stroke the blue rock with one finger and smile. The dryer thuds away, full of rocks not pulled from pockets, tiny dense treasures not yet shared.

“Kids,” my childless friend says with tolerant pity.

“Kids,” I agree, my mind full of small wonders and adventures she will never understand, happy with the rocks in the dryer and the rock in my hand.



UNTITLED - *by Patrick W. Hart*

BONES

by Stacey Webb

Sadness overwhelmed me as I looked at the wreck of a dog in the kennel. Bones jutted up under the red brown hide. The almond-shaped brown eyes were weepy, without sparkle. Worst, though, were the sores. They were large, crusted over in places and oozing blood in others, blooming between the arched toes, spreading along the white chest and belly. Once upon a time, he had been a fawn Boxer with the traditional white chest, toes, and collar around the neck, with a black mask. Once, he had been one endless bounce, full of energy, with a sense of humor unrivalled by other breeds. Now it was cruelly apparent that the dog was finding it difficult to remain upright without help. The sparsely covered bones were the framework upon which a dog had been built. Like a fallen building, only the supports remained. All else was speculation and imagination.

“He’s part of a cruelty case,” the shelter volunteer told me. “He had a brother with him, but his brother didn’t make it.” The volunteer had brown hair and unremarkable brown eyes, with pain and compassion etched on her face. The lines of pain and compassion came from fighting a losing battle and are a badge that most people who work or volunteer in animal shelters wear, bringing familiarity to the variety of faces. “His owner signed him over, so he’s free to go with you, if you have room for him.”

I would make room, I decided immediately, squatting on my heels and steadying myself with a hand on the wire door. The Boxer stood and walked to his side of the door. His harsh dry nose searched out my hand, and a tentative tongue briefly touched me through the wire. Tears sprang to my eyes. I could see the scars that laced his ribs and back, some old, some new, all telling of a lifetime of abuse. One ear was ragged and torn. Someone had done this to him, and yet his fearless heart brought him to the kennel door in hopes of finding kindness. I roughly wiped one errant tear away and stood.

“What do I need to sign?” I asked. The volunteer’s plain face lit up with a smile, and suddenly she was beautiful. This was a victory for her, and for that brief moment we were connected by the knowledge that one dog in this shelter would survive, would not be sent to the large steel box. The large box was filled with as many unwanted dogs and puppies as would fit

and pumped full of poison gas. The bodies, usually bleeding from wounds received in the panic that ensued before the gas claimed them, were stored in freezers until they could be taken to the landfill. This week the box would not contain this starved, abused Boxer. There was a grim sense of satisfaction in that, as well as guilt and sadness for the barking, whining dogs that surrounded us who did not have rescue. I avoided the countless begging eyes and wagging hopeful tails as the volunteer put the Boxer's leash into my hands and let me claim him.

The Boxer followed me willingly into the cold, sunny day. He paused, one foot raised, his square head lifted with nose quivering, undoubtedly enjoying relief from the mingled smells of bleach, urine, and feces in the kennel. His almond eyes searched out my face and he studied me carefully. I allowed him time to look, knowing that Boxers could read faces of people better than most people could and that his considering gaze would lead to either acceptance or rejection. He heaved a sigh and leaned his skinny body against my legs. I was accepted.

"Come on, Bones," I said softly, and his ears lifted at the sound of my voice. I slid my hand along the peaks and valleys of his spine and then started walking. He followed me to my car and jumped in willingly when I opened the door. He sat upright in the passenger seat, his dignified profile causing me to smile. Like all Boxers, he assumed it was his right to sit next to me. I started the engine and we pulled away from the shelter.

At home, he hopped out of the car and nearly fell, but recovered himself and looked around. He sniffed the ground and relieved himself on the dying grass, then followed me to the house. His ears perked up when my personal Boxer, Tatiana, started barking from inside. She was perched along the back of the loveseat, looking at us through the window, which was expressly forbidden. I shook a finger at her through the glass and she jumped down, not showing any signs of remorse. I opened the door, my hand tightening on the leash in case he wasn't receptive to other dogs.

Tati greeted us immediately, her ghost white body wriggling in delight. I signaled her to sit and she plopped her butt down, which didn't hamper her wiggling at all. I flashed the sign for stay, and she sighed impatiently but did as she was told. She knew the routine when I brought home a shelter dog, but she had her own ideas of how introductions should go. Tati was my first rescue. As a 12-week-old puppy, she was taken to a shelter to be euthanized

because she was born deaf. The shelter called me immediately, and five years later, she was still with me, a master of sign language and disobedience. Tati was my heart dog.

The skinny Boxer looked at Tatiana with interest but no signs of aggression, and I allowed him to sniff noses with her, which caused Tati's wiggling to ratchet up a notch with sheer delight. The fawn, who I decided to name Bones until a better name came along, shimmered with a hint of a wiggle. I relaxed; they would be fine. Boxers generally love other Boxers, and it seemed Bones was no exception. I waved a hand at Tati to release her from her spot, and she immediately bounced up, begging Bones to play. Bones was too weak to play, and Tati seemed to understand quickly. She followed us into the kitchen, adjusting her stride to Bones' slow, painful walk, delighted with his company.

Bones sniffed but seemed unconcerned about his surroundings, which made me believe he had been a house pet at some time in his life. The harsh florescent lights made his bones even more evident under his dirty fur. I showed him the water bowl, and he lapped gratefully, then nosed the food dish hopefully.

"Not until you are in your crate, old boy," I murmured. "And you had breakfast at the shelter." As starved as he was, the chances were good that he would be food aggressive. I would feed him in his crate until I knew him better. I unclipped his leash and stepped back, watching him as he explored. Tati kept shooting me glances, in case I needed to sign to her, but she was much more concerned with Bones. She followed him into the living room, and I went with them.

Bones circled a few times on the carpet in front of the loveseat and finally lowered himself down with a sigh. I tried to imagine how he might feel, being in a strange place full of strangers. Tati glanced at me and then curled up next to Bones on the floor. His eyes were soft, unafraid, and he rested his head against Tati's side. Tati licked him gently, and I got the impression they were communicating on some deep level. Was he telling her how horrible his life had been? Was she explaining that this was a good, peaceful place? I watched the two dogs speak and wished I could be part of their conversation. I could only hope that my hands, which would never touch them in anger, and my voice, which would only say soft things, were enough. I could only hope they could understand.

Bones had a long road ahead of him. He would visit the vet, and he would be treated for the starvation and the sores and whatever else may be wrong with him physically. He might have behavior problems that would come to light as he settled into our routine. He might even die in the night, another victim of neglect and abuse, unsung and unremembered, just another sad statistic in the world of animal rescue. But for now, he was safe. He was warm, comfortable, and could feel the love and welcome that Tati and I had to offer. For dogs, one good moment can wipe out a lifetime of wrongs.

His almond eyes slipped shut and he slept, safe in one good moment.

THEY PERSEVERED

by Marci Singer

A soldier stands,
In silent disbelief.
He cannot comprehend
The cataclysmic disaster,
The appalling atrocities,
Abundant everywhere.
Forlorn faces,
Frozen in terror.
Devastation so disturbing,
Diabolically contrived.
Hordes of hostages,
In hellish bondage.
They are just Jews,
Judged by a madman.
Plunged into purgatory,
They persevered,
Finally free, from the Fascist pig.

DRONES

by Marci Singer

The drones were dripping like bloody tears,
spilling out the eyes of the sun sculpture mounted on the house.

Gathering, like a dust storm.

Forced together out of innate necessity,
all working tirelessly towards the same goal.
Like a duvet of down, they protect their queen.
spinning and buzzing like whirling dervishes.

Creating sweet nectar
that is pure as filigrees of gold,
culminating in precious honey.



LIFE IN THE JUNGLE ~ *by Joshua Klein*

I Do

by Vicki Davis

I knew before you ever did
that our children would have
quicksilver minds and no coordination.
Even before your casual “yes” to my
desperate “How about dinner?”
I saw a blue house, a brown dog,
and the strong yellow radiance of us.

I did not know that your
perfect Sunday was snuggling
on a sofa, drinking hot chocolate,
and watching old Ray Milland movies.
Who is Ray Milland anyway?
I wanted to watch him with you
on that sofa, hot chocolate scalding my tongue.

I’m not a deep thinker – Sunday papers
are for fairs and movie times.
Plato’s *Republic* sits on the shelf because
its bright red spine matches the pillows.
But my vow is this: that I will fall in love with you
over and over again, after every “I hate you”
and every separation, until we are
no more divisible than sun from sky.

SNOWBODY

by Theresa Holup

Watching the snow
Falling, falling
Ever so gently.
Each flake precious
And unique
Like each of us.
Many perch upon
Tree and fence
Blanket of beauty.
Others are rogue
Causing havoc
Upon streets and walkways
As we can be
A source of beauty
Or a source of strife
Depending on
The path
We choose.
Thank God
He gave us a soul
To help us
Steer clear of danger
To make of ourselves
A beautiful gift.
A drift drops away
From the roof
Making its presence known.
The dog barks and
My child asks,
“Who’s here mom?”
I answer
“Snowbody.”

THOUGHTS ON THE BEACH

by Karen Granata

(1)

What natural phenomenon
draws us to the sea?
What instinct drives us to contemplate
the vastness of the ocean?
A force so powerful, yet so calming
So awesome, yet so gentle.

Men have tried to conquer her,
to understand her.
Still the vast ocean remains a mystery.
Her waves tense and taut, moving ever closer
Then quickly retreating
lest she divulge some secret.

(2)

The difference between dreams and reality, as I see it,
is the ratio of doing to being.
To be – to exist – one must only breathe. It is this action alone:
the passage of air in and out
of the lungs, like the ebb and flow of the sea, that constitutes existence.
It is when breathing is altered by desire, wants, and
needs that dreams begin.
The dreams can remain as they are, the creation of one for one;
or the dreams can be shared with others and become a reality.

(3)

She sat quietly alone – but not lonely.

Here was perfect harmony:

Earth and sky,

Wind and water.

The comfort and joy of Christmas heard
in the ebb and flow of the ocean, the giggles of little boys,

and the laughter of family and friends

lost in the wonder of it all and believing

that there truly can be

“Peace on Earth, Good Will Among Men.”



BOCA BEACH ~ by *Annette Fink*

YOU CRAZY KIDS AND YOUR ROCK AND ROLL

by Vicki Davis

It was one of those songs that comes on the radio, and boom – it’s a time machine. You’re transported back to when you were fourteen, lying on the beach on a blanket that your mother let you have because the edging came off in the washing machine. Your very best girlfriend is sharing the blanket, and she’ll always be your very best girlfriend even though you’ve hated her for a while because her stomach is so flat and her hair is so straight and shiny, like Twiggy’s. You and she had told each other **everything**, like how Frank Morgan tried to get to second base under the train trestle after Sharon’s birthday party last April. You called him a jerk and started to cry because he didn’t respect you, and then you leaned against him ever so slightly. The zing that waded through your body made your brain sparkle and brought a faint tinge of nausea. She told you about the time her stepfather got drunk and she and her brother found him lying in the basement wearing just a flannel shirt and a Padres ball cap. She was so afraid to tell her mother because she knew in her gut that it would make her mom a little smaller inside, and her mom was already too small inside.

So you’re lying on that blanket on the beach and that guy’s radio is tuned to WLS. That guy is here with his radio every day just like you and your friend, but you don’t try to flirt with him or deliberately strut in front of him with your hair all windblown and in your new super-cool bikini like you do when the guys you know from school are there because that guy is not from school. He’s old – probably twenty-seven or twenty-eight – and he smokes as he sits in a busted beach chair reading the paper and occasionally reaching for a Pabst Blue Ribbon from an old green cooler with a metal can opener built into the side. You don’t really talk to him, but you’re glad he brings the radio every day because it’s really cool being able to hear your favorite songs while you’re lying on that blanket with the sun seeping down to your bones, your arms aching with the effort of keeping them in just the right position so your tan comes out evenly.

The song comes on the radio, that same one that you and your girlfriend just have to dance to whenever it comes on, just the two of you in your dad’s workshop where you can turn the music up so loud it makes the half-empty nail jars and paint cans on the shelf rattle and jump like a field of crickets. You and she do all your favorite moves, and you think you look like

that cool girl you saw dancing in that movie about Woodstock. The song is irresistible and you can't stop moving and you can't find a limit on how loud you can sing. Your voice gets bigger and bigger until your throat starts to strain and choke up a little, and you know that tomorrow you might be a little hoarse.

So now you're forty-two and you're driving back home after dropping the kids off at soccer practice and piano lessons, and that song comes on the car radio. You look around furtively to make sure that the car windows are rolled up, and then you crank up the volume so high that the speakers crackle a little dangerously. And you sing that song, amazed that after twenty-eight years you still know every word and every guitar strum. And you sing so loud that your voice starts to crack, your throat starts to strain and choke up a little, and you know that tomorrow you might be a little hoarse.

THE WORN SHOES OF GRACE

by Savannah Frelin

Your shoes are worn. You've been walking through thick, fudgy mud that is hard to escape. You know, the kind of mud that has made you feel there's no hope? I watch you feel as if you are in a horror movie, trying to escape the killer, but being slowed by the very mud that makes your shoes worn. You feel as if the murder weapon has impaled your fate, but you're wrong. You sit next to me, thumbing your pencil, having no clue about the thoughts running through my mind. Your hair lays flat and smooth, as if it would be cool and flowing to the touch. You sit forward in your chair as if you're going to make a move, but then you slouch back into the abyss of your despair. I look around at the others and conclude that right now, you are the one that demands my attention. Your hands captivate me; they're delicate and painted to perfection. You are like a deep sea of blue that penetrates the very depths of my soul. I know you detest the color blue, but it suits you well. Your lips that never seem to speak would complement an oasis of blue, as if the flow of eventual words would reach the deep crevices of your strangled pain and fury. I imagine your emerald eyes would look even more beautiful if you would freely submit to truth. But no, my dear friend, you struggle to break free of the chains that imprison you. I know you have an element of worth inside of you, but you have hardened your heart and wear a façade. You may smile at the world, but I can see beyond the pearly teeth and dimples that penetrate your milky skin. I ache at the thought of your beautiful smile being transfigured by agony and resistance. Your truth terrifies me; will you ever look into your eyes and see what I see? You feel your shoes are worn and that you are rugged, like a jagged knife that will pierce the skin. I see your shoes are worn, but know you can make the choice to escape the darkness. I wonder if you'll ever choose to be free. I guess only time will tell; you rise and exit, and I remain fixated, knowing why a girl such as you is named Grace.

I wonder what you're thinking right now, Mr. Johnson. Do you notice the girl Grace who sits before you, struggling to hide her pain and tears? Is the passion inside of you what it appears to be, or do you hide behind your big words and matter-of-facts? What is passion anyway? Is it the love that is irresistible, the kind that makes your entire body tingle with anticipation and rebellion? Or is passion a driving force that propels you through the strongest of winds, resistant

to all inertia? I wonder how far you've flown in your life. Do you come from the mansion-like home that is adorned with frilly curtains, overstuffed pillows, and ostracized china set at the table? Did your family sit around watching black and white movies, eating ice cream sundaes, and laughing at memories that aren't humorous? Looking at you, I decide yes. You stand before us in your polished suit, with a necktie that screams for attention. I highly doubt anyone is listening to a word you're saying. In fact, I'm thinking about the way your name looks written on the board: Mr. Damien Johnson. What type of parents name their child Damien? Do they have any idea what kind of curse this is? I guess your fate is the same as mine, Mr. Johnson. I laugh inside until my insides quiver with fear. I scowl at those that think they know me. Looking around at all of you, I snicker that you are intrigued by my flawless beauty and properness. I laugh deep inside because you have it so wrong. Can you imagine me entranced in a cathartic state of mind, addicted to the ecstasy that oozes from my wounds? Can you imagine the state of panic and the shaking of my entire being, needing and desiring a release that only I can provide? Can you imagine the pitch black that envelopes me, smothering me until the only air I breathe is infected with remorse, sin, and helplessness? No, you can't imagine this, Mr. Johnson. Not you with your overstuffed pillows and ostracized china. You'll never know me, Damien. I don't have to wonder what you're thinking. I already know. Or do I? Fearfully, I ponder this as I leave this shadowy trench.

Today you seem different. You have a different kind of optimism about you, and I have made it my endeavor to study you closely. You still wear the same worn shoes as you did weeks ago. Physically you look the same, but the depth in your eyes is different. I see a glimmer of hope in the abyss of blue your spirit exudes, despite it being worn down by your truth. I sit next to you every day, loving you with every ounce of my soul, but your pained heart doesn't even realize it. I have seen you admire what you've done, as if you're admiring a painter creating a masterpiece. I have watched you close your beautiful eyes, unable to bear the memories. You believe by closing your eyes that you can escape the dreary thoughts that consume you. You see, friend, I know how you feel. Your eyes give me insight into your soul. I see you clearly and I love you despite your faults. I sit next to you, compelled to speak to the eyes that have been my focus for so long. I want you to know all that I've felt for you. I want to tell you that I've been watching and that I've seen your smile be transfigured by agony and pain. I want you to know that his overstuffed pillows and ostracized china don't even compare to what I offer. I want to stroke your beautiful hair and secure

your damaged heart and body in my grasp. I feel you are almost ready, so I reach out to you, friend. I am ready to burst with excitement at the thought of you finally noticing me. Confidently, I call your name, “Grace.” The emerald eyes I know so well look at me, exposing your recognition and meekness. These are the same eyes that have revealed your truth, even when you haven’t wanted them to.

Ever since the day I pondered your name, Mr. Johnson, I have been transfixed by you. Your coldness and bluntness and disguise make me get chills up my spine when I’m in your presence. You make me want to feel the sharp, metallic sensation, erasing the overpowering scars of my past. I imagine you are smiling inside, knowing what you do to me, Damien. I imagine you know the tests you give me are challenging, and you stand before me, waiting eagerly for me to fail. You would pounce on me at any moment; you know my weaknesses. For the longest time I believed you couldn’t possibly know me, with your ice cream sundaes and polished suit. But now I know the truth. You know me well. You have dragged me through the mud, making my shoes worn. You have provided my perplexed, pained being with the ecstasy and catharsis I’ve craved. You have made me lose sight of hope; you frighten me to my core, Damien. I sit resisting you every day, rebelling against the deceit you impose. You may know my weaknesses, but I’ll no longer submit to you. I won’t allow you to make my shoes worn; I won’t give power to your name. I watch you today, feeling powerful and in control. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a friend’s hand reach out to me...

“Grace.”

How does he know my name? I respond in a mix of confusion and eagerness, wanting to know more. For some reason, I feel compelled by him. He never takes his eyes off of me; it feels as if he is illuminating the very depths of my soul. Grabbing his hand, I ask if I know him.

“No, but you will now. I’ve been close to you, waiting for you to notice. You can call me Friend.”

I feel a sense of warmth permeate my entire body. I have never felt so connected with someone. Grasping my Friend’s hand, I catch a glimpse of Damien, who looks defeated for the first time. There he sits before us, in his polished suit, completely desolate and alone. I walk over to him, having courage I’ve never felt in his presence. Just then, I begin to speak...

I wake suddenly in my bed, smothered in sweat that drenches my clothes. I look around, allowing my eyes to adjust to the darkness. Feeling relief and newfound hope, I roll to my side and lay my head on my overstuffed pillow. There on the floor in front of me are my worn shoes...



LIME NIKES - by *Lyn-sey Bishop*

THE IMPORTANCE OF FINDING THE PERFECT SHOES

by Vicki Davis

Eyes fixed to the gray pavement ahead of me
intent upon that awkward step at the curb –
the step I always miss, scraping the toe
on my best black pumps that were so hard to find.
I curse and look to note who saw my bungle.
Every mother's son with a car at this corner,
I am the thief getting snagged,
red dye dripping from the bag of stolen loot.

Doctor Doppler's Darling – waves of sound
crashing into my head
along with the once-chrome bumper
of a '97 Chevy Sonoma.
A universe away until a moment ago,
now his acceleration is mine as I go
up, up, up – I have definitely missed that curb.

Murphy's Law – I am the buttered bread
guaranteed to land face down, splat
in the bed of that Chevy Sonoma.
My body's clock slams to a halt
(although my acceleration does not)
and I have a hawk's eye vision of
My final resting place --
My bier of beer? My tomb of half-ton?

The projectile that is me begins its earthward trajectory.
Every detail of my short journey
comes sharply into focus, a kaleidoscope
of fuzzy colors snapping into faceted gems.
The woman on the curb with the yellow umbrella,
her mouth agape in an "O" of astonishment.
The screech of a crow disturbed from
his leafy roost by the cacophony of sound.

And in the bed of this pick-up,
An empty plane of ridges and wheel wells,
lying smack in the middle of my future landing –
nothing but a pair of good black pumps, and
I think to myself as I embrace my metal partner,
“Hard to find.”

ALL I'S ARE UPON ME

by Robert Newbold III

I can't help but dream sometimes.
Sleep doesn't always take me
On the slow spiral into the depth of my inner truth.
In my own mind, I am on my own.
In my own mind, I am alone.
To be fair, all minds are alone
But crave the solitude of togetherness.

It is the drive that takes us to the edge.
High atop the steep cliff
One foot hanging over the ridge,
I can't wait to jump,
But I know what will happen.
Falling will take an eternity
But the sea below is timeless.

Barely awake, I can hear her
Motioning towards me
Warning me of my fate.
Flowers attract bees because of color
But the poor creatures are colorblind.
There is no comfort in truth.
There is no truth in illusion.

At last my head has cleared
At last I see my path.
Slow steps carry me further.
Peace has washed me, cleansed me.
Something has come over me
I have overcome myself,
And over you come.



SERENITY IN FOCUS ~ *by Paul Longenecker*

JUST DRIVE

by Andrea Szymkowiak

She drives home,
tears fill her eyes.
Pushing the gas,
climbing to fifty-five.
The dancing green grass
nor the clear blue sky
can ease her restless heart
or free her trapped mind.
She looks behind
in the rear view mirror
hoping to find
some comfort there.

Her heart sinks,
just drive.
Try not to think,
Oh, baby just drive.

The whispering wind,
the open fields,
the empty country road
all remind her she's alone.
Her treadless tires
won't steer her wrong.
The long ride home
has come and gone.
The sunset fades
darkness gives way
her tender heart made
tomorrow's another day.

GLASSY MIDNIGHT

by Andrea Szymkowiak

I lie here
eyes swollen.
My head hits the pillow
my feet leave the floor.

Out in the cold
a train rolls by
and curious shapes dance
on the ceiling up high.

The day is done,
the world sleeps,
glassy midnight
on Main Street.

It's dark here,
acid rain,
fill the well with water
fill my heart, Novacain.

Out in the night
the strange wind cries.
The trees become life-like
crickets sing to the skies.

The day is done,
the world sleeps,
glassy midnight
on Main Street.



WOODS ~ by Molly Miller

MOTHER HUNGER

by Savannah Frelin

Dear wonderful mother, can I spend a moment with you,
Can I share these vivid memories, in my mind that ring so true?
Can I express to you the love that I felt so long ago
Can I share with you my thoughts, that have made me feel so
HUNGRY.

Can I tell you that I remember having you by my side?
Can I tell you that I remember, you wiped my tears when I cried?
Can I express to you the emptiness, that now remains in my heart?
Can I share with you the agony that tears my memories apart?

Dear, dear mommy, so much to say it would take a book
You betrayed and belittled me, my confidence you took.
You tied my hands behind my back, words spit on me were real
You made me so weak, mother, your abuse made me feel so
HUNGRY.

Don't worry, I will keep you safe with all my treasure.
I will be sure to come find you, maybe in this life, maybe never.
Oh, mommy, I will remember you, feeling guilt inside my soul,
But it's my turn now. I'm the one who's in control.

I will drain the evil mother, right from your weary bones,
I will assemble all my fury, in memories you can behold.
I will finally replace you, all the emotions I won't miss.
I am doing what is needed, I won't ever again feel this
HUNGRY.

So-called Mothers reflect shame, regret, and sorrow.
Daughters persevere with strength, peace, and courage.

Goodbye, mommy.
I love you.

THE GRADUATE

by Amanda May

A crowded room seats those who chased the dream
And caught its tail – ten rows of caps and gowns.

Onlookers wait with great expectancy
and parents see how much their child has grown.
Three speeches follow Pomp and Circumstance...

The seated graduates now take a stand
row by seated row. Those that remain glance
while their peers rise and take degrees in hand.
The stage is crossed, and while the tassels turn,
their dreams intensely fester, and they burn
with a maelstrom of thoughts on what comes next
and if they'll ever taste a truer success...

The caps are tossed. Such uncertainty stands –
except this piece of paper in my hand.



MATILDA - by Missy Hansen

ANORSEXIA

by Melissa Pompili

My doctor weighs at least three hundred pounds. I say this, not to be rude or judgmental, but to emphasize the complete and utter hypocrisy of her putting me on a diet a few years ago. At the time I weighed 152 pounds, and being five foot three I was a bit on the chubby side, I suppose. It was chubby in a cute way, though, not in a “be-careful-or-you’ll-become-insulin-dependent-for-the-rest-of-your-life” sort of way. There was no immediate danger of a hip-replacement or even a knee brace to accommodate my heft, but she thought 1,500 calories a day would change my life. I wanted to point out what I thought was the obvious, but I am only internally rude for the most part. All I was able to say was “I know, I know.”

I know that as an American woman I have certain responsibilities that come along with my citizenship. I am supposed to vote, pay my taxes, and feel bad about my body at all times. I am supposed to be able to grow to the staggering height of six feet, weigh in at 105 pounds, and be very, very, very tan. I am none of these things and I never will be. I am the palest white kid I know; actually, my skin color was once described as “piglet pink.” No one will ever stop me on the street and ask to take my picture, but I count myself as lucky that I will never have a stalker, either. I’d much rather be considered “cute” than waste countless hours at the police station filing yet another restraining order. I simply don’t have enough free time to identify anyone in a police lineup.

The downside to not being a size two is that it’s very hard to feel conventionally “sexy” (whatever that means). There was a time when I was, in fact, a size two. I didn’t lose the weight through diet and exercise, however, but through good-old-fashioned, out of my mind depression. It was honestly the lowest point in my life, and for the first time I was thin enough to be considered attractive. My hips bones jutted through my skin so severely it gave the impression that they were about to tear through, and everyone kept telling me how great I looked. They were so enthusiastic about it I got the impression that I had been some sort of monster before. Which made me feel even worse. Then I got even thinner.

Hardly anyone ever tells you that when you lose even a tiny amount of weight your entire life revolves around not gaining any of it back. I became obsessed with what I was eating, and if my pants were even the tiniest bit snug I would cry for hours. The night I bought a pair of size six pants, after quitting smoking, I barely slept. Then when I had to buy a size eight, I nearly had a mental breakdown. It was all so pathetic; I can see that now. At the time, though, nothing could possibly have been worse in my shallow, self-absorbed mind. I began to envy the girls I knew who had full-blown eating disorders. “Why can’t that be me?” I would cry to myself as I ate a full bag of potato chips.

I realize, however, that I could never have an eating disorder. It’s not just because I like food too much, but I am also far too lazy to develop one. The act of not eating in itself takes a lot of energy, and I just don’t have that much energy in the first place. I also have a very deep-seated fear of vomiting. So, bulimia is out and so is anorexia, I suppose. I could work out obsessively, but like I said, I’m lazy. I would much rather buy a pair of elastic-waist pants than get on a treadmill with the only purpose being to lose weight. If I had to choose between working out to be “attractive” and reading a book while I eat a plate of brownies, I’m picking the brownies every time.

Seriously, though, instead of taking the time to find a disordered way of viewing food that would fit into my life, I decided to just get comfortable with what I have. This sounds very nice in theory, but it has proved to be one of the hardest and most political things I have ever done. I never thought my personal revolutionary contribution to this planet would be the experience of getting my thoughts off of the size of my backside. When I made this decision, I started to realize to what extent I have been trained my entire life to feel exactly the way I was feeling. Everywhere I looked there were reminders of how I was simply not good enough. Companies spend billions of dollars every day in order for me to personally feel that I will die alone and surrounded by cats if I don’t do something about the size of my thighs. It is mind-boggling. The self-loathing is being woven into our subconscious every single day, and we keep the message alive by judging each other based on appearance or size. The message we women get and perpetuate is a terrifying one. And for the most part, we completely comply.

I decided to use my skills as a reader to analyze my everyday life. I looked for the subtext and hidden meaning in every conversation I had, in every television show I watched, and in every advertisement I saw. I barely made it through two hours. Just watching a thirty-second advertisement for a popular show about housewives with far too much free time was enough to turn my stomach. I tried to look at the bright side: at least they were being praised for their sex appeal and were over the age of forty, right? It didn't change the fact that they were only considered sexy because their ribs were showing through their overly tanned skin. They had to diminish their physical presence to feel relevant, and I felt so heavy-hearted. Is it possible that in the era of Third-Wave feminists that this is just the newest form of social control? My answer is a resounding "Yes!" To personally combat this message on an extremely local level I did something that we women are never supposed to do.

I stopped participating.

This was something that was not well received by the people I know, for the most part. I was asked on a daily basis if I was depressed or if something was wrong. I cannot even count the number of times I was asked if I was sick. I felt great, but much to my chagrin no one believed me. An unspoken rule apparently states that if a woman stops wearing makeup that matches her outfit, she must be at the breaking point. People began to question everything they knew about me simply because I stopped trying so hard to be something that I just wasn't. I began to see the ugly truth about how intertwined a traditionally feminine appearance is with stereotype, and how much we truly judge others based on what we perceive as "normal." The very act of putting down my lipstick made me an "other," an outsider. I was no longer to be trusted. This is completely fine with me, now.

I make light of the effort that is required and the heartache that comes with refusing to participate, and honestly, I can't say that I ever fully stopped. But I feel so much better and so much happier than I ever have in my life. I also stopped feeling insanely hungry all of the time which is the way I always felt when I skinny. My mind is able to think about things that are not food now. This never would have happened if I was still trying to cram myself into clothes that make me uncomfortable with matching high heels. Call me whatever you want, but I feel good. And now when my doctor gives me that look, I can give her a much more confident finger.



PEARL HARBOR REFLECTIONS ~ by *Cindy Meadows-Clark*

ICARIAN ROBOT

by Charity Anderson

Where now, sweet angel, are your mechanical wings?

It appears the beast has been tamed,
Your gentle tusks have been removed,
You have become one with the ground.

Tell me, now where will you go?
To part the Red Sea...
To bring peace to the kingdom...
a valiant knight on a paper horse.

What will become of you?
Will you rust in the rain...
Drown in the current...
Fold beneath the wind...
Or will the memory of an Eden night forever haunt you?

Tell me, fair prince, what it is you plan to do...
Now that your bones are broken
and your head refuses to turn.

How can you speak now
When your mouth dares not open for your words
or parched tongue?

Will you wander the desert?
Will you scavenge the land?
Will you pick the tainted meat again?

What a mountain you stood upon for me.
And how commonly forsaken you have become.

THE OFFER
by Charity Anderson

Husbands coming home to their wives
after a definite break
after a definite decision to dissolve their holy vows into ink on paper
after the boxes have been packed and books and movies separated
after addresses have been changed and cell phone plans erased
after all the fighting, and silence, and separation

Some of them, most of them lately, come back to their estranged wives
after sleeping with other men
after sleeping with other women
after custody arrangements have already been planned
after bankruptcy papers have been drawn
after foreclosure decisions have already been made

And here I am, wondering why mine, as great as he was to me, has not



CHESS PLAYERS - *by Cindy Meadows-Clark*

THE DEATH OF THE ROSE

by Marci Singer

The hours are growing long in days
as the year draws to a close.
The leaves turn a flamboyant blaze
the wind tickles my nose.
Twilight goes slowly to a haze
no more gazing upon the rose.

No more aroma of the rose
the chrysanthemums bloomed today.
Mother Earth sheds her summer clothes
the sunshine is becoming a haze.
Crisp scents assail my nose
the sunshine is no longer ablaze.

As the maple leaf becomes a fiery blaze
we take shears and prune the rose.
it's almost as if Mother Nature knows
that winter is intruding on the days
and autumn has come to a close
Daylight is fading into a shimmering haze.

The moon is surrounded by a haze
dawn arrives in a spectacular blaze.
Children put on their back-to-school clothes
into a higher grade to which they rose.
It signals the start of new school days
it's time to prove what each one knows.

The change of seasons attacks my sensitive nose,
afternoon sun is obscured by a haze
Indian summer has turned into nippy days,
Trees are shedding their autumn blaze
barren ground has replaced the rose.
Birds, butterflies, and buds have all closed.

The year is coming to a close
I need a scarf to cover my nose
there is no trace of the delicate rose.
Blizzards swirl in a bitter haze
the fireplace glows with a welcoming blaze
winter is signaling the close of the days.



RED ABSTRACT - *by Molly Miller*

FALLING LEAVES
by Robert Newbold III

Leaves fall
Falling to the ground
Grounded in my thoughts
Thoughts turn to wishes
Wishing I weren't alone
Alone, it's hard to walk
Walking moves me forward
Forward brings me closer
Closer come the trees
Trees hide my shame
Shameful are my dreams
Dreams are only passions
Passionately set free
Freedom I don't possess
Possession of a hand
Handing me her heart
Hearts beating as one
One flowing wind
Wind blowing the leaves

WE BUY THE BROKEN

by Andrea Szymkowiak

The empty parking lot
in front of the store
leads one to believe
it isn't open anymore.
The store window reads,
"Antiques for Sale:
Come on in.
We buy the broken."
The old man behind the desk
warmly welcomes visitors.
He kindly greets them
'hello miss, hello sir.'

Tiny little people
lined up neatly on the shelf
too tired and too lonely
to make it by themselves.
We buy the broken,
but there's nothing we can sell.
We buy the broken
please help yourself.

Have a look around
you might like what you see.
You could become one of them
the old man beckons me.
Hands that never move
scars on worn faces
worn proudly
like trophies in glass cases.
Shelves full of dust
timeless treasures
toys and magazines
guilty forbidden pleasures.

Tiny little people
lined up neatly on the shelf
too tired and too lonely
to make it by themselves.
We buy the broken,
but there's nothing we can sell.
We buy the broken
please help yourself.

Everything's for sale
but nothing can leave.
There is no price
on human sacrifice.
We pay a pretty penny
just sign on the line
so you can live forever
and defy the test of time.
So before you sell your soul away
for a shiny brand new dime
be sure your life's worth selling,
be sure your streets are paved,
and you color outside the lines.

Tiny little people
lined up neatly on the shelf
too tired and too lonely
to make it by themselves.
We buy the broken,
but there's nothing we can sell.
We buy the broken
please help yourself.

WHY I WRITE

by Fran Hendren

When I write I feel as though my mind has been set free from a straightjacket of “necessary” thoughts to create and roam free.



WHIRLYGIG - *by Carrie Carter*

THE REST OF THE PAGE

by Amanda May

It seems like such a shame to waste
the rest of the page, to
leave it unfulfilled, unutilized,
to ignore the twenty-seven unfilled lines
for the three that were filled
with a haiku...

I consider the lines that could be written
to fill
 those Lines –
Brief and poignant,

Lengthy lines that actually carry on for several lines because I've hit a spot
where the words just keep coming without a break and for some reason
my hand keeps writing them without putting any more than one little
apostrophe in there even though every fiber of my being tells me there
should be more punctuation in there than there actually is –

Lines to fill the empty space...

But even the

Empty

Spaces

Hold something...



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