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A black silhouette of a man wearing a top hat and a trench coat, holding a closed umbrella. The figure is positioned in the center-left of the frame. The background is dark with a large, faint circular area containing a pattern of small white dots. Overlaid on this are several sets of concentric, dotted white lines that curve around the central figure, creating a sense of depth and movement.

ATTIC SALT

Attic Salt

n

**18th Century: A translation of the Latin *sal Atticum*.
Graceful, piercing, Athenian wit.**

Published by

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Attic Salt is an interdisciplinary journal which accepts submissions in any genre, format, or medium – essays, original research, creative writing, videos, artwork, etc. – from the entire LMU undergraduate and graduate community.

Visit www.atticsaltlmu.com for full-length works, videos, and other information.

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ATTIC SALT

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Attic Salt Readers,

For this year's edition of Attic Salt, we have expanded the possibilities of the journal, featuring kinds of work that we have previously been unable to publish. In the past, we have had to cut down lengthier submissions to a brief excerpt, and multimedia submissions were not even an option. Over this academic year, we have brought Attic Salt into the digital age, redesigning our website to allow for online publications. Now we publish the entirety of lengthier pieces as well as multimedia submissions online, which moves us toward our wider goal of fully embracing the "interdisciplinary" character of our journal.

In the following selections we hear, among others, the voices of grieving fathers, brooding youths, a forsaken mother, and a mad poet. We travel through a darkened theological forest, all the way up to the indifferent stars. Yet despite the often melancholic quality of these pieces, a profound hopefulness emanates from them. In reading them, we have been invigorated by their depictions of human resilience, by the honesty of the emotions, and by the determination in their search for meaning. We invite our readers to immerse themselves in the experience of this year's journal and recognize that shadows do not necessarily preclude the beautiful.

We would first like to thank our staff members, who have put a tremendous amount of work and enthusiasm into this year's publication. We would also like to extend our gratitude to our faculty advisers, Dr. Dermot Ryan and Dr. Alexandra Neel. Additionally, we want to thank the Honors Program of Loyola Marymount University, specifically Dr. John Parrish, Dr. John Dionisio, and Meghan Alcantar, for their limitless support. Finally, we would like to thank Garland Kirkpatrick for granting us the privilege of working with Justin Lai and Madison Wurster, the artists who are responsible for the utterly beautiful design of the journal.

And to our readers: please, make yourselves at home.

Warmly yours,
The Attic Salt Editors-in-Chief

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PATRICK FOSTER

Patrick Foster is a sophomore Electrical Engineering major from Northern California. He recently returned from studying abroad in Germany, where he gave his camera a serious workout. He also likes piña coladas, and getting caught in the rain.



Patrick Foster
Time and Tide



PATRICK SULLIVAN

Patrick Sullivan is a lifelong resident of Southern California, born and raised in Los Angeles. He briefly attended Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts, before returning to L.A. and entering LMU as an English major, where – currently in his junior year – he focuses on creative writing, alongside dual minors in Computer Science and Screenwriting.

The Last Book of Doctor Seuss

(Inspired by H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos)

For quite a few years now, I've often had dreams
Of a nightmarish place that's not what it seems—
A city whose streets are all swarmed with creatures,
Shoggoths and mud-mooks and hullaboo-screechers,
Grum-zooks and squid-men with horrible features!

I dreamt and I dreamt, 'til despairing I said
"I'll set down to writing them out of my head!"
I wrote away reason, away sanity—
I wrote about letters that come after Z! —
But still my sleep took me there, under the sea.

What a place! That old city, twisted and bent,
With weird hellish carvings in greenish cement!
Which way was up — and for that matter, down?
Directions I knew made no sense in this town.
Awash in those waters, I feared I might drown!

But I found something there, in that sunken court,
In sanguine-ish ink of a most gruesome sort.
The text's cryptic message, I can't now deny:
Strange eons, indeed, tiptoe ever so nigh,
For that is not dead which can eternal lie.

But what can be done — by me, or by you?
The Old Ones approach, and there's naught we can do!
I think I'll soon learn how to tie up a noose,
For it won't be much longer 'til He is loose:

This is the last book of old Doctor Seuss.

I found I could speak with the strange eldritch things,
And I quake to recall the beat of their wings.
The horrors they told of, I put into verse;
My rhyming's true message, you'll find, is perverse.
Listen to each, now, and hear my dream-curse:

I wasn't quite lying, you know, when I wrote
Of a world so minute it sits on a dust-mote.
The truth of poor Horton's tale has a grim theme:
A place whose salvation from dark things that teem
Would be to rouse ev'ryone on it to scream!

I dreamt of a name, too, I won't soon forget:
At the mountains of madness, an ur-Scrooge ill-met.
Who lived in the bone-chilling Antarctic air
But the old star-spawn'd Gryyntch, whose great frozen lair
Looked over the city the Old Ones built there?

The people who dwelt there were broken, unwhole:
There was something that from them the old Gryyntch had stole!
Right into the city he'd crept through the chill,
And taken the thing that'd made them so ill:
The people were happy to lose it!— Their will.

I wrote about slime falling out of the sky,
Nasty green gunk raining down from on high!
And the creatures! Horrors who came from afar;
Those wockets-in-pockets? They came from the stars,
Brought down by a Thing with intentions bizarre:

A king robed in yellow who lurks underground,
A grumpy old fellow, whose name makes no sound—
They called him the L'orakss, who speaks for the deep
Ones without mouths whom, awake, lie asleep
In that city of arches, all angled and steep!

What city? My city, it turned out to be,
That place where I went in my slumber, you see!
And maybe you've heard of its lord 'neath the wave,
Whose terrible wisdom I've now come to crave:
Great dreaming Cthulhu, asleep in his grave!

"I'a Cthulhu!" It rings in my mind,
The name of the high priest to all Elder-kind!
The creatures, the dreams, it was all of it true!
My nightmares now haunted the waking world, too,
Made real by the power of great Cthulhu!

But who's to believe me? A rhyming old prat,
Whose claim to a voice is a cat in a hat?
What I've found in my dreams, I've left in my tales;
"The Lorax?" I beg you, look past the details,
And yet... no, I pray that my pretense prevails.

What's lost in translation, I hope stays unfound,
If those with a nose go a-poking around.
The writing is childish, the text is mundane,
But the right kind of chap with the wrong kind of brain,
Might know the unknow'ble—
And go right insane.



JASON JOYCE

Jason Joyce grew up in Cheyenne, Wyoming and now lives in Los Angeles, where he is currently in the first year of LMU's MBA program. He co-owns the clothing company Weekend Society, works on the coaching staff for the LMU Lacrosse team, plays keyboards in the band The Rubbish Zoo, and is working on his first full-length collection of poems and short stories. You can find out more about his writing and published poetry on his blog at jasonrjoyce.tumblr.com.

Motown's Most Lonely

My mother took up meditation or yoga or something. She sat, shades drawn, chanting, "ohm mani pedi ohm flower petals".

That was the summer the neighbor girl got her boobs. It was also the summer when I stole two flightless ducks from the gypsies that thought they were chameleons that owned a pretend petting zoo.

Kenny and I took the ducks out to the back lot and shot at them with a BB gun. When people think you can't see them and you take what is theirs, it's just a lucky catch. It's a pair of hands practicing in the dark, hoping to unhook a bra, but past that has no idea what to do.

And I had no one to call about those ducks decorated with pellets because a family member wasn't dead or injured, and that was the only time I was allowed to use my cell phone.

Then my father put an extra lock on the door because someone or something kept letting the dogs out at night. That was the summer my classmates said a mountain panther was on the prowl, the same summer a curfew was imposed. It was also the summer my father was caught feather-handed near the neighbor's open window with an African grey parrot he plucked from its cage.

It was just a lucky catch. The damn bird wouldn't shut up at night, so my father took matters into his own hands. Then he paid the fine and bought them a new bird that ended up being much more quiet. But it was still for the better he said, that we didn't tell our grandparents or friends about this.

And I had no idea what to think when the moon disappeared for good, other than that I was really looking forward to learning about space in school that coming year. But that would have to be postponed indefinitely. Scientists were at a loss and could only reference some old Motown song when trying to guess what happened.

Then my sister ran away with a boy in white high-tops on a dirt bike. That was the summer we drove across two states to find her, the summer I saw Indiana's second biggest rocking chair, the summer when the news anchor reported the moon "had moved on". My mother cried for some reason and started meditating, and my father became worried that no one was safe so he bought extra locks again.

On the nights when it gets real bad and my parents scream and break things, I like to sit in my closet behind the stacked tubs of my old toys and think about the moon. I pretend the moon bought Indiana's biggest rocking chair, and is resting on some big country porch in its high-tops knowing exactly how to French kiss and what to do with boobs.



KRISTEN TRUDO

Kristen Trudo is a senior English and Psychology double major from Rancho Cucamonga, CA. And words are the engine that moves her, the blood that sweeps through her veins, the butterflies that overwhelm her stomach.

When You Became Foreign

And moreover your names were foreign
And difficult to pronounce
So we forget the story
That we belong to one another

Difficult to pronounce
So we whisper in hesitation
That we belong to one another
Forgetting the names of our heroes

So we whisper in hesitation
About your death and dying
Forgetting the names of our heroes
Forgetting the reasons for which you died

About your death and dying:
Was it for freedom, liberty, or pride?
Forgetting the reasons for which you died
Was it worth it in your eyes?

Was it for freedom, liberty, or pride
That we sacrificed your life?
Was it worth it in your eyes
To see your mother's heart just die?

That we sacrificed your life
Well, it's a fact that we must live with
To see your mother's heart just die

It's a burden we will bear

It's a fact that we must live with
As the world moves on about us
It's a burden we must bear
That we forgot your blessed name

As the world moves on about us
We forget your sacred story.
We forgot your blessed name
And it's almost like it's foreign.

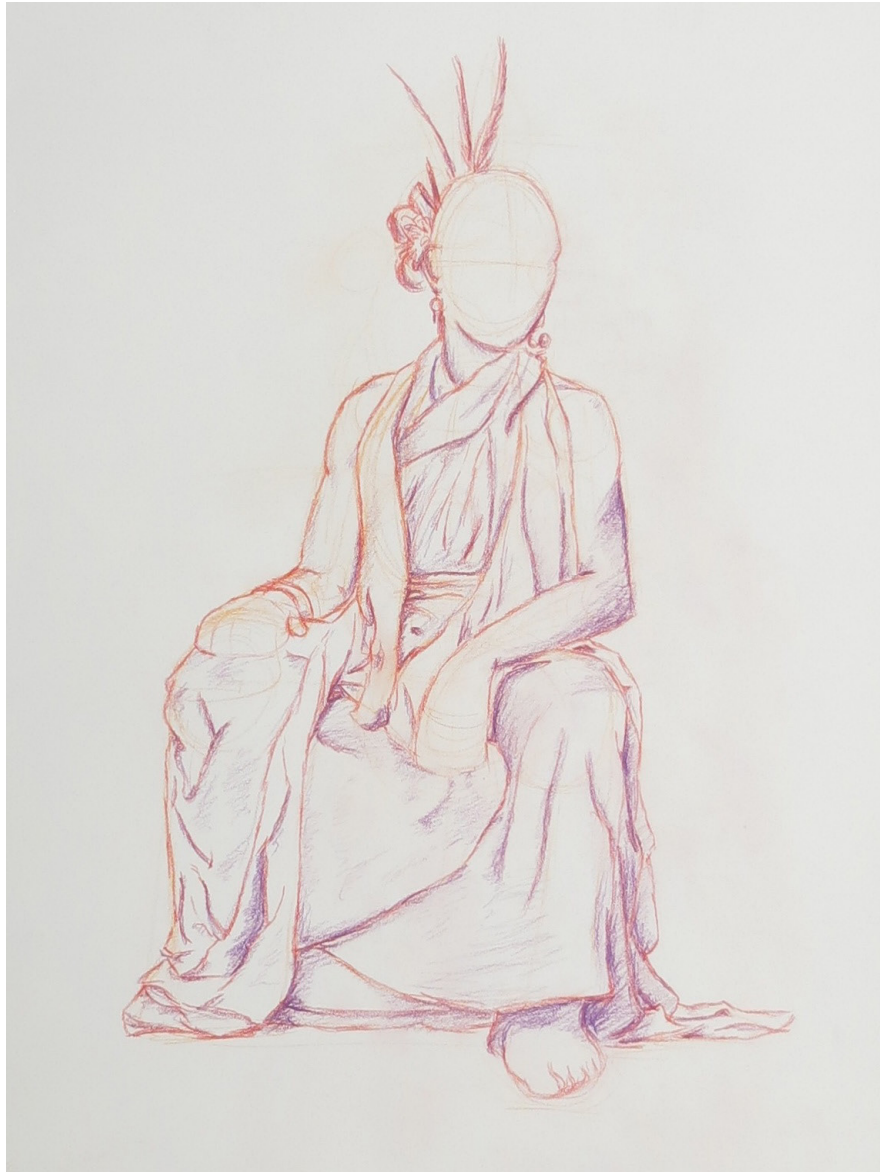


KATARINA KLASK

Katarina is a sophomore Animation major and Dance/Computer Science double minor from San Jose, California. She greatly enjoys everything having to do with art and is delighted that some of her pieces from last semester's figure drawing class made it into Attic Salt. She also really likes chocolate cake.



Untitled 1
Katarina Klask



Untitled 2
Katarina Klask



MADISON JOSEPH

Madison Joseph is a freshman Communication Studies major with an Environmental Studies minor. She is from Seattle, Washington, but currently lives in San Luis Obispo, California. She is a member of the Kappa Alpha Theta fraternity at LMU.

Pounding Feet

The pounding feet
Matched the pounding heart.
The hushed waters
reflected the full moon,
only disturbed by ripples
and leaves resting on its surface.

The path,
Which wove around the lake,
Was empty,
Aside from the pounding feet,
And the pounding heart.

The feet stopped pounding.
The heart did too.
The boy,
To whom the feet and heart belonged,
Stood at the water's edge.
He looked at the black sky,
And the bright moon.

The heart ached.
Maybe she was looking at the moon too,
Just from another place,
Another angle,
A world away.



JULIA FLEMING

Julia Fleming is a senior English major and Screenwriting minor from Torrance, CA. She transferred from El Camino College in Torrance in 2012. Julia had the pleasure of studying abroad with the LMU Summer in Oxford program. She has worked on campus as both a lifeguard at the Burns Rec Center and a writing tutor at the Academic Resource Center. Her hobbies include painting her nails, talking to dogs, and crushing the patriarchy. After graduation, Julia hopes to get into screenwriting and eventually publish a novel.

Burying Polynices

As Haimon cradles her in his arms, the Captain stands behind her. He tells the story of her fate, her search for her brother, her brother fighting in a war he doesn't believe in. "Take to the jungles," they told him and she followed after word of his death, wishing only for a proper burial, wishing only to ensure his future in the afterlife. She mourned him in the swamps, in the muck. She fought for his body on the Nung River, under the dense trees. She painted her face green to become part of the jungle. She cried, and was hanged.

Haimon followed her into the jungles and cut her down from the branch on which she hanged. The Captain stepped off the boat and he knew, he heard the stories of the girl from the Mediterranean, the venerable daughter of Oedipus who fought only for her faith, now hung dead, naked, and covered in mud, fighting for her brother who was sent off to fight the war he didn't believe in, drafted as only a body without a soul, a gun without a brain, now blood without a heart. The Captain had heard her story in whispers, the horror, the horror.

And Haimon stood steadfast on that fiberglass ship down that fire-lined tendril of green smoke river, through the napalm breeze and back to Kurtz's camp where she hung and Marlow told him how, captive, she chose death over eternity, suffering in the hands of Charlie. He told Haimon how Antigone purred poetic in Kurtz's presence, asking why they keep saying the world is going to end. "Maybe," she said, "Maybe it did end and we just didn't know about it. What horror that would be, standing at the end of the world and unable to die." Her orange diamond eyes flashed futures.

Haimon sprinkled the earth over Antigone because she would never come home. He gripped his machete tight. He located that intercostal space and split his side.



MATTHEW BALLARD

Matthew Ballard is a freshman Film Production major from Wenatchee, Washington. As a cinematographer, he enjoys making documentaries, narratives, commercials, music videos, and action sports videos. Other than filmmaking, Matthew is an avid skier and traveler. He has worked on informative films in East Africa and loves to experience different cultures around the world. He is also an ambassador of "kendama," a Japanese skill toy.

Click below to watch the documentary



Kendama is a Japanese skill toy that has been around for over two centuries. Iijima Hiroki is a modern kendama player who has incorporated dancing and style into his play. He strives to revolutionize kendama culture in Japan through his freestyle performances.

Matthew Ballard met "Iji" on a street corner in Tokyo. Matthew had never seen anything like what Iji was doing so he had to know more. He asked one of his Japanese friends to translate an interview for him so Matthew could hear more about Iji's inspiration and the philosophy about kendama.







MICHELLE IAFE

Michelle Iafe is a senior Health and Human Sciences student. The Honors Summer Research Fellowship brought her to Siena, Italy, to study Italian Sign Language and Deaf culture this past summer. Rather than return to the states before her autumn semester was to begin in Madrid, she followed the call of friendship and adventure. With no more than a 60-liter rucksack on her back and camera in hand, she met some incredible people and places while backpacking over a month as the wind blew across Europe. She is happy to share this photography from her collection and experiences.



Ponte Della Maddelena, Luccam, Italia
Michelle lafe



SOFIA LEGGIO

Sofia Leggio is a sophomore English major and French minor. She was born in Washington state, spent some of her childhood in Saudi Arabia, and is most recently from Houston, TX, which she considers home. She loves being outside, sketching, reading, writing, watching movies, and dreaming.

Habibi

It's me. Again. I know you're not there—or not really. I mean maybe in a metaphysical way your being understands that my being wants to contact you, or something, but you, Aïcha, my little Aïcha, are gone. I just like to hear your voice. It calms me down sometimes.

But then again, not always.

Like tonight...it's more like my body is being set on fire via my ear. My brain is boiling in my skull. Your soft and giggling message enrages me. It makes me want to rip you apart for what you did to me—no, what you did to yourself. I can't figure it out, little habibi.

...

Do you remember when you played me that English hymn, "Jerusalem," so sweetly, so deftly? How could those same hands turn on their master? You who could diffuse any situation with one carefree smile couldn't diffuse the time bomb in your own heart. It's better to call you. When I read your note, I...I just fall apart, habibi. If I hear your voice

you're not gone. You're simply not. If you felt like I do now, maybe I can understand why you did it.

What fundamental sadness you must have suppressed for so long...how unselfish to hide it!

But no, how selfish to take yourself away from me! How dare you! I made you, you can't just decide you don't want the life I gave you... oh my habibi, I never really understood, did I? And I still don't. I miss you.

Goodbye, Aïcha. I love yo—This mailbox is full. Your message will be deleted. Please hang up and try again.



MARIELE COURTOIS

Mariele Courtois is a junior Biology major from Parker, Colorado. She is a member of the LMU Honors Program and Gryphon Circle Service Organization. She is also involved in Campus Ministry and CLC and is the founding member of Annunziatazione. One of her favorite quotes is from Sir William Bragg: "Religion and science are opposed... but only in the same sense as that in which my thumb and forefinger are opposed - and between the two, one can grasp anything." Although she is still discerning what to do post-graduation, she hopes whatever it is will involve her thumb and forefinger grasping a pen, so she can follow her dream to be a writer.

The Dark Woods of the Soul

Torturous mutilation, ruthless demons, oppressive crowdedness, and the sickly song of endless despairing cries galvanize the depiction of hell in *Inferno*, the first part of Dante's 14th-century *Divine Comedy*. However, it is within the dark wood, before Dante even enters hell, that he experiences what Edith Stein, renowned philosopher and admired saint, would deem true Christian suffering. In order to fully appreciate how Edith Stein's characterization of a "dark night" of the soul provides new insights into Dante's experience in the dark woods, it is first necessary to appreciate Edith Stein as a gifted scholar with a fascination for the most hallowed Christian symbol of suffering – the cross. Comparison of the text to Edith Stein's philosophical reflections provides a novel perspective from which to gaze into Dante's dark woods, to realize the redemptive potential of surrendering to the call to be like Christ, and to identify Dante's *Divine Comedy* as a true example of the humbling Christian journey.

Edith Stein was a 20th century Jewish philosopher who began her intellectual career as an atheist. She received a doctorate in

philosophy from the University of Freiburg as *Summa Cum Laude* and later studied phenomenology with Professor Husserl. Stein established herself as a brilliant philosopher and highly-respected educator despite being a woman and a Jew during the Nazi regime. Stein was deeply impacted by the writings of St. Therese of Avila. To the shock and disappointment of many, especially her Jewish family, Stein converted to Catholicism in 1922 and, following in the footsteps of St. Therese, became a Carmelite about a decade later. *The Science of the Cross* is Edith's unfinished reflections on the purpose and paradoxical nature of Christian suffering as a means to unite in life-giving communion with Christ, and it is perhaps the most significant contribution Edith made to the spheres of philosophy and theology (Kavungualappil 9). Interestingly, Edith wrote this book as she anticipated her own suffering by the hands of the Nazis (*Ibid.*). Thus, it is possible to infer that Stein was motivated to find meaning in her imminent martyrdom. It is from this manuscript that striking connections can be made to Dante's first Canto.

"In the middle of the journey of our life, I came

to myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost" (Canto 1, Lines 1-3). In this first line of the *Divine Comedy*, already two important images surface that are fundamental to Stein's *Science of the Cross*. The first is darkness, and the second is the wood.

Dante is initially lost in a place of darkness. Interpreting the text metaphorically, Dante does not merely describe a physical setting but also the internal condition of his soul. Dante's lack of awareness and feelings of being "lost" and full of "fear" reveal that he is not at ease in his spiritual life and desires to find truth and security. The initial distressed state of Dante's soul in the beginning of the epic is no insignificant detail. Dante's depiction of being in a "dark wood" is one that correlates to Stein's complex, multi-faceted explanation of darkness in *The Science of the Cross*.

Stein characterizes "darkness" as a term that describes the severe condition of an abandoned soul. Stein devotes a substantial portion of *The Science of the Cross* exclusively to meticulously describing the essence and spiritual significance of being in darkness, which she explains is experienced during the "night of the soul," a time of doubt and uncertainty to which it seems Dante and many others can easily relate:

Just as light allows things to step forward with their visible qualities, so night devours them and threatens to devour us also. Whatever sinks into it is not simply nothing; it continues to exist but as indeterminate, invisible, and formless as night itself or shadowy, ghost-like, and therefore threatening. ...[Darkness] robs us of the use of our senses, limits our movements, makes lame our strengths, banishes us in loneliness, makes us shadowy and ghostly ourselves." (Stein 39)

Stein's description emphasizes the state of grave danger in which Dante finds his soul. His soul is at a precarious, mysterious place in which it might either find itself or lose itself.

Just as Dante portrays entering into the darkness as veering off a sure path, so too does Stein depict darkness as presenting an unconventional, alternative course – a turning point in the spiritual life. Dante writes that "the straight way was lost" (line 2). Stein also uses diction that indicates a sense of separation. "Detachment is designated as a night through which the soul must pass. ...The point of departure is the desire for the things of this world, which the soul must renounce" (Stein 45). Both authors indicate that the soul is undergoing a time of transition. Having been accustomed to a familiar way, the lost

soul must now re-adapt in order to survive in unfamiliar territory. The soul is forced to become used to having nothing, to being unsatisfied and starved, as evidenced by the gustatory imagery employed by Stein and Dante: to Stein, darkness is a “foretaste of death” and an “extreme bitterness,” and Dante’s darkness is “so bitter that death is little more so” (line 7). This time of spiritual desolation presents immense challenge, but it can also play a formative role in the creation of a strong spirit. Although the darkness presents a death-like place of disturbance and loss, Stein argues that it is a discomfort that is actually freeing.

Darkness becomes freeing as it strips one of reliance on unnecessary external goods that are distracting to the truth-seeking soul. For Stein, plunging into darkness is the equivalent of ripping off a bothersome, useless bandage. In its dark night, the soul (to which Stein refers to in the third-person as a “she”) is “freed from the confinement imposed by her sensory nature” (Stein 45). Because it no longer has to be distracted by the senses, the soul is free to use a much more vital tool to find truth: faith. In fact, Stein states “faith is a dark knowledge: it acquaints us with something but we do not get to see it” (Stein, 46). For Stein, suffering has transformative purpose. A transformative purpose is evident in Dante’s dark night: it is Dante’s freedom from his old path that

grants him the opportunity to follow Virgil toward Purgatory. Although he had fallen into despair, his journey was re-directed to a destination presumably more intriguing and worthwhile: the gates of heaven. When something is in darkness, one cannot see it for what it truly is. Therefore, one is in danger of mistaking to be unimportant what may be important, or vice versa. In darkness, a soul struggles for direction. Stein understands that in darkness, one is in need of a guide, and she conveys that it is at times of helplessness that God lends his loving hand. “The soul must strain with all her might,” writes Stein, “but God must come to her assistance with his efficacy, indeed he must act first” (Stein 45). In the case of the *Divine Comedy*, God provides assistance to Dante through his guide, Virgil. It is through Virgil that God offers his helping hand to the suffering Dante so he “may flee this evil” (line 131). Dante sacrifices his own autonomy so that he may be led out of darkness to “see the gate of Saint Peter” (line 134).

Dante’s journey up the mountain may signify a need to relinquish one’s pride in order to find God. Interpreting Dante’s text through Stein’s philosophy supports this notion that an admission of helplessness is necessary to receive grace. In darkness, one has no choice but to submit to outside forces that render us senseless, detached, and defenseless. Stein

attests that this weakness reveals a great strength. By giving up our heroism, we allow someone else to become the hero. We step aside to allow for Christ to intervene and save us. Both Stein and Dante employ similes related to the ocean to portray the daunting sentiment of powerlessness, the doomed fate of a weak soul, and severance from an old self. Dante writes, "like one... come forth out of the deep onto the shore, who turns back to the perilous water and stares: so my spirit, still fleeing, turned back to gaze again at the pass that has never yet left anyone alive" (lines 22-27). Similarly, Stein writes, "If this world is taken from us or if we are forced to withdraw ourselves from it, it is truly as though the ground were swept away from under our feet and as though it become night all around us; as though we ourselves must sink and vanish" (Stein 121).

One may formulate two objections to comparing Stein's depiction of suffering in the *Science of the Cross* to Dante's dark woods. First, Dante admits that he has passively entered darkness: "I cannot really say how I entered there, so full of sleep was I at the point when I abandoned the true way" (lines 10-12). This directly conflicts with the portrayal of true suffering provided in *The Science of the Cross*, which calls for an intentional imitation of Christ through the adoption of suffering.

Second, one may also point out that while both Dante and Stein explicitly rely on "darkness" to describe an inner struggle, Dante never makes explicit reference in Canto I to a cross. Without evidence of this image in Dante's depiction of his suffering, it may be unreasonable to assert that the *Divine Comedy* has much relevance to Stein's treatment of suffering that establishes the cross as the focal point.

In response to the first objection, it is true that Stein considers an active entrance into darkness to be necessary for the redemptive gifts of a suffering like Christ's, but according to Stein, suffering transforms into a selfless offering when it incorporates both active and passive intentions. Stein explains that the soul must be deliberately purged of disordered desires in order to effectively "engag[e]... in the battle with one's own nature" (Stein 47). Dante did not intend to arrive in a dark wood; however, Stein also describes how suffering should not be sought out for its own sake. If one only offers sacrifice to God because they expect glory (this would be the case for someone guilty of "spiritual pride" or "spiritual avarice"), then their offering is just as illegitimate as sacrifice to God that is forced (Stein 50). The fact that Dante fears his dark wood and describes himself as "falling down into a low place" during his suffering confirms that he does not possess the vices of spiritual

pride or spiritual avarice, and his willingness and enthusiasm to be led by Virgil indicates he desires spiritual insight and is not being forced into his epic journey. Thus, Dante serves as a prime example of someone who meets both the active and passive requirements for making a true sacrificial offering.

In response to the second objection, it is erroneous to assert that Dante's first Canto is void of any cross-related imagery. Dante does not choose, after all, a barren desert as the setting for his loneliness. Instead, he depicts himself in a wood, which brings us to the second important image in Stein's portrayal of suffering. Dante is surrounded by a forest, a dense crowding of trees. Coincidentally, the image of a growing tree is used by Stein to depict how one gradually becomes accustomed and even dependent on a cross, or a spiritual suffering that is offered as a gift to God. Marian Maskulak elaborates on this image of the cross as a growing tree in her article "Reflections for a Theology and Spirituality of the Cross." She states that Stein "envision[s] the cross as a 'seed' planted in the soul of those who accept it, entailing a painful process of growth" (Maskulak 446). Maskulak describes how Stein foresees that the growth eventually culminates in a life-giving tree that bears valuable fruits of wisdom and grace. "Faith sets Christ before her eyes: the poor, humiliated, crucified one, who is abandoned

on the cross even by his heavenly Father. In his poverty and abandonment she rediscovers herself. Dryness, distaste, and affliction are the 'purely spiritual cross' that is handed to her. If she accepts it she experiences that it is an easy yoke and a light burden. It becomes a staff for her that will quickly lead her up the mountain" (Stein 121).

Dante also struggles up a mountain he is not prepared to climb, but instead, Virgil directs him down a different route "to escape from this savage place" (line 92-93). If it had not been for his cross of helplessness, then Dante would have never met Virgil. This is an example of how Dante's helplessness is redeemed by grace. The cross, the holy wood, is illuminated as both a needy parasite that, once allowed to take life from its master, becomes a dependable and perpetual fortifier. According to Stein, if we accept our cross, our redemption is the satisfying fruit of our labor in carrying this growing tree within us.

Additionally, Dante's location in a wood can also be connected to Stein's ultimate example of the darkest night: the most agonizing abandonment by God experienced by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane and during his crucifixion. Maskulak quotes Stein: "No human heart ever entered as dark a night as did the God-man in Gethsemane and on Golgotha. No searching human spirit can

penetrate the unfathomable mystery of the dying God-man's abandonment by God" (451). First, Christ is surrounded by trees during his urgent prayer to his father pleading, unless it be contradictory to his Father's will, for dismissal from his destiny as a sacrifice. Then, in another instance of abandonment, Christ and two criminals die, each nailed to a tree. Christ calls out to his Father, "Why have you forsaken me?" and dies a short time afterward (Matt. 27:46). The men hang from their crucifixes in the darkness that falls over the land. The three form a small wood of death. Dante, like Christ, is surrounded by trees in a time of abandonment. In a sense, they are both blatantly confronted by the devastating cost of sin in these moments when they are submerged in dark fields of crosses.

In contrast to a tragedy, which is defined by a story that descends in a ruinous downfall, the plot of the Divine Comedy ascends from the deep trenches of Inferno to divine grandeur in Paradiso. The upward momentum of the emotional landscape of the epic poem, from desolation to glory, mimics the spiritual movement of the Paschal Mystery and defines the Divine Comedy as a truly Christian story. Edith Stein's philosophical reflections on the meaning of suffering in light of the call to be like Christ reveal that Dante carries a cross through the dark wood. Illuminating the intrinsic ties between Dante's night of the

soul and the paradoxical nature of life-giving suffering, Stein shines a beacon of hope through Dante's dark wood that he will be delivered from helplessness to the kingdom of new life.

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The Path Home
Patrick Foster

The Answer

Kristen Trudo

So I just hit the road, because that is what writers do when things go wrong, or right, or somewhere in between, that is what writers do when we are looking for answers – we get in the car, turn on the music, and drive – so I found myself on that road, reliving memories that I thought had died so long ago, but, as it turns out, they weren't dead at all, they were living, breathing bodies, just waiting to be discovered, rediscovered, to remind me of the life I had lived, and mistakes made at my hands: and I don't remember how, but I ended up in that place where I realized that I loved you, where the chairs fit into my back in an incredibly perfect way, where I would sit for hours, only to get up, leave, and realize the smell of coffee had somehow become part of me – a way of reminding me where I had spent my early morning hours – and I kept driving because there was really nothing for me there, not anymore, not like there was on the road, because the road was new and free and unmarked, the road was waiting for a different story to be written upon it and across it and through it, and yet, I still found myself driving for awhile only to arrive at that other place, the place I told you that I loved you, and realized that you didn't love me back, and realized that you couldn't love me back, and realized that the world did not want you to love me back, and so I kept driving, because the driving is really the only answer when you arrive at a place that is still grieving with the loss of your love, a place that still

whispers sweet hymns of pity upon you, a place that still knows every meter and rhyme and verse of your story, and just when you think that you have arrived and departed from the worst possible place, you find your car parked in front of her house again, and you sit there, breathing heavily, unable to discern what and how and why you have ended up here, here, where she is sitting up in her room probably listening to that song that reminds her of you, here, where her world is filed neatly away in tiny drawers and folders and cupboards, here, where your presence would offer disruption and imbalance, here, where the hurricanes and tornadoes and earthquakes that are your emotions are unwelcome, and yet, you still find yourself here, unbuckling your seatbelt, breathing, lowering the volume on the radio, panicking, turning the key counter clockwise to shut off the engine, breathing, placing your hand on the door, panicking, watching as it opens despite the unsteadiness of your grip, breathing, stepping out left followed by right, panicking, standing before her white picket fence of a home, breathing, and deciding that you must speak to her, that you will not allow her to say no to you once again, that she is the answer that this road has led you to.

Pricklies

Jason Joyce

When the man next door drinks
his arm turns into a cactus

with a heavy arm like that and the
spins like a failing fighter pilot you can
imagine the holy mess his house becomes on the weekends

One time when the town upholsterer was leaving he told me it looked like a pride of lions
filed down their claws on the fine furniture

If you asked a professor or a psychiatrist about it, they would tell you this whole
thing is something to do with a distended carnal desire

Living alone

I figure though, it has something to do with the time a soaking wet girl showed up on
his doorstep in her Sadie Hawkins dress

Even guys like us fantasize about remarkable things like that

She asked if Bryan was there and when she had the wrong house asked if she could
come in and dry off

Guys like us can't make this stuff up



Amici di Venezia, Italia
Michelle lafe



MICHAEL ROBINSON

Michael Robinson is an LMU senior – local, pastured & organic. A friend to all animals, except the manatee (who are known poker cheats). Open Monday-Friday – never closed, but less open on Saturdays and Sundays. A purveyor of fine verse, dialogues and prose for limited occasions since 1972(-ish).

Gentile Sabbath Psalms

I. Vespers

This late day, gray tinged, cool to the touch of
Winter, still tinged silver in these days that
steal pass Ides. Settled in now, in this black
clear night, the birthday boy, a red-black imp,
seventy, out of the blue, impishly
asks of two stars straddling the bisque moon.
Home now. Blues bogged. I check chickens, sight stars
by the scooped cream moon – one, left; checked, maybe,
by Venus, right – a white asterisk. Maybe
the rust cat longs to pass the iron-wright's
kitchen gate, black, its glass door, long swung wide
open. Now, the dour calico creeps, a
titian vine, stretching, claws open, paws splayed.
I pause. The gold eyes size the night, then leave.

II. Compline

The dog sighs out her lungs, a piebald tire,
Tired, I ker-plop on the tweed sofa.
The lamp's green bulb whines. I rewind up, plop
back to barking feet; like her, beat up, green
and black, a bit broken. My back rumbles,
moans, unvoiced. Out a bit, a taupe cricket

chirps despair and white rage. Inside and out,
in our own hues, we rage screaming against
being dark. Alone. Together. Screaming:
the dog's dark eyes, the cricket's notes, my way-
ward note of the puce door that comes open
for exit, not welcome. We three yell, brass
bells in discord; gray sleep, our lone exit,
colorless and mute as clapperless bells.



JAKE WEITZ

Jake Weitz is a Southern California native, hailing from Long Beach. He is currently a freshman Political Science/English double major, with a minor in Asian Pacific Studies. He is a Researcher at the Institute for Leadership Studies at Loyola Marymount University. He has been writing poetry and prose for as long as he can remember, because he feels that it is the truest way to communicate, as well as the easiest way for him to do so. He loves dogs, wolves, and bears, has his own radio show, and has a titanium spine, which is a story he will tell you if you ask him.

Lightning

Thunder.

She sat on the porch, sipping a dark liquid quietly.

Thunder.

My heart pounded against my chest, bloody.

Thunder.

My soul cracked against the sky, dripping moonlight.

Thunder.

Tough like Ghostwood, it snaps, it does not bend.

Thunder.

Rain like hail, snow like fire.

Thunder.

Seconds turn to hours as my hands move, insidious.

Thunder.

Midnight on her lips tells secrets like willows.

Thunder.

The drum pounds like war, like fire, like ash in my mouth.

Thunder.

The grey churning stops, continues, stops, I tell myself.

Thunder.

The seconds turn to hours then melt. My mind.

Thunder.

Forgive your wrongs, forgive my sins, who am I, who are you?

Thunder.

Her lips.

Thunder.

My heart.

Thunder.

I move.

Thunder.

Autumn has come.



Sprouts of Capuchos, Sintra, Portugal
Michelle lafe



DIANA SOFIA DELGADO CORNEJO

Diana is a sophomore Modern Languages and Literatures major with a Philosophy minor. She enjoys writing, the color green, immigrant activism, and singing spontaneously about her feelings.

If a writer falls in love with you

They say that if a writer falls in love with you, you can never die. You are turned from flesh and blood to the subject of countless odes, to the hero of endless fantastical adventures. And a vast majority of these will be scrapped, bashed, fertilized and reused, like a frustrated potter dashing an imperfect vase back into shapeless clay, because she is suddenly painfully aware that they are mediocre shadows of you, mere lovesick babble. The writer's previously obedient words suddenly run amok, ungraspable like gnats in the air. She bats them away with a goaded hand. It is a time of thrilling lexical chaos.

Inevitably, bits of you will start to seep into stories that are not yours, places where you should not be. Your hyperactive left eyebrow will appear on the man's brow in a short story about ducks. Your perpetually-stained striped polo shirts will emerge in a poem about autumn. Your insufferable pun about Julie Andrews will be immortalized in a dramatic dialogue. And your incredibly wise off-hand remark about existentialism will catalyze an entire manifesto, a new life ideology.

Like a bottle of spilled ink, you will blot out her intricately scribbled words and flood into everything, erasing them with that dark color of the universe.

A lifetime is such a laughable thing in the face of eternity. You both mock it. Love is omniscient, not blind. Only the two of you know this in all the world, in all of history.

But perhaps, one day, it will mock you back. Maybe one day, you will notice how you gesticulate wildly when you speak to her, swinging your pencil through the air like a baton, like you are conducting your own thoughts into words. But you will realize that you are instead conducting her words, imprisoning her thoughts, be they tied by meter or melody. And maybe after a while, you will become lazy, clumsily dropping the fledgling phrases she gave to you as gifts with trust in her eyes.

Just an unfortunate plot development. The writer knows better than anything else that prolonging a saga does not necessarily do anything to enhance it, and that a sad ending does not take away from a beautiful story. Sometimes it makes it greater, even.

But maybe she was a fool to ask eternity of a fellow simple mortal.

And she will be betrayed by her own trade, as the words begin to return obediently to her

shaking hands, nuzzling her apologetically for their sabbatical. It will become unbearable for her to see her pain fettered into heartsick cliché. They are too heavy for you. They are too heavy for her. She is a free spirit. And if she cannot fly, she will sing. This is no duet anymore. You must realize this. You, the muse, must set her free.

But somewhere in this hurtling world, there must remain an imprint, a baby fossil, of your eyelashes like butterfly wings, of your all-of-a-sudden laughter that sounds decades older than you. And she will be the last to realize that you must first become a memory if you are ever going to be remembered properly.

Subtotals: A Summation of Pain

Kristen Trudo

Number of times I have been discriminated against for being black: 2,231; for growing up poor: 1,347; for not going to college: 349; for other miscellaneous reasons: 1,983. Number of children I had with my wife: 3. Number of sons I had with my wife: 1. Number of years my son, George, played varsity basketball: 4. Number of points he averaged per game: 24. Number of colleges that recruited him for basketball: 11. Number of colleges he declined: 11. Number of times my son told me he wanted to be a writer: 8. Number of times I supported that desire: 0. Number of girlfriends he brought home as a teenager: 0. Age of my son when he came out to my wife: 15. Age of my son when he came out to me: 19. Number of drinks I had the night he said he was gay: 13. Number of times I punched my son for being gay: 113. Number of times he punched back: 1. Number of times I was arrested for punching my son: 2. Number of nights I spent in jail for punching my son: 4. Number of times he begged my wife to drop the charges: 2.

Number of gay friends I've had throughout my lifetime: 0. Number of gays I beat up when I was a kid: 7. Number of times I called my son a faggot: 18; a fairy: 43; a homo: 28; a fruitcake: 33; a pussy: 22. Number of times I made my son cry before he came out: 1; after he came out: 77. Number of cuts my wife found on his wrist while he was asleep: 12.

Number of therapists George saw, alone: 2; I saw, alone: 4; our family saw, together: 1. Number of therapists that could get through to me: 0. Number of boyfriends my son brought home to Thanksgiving: 1. Number of boyfriends I made leave our home on Thanksgiving: 1.

Number of times I prayed that he would choose to be straight again: 4,002. Number of times he became straight again: 0. Number of times I said fuck you to God for doing this to me: 163. Number of times I kicked my son out of the house: 1. Number of times I let him move back in: 0. Number of times my son looked at me with fear in his eyes: 12; with misery: 148; hatred: 7; disappointment: 16; shame: 28; love: 39. Number of letters my son sent to me after I kicked him out: 78. Number of letters I responded to: 0. Number of times I cried myself to sleep: 2,784. Number of books my son wrote: 7. Number of books my son had published: 4. Number of books he dedicated to me: 2. Number of times I thanked him for that: 0.

Number of times my wife asked me to love my son unconditionally: 1,422. Number of times I told her to fuck off: 1,422. Number of times we got divorced: 1. Number of times George got married: 1. Number of wedding invitations he sent to me: 1. Number of times he called to see if I was coming: 8. Number of times I answered: 0. Number of peo-

ple in attendance at the wedding: 346. Number of times I saw my son get married: 0. Number of children he and his husband, Matthew, adopted: 3. Number of times I said I love you to my son before he came out: 7,239; after: 0. Number of times that I apologized to my son: 0.

Number of times I have felt suffocated by my regrets: 10,347.

Age of my son when he purchased that gun: 32. The number of bullets it took for him to end his life: 1.



Untitled 1
Nathan Pihl

Untitled

Sofia Leggio

Chère Anoushka,
How long has it been? Last summer, in Guiana?

I miss you, you know, ma souricette. Me and Axel, here in Los Angeles, without you. The city of angels, don't they call it? But really it's just the city of big cars and big loneliness. I take Axel to school, I go to school; I teach my students. And it's isolated, you know? Always in our car, our metal box, going somewhere—it's never organic, like in Paris. Nobody has time to know you. But this is where you were born, do you remember? You were so young when you and your mother left.

It is like where I was born, in a way. You know the big yellow house, where we go sometimes in the summer? That's my country. So jumbled, confused and dense with dark forest? And those big army helicopters that shoot down the gold greedy Brazilians? And the thick-green jungle that devours the country, until we humans can only live right on the coast? It's isolated, like that.

Where I took your picture, my little golden girl with her secret smile.

But! How is everything? Tous va bien? How is your English coming? I bet you're the best in your class, ma souricette. You are always so bright, ma petite lumière. But don't worry if it's not coming so easy. Eleven is hard.

I remember when I was eleven, back in Guiana, How Papa played us that Brazilian music, the American rock-n-roll, The beats were sublime, they pulsed in my veins, Then me in my rock band in Paris, your papa was going to become a star— Music made me a dreamer.

And now, here I am, dreaming still. Teaching isn't music, but it can sometimes feel like it, When you're sharing with and guiding your students, And the cool-green, peaceful joy when they get it—quand ils comprennent— It's like music that way.

Do you dream, little Anoush?
Not in the night, so much, though I hope
those dreams are all fantastical, and frighten-
ing even—
For how else can you learn to fight monsters,
except within yourself? —
Mais, fais-tu des rêves pour ta vie? J'espere
que oui.
I dream for you, and Axel too. Even your
mother, sometimes. And for myself, of course.
Always, I dream.

Forgive your papa, tonight I'm pensive.
So much always running through my big, wrin-
kled head, no?
But I love you, my sweet daughter.
Gros bisous,
Papa

June Morning

Julia Fleming

She has blue hair and wears red lipstick, though she is only fifteen, and no one seems to take notice even though everyone does notice and she likes it that way; she likes the attention she can get from her lipstick, her hair, her clothes and her cutting, which she does semi-secretly in the bathrooms at her high school or restaurants after fighting with her friends and she carries the razor in a little Altoid tin that also contains some Xanax and Oxycontin and all the nightmares I could have never imagined at fifteen. The boy she's met went to high school with me and he got her into the stuff unfortunately; she had been doing better for a long time before she met him and he had been doing fine until his girlfriend broke up with him so now he's going around messing with my little cousin and making her fall in love with him until he gets bored and moves on so she tries to kill herself just like he tried to a few months ago; she takes a few pills she thinks are Vicodin and tells the world. My aunt doesn't have a cell phone because she's far too poor from paying for the whole delinquent family so when I get the text message that my cousin is at it again I don't bother to call her but I don't bother to call anyone else either because it's

been far too many late nights trying to talk her down from that ledge and by now I'm sure she'll never really do it but once I hear the circumstances, I begin to wonder and by morning, I don't hear from her at all and I start to get worried since apparently she's told friends goodbye and she didn't make it to school and my sister doesn't know where she is and she won't answer her phone so I start to get worried. Startled in the early morning by the definite fear that she may or may not have tried to overdose on Vicodin, I'm already in my car charging down the road to the one bedroom apartment where my aunt lives off a single income and where my older cousins should live if they hadn't stopped coming home one night and I'm calling and calling, calling the house phone, the cell phone that won't pick up and I'm getting really worried because no one is home and how could they just leave her there all alone when they know what she does when she is alone; I'm already crying and I'm already calling 911 in my head, punching through a window to unlock the door, punching past the bars on the window my uncle installed before he got put in jail—I guess I could probably kick down the shitty screen door or break a window or I could just

call the ambulance and make them do it but she could just be asleep, she could just be ignoring her phone, drawing out the attention she craves and needs so much and now I'm getting mad, but I'm still scared I'm going to get to her apartment and find her dead. Pulling up to the complex, the apartment where her family is slowly pressing all the life out of her just as quickly as the pills might be, I call and call, continue to call and I run up the stairs and pound on the door, yelling for her, yelling, get out here, get out here, it's me are you there and I stand on the porch for a few minutes, leaving another message on the answering machine—it's been hundreds now—and the door opens slowly and she peers out blearily in pajamas and her blue hair is all messed up and she looks at me like I'm crazy and asks what I'm doing here. I tell her that I know about the pills and I know that she wants to die and this isn't the first time she's tried and she cries like I knew she would but I never thought I'd cry so much too.

I tell her all the things I didn't want to say when I got to her house and found her dead; I tell her about the vomit the EMTs won't wipe off her cheeks and the AED pads they won't apply to her cold chest and the sound of the sirens all through Hawthorne that won't bring out neighbors who wouldn't have been all that surprised to see an ambulance at their house by now; I tell her about the funeral I won't

have to attend and the black dress I would dread buying, the poem her mother won't cry her eyes out reading. I tell her I don't want to go to that funeral. I don't want to read her eulogy. I don't want to find her dead and poisoned from some dirty pills because of some worthless guy...and for all the things I don't want and I do wish for my cousin, she still keeps her little Altoid tin with a razor blade and a few Xanax and has stripes up her arms and legs and sides, blue hair, and red lipstick.

On Describing Their History

Kristen Trudo

Not very descriptive.
It could have been anyone:
That man buried beneath that dirt.
Because no one bothered
To write down his name.
As they piled them, one
Upon the other – to the sky.
Something like scrap metal
In a junkyard.
Their worth, those days, probably
Comparable to such.
Not very descriptive.
The pages of his history.
Man. With child. With wife.
All dead.
Not very descriptive.
The tale of his dying.
Concentrated with men
And women, and children,
In a field that became their prison,
A prison that became their home.
Clubs, whips, and rifles
Move his bare body forward
Into a box. And
The chamber that reeks of death
Witnesses his last thoughts
Of wife and boy, of wife and boy.
Not very descriptive

Are the reflections that penetrate
Us today,
Unable to make sense of the
Stories we are told,
Of a world that lived not even
A century ago.
So we speak of the graves
That lack
Details –
Graves of cracked cement,
And pristine grass
Where feet never
Tread.
Knowing the history
We are told is
Not
Very
Descriptive.



Kittens of Chefchaouen, Morocco
Michelle lafe



MARC PAPAKYRIAKOU

Marc Papakyriakou is a senior Mechanical Engineering major with a double minor in Physics and Applied Mathematics. He grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, and has been spoiled with warm weather all his life and considers rain and snow pleasant novelties. Over his summers he has conducted research at the University of Arkansas and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and he is aiming to attend graduate school to study nanotechnology for a PhD. But, he secretly wants to throw everything away and become a writer.

Below is an excerpt. For the full story, please follow the link -- [Click Here](#)

The Unusual Hermit

It's strange to be up here. To think that all that is connecting me to Earth is a wire only a few meters in diameter and tens of thousands of meters in length. It is anchored to an equatorial island somewhere south of Hawaii, but the center of gravity is located somewhere around thirty-six thousand kilometers away from the planet. I'm even further away than that and, looking beneath me while I float on the observatory deck, Earth is clearly visible, but only about the size of my hand when outstretched. It's hard to imagine that humans actually made this device and even harder to actually imagine that I am here, at the end of this long, thin wire. It has been, what, over three years now since I was last on Earth? When did this all start again? I guess you could say when I was accepted for a position as an engineer in the control and launch center at the top of the Elevator. It was a great opportunity, but it didn't come without its demands. My nineteen fellow colleagues and I run on a shifting time schedule, nine months of work and three months of down time. This is because of the long journey to and from the command center, which is on average eight to nine days each way, depending on how many tons of materials are transported along with it. When it reaches the top, the carrier docks at the command center where it is able to offload its materials and any personnel being brought up at the same time exit the capsule and undress

from the silly, but necessary, suits required for the ascent. They are needed because the Elevator's path is directly upwards from the equator and there is no way for the climber to avoid or mitigate the large dosages of cosmic radiation caused by the Van Allen belts. The suits, along with augmentations to the personnel portion of the carrier are supposed to counter the magnetic frequencies and lessen the impact on the riders. The three-month downtime is not only for our rest from work but also from our exposure to this radiation.

One day we were given some curious orders. All but one of us was to report planet side for some "special project." Someone had to stay to make sure everything continued running and I was picked because I wasn't ranked high enough to complain, yet I was still competent enough to do all that was required. I was nearing the end of my nine-month shift but the prospect of being alone excited me. I kept these feelings to myself, knowing the mentalities of my colleagues, and they guaranteed me that when the next carrier came up in around three weeks I would be allowed to descend. That would be enough time.

But, after three weeks passed I was given a notification that they were encountering difficulties and that my descent had to be delayed, "but

only for a few days" they promised. These days then turned into weeks and after many failed attempts I finally got a hold of someone, the Chief Engineer of the Elevator building process. After the successful construction, he was granted the position as the highest up when it came to what happened with the Elevator. I had only ever seen him from the torso up on the communication screen, but it was evident that he is quite overweight. He has the face and expression of a retired military man and the haircut the match it, but his suit said only business. "When am I heading down?" I asked, "I should be down already, but as you see that clearly isn't the case." I could see his face grimace a little and he looked directly at me and said, in his very deep voice, "We're sorry to inform you we can't see you coming down any time in the immediate future." I paused, and even though I knew what it meant I still had to ask, because he wasn't being direct, "What exactly is that supposed to mean? I have a wife and kids you know. I want to see them." I went to check the status of the next carrier in line, like I had every day, but this time nothing showed up. "Why is there no carrier on the track?" I asked, receiving another highly mechanical response "The last carrier that we sent up was... decommissioned during transit." I knew my way around the lingo the decipher this euphemism, The carrier had been destroyed while it was climbing up, and definitely not from mechanical problems. The carriers aren't nearly as strong as the tower itself so the prospect of shooting down the carrier wasn't surprising to me from a technical standpoint but more from a political one. "Now just tell me straight up, what exactly is going on down there?" I asked in a tone

that showed that I wouldn't be satisfied with more lingo. He paused and gulped, clearly formulating his thoughts before he said, "A world crisis is at hand and the central focus is the Elevator. The level of firepower focused on Baker Island right now is unprecedented. Nothing is being allowed up or down. Does that answer your question?" I nodded and sighed. I had assumed that humanity was beyond war at this point. I thought that it was agreed upon when we started the Elevator project. This wouldn't have been possible without large-scale cooperation. But as usual in politics, everyone said one thing and intended another. They all want the Elevator for themselves. I can't fault them for that.

* * *

But, every choice comes with a cost. I chose to follow my dreams without question or hesitation. But, whom would I be leaving behind? I never considered that. For my colleagues and me it was all the same. We would spend nine months up in the sky, working until exhaustion, and then spend three months back on Earth pretending that everything was as it always was, pretending that distance plays no part in emotion. Sure, after nine months we could scrap together some pieces and make it seem like we still have an idea what is going on, that we were still human, but the best that one can do is convince everyone else that it is true, everyone except oneself of course. I've been told that I'm one of the lucky ones, as I have a family to go home to. They call it a family because they only see it on the outside or on my personnel profile. To me though it doesn't feel like a family,

but just a group of strangers who lives where I once used to live. Every nine months I come back to see two boys who just happen to have the same names as the ones that I chose. The recognition and love in their eyes just makes me sick knowing that I can't reciprocate. They never told us about this part, how we would be torn apart from the inside out.

So why don't I just quit, now knowing this true reality? It's so easy to just think it, and theoretically also to do it. All I would have to do is exit my living quarters, float down the cylindrical path around the core docking bay until I reach the wide entrance to the long clear tube, about a kilometer long, that leads to the communication center, the only place where any outgoing messages could be placed. As I float down that tube the sight of the stars always catches me and slows my drift. The stars shining in all of their untainted glory. The stars. They seem so close but they are still so far away. But I'm closer than any other human is to them, and then it hits me. We're part of a project that is bigger than any one of us. Some day we're going to be at those stars, and some day we're going to control them. By the end of the tube, whatever any of my colleagues or I would have said had been overruled by that image. They know why we are all up here, why we endure it all, why we sacrifice our humanity. Because we believe we are doing it for humanity. It's so silly how easily we allowed ourselves to be deluded.



A Bike-Ridden Underpass
Patrick Foster



VIRGINIA COMBS

Virginia Combs, an avid fan of *Downton Abbey*, *The Mindy Project*, and all things Austen, is a senior English major and Screenwriting minor from Rochester, NY. She transferred from Monroe Community College as a junior and immediately fell in love with the LMU English Department. A member of the staff for *Criterion* and *LA Miscellany*, Virginia is honored to have her work included in *Attic Salt*. After graduation, Virginia plans on staying in L.A., where it is sunny and warm year-round and she doesn't have to shovel or scrape ice off of any surfaces. She plans on living with her best friends, Julia and Angelee, and continuing to accumulate good times with them.

The Last Week on Earth, Somewhere in a Crumbling London

In the last dive bar on Earth
I met the first man. He sat,
back against the wall, celebrating, finally,
his divorce from Eve with a glass
of scotch on ice. I approached
him, after knocking back a shot of tequila
and swallowing six pomegranate seeds,
to give
him a piece of my liberated woman's mind.
I spat on his animal skin shoe
that stuck out from under the table.
"Suzy and Lizzy send their regards."

He remained impassive, as only the first man
could, while I took a dangerous look
at his inspired being:
His face was tanned from thousands of years
of trying to break into Paradise during broad daylight.
A thin scar chased his perfect jawline,
no doubt from the night Lilith backhanded
him, her wedding ring hanging on loosely
to a finger that kept narrowing.
(He smirked when she hit him.)
A print of the reddest lips
I had ever seen rested on his collar bone—
I heard that Eve had had her matching tattoo
removed long ago.
A holy five o'clock shadow graced
his visage and dark brows shaded
Earth-colored eyes that held more generations

than anthropologists had time for—
How could I not give in?

At three A.M. his idyllic, dreaming
being was passed out in a shadowed, tangled
mess of sheets. I didn't say a Word
as I shrugged on his coolest shirt
and plucked a palm frond
from behind a crucifix.
I tied it around my waist—
the second most primitive belt,
just a bite of a fruit away from man's
crafted hands on woman's exposed waist.

It took me six steps to reach the front
door and another to escape
into the deteriorating, falling world.
He was an arrogant, confused son of God
and I remembered as I took that one last step
out of his metropolitan hovel:
he was the only man that didn't have a mother.

Beautiful Dreamer

Sofia Leggio

Heavier
Uncoiled
She was slipping
Pure color
What does one say to all this?

I was alien
Unavoidable
Vital, alive
A primitive
Naked power

Release
Really free
Lifting
Rapid softness

Necessity
To linger, to look back, to find
Too late

A poignancy.

(Found poem from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*)

This Immovable Eternity

Kristen Trudo

The desert gives us an image of flat, immovable eternity. Resolute in the way that it holds us, as if we are prisoners under some merciless trapdoor. Pounding against the wooden stage for an opportunity to be released – an opportunity to take those long overdue steps toward life, an opportunity to smell my wife’s hair once more. But I would sink below that trapdoor if only I might walk away from this place of forty days and forty nights. For a trapdoor provides the anticipation that one might come about to unlock it – that someone might hear the pounding. And he will find himself rushing over to lift you from your misery. And that anticipation, under that trapdoor, inside that jail cell, locked in that closet – that anticipation is what keeps the inhalations following each exhalation. That anticipation gives you permission to live.

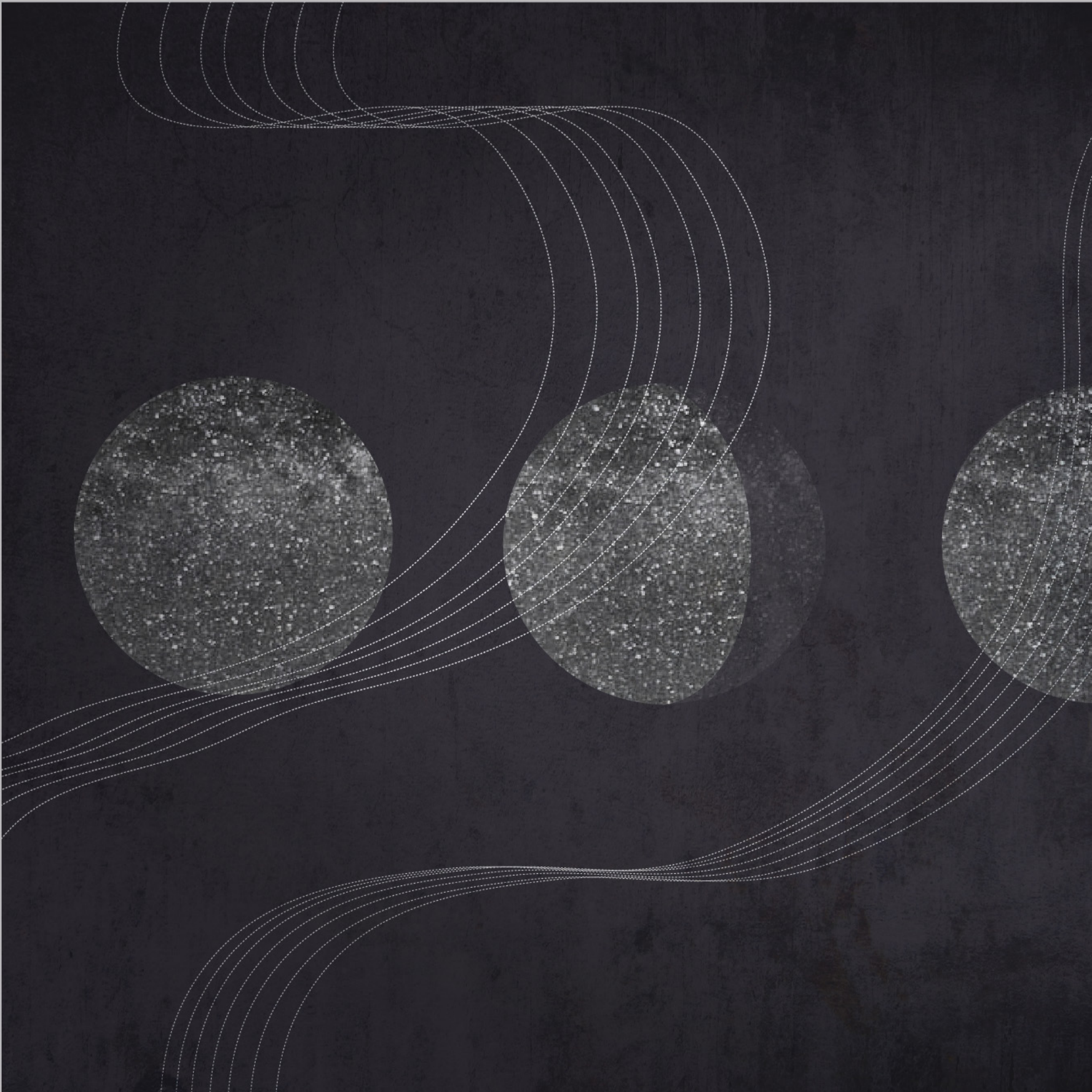
But in the desert: the sand – and monotony – swallow anticipation.

For in the desert, no one hears your pounding, your screaming, your crying. And the only person to panic at the sound of your sudden, visceral cries is the same one you would find in your mirror back

home. And nearly every night, you find that you are ripped from sleep, with weapon in hand. (The movement as automatic as the death derived from it.) For with its rigid landscape, the desert breeds the reflexive: And you find that you forget what it meant to be a man, what it meant to anticipate, what it meant to breathe.



Untitled 2
Nathan Pihl





ATTIC SALT

