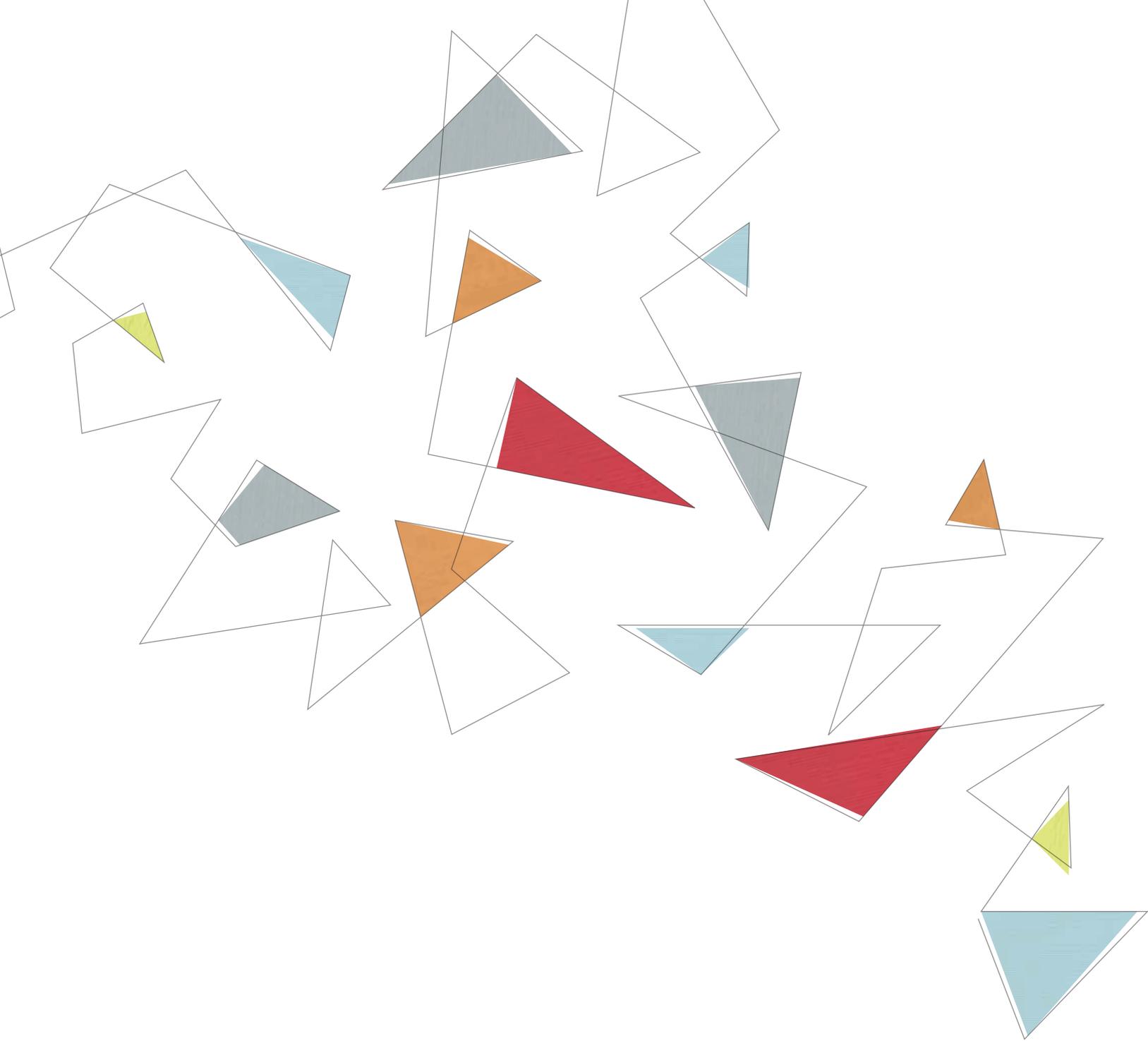


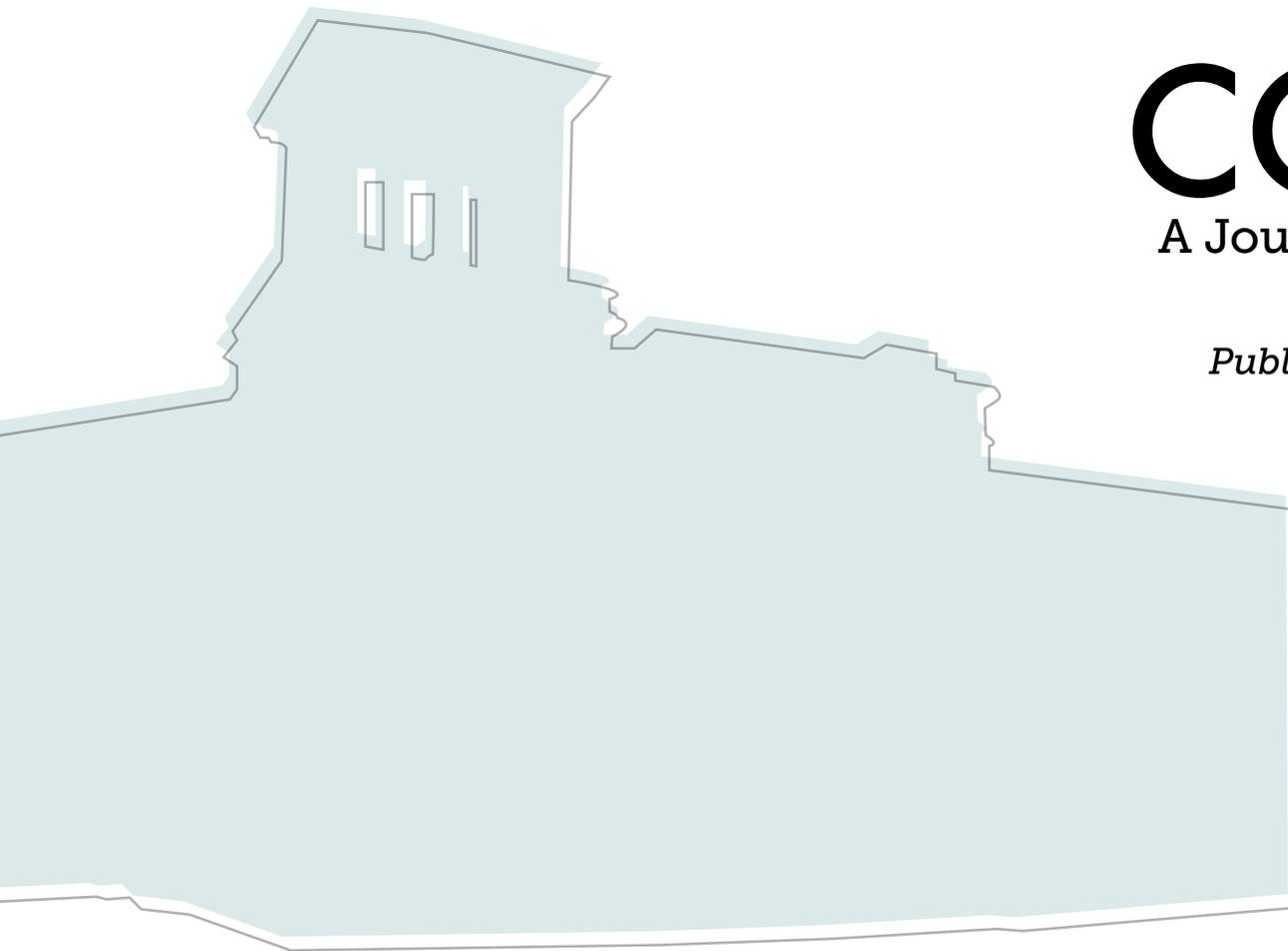


COLLAGE

A Journal of Creative Expression

Issue 13 Spring 2011



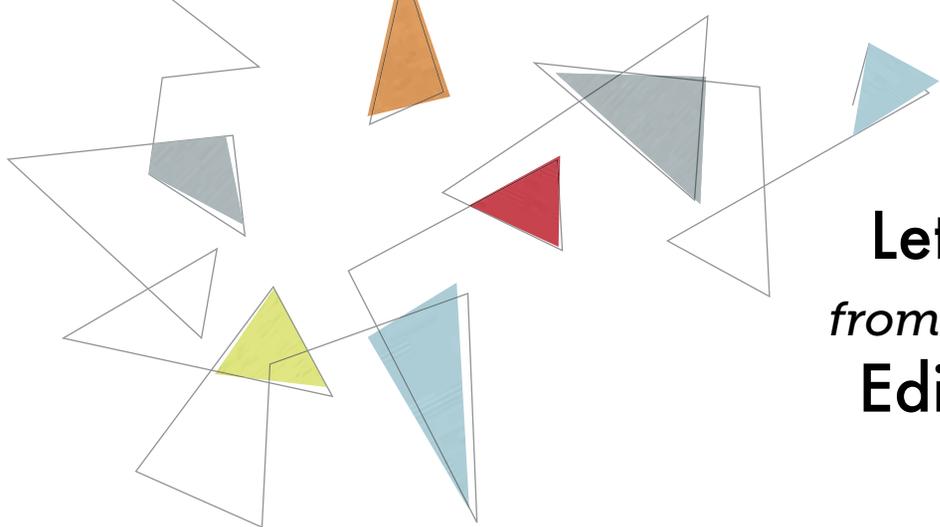


COLLAGE

A Journal of Creative Expression

Published by the MTSU Honors College

Issue 13 Spring 2011



Letter from the Editor

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As MTSU progresses into a new era this year by celebrating its 100th anniversary, I would like to reflect briefly on the history of *Collage*. Founded by student publications in 1968, the literary arts magazine found a new home at the Honors College in 2004. Over the past 43 years, the magazine has continued to grow and change into the publication that it is today. The magazine advances MTSU's reputation for excellence by highlighting the immense creativity of its students.

I would like to thank the spring 2011 staff members who put countless hours toward grading, selecting, and editing the pieces. I would also like to thank the faculty of the Honors College and our adviser, Marsha Powers, who play an integral role in the success of *Collage*. Lastly, thank you to all the students and alumni who submit their work each semester. Without you this publication would not be possible.

It has been rewarding to be a part of *Collage* for three years and to serve as editor-in-chief the past two semesters. As I prepare to leave the magazine, I look forward to watching it further grow and reach more students and community members. I believe it is so important for students to have an outlet for their creativity, and I am grateful to have been a part of a publication that does that.

I proudly present the spring 2011 issue of *Collage*.

Caitlin Orman

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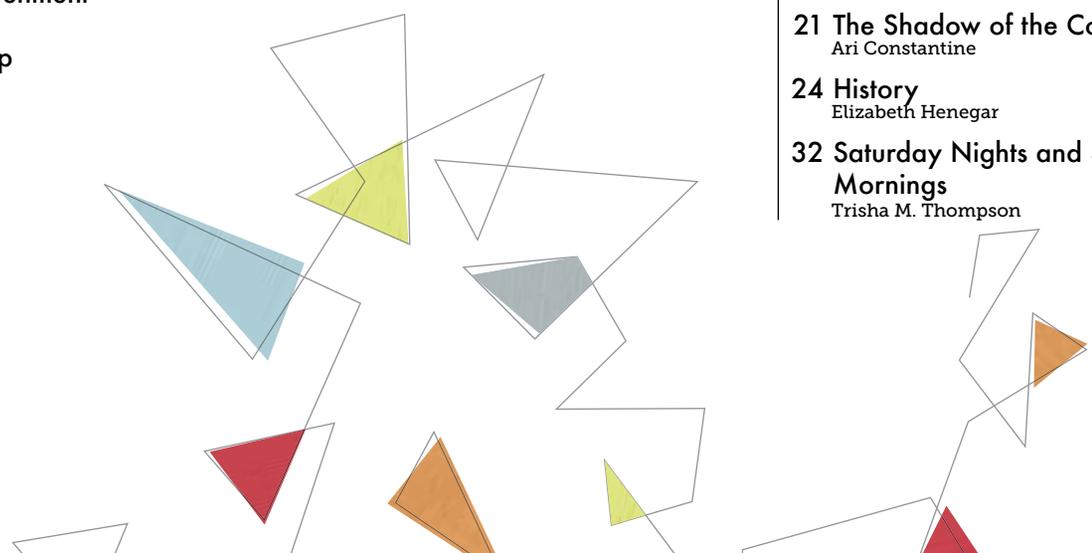
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sculpting the earth
Sarah Gallager
Poetry

when I was three, I scooped up the earth
and began to sculpt.
the earth birthed me from her insides.
from her dust came my flesh.
She was within me and I was
upon her, dust upon dust.

my hands moved along her body,
carefully, gently.
my hands massaged her flesh,
and her life slipped through my
fingers as the clay,
with which I sculpted
new life,
fell back into its grassy grave.

the earth, She took pity on me
and fastened herself
to my fingertips.
She became my hands—
fixed with muddy digits,
creating and recreating.

the earth, She was moved by
me. so I moved the earth—
thrusting my weight
into her inner bowels
and scooping out her riches
with the gentle touch
of a potter's
handiwork.



Life Begins
Alex Hall
Charcoal Diptych

I reformed her,
reinventing
the composition of beings
which lived
only in my mind,
but for her.

each day I labored
in her veins,
the very ligaments
of life
which brought forth
new growth
each spring.

when I awoke one morning,
I realized my hands,

though still accustomed
to the familiar feel
of her
body in my grasp,
were worn by
the years.

when I opened my eyes,
56 summers had passed,
and the earth, which I loved,
was still the same,
but I was changed.

Memphis, TN
(Upon the Death of Jimmy Lee Lindsey)
Tiffany Clark
Poetry

Jimmy Lee is dead.
Crushed under that cross,
that tiny tumbleweed town,
a burdensome city
of cicada.

You can smell the rot.
And boy, it ain't just
river water or Wonder Bread,
it's the milk and meat
at every table.

O' Deliver Us From Mediocrity!

But Jimmy Lee is dead.
Funny that the hope of a city
will lay down for death,
or walk into the Mississippi,
boots on.

And didn't he already know?
No one here can walk on water.



Gutted
Marissa Moore
Black & White Photography



Why, Why Me?
Kallie D. Jackson
*Acrylic, College & Encaustic
on Masonite*

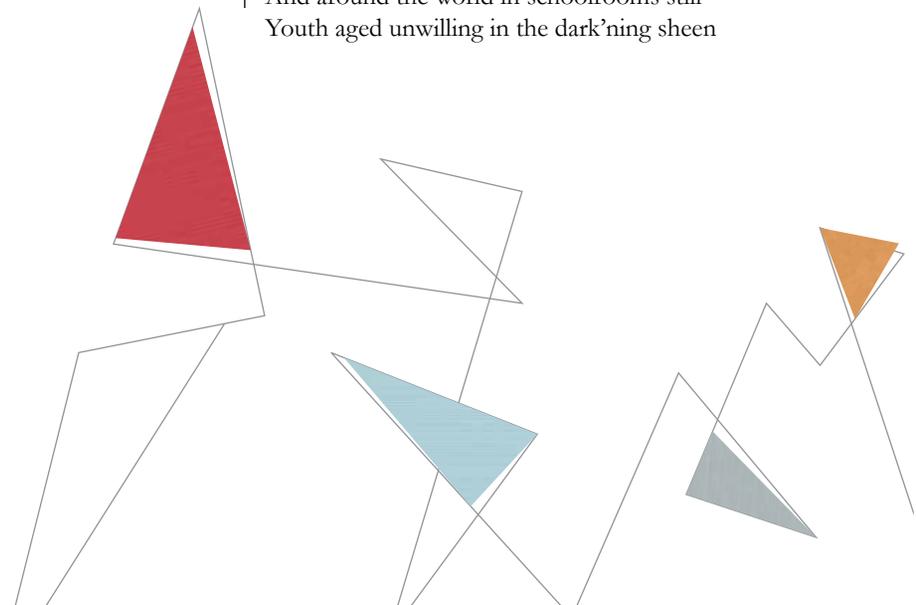
September
Jared Burton
Poetry

Youth in vain in schoolroom stood
With eyes unblinking upon the screen
As shattered steel bled billows black
Of youth and life lost on the scene

Hand to mouth in abstract pain
Like horror from his history book
He could not fathom, nor nightmare dream
Of all the innocents evil took

The shock unreal, so worse he saw
No loss the child could then compare
He could not tear his tears away
As ungodly fire raged in his stare

The country mourned, the world stood by
With eyes unblinking upon their screens
And around the world in schoolrooms still
Youth aged unwilling in the dark'ning sheen





 **Traps of Reality**
Chris Donahue
Color Photography



Irons & Lace: Rosette
Heather Moulder
Emboss & Burn Printing



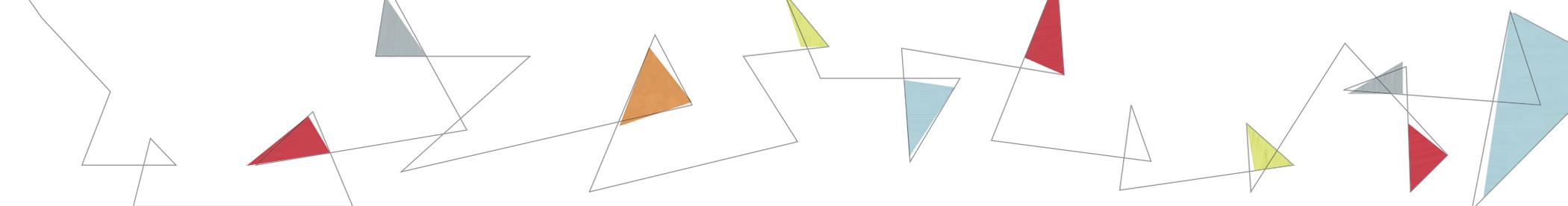
Southern Belle
Heather Moulder
Lithography & Silkscreen

Aunt Nancy Krista Duggin *Fiction*

Somehow or someway, everyone knew about Aunt Nancy. She wasn't my aunt or anyone else's that we knew of. But that was what we had called her since day one, back when she first came rolling in as a tiny girl with her long copper hair in braids brushing her elbows. That must have been ten years ago, at least. She had walked down the town's streets with her tortoise-shell eyes gleaming, looking for something no one quite knew, a child who thought the world was her playground and those in it her sandbox pals. She never exactly said where she came from. One rumor was that she'd hopped off a train two towns over and followed a fox till she hit the Pike. Another claimed she'd been raised by the fay in the hilly mountains. No one knew how she came to town all those years ago, alone at such a young age. But she was there, and that much everyone knew.

And if there was one thing everyone knew about Aunt Nancy, besides that she was there, it was that she had a knack for mischief. She could fool the school teacher as to how a toad snuck into her lunch sack. She could con the grannies of town to believe Easter came on the first Sunday of April and not the second (Aunt Nancy had never been a patient girl, after all). She could even dupe the mayor to issue a town celebration in her honor—how, though, the mayor won't admit, and Aunt Nancy knows better than to give away her secrets. One of Aunt Nancy's best tricks is still under scrutiny. Word has it she hoodwinked death itself.

It was safe to say that the town knew Aunt Nancy was capable of a lot of things. We all knew that when she came around the corner in the late afternoons with her football jersey slung over her shoulder, bangs stuck to her forehead from sweat and eyes shiny with life that it was in your best interest not to catch her sight. Not because she was a rotten apple of a kid. We knew she could be as sweet as caramel



when she wanted to be. But while her tricks were fine and funny now, we all had the same inkling suspicion that if riled up the wrong way, the fires of Hell wouldn't compare to her unruly spirit. Those jokes could turn a world upside down. And for our own sakes, we took care to be careful around Aunt Nancy.

// I ain't nobody's 'baby,' and I'm not just a 'girl.' Now either put up a good game or get gone. //

One hot June day, though, all of our tip-toeing proved to be for nothing. Like Aunt Nancy had done so many years ago as a little girl, a young man came strolling up the center of the town's main road. The sun was high overhead, and try as hard as anyone who saw him might, they couldn't make out a clear face. They could only see his dark skin glistening like a cooking pot with summer sweat, his head shaved of hair and a leather jacket slung over his shoulder. He walked with a swagger, as if he owned whatever land he stepped on. He gazed at the buildings as if he could enter whichever one he pleased without permission. And when we realized who he reminded us of, it was too late to stop him. He found Mike's Hub Pub easily enough, drawn in by the jukebox's tunes playing through the open windows. With his self-assured swagger, he came right up to the bar, laid down his leather and ordered something tall and strong.

Now, it's not every day we see someone new, and we've come to expect only one Aunt Nancy for our lifetimes. She was more than interesting enough, after all. But when he came waltzing in, oozing some undefinable prowess—well, we held our breath. Two slippery customers with that kind of attitude were bound to burn the town down.

Just like everyone else in Mike's that afternoon, she spotted him the moment he came in. Crowded around

the pool table, some of the football boys and Aunt Nancy were shooting balls and sipping on cokes. The other girls hovered close to the fan, hoping to break the heat, if only for a minute. When they saw the newcomer leaning casually with his elbows on the countertop, watching Mike break open a beer, the girls simultaneously let loose a long, slow sigh; they had something else hot on their hands. The boys nodded to one another, thinking about asking him to join their game, yet no one verbalized the offer.

Well, Aunt Nancy had never been one to sit and wait. She had always been a go-getter of a girl, so it didn't come as much of a surprise when she hollered over the jukebox. "Hey, you! Come play."

After a minute, the boy turned to face her, making sure it was him she'd been talking to. Looking at her over the rounded amber rim of his bottle, he took a gulp of beer and approached the table. With only half of his face, he smiled in a crooked sort of way, his teeth made whiter by the contrast of his skin. And when Aunt Nancy could see the whites of his eyes, those brown irises seemed to glitter with some bright blaze inside his spirit.

"You wanna play with me, baby girl?" he said. His voice was as smooth as velvet.

She eyed him with restrained resentment, raising her brow. "I ain't anybody's 'baby,' and I'm not just a 'girl.' Now either put up a good game or get gone." Emphasizing her challenge, she tossed him her own pool stick over the table in one swift move. He caught it with his free hand, grinning like a cat with a bird between its teeth.

"What should I call you then?" he asked.

Jutting out her jaw proudly, she answered. "They call me Aunt Nancy." And, to settle her nosy nature and calm her arrogance, she asked who he was.

"Anansi," was his reply with a twinkly brown eye.

Taking one of the other boys' sticks for herself, Aunt

Nancy gestured to the table. "Then let's see what you can do, Anansi."

By this time, everyone in Mike's was watching Aunt Nancy and Anansi. The girls had moved the fan as close to the table as the cord would reach, and the boys stood against the back wall. Before joining the others, one of the boys reset the table. When the game was ready to begin, Anansi half bowed to Aunt Nancy, saying that a lady should go first.

"I ain't no 'lady,' either. But I'll break just the same," she said, angling her stick at the focal point of the racked balls. Without looking at him, she said over her shoulder, "Let's say we make this interesting. You lose and you skip town."

Holding his stick across his broad shoulders, he countered, "You lose and you do something for me."

And while anyone else would have asked what that 'something' was, Aunt Nancy just laughed and got the balls rolling. Since more stripes fell into the pockets, she let him be the solid-colored balls. In turn, he chuckled, tickled that he would have done the same, and followed up by offering her a sip of his beer.

By the time a half hour passed, their game was getting down and dirty. Neither let on their determination to win, but each made sure to shoot straighter than ever before. But just as Anansi sunk another ball, one too many for Aunt Nancy's tastes, it seemed he might beat the town charlatan. The fan-blown girls watched on the edge of their seats while the boys placed bets on who'd beat who.

"Hey, Tommy," Aunt Nancy said at one point, after hearing Anansi had more bets in his favor. "I wouldn't place my money on him. Not with the trick I've got up my sleeve."

Anansi smiled sheepishly as he traced the tattered edge of her sleeveless shirt. "What sleeve would that be?"

Between the two, no one quite knew who to gamble on. Everyone knew that Aunt Nancy would use any trick

in her unwritten book to get what she wanted, as history had long ago proven. But that black young man had a twinkle in his eye that we all knew not to underestimate. It was the same kind of shine Aunt Nancy's eyes had when she was challenged.

In the way that stories like this twist with time, how it'll be one way today and another by tomorrow, so goes what happened next. Some of the sweaty girls say they saw Anansi looking hocus-pocus style at the table. The remaining boys say they heard Aunt Nancy whisper as she leaned in close to the young man. Mike the bartender swears on his grandmother's grave that both Anansi and Aunt Nancy were up to some kind of wily game other than pool, though he couldn't guess exactly what. But, fact is that when Aunt Nancy took a step back, the crack of a final ball into a pocket still sharp, the matter was decided. Off to the side, Aunt Nancy and Anansi leaned against the back wall, turning their polished sticks to catch the light.

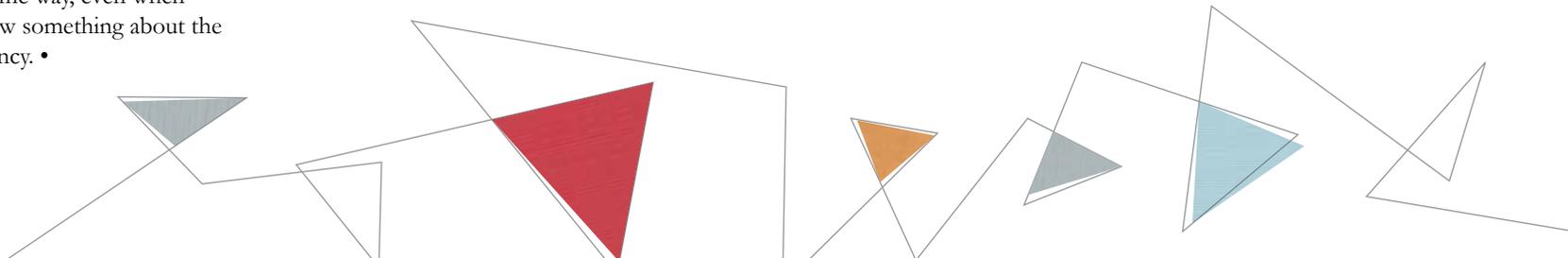
So when Aunt Nancy told him to get gone, Anansi laid out the fine print of their wager. "I'll hit the road again," he promised. "So long as you come with me."

Not one to turn down an experience, Aunt Nancy didn't blink twice before agreeing. She didn't say goodbye to anyone or take anything with her when she left. Instead, she finished her coke, and Anansi drained his beer before leaving the cool shade to live under the sun. By the time anyone noticed the couple was gone, the crickets had begun to play their nighttime ballad, leaving the town to question if they'd ever see that copper-haired girl again.

Everyone in town suspected that, someday, Aunt Nancy would leave just as strangely as she had come. But in the wake of her tomfoolery, when we each tittle-tattled on her, we wondered where she was this week. Who had she swindled for her evening meal? What kind of adventures was she having with that dark-skinned boy so much like herself? Because somehow or some way, even when she was long gone, everyone knew something about the trickster of a girl called Aunt Nancy. •



She Grew Up During the Depression
Kelsey Wells
Color Photography





Eliot
Morgan Beaty
Color Photography



I AMsterdam
Elizabeth K. Burton
Black and White Photography

Affinity
Joseph Lampley
Poetry

I feel a certain kinship
with the sidewalk's drowning worms today.
Misplaced survival instincts—up from the damp earth
to lie on a cold concrete bed.
We flee our homes in the downpour—vainly cling to the stonework.
Lest the tide take us unawares.

Gift To a Black Sheep
Steve Christopher
Poetry



And I asked them
to bore the hole clean and straight,
the circumference of an arm,
directly above where his heart might be.

That I could reach my arm
into the hole in the earth,
make the grand gesture,
thread my fist through frost,

to the concrete vault lid, the one
my brother Fred insisted we needed.
Dried floral permeates the grey pinstripe
he looked so good in

not one week prior to when his prophetic
bury me in this suit was spoken.
To be fishing through my father's breast pocket,
rummaging around for a candy or a coin

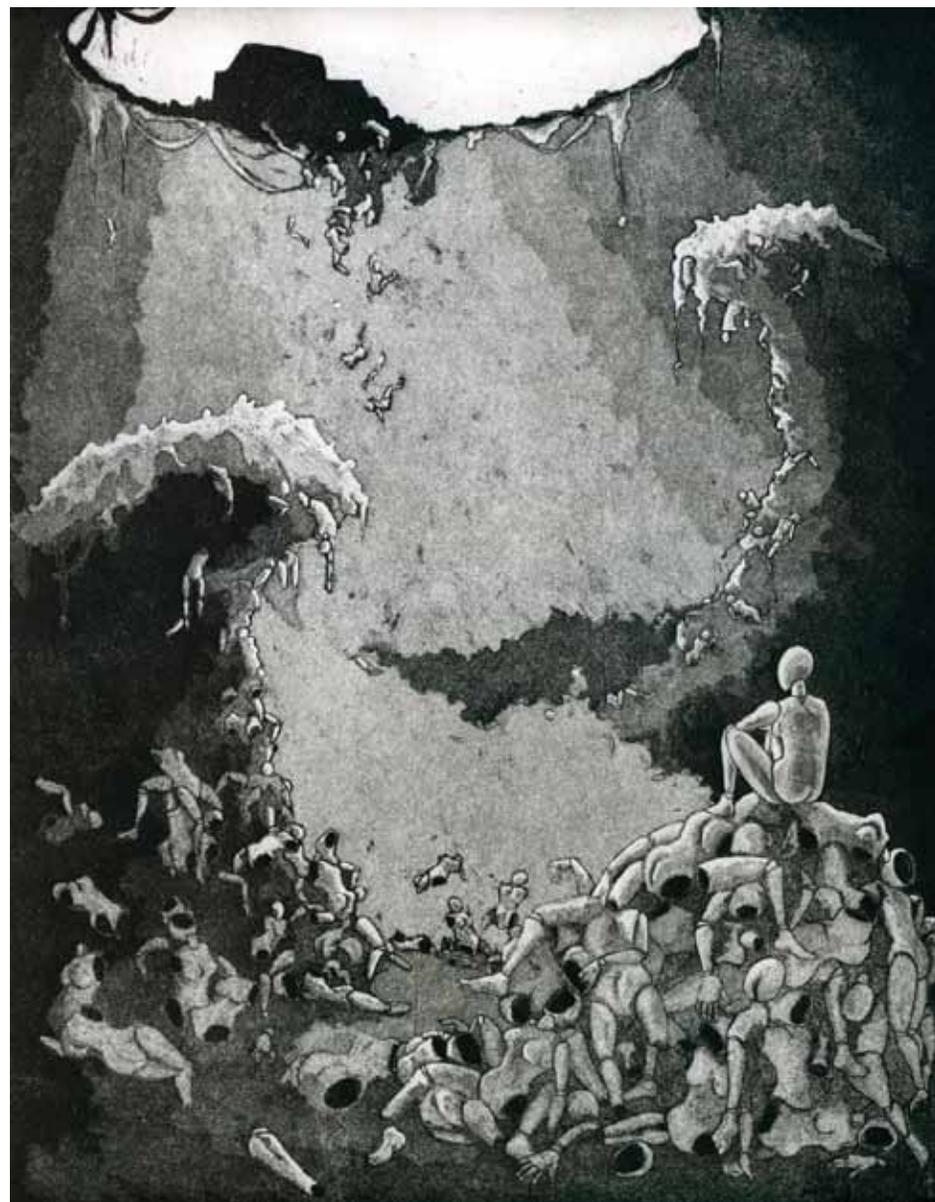
with unexpected, proving courage.
To feel through his liver,
his lungs, his bladder,
that by now, seven years past,

in pithy, chalky, powder-like residue
of a burned branch,
waiting for the slightest anything
to collapse its form.

Until I felt it there...
in the center of what was once his beating heart,
as smooth as a well-worn worry stone,
that I placed against my cheek,

still electric, still warm,
wanting it for my own.
Blown the dust off, and clutched,
where I would give it to my brother, Pete.

My father's approval.
The very thing
he's waited so long for. So longed for.



Waiting
Betsy Ochoa
*Etching with Spraypaint
Aquatint*



Dimensia
Joshua Petty
Oil on Canvas

Arrhythmia
Anna Houser
Poetry

and
what
is
this.
here i am again reminiscing and
i want you o u t.
stop re-entering the stagnating
puddle of my subconscious,
please.
yes, it's your fault.
had you been anything
or anyone else this
wouldn't be a problem.
and somehow you're the shattered
glass right outside the front door that i keep
forgetting is there and never
clean up.
just to step on at a later date,
just to cause more pain,
just to serve as a reminder.

through my head, echoes of your voice are
r e v e r b e r a t i n g
and it's so loud.
so loud.
i can barely hear you for your voice.
i can barely see the windows for the walls.
you've been here all along, haven't you?

you're right here.
a little to the left, from the center.

Pipe Tobacco

Nicole Ward
Nonfiction

*"The smoke that doth so high ascend
Shows that our lives must have an end
The vapor's gone
Man's life is done
Think on this when you smoke tobacco"*
-Tobacco is an Indian Weed, James VI

The seasons passed in my childhood just as they would in any other. Spring brought rain and soft, blowing buds on the pear trees in my neighbor's yard. Winter meant a short relief from school burdens and sleeping mysteries hidden in the morning frost. Summer ushered in recognition of the passage of time and the onslaught of unavoidable maturity, but fall... fall meant twilight.

My father's office has always—regardless of location—been a cave of books and papers. I grew up with the crooked face of Andrew Jackson staring solemnly down at me from his off-kilter position on the wall. The prints that adorned my father's office were of paintings done by an old friend. My father had often posed for him. In these pictures, I saw the imposing brow and rounded nose of my father, but he was magically dressed as John Smith or as a singular militiaman gazing placidly down across a smooth river at a small herd of drinking deer. He was a time traveler.

His floors were barely distinguishable amongst the stacks of books scattered around the room. Obviously read, their edges were bent and smudged with the oils of his commanding finger. The bookshelf behind his desk was of medium height and covered with books and relics of his past. Studying the items placed on the painted wood was like gaining access to an archaeological dig of his subconscious. A small model airplane, a crudely crafted clay skull, a picture of a young boy in a Scout's uniform with the same brow and nose, just a softer eye and countenance—my brother. A picture of my father with long hair, his face engulfed by a pair of glasses congruent with the style of the time, and his arms around a small blonde girl with an open face and a self-conscious smile—my mother. Several small vials of ink sat quietly awaiting use. A picture of a raven-haired toddler in a cherry red jacket struggling to mount a bale of hay. A fall noon many years ago. She tumbled and grinned, forever smiling with her baby face

turned up to the autumn leaves. This baby now taking care of a baby all her own, one who owns an almost mirrored likeness—my sister. A model VW Bug, a few boxes of buckshot, a small day calendar that had been forgotten. These objects adorned the shelves of my father's office. Time-frozen.

It was on his desk, however, where the crux of the room was stored. Amid the papers, covered with the long, scrolling script of his hand and the odd assortment of pens, pencils and business cards, sat a deep, round, cherry wood container—my father's pipe carousel. The embodiment of fall. Around the edges there were vertically drilled holes, specially made slots for his collection of pipes. He had many, all different colors and sizes. Some ornately decorated, others crudely whittled by a dull blade. In the center was a smaller container, half filled with the mystery stuff. The material that, on crisp fall evenings, my father would decidedly pack into his choice pipe. I would sit and watch in silence as he reclined and enjoyed this special providence.

The blue smoke left his mustached lip and curled into the twilight, mixing with the orange and red glowing leaves, embers that bejeweled the poplar tree in our front yard. The evening fell into the trees, and the stars appeared, turning the smoke into a purple ribbon. I watched it dance into the twilight, the stars dripping onto the sliver in the sky. With my father, it was a slow process.

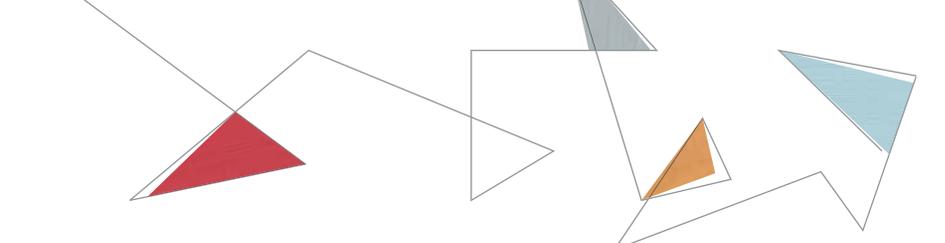
The stars commandeered the horizon and the moon became the compass rose for the sky map in his mind. Do you see Orion, Nik? Yes, sir. And you see the Great Bear, and Orion's dog? Yes, sir. You know what he's doing? He's still chasing the Seven Sisters, the Pleiades. He became so ardent for them that Zeus, their daddy, feared for them. He turned them all into twinkling doves and placed them in the night sky. Orion still chases them. That's love.

Then he would send me off to bed, where I would lie and let it seep into my pores. The stars, the lore, the smoke. Those evenings as I lay in bed, my mind would refract all I had seen and heard. I could feel my brain buzzing and glowing within my skull, smoke swirling and twisting between the folds. I would close my eyes and grow woozy from the scent of the tobacco tingling in my nose. I would fall swiftly to the dream cavity. Here I could dance and leap from star to star, talking with the sisters



Amid the Groans
Dylan M. Leitnaker
Black & White Photography

as they shivered brightly in their celestial prison. I, too, felt the fear and love that Zeus felt surging through his skin. I looked back and saw Orion climb on. Always remaining a certain distance, never gaining, never losing. And, if I looked hard enough, I could see my own father sitting on the front stoop. Time-frozen, staring through the fading trees at the night sky, the smell of tobacco in his hair. •



Commencement for Bliss

Steve Christopher

Poetry

It'll be the speech nobody asked me for,
though I'll give it silently, even if only to the ants crawling
on the summer stage, or the moths' wings

that might flap at the overhead bulbs. It'll be deep in
August, sandwiched between the bread of
spring semester and fall. The turnout noticeably less.

The way I like it, an introvert's way. Not that I'm
hiding in my forty-eight-year-old face, but rather
because no doubt I'll be peppered between my fellow

late-in-life grads as turned on as Christmas.
We'll all swim together, fish that we are,
upstream in a sea of blue taffeta, tasseled to one

side, to be flipped to the other. We'll press hands
with TV evangelist-looking white-hairs
handing out diplomas, so many times,

too many times. The paper more valuable to me
than gold they might dig up on Mars,
valuable beyond measure. But to a forty-eight-year-old

the meaning would be lost in my fumbled speech,
my ability to pluck the right words like ripened plums,
as certainly as an Arizona drought.

I'll wring my hands as if full of invisible
Rosary beads, and I'll will the silver linings
to all my dark clouds into their collective



Gears of Life
Claire Coleman
*Sheet Metal
& Cast Aluminum*

subconscious, in hopes that they won't make mistakes,
life-changing, crossroads mistakes.
The kind you don't see till you look back up the hills

you've toppled down. You are me, and I am you,
though you would never notice it seeing me sit behind
you all in Marketing of Recordings 101

or the grocery line. You won't know, no, you can't know
what that small piece of wall jewelry with your
name on it means yet, and I hope...
you never see what it means to me.

Taffeta Chime

Exploring New Depths

Casey Gaddis, Assistant Literature Editor
Jonathan Siler, Fiction Editor

When we first contacted Taffeta to sit down with us for an interview, she was more than ecstatic. Our first impressions were of an extremely determined young woman who has worked hard to establish herself as a creative writer. Already a published author, she aspires to continue her education into graduate school, complete her Honors thesis and publish the creative portion as her second novel. One of MTSU's first Buchanan scholars, Taffeta's work exhibits the diligence and creativity that the Buchanan Fellow program seeks to encourage in its students. Throughout the interview, Taffeta's responses demonstrated an impressive ability for processing her experiences—especially her past—and articulating them in both speech and writing.

Taffeta informed us that she has been writing since childhood. The first of her stories she remembers was a work titled, "My Pet Cheetah," which was written in the first grade. Stories and blurbs such as these have inspired her later works such as *Stoodie*, a novel based on a short story she wrote in seventh grade. Her next novel, *The Last*, is a continuation of a short story she wrote in fourth grade

and for which she won first place in a worldwide contest: the Future Problem Solving Program International Scenario Writing Competition. The novel was scheduled for release in March.

The Last tells of Josephine Cousteau, a nine-year-old girl who lives in a time when all children are home-schooled through a virtual, web-based program. Having no siblings, extended family, or friends, Jo's life is very lonely. She loves her parents, but her father, a famous oceanographer, is

gone for long periods of time working on a mysterious "project." He promises Jo, however, that her life is going to change. *The Last* follows Jo through her extraordinary life, finding out the truth about her father's underwater "project," facing the terrible death of a parent, and learning the precious value of friendship, faith, and love.

We asked Taffeta about her process in writing *The Last* and what challenges she faced. She told us that since her freshman year at MTSU, she had planned on writing a novel as her thesis. During Christmas of her sophomore year, she felt disconnected from her characters and was concerned that her work had become too research-driven. With encouragement from her family and by recalling elements of an acting course she took in freshman year, she shifted her focus to her characters and continued with the project. She explained that research was essential to any creative writing, but that it should not hinder the power of imagination.

Taffeta's two novels are oriented toward younger audiences, ages 13-15, but are written in such a way that all ages should be able to enjoy the text on one level or another. Although both novels are coming-of-age narratives, *The Last* includes deeper issues, such as the struggle for survival, the questioning of faith and the discovery of one's beliefs. In addition, the third-person narration in *The Last* grows more eloquent as the novel progresses, exemplifying the protagonist's growth from girl to woman.

Taffeta has many literary influences. She explained that when she reads, she looks at the mechanics and the purpose behind each scene or detail and therefore defines herself as more writer than reader. As such, she has few favorite books, but enjoys certain aspects of them, such as the connection with the reader that can be found in the novel *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson. Her favorite





Life and Writing

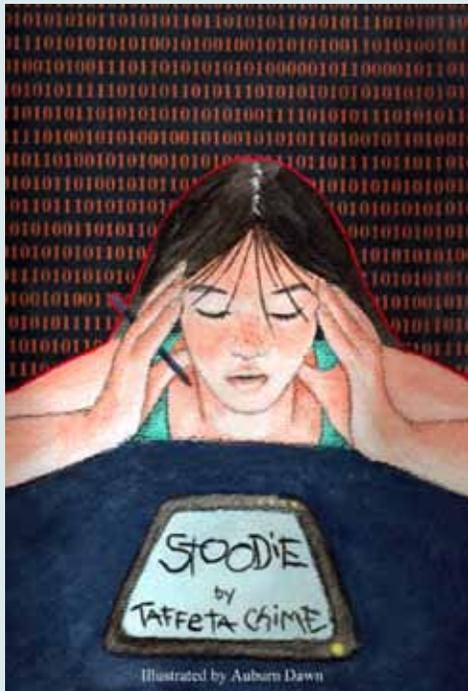
Taffeta Chime

Poetry

authors include: Christopher Paolini, Anne McCaffrey, Ray Bradbury, Stephen King, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and John Green. The authors Roald Dahl, Shel Silverstein and William Blake also inspire her. Other poets whose work she enjoys are Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams and Elizabeth Bishop.

We asked Taffeta if she had any advice for MTSU's creative writers, and her response was:

With all of the sensory overload we have in our culture—particularly at this terribly busy time of our lives—it's vital to stay open, aware, and observant Spy on people, listen to conversations, look up when you walk—don't close yourself off. Writing is just a form of espionage!



Shoved by everything
From the air to the sea,
The waves pull the air from my lungs,
O unmerciful claw!
Swallowed in ice, deafened by cold,
But I hear the laughing

As I sink.

Down deeper darker deadlier,
Am I still here?
Have I stopped? Died?
Because I've become nothing.

I climb tug push at the thickness,
Getting lighter and it's easier to run.
Above, I guess, is where I'm going,
My lungs are slowly dying,
I don't think I can make it,
But the darkness is letting go,
Cold is getting warmer,
Surface is getting closer

closer

closer still.

I can't help but inhale biting water
My hands – I see them now –
Are groping to the sky
Reaching for that one gasp

And there it is!

Pencil and paper float and

Breathe me back

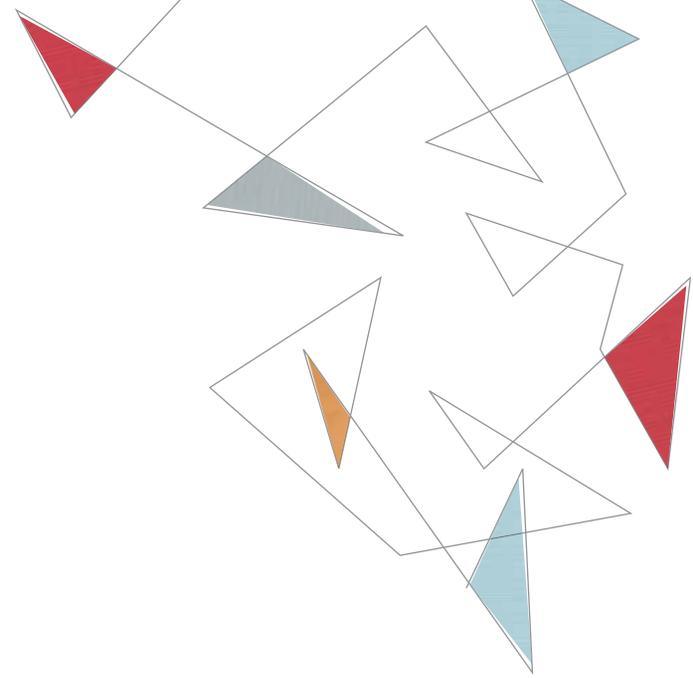
Into the air.



Taffeta Chime graduates in May from Middle Tennessee State University with a B.A. in English. A native Tennessean, her lifelong passion for writing has resulted in several international trophies through Future Problem Solving Program International's Scenario Writing Competition, a successful first novel, *Stoodie*, and inclusion of her poetry in the anthology, *Time & Tradition*. Previous publications of Taffeta's work in *Collage* include the poems: "Life in Writing," "Freckles," "D-Daddy," "Simile of a Smile," "School Dream" and "For a Trimm'd Tree," and the short stories: "Excerpt from Barefoot," "Meet and Three" and "The Missus." Taffeta also enjoys teaching creative writing, and she is looking forward to attending graduate school for creative writing in the fall.



Ancient Bruises
Jacquelyn Swanson
Encaustic with Image Transfer



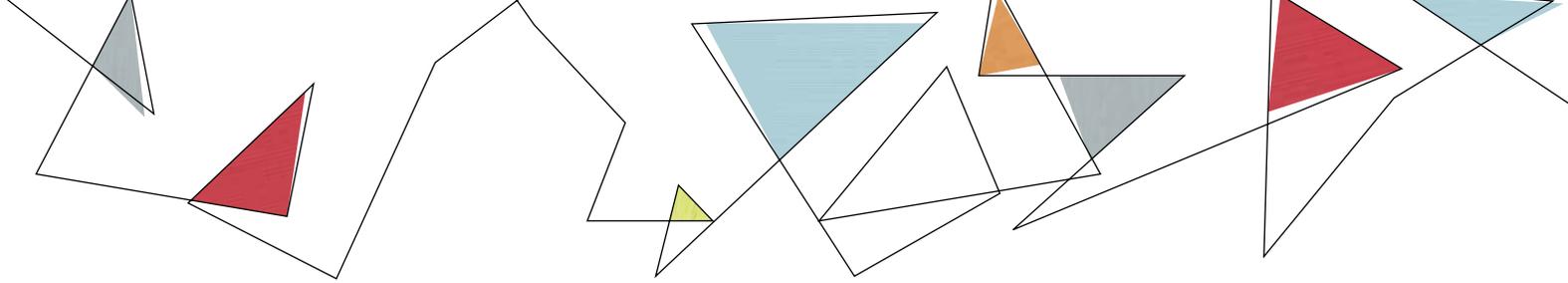
Eaten Crow
Tiffany Clark
Poetry

The first black bird I ever saw
was headless and stiff,
belly-up in the sand by the playground.

The stub of its neck tipped with pink
like chewed bubblegum.
The sun, crowning in the sky, brought the stink.

Hands over mouths and noses, the boys led me to it.
Small, dirtied palms pushed the small of my back,
daring me to touch it with a stick, a trembling finger.

They laughed, wiped snot on their sleeves,
and pulled acorns from their stained pockets
to throw at the broken body.



35mm Divinity

Kara Wilson
Poetry

The moon and the sun are God's lenses in the sky, while the clouds act as filters. The stars are his flash; the winds lend distortion, and the natural disasters wipe the memory clean.



Hoses and Wires

Marissa Moore
Color Photography



Laughter

Aline Pellizzaro
Acrylic on Cardboard

the boy knows

Sarah Gallager
Poetry

consoling the kid who crawled
out of bed
to tell me through tears
he is dreaming
of monsters,

i ask him to explain
the monster's face.
he says it's yellow,
and human.

i try to pry into that mind—
that little mind
carrying far more than
little minds should.

he doesn't know
the who or why,
just that he's scared
of monsters.

i rub his back
and kiss his head,
hold him close
and tell a lie:

*monsters are not real,
not really,
so you can sleep in peace.*

i tuck him in
and place a pillow
under his small,
blonde head.

i return to my book,
which tells of monsters
with the faces of men.



What Comes in the Night
Elizabeth Rich
Silkscreen

real-life tales
of savage men,
of monsters,
that i told the boy
were not real.

not really.

The Shadow of the Colossus

Ari Constantine
Poetry

Beneath my desert memory,
Swelter and melt like sour sun,
The rubble of some ancient purgatory collapses.
Rust! and ruins...
A giant creature dances there,
A colossus, he conjures dust with his
Hollow stare.
Master of the Forgotten, Keeper of none.

I gaze from afar upon my mind,
An out-of-existence experience.
The beast, he grins; he knows I'm there.
But still he dances,
Whirlwind dreams,
And screams and crackles torture seams.
Abyssal and conquered, as the flickering green bulbs
Set firmly in their sockets upon the cold stone skin,
Rickshaw joints and cinderblock teeth
Chattering, chattering, dynamite.
It's worse than a heart attack.

Speckled reeds, withered, sway every which way,
An earthen mane upon his mantle.
A beard of wheat, like jolly Christmas fables
Planted just below the infinite cavern.
It bellows: foghorn, whistle, rumble,
Lingering cries of an oracle betrayed,
Exchanging cheap formalities with some sort of
Fallen deity.
My hero bound in stone, each crevice and cranny
Concealing new secrets,
Not yet ripe enough to be devoured by conscious minds.

He hollers, yelping and whining,
Like a child lost its toy.
Like foolish innocence
That I once used to know
In my spare days.



The Proletariat
Joshua Petty
Oil on Canvas

God-throat, Satan sky.

And when the shoulder crashes down,
Two-ton cymbals, racket warfare,
The shock does not come; I am not surprised.
He collapses with his kingdom.

Debaucherous step, treacherous tune,
My duty begins anew.

I cannot piece you together again
With my discount preschool glue.
Heal in time, pretend on cue,
Your frailty mended is my doom.
These three treasures, I've scattered so few
Across your corpse in lilac hue.
I'll never admit, since never did you
That ultimately, hopelessly, I loved you.



The Phone Call

Joseph Quarles
Nonfiction

They had been trying to find us, though I discovered that fact later. After an extensive search, the Red Cross finally found my loca mother in a pocket of the white trash farm community we lived in. They told her the bad news. Her father was dead, thousands of miles away, near the bottom of the Earth, and there was no way she could go to the funeral. She hid it from me and my little sister. What was it like? To pick up the phone and hear that whispering, electronic voice saying her father was gone? Did the mental illnesses that plagued her for most of her life weave it into her delusions? How did she justify hiding his death from me and my sister for so long?

A few years later, I got a special phone call, too. My soon-to-be mother-in-law called me during the hurly-burly of the preparations for my impending marriage to ask me a question. She was writing up the newspaper announcement and wanted to know the spelling of my deceased grandfather's name, Hilario Rios.

"Excuse me? My grandfather's not dead," I said.

"Um, Joseph, your mother said her father was dead. She said he died three years ago." She sounded aggravated.

"Wh-what the hell are you talking about?! He's not dead!" I shouted into the phone.

Suddenly, my mother-in-law-to-be became quiet, to the point I could hear the static in the phone line. I swear I thought I heard a sharp intake of breath for a moment.

Without warning, she said, "I'm sorry, gotta go!" The phone clicked with an abrupt disconnection.

I threw the phone against the wall, I screamed at my fiancée—one of the numerous missteps I made that laid the groundwork for a rocky marriage later—and I went driving like a maniac to my mother's house. I confronted her in the living room and said some very vicious things. She never explained why; she just sat there, her pale, oval face drawn up into a prunish study of distaste and disassociation, illuminated by the flickering blue light of the television. I shouted at her with little bits of spit flying out of my mouth and spots appearing before my eyes. I actually became dizzy. She continued to stare at the television, her



Hard at Work
Courtney Lineberger
Color Photography

eyes like two raisins in a lump of undercooked cookie dough. I finally left, shaking and in a strange state of furious shock. I was not so much in emotional pain of the sudden revelation of Papa Hilario's death as I was just overwhelmingly angry. I hated my mother, myself and life. As with the many issues that my sister and I faced over the years with my mother, my own problems with grieving were long in resolving.

Not long after the initial shock of finding out my grandfather had passed away and after my wedding, I began to think a lot about my mother's side of the family. I found old pictures in shoeboxes and bags and sorted through them. I saw pictures of the rural area my grandfather and grandmother had lived in. Memories spilled out of the boxes as I saw photos of weddings, funerals and my cousins. I found pictures of my uncles, Hector and Tito, working on old cars and motorcycles, ghostly images captured in the stained and yellowed black-and-white pictures.

With the exploration of the elements of my mother and her past, I began to explore my own childhood and to remember things that had happened while I lived in South America. I remembered the summers spent living there, the holidays of the saints, and Christmas celebrations with Mass at church. I also remember some very horrible things that happened to the people who were our neighbors and friends—acts committed by the soldiers of the new dictatorship. Now, with absolute clarity, I remember my last day there and the last time I saw my grandfather. Even in our parting, there was no closure, no sense of finality, only fear.

It was the end of winter in the city of Rosario, and my mother, my sister and I had spent the week preparing to head back to the United States. Early one morning, toward the end of that hectic week, I was sent by my grandfather to the bakery to buy bread. There was a heavy fog that obscured the sunrise like a thick and clinging blanket. It

was so dense that I became lost as I made my way down the silent streets with only the occasional small pockets of sudden clear areas that I stumbled into to help me along. As I practically felt my way through the thick wall of vapor, I stepped off the sidewalk and nearly tripped. Suddenly, I heard dogs barking and a loud mechanical ratcheting noise echoing off the sides of the buildings, the sound of rapidly moving heavy vehicles. I jumped back onto the sidewalk, and bursting out of the striated fog was a large troop truck

“ My grandfather pulled me aside from the chaos of our family members’ panicking and shouting. ”

and a Jeep with soldiers crammed into the backs of the vehicles. I could see automatic weapons sticking up in the air from the silhouettes in the back of the Jeep.

I was terrified. I prayed feverently that they had not seen me as I darted back into the fog and ran through twisting back alleys. On and on I ran, seeing shapes of refuse and trash pop up in front of me, causing me to zig zag and jump as I fled. I finally collapsed in a dirty back alley with trash cans and pallets leaning against the grubby walls. I felt absolutely certain that the soldiers were headed to my grandparents’ house. The squads of men were an extraction team sent in to capture people considered dangerous to the government, and those people never came back. They became the “disappeared ones.” As I sat in the alley, crying and shaking, I suddenly smelled bread. The scent calmed me down, and I felt a sense of intense relief, the fear trickling out of my now leaden limbs. I calmly followed the smell through the fog to the bakery and made my way back through the clearing strands of moisture, tattered and wispy as the sun finally burned the vapor away. I felt that everything was going to be okay.

When I finally made it back to my grandfather and grandmother’s home, my mother was hysterical, and my little sister was frightened. The soldiers had taken away a family a few houses down from us. My grandfather said nothing. He just kept hugging me. His green eyes scrunched up behind his round, gold-rimmed glasses. The flesh of his neck was red, causing his salt and pepper hair to stand out even more. His protective embrace, the scent of his cologne, and his soft Spanish gave me an intense

feeling of safety. Everybody was finally reassured I was okay. Later that night, one by one, we went to bed.

I was awakened around three in the morning by the screaming of my mother. She was shouting and yelling, throwing our clothes onto the floor and flinging our suitcases onto the bed. My grandmother was weeping and sobbing. My grandfather just stood there in his nightclothes staring at us, his face looking crushed. Uncle Hector was there. He was shivering and soaking wet from a late night storm. He had ridden his motorcycle through the night, tearing through the streets manically, trying to come warn us that the government was not going to let us go. Soon, they were going to come to the house and stop us. Somebody had tipped him off. We had to get to the airport and flee the country as soon as possible.

My grandfather pulled me aside from the chaos of our family members’ panicking and shouting. He leaned down to me and said that he loved me more than life itself, that I was as good a boy as anyone could ask for. He told me not to be frightened, but to be strong and to know that we would come back soon and be able to stay again. He took a small hollow wooden gourd, burnt around the edges of the top and a deep rich brown in color—his personal yerba mate tea gourd—and firmly pressed it in my hands. His strong calloused fingers enfolded my own boyish ones.

He said to me, “Take this; someday we will drink from this together again.” He really believed it, and so did I.

As we were hustled into the cab in the driving rain, my sister clinging to my terrified mother, I looked back for my grandfather. He was standing in the rain, a blanket over his hunched shoulders, squinting into the darkness from the small pool of light at the front door. I thought I saw his glasses glimmer. I turned for a moment as the cab lurched forward. When I looked back through the rain-streaked rear window, I saw his back as he turned and went inside. That was the last time I ever saw him; we were never able to go back. My mother’s country went to war and lost. Democracy returned, but as for my mother’s family, I never found out exactly what happened to them.

I was not able to grieve for Papa Hilario for many years. One day, I received another phone call, this time telling me my father was dead. That static squawk, the tinny voice on the other end, and the impact of that moment nearly destroyed me. To find out in such a way that my father was dead was devastating. I thought, “Is this what my mother



Jared in Warehouse
Joel Hebert
Digital Photography

felt? Is this what everyone feels?” The incredible loss of my grandfather and an entire family hit me soon after I began to grieve my father.

I finally began to realize emotionally that I would never play fútbol with neighborhood children in the muddy streets, never help my uncles work on a Vespa scooter or an old Mercedes car, and I would never share a mate drink with my grandfather again. I used to see my mother’s family only in pictures, tattered visions that flit through my mind like shreds of old cloth in a dusty attic. I look up above my computer now, as I write, in this season of grieving that seems to never end. I look up at my bookshelf, and I see a battered deep brown gourd, seared around the edges, with the faintest scent of strong green tea, and I remember. I remember everything. •



On the Television
 Malina Chavez
Collage of Found Images



Criticism or Enlightenment
 Amiee Stubbs
Black & White Photography

History
 Elizabeth Henegar
Poetry

History, the story of the winners
 Or is it the abasement of the felled?
 A side is told, biased by letters
 Told by those who upheld

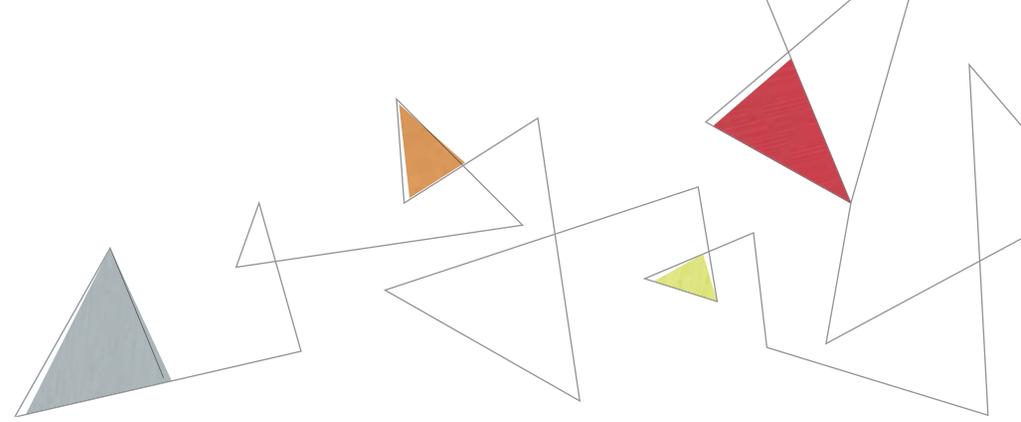
Throughout the strife and adversity.
 Was the truth purposely mislaid?
 Or simply lost in the memoirs' diversity
 By those who knew and swung the blade?

Was the ending of a culture
 Worth the gaining of a few rocks?
 Do not these winners resemble a vulture
 Waiting by the chopping blocks?

If the losing perspective were told
 How few would still be sold?



In Your Face
Brian Michels & Stephen Wells
House Paint, Acrylic, & Spraypaint



A Newtonian Romance

Kaitlin Jones
Nonfiction

In the world of science, Newton gifted us with three beautiful Laws of Motion. These Laws have helped me come to understand the miracle of our chance meeting.

1. If she hadn't broken me (the external force), I wouldn't have been pushed off the path that was so far from yours.
2. The brilliance in the blueprints of our relationship wouldn't have held the momentous impact if the mass of that betrayal hadn't been multiplied with the acceleration of all the events that occurred post-California ($F=ma$).
3. And lastly, "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." The downward force created by life's tragedies (of which we have plenty) propelled us like rockets into the heavens, into the vacuum of space glittered with gazillions of stars, where one either loses their mind or finds a new purpose.

I think your energy and my energy are blending quite nicely and filling the gaping black holes of no-energy that other people and circumstances left in or took out of us.

Teddy
Katherine Bonnie Bailey
Fiction

“Teddy.”

The name slipped from Aunt Bethany’s lips with her last breath.

She spoke of him many times in the nursing home. She told rambling tales of her youth while I sat by her impersonal white-sheeted, hospital bed and held her frail hand in mine.

Most of the stories I knew, but I had never heard of Teddy. She talked about him during her crazy spells when she would call me by my mother’s name and think she was young again.

“Maggie,” she’d say, “Teddy says he’s going to take me out dancing when he gets back. I think I’ll wear that new blue dress he likes. Says it makes my eyes look even prettier.”

Then she’d blush and smile, twirling a lock of her steel gray hair around her finger as she stared into space, imagining.

When she wasn’t having a spell, she was herself. Herself was sad, lonely and shut up in a room that smelled of antiseptic, mushy carrots from the cafeteria and hopelessness.

The day she died she was herself. I sat beside her on the bed and read to her from Peter Pan.

“No matter how old I get I’ll always love this story. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to be young always?”

I smiled sadly and agreed. Aging is so rarely graceful.

“Who is Teddy?” I asked hesitantly. I had asked the question before, but she had gone off into one of her spells.

“Have I been talking of him again?”

I watched conflicting emotions cross her tired face. That morning she had bravely put on bright red lipstick and pearl earrings. The lipstick made her face look pale, and she touched the earrings every minute or so as if for reassurance of their presence.

She studied my face as I watched hers. The long, noble nose. The kind, yet sad blue eyes. She was more sturdily built than I was, but our faces were very alike.

“You look so much like Maggie,” she finally said. “You make me think of her. You look at me with those puzzled blue eyes, and I see her about to ask me a question.”

Her countenance brightened, and I could see a bit of life come back into her eyes. She had been close to my mother and loved to tell me about her. I had few memories of her myself. I thought I saw an old Maggie story coming, but she went for one of her new favorite subjects instead.

“When are you starting renovations on the house?”

I was frustrated that she avoided my Teddy question but didn’t press the matter. I knew she was perilously close to the end.

“They’ve been at work for a couple weeks now. I should be able to move in within a month.”

Bethany had decided to leave me her home. The house I grew up in. My mother died when I was five, and my father traveled extensively for his job. Bethany took me in. When my father passed away two years ago, she became the closest thing I had to a parent.

“I’m glad. You know, I always wanted to have children in that house,” she said, looking up from her deathbed with those startlingly blue eyes. “It was a house meant for children. Not just one. Enough to fill all the rooms.”

She squeezed my hand.

“I’ll see what I can do, but things aren’t looking good, Bethany.” We both laughed. We had talked extensively about my romances, none of which lasted very long.

She sighed and closed her eyes. “You’ll find your Teddy soon.”

I stood up and picked up my purse, preparing to leave.

Her eyes popped open.

“Don’t leave yet. I’m not asleep.” She smiled charmingly at me. Bethany was the most charming person I’ve ever met.

Her smile reminded me of every time I had walked into her kitchen to be greeted by her happy face and a jug of overly sweet tea. I sat back down, smiling at the thought.

“Remember the summer I went to college?”

“Do I!” Bethany threw her head back, looking up at the ceiling, and laughed deeply. “You were so homesick that you called me at midnight and wanted me to drive three hours to come get you and bring you home.”

“You didn’t,” I replied reproachfully.

“Of course not. You were fine. You had everything you needed.” She patted my hand absently, lost in memories.

“There was no reason for you to come home.”

“I’m going home now,” I said, referring to Bethany’s house.

“So am I,” she replied.

“I’ve missed you.”

“I’ve missed you, too. You will have a million things that you miss in life. You’ll lose things that you think you can’t live without. Somehow, you do.”

Bethany’s eyes had become serious again—sad and serious. She liked to lecture me on loss. I was never allowed to cry over loss after I went to live with Bethany. I cried

// He pulled a sheet down from the wall, revealing an old, wooden door with a round, golden doorknob, faded and rusted. //

when my father left me with her, and she called me a baby. I hadn’t cried in front of her since, even at my father’s funeral.

We reminisced for another hour before her strength gave out. Her eyelids fluttered, trying to stay open. I excused myself, knowing she needed a nap.

The modern, steel-framed nursing home door had just clanged shut behind me when my phone rang. It was the contractor I had hired to fix up Aunt Bethany’s house.

“We’ve found something you might want to see.”

I rushed over, worried about mold or an infestation of termites, adding up how much those disasters would cost as I drove.

But it wasn’t termites or mold.

I walked up the cracked, leafy sidewalk slowly, uncertain of what I would find inside. The huge oak tree that dominated Bethany’s front yard had littered orange and red leaves everywhere, and they crunched underfoot as I approached the Victorian monstrosity that Bethany affectionately called her “little home.”

The white paint on the outside was cracked and peeled. It looked like a dilapidated haunted house. The contractors hadn’t made it to the outside yet; they were saving it for last. I needed the inside fixed up first so I could move in.

I ascended the steps of the wraparound porch that Bethany adored and tried not to see her sitting in the porch swing. Memories invaded my mind whenever I came into

this house, and my memory of younger Bethany haunted every nook and cranny.

Inside, the house smelled of paint, sawdust and sweat. I could hear a saw screeching through a 2-by-4 in the next room.

The foreman met me in the front hallway. He extended a leathery, work-blistered hand, and I took it.

“Thanks for coming. We need you to see something before we continue with the work in the upstairs bedroom.”

His voice was almost drowned out by the screaming saw and the sudden pounding of a hammer. I nodded and followed him up the stairs, which were scratched and stained from years of use. I saw my name etched in the handrail. I had done it when I was eight, much to Bethany’s annoyance.

The foreman led me to my aunt’s bedroom, which they were redoing to be my own. Floor-to-ceiling windows all along the outside wall let in plenty of sunlight, which highlighted the rich, brown hardwood floor beautifully. It was a large room, the master bedroom, and attached to it was a small old-fashioned bathroom with a claw-foot tub.

“We found something in the wall here while we were tearing down the old sheetrock.”

The room, and in fact the entire house, needed extensive renovations because of age and years of a tired old lady’s care. Bethany hadn’t had the energy or the money to fix or care for the house properly for years.

He pulled a sheet down from the wall, revealing an old, wooden door with a round, golden doorknob, faded and rusted.

I paused, confused.

“There was a door behind the sheetrock?”

The foreman nodded as he smiled and rubbed sheetrock dust off the door with a tanned hand. He was obviously pleased with his find.

“It’s really something, isn’t it?”

“Is it a closet?”

I had always wondered why there wasn’t a closet in Bethany’s room. She had a giant old wardrobe instead that I used to play in as a kid, pretending to be Lucy in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*.

“No. Look inside. I already opened it. I hope you don’t mind.”

He eased the door open roughly. It squeaked loudly on its hinges.



**The Joy of My Life
Is in Zion**
Grace Boto
Graphite Drawing

I peered inside. The darkness spilled out and into the sun-filled bedroom, bringing with it the musty smell of old trapped air and mold.

The walls inside the tiny room were a faded yellow, cracked in places and chipping badly from age. A cross-stitch of the Lord’s Prayer, covered in dust and cobwebs, hung above a crib painted baby blue.

A cardboard box sat in the center of the room as if forgotten.

I looked at the foreman in disbelief. He looked back with wide, excited brown eyes.

“Go in. I didn’t go in yet. Did you know about this?”

“No,” I said, taking a cautious step in. His deep, throaty voice brought back memories of my father.

I approached the cardboard box and opened it carefully. Papers were piled haphazardly at the bottom, and I lifted them out. The smell of the old papers was almost overwhelming. I heard the foreman open the bedroom windows and felt a cool breeze lift the tendrils of hair off the back of my neck.

I held up a photograph to the light streaming in. It was of a young woman with sleek brown curls and blue eyes, leaning against a young man.

He had a solemn face with attractive features and a small mustache. His dark hair was neatly combed, probably for the photograph, which looked like it had been taken professionally. She wore a dress, pearl earrings and dark lipstick. He had an arm around her trim waist.

Their eyes shone with happiness.

I felt as if I knew those eyes. I studied the two carefully until I knew the answer. Then I flipped the photo over. On the back were two names: Teddy and Bethany.

In the box I found a marriage certificate, a few more photographs, and a clipping from a newspaper announcing Teddy’s death in a tragic car accident only two years after the couple had wed.

This room had been prepared for children who never came.

“What do you want to do with it?” the worker asked me, leaning against the door jam. He looked appraisingly around the room. “It would make a good-sized closet.”

“No,” I said, quickly. “I want it to stay a nursery. Fix it up, but it stays the same. Same color, same everything.”

The foreman nodded and raised his eyebrows.

“Yes, ma’am.”

I sat on the floor of the nursery long after he left, looking at that photograph. I thought I had known Bethany better than anyone in the world, and yet she had kept this secret from me. A memory so painful she had locked it up in this room and in her mind and pretended as if it never happened.

I was already crying when the nursing home called to tell me that my aunt had slipped into a coma. I cried for the first time in years—this time for Bethany, who couldn’t cry the tears herself. I arrived back at her bedside just in time to catch that last word.

Teddy had never come home to her, so now she would go to him. •



Tea Time
Holland Glover
Drawing with Markers



Ballet
Holland Glover
Drawing with Markers



Eden
Tara Ross
Silkscreen

Metropolitan Vamp
Amiee Stubbs
Color Photography



Sheets
Robyn Ritchie
Fiction

You say, “Come.”

On the couch, a beam of light rolling over me—the dull, dirty shine of a noontime, summertime, whatever time. I am stuck to the leather material like a fly to flypaper, and here you catch me. Tapping slender fingers against the side of my thigh, you promise miracles.

“—fifteen-thousand troops on foreign shores, a princess mourning the lost prince, a new planet to be discovered, a sword that gleams in the sun—”

A thin sheen of saliva coats your lips, and I look up at the ceiling, the cracked plaster above us. This tiny apartment—filled with the stench of week-old trash and yesterday’s coffee—is falling down around us, the way you

fall down around me. Your arms, like prison bars, block me from escape. I turn back, and suddenly there is heat in your eyes, slowly building like a furnace startled to life.

“—a feeling of apprehension, a monster under the bed, a little girl’s broken neck, the cuts on her thighs, a magician who sees all, little boys in despair—”

Your fingers on my thigh creep upward and—tension, push, sigh—you’re inside of me.

You say, “Come,” and I want to.

But the sun is so bright; I tilt my head back over the armrest to squint at the open window. The curtains part to reveal a world outside, a world so much like the one you describe. I feel you working inside of me and pause to think that all you say, all you promise to dreaming people like me, is a lie. Just fantasy, too lofty for us to reach. We are stuck here on Earth, the ground-floor apartment, languishing in a

ray of dust motes that float overhead like satellites.

Your temper flares—you’re losing my interest. The dream is dissipating, sliding from view, and you tense. I let out a sigh as you lean into me with a foreign weight, and you’re suddenly something of great mass.

“—a world of passion, people who are beautifully ugly, ten different kinds of love, freaks in love, freaks who find someone to love, someone to hate, and a feeling that is born from the two—”

Your mouth continues to move, and I am in a haze; the sun moves, and the room drips in shadow. Your words encase me until they are tangible, a blanket to wrap me up, a blanket to take away my vision, my sense, and I succumb. Pliant, you mold my body, my mind, and through the material of this web you’ve spun, I see your grinning face.

You say, “Come,” and I do. •



Requiem

Ryan Rehnborg
Nonfiction

The Ford Ranger started with a gurgle and a squeal, followed by the brooding sounds of Mozart's Requiem Mass in D Minor. As Scott eased off the clutch and backed uphill to the street, he closed his eyes and sucked in breath. Cool air from the vents beat his face, evaporating the perspiration that tiptoed along his forehead. His eyes flickered open just in time to skid around the mailbox and into the left lane of traffic. Heedless of sudden danger, he floored the accelerator and zipped around the neighbors' oncoming van. As he sped down Carthage Highway, past Johnson's Nursing Home and a lonely hardware store, he hastily spun the volume on the radio and gunned the engine, filling his world with Mozart and RPMs.

The first time I heard Mozart's Requiem Mass, I was sitting in the balcony of an auditorium, watching my father play cello. The last time I heard it, I was lying in my casket, watching my funeral.

I had heard the song countless other times while growing up in a household bursting at the seams with musical energy. My mother and father's musical energy met for the first time in the Nashville Symphony. My father played cello; my mother sang in the symphony choir. They conceived my sister in a late night excursion to the symphony center, and she spent most of her life there, playing cello like my father. My twin brother, Jack, ran from the symphony life, instead playing piano, guitar, harmonica, and singing with blues artists all over the nation until he came back home to start a music shop on the square. I didn't even sing karaoke. I flew airplanes.

I flew out this afternoon to clear my head. If I let myself concentrate on flying, my head fills up with altitudes, degrees, and clear skies. Flying at 270 degrees and flight level 300 takes over my mind, and leaves it no spare second to dwell on things like this morning, which I spent hiding behind a couch, praying my wife would stop knocking on the door. It was the same flight I took after the morning I walked into my parent's house to be greeted by some strange woman's voice groaning in ecstasy behind my father's door. It was the same flight I took the day my son was stillborn and my marriage began to unravel. Flying due west at 30,000 feet – the only rest for an unraveling mind.

Three seconds before the light turned green, Scott peeled across the intersection, his pickup bed bumping and creaking as Sir Pizza vanished in his rear view mirror. He gritted his teeth, stiffening his shoulders and arching his back until he could tense no more. With a yell, he pounded an open palm into the steering wheel so hard that he whipped the hand back with a whimper. The pain shot through his arm and he gripped the wheel tighter with his other hand, hoping the pressure and the pain would overwhelm the thoughts and the voices and the faces. His vision blurred as he whirled around the town square, and his legs trembled. His spine sent ripples of numbness up and down his body, but Scott was not a single painful thought less for the wear. He slid into the parking lot of the Lebanon Municipal Airport.

Desperate as I was for rest, I didn't notice the weather as I charged to the cockpit, and this time, my thoughts raged above the chatter of the radio as I ascended to 30,000 feet. Hours passed before my thoughts finally gave me the rest I had come to beg of the heavens, and by then it was too late. I saw the storm on the radar, and soon enough, it darkened the heavens before my eyes. The dark clouds soon towered above me, and the cockpit quaked around me. My day spent in hiding made me quake with rage at the thought of turning back, and I defiantly rocketed upward, daring myself to fly above the storm.

As I throttled toward the top of the sky, I finally found a measure of peace, nestling in memories of daring feats I'd performed while flying fighter jets in the Air Force. Up and up I soared as I clung to the haven of memories that stood a world apart from my collapsing life.

I broke through to clear skies and soared over the world and the storm and everything that harrowed me. My mind cleared and my heart soared as I slipped out of reach of all the troubles that tied me to the earth. Methodically, I checked the gauges, slipping into my routine of blissful indifference to the world below.

Jack stared at the ripples in his black coffee and felt the shiver from the first sip twist around his shoulders and run down his spine. He let out a forceful breath, closing his eyes for a second. A jarring

squeal snapped Jack from his trance, and his eyes flicked open to see a dented blue Ranger skid out in front of the mustached Sir Pizza statue. Jack's heart skipped a beat when he saw his brother at the wheel, and another, sharper shiver shot down his spine. He leapt up from the table and pulled on his jacket. He'd never seen his brother drive like that. Jack blustered out of the coffee shop and into his car, revving the engine desperately.

// Hearing my stillborn son's name sent shrapnel through my chest. //

The sunset hit my eyes just as I started to check the fuel gauge. I took in a sharp breath through my nose, and my eyes widened. Every feeling and thought flooded in through my nose, and I shook with realization. Sitting there in the cockpit and gazing out over the purple glare of the West, I realized my time was at an end. I had missed far more than the weather in my mad rush to the airport this time. If I had taken the normal route or turned back when I saw the storm, I could have barely made an emergency landing, but my mad challenge of the storm had left me miles above the earth with a few minutes of fuel left to live. Here in front of me stood another towering storm, one I could not remember away and one I would never rise above; here was a sunset that would not set in my lifetime.

A storm beat the heavens as Jack searched the sunless sky from his perch on the hood of his car. "Get back down here," Jack mouthed desperately. He leapt from the hood of his car, and launched himself into the door of Scott's parked truck. "Don't be an idiot!" He slammed his hand into the window, letting it slide down the wet glass. Jack whirled back to look at the heavens.

I rose higher into the navy sky until every gauge quaked with panic. Letting go of the panic and plane, I sighed and smirked and closed my eyes. Time slipped away from me as the plane stalled and fluttered and fell. As the present faded away, it was not my life that appeared before my eyes, but something I had never seen in all of my time on earth.

Mozart's Requiem Mass filled my ears before I opened my eyes. As my eyes fluttered open, the faces of my family faded into view. My sister kept trying to take my hand, and her face pleaded with me to return the gesture. My father stopped her with a gentle embrace. Their mournful embrace left only Mom and Jack to stare down into my casket. I can only imagine what Jack felt with his own face staring back at him from death. Jack's hands trembled, and he broke away from my view with a start, leaving only my mother. Her hands trembled too, but she smiled through the tears and barely voiced the words, "Scott, my angel."

My own vision blurred as my eyes filled with tears, and suddenly, Mom was gone. In her place stood the teary figure of my wife, Annie. My embalmed stomach wrenched at the sight of her, and my fingers trembled, desperate to reach out. So much love and fear and misery filled me as should have raised my embalmed body from its bed, but I lay fixed in the casket.

"Tell Peter I love him."

Hearing my stillborn son's name sent shrapnel through my chest.

"I never should have let you two go."

I begged my mouth to plead, "No. No. No. You didn't let us go." She quivered there for fifteen minutes until her brother came to make her let go of the coffin. As her fingers loosened their grip and finally let go, the coffin wobbled, and I felt like I was drifting on a lake. Coffin and corpse, I plunged below the surface of the water, and closed my eyes once more.

A shadowy vessel tumbled from the clouds and into a distant lake.

I shook my head, and the water bubbled up around my body. They wouldn't have found my body intact. They wouldn't have an open casket funeral for the victim of a plane crash. From the depths of the water below, fire billowed up and enveloped me.

Jack felt a twinge and a shudder and release. He stumbled back, as an orange light glittered on the lake.

The Requiem Mass still played, and my mother's sweet voice proclaimed the "Lacrimosa:"

"Lacrimosa dies illa," That day of tears and mourning.

"Qua resurget ex favilla," When from the ashes shall arise...

I sat on Jack's mantle at Christmas, an urn of ashes. A five year-old boy bombarded the living room with stamping feet and shouting. Jack stamped into the room behind him and caught the boy up in his arms, "Hey Peter!" My throat caught, and I swallowed a mouthful of ash.

Annie swept into the room, her eyes radiant and her mouth bright with a grin. She embraced Jack and Peter, "Merry Christmas!"

I could have watched for hours and never grown tired of their grins and embraces. I both loved and hated that Annie had married Jack, but nothing in the world would make me wish that they hadn't brought Peter into it. Our lost boy had been returned. As I stared at Peter's perfect face, I felt the ash reclaim my perch on their mantle.

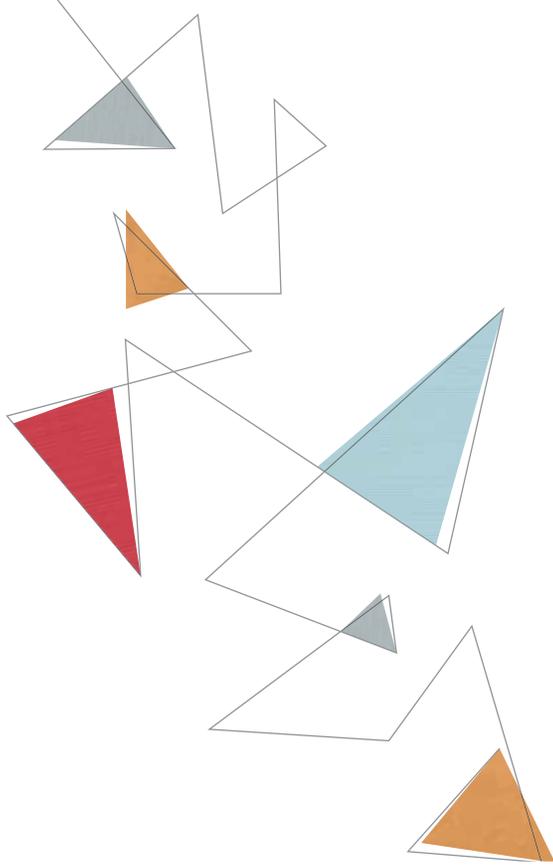
Jack fell backwards, slammed into his car door, and slid down to the ground. He didn't feel a thing. His eyes fixed on the ripples of orange and black that welled up from the lake and into the sunset as storm clouds vanished. Orange tore through the purple West like a fiery chariot. And then, black. Just black.

"Huic ergo parce, Deus," my mother sang. Spare us by your mercy, Lord.

I stared out of a picture frame, into my parent's bedroom. My father lay on the bed, dying. The whole family had gathered around my father, and my mother knelt at the dying man's side. She leaned forward to hear something my father had to whisper in her ear. I bit my tongue in two to see the look of confession on his face and the look of forgiveness on hers.

She climbed up into his bed and cradled him in her arms, singing:

"Dona eis requiem. Amen." Grant them eternal rest. Amen. •



Saturday Nights and Sunday Mornings

Trisha M. Thompson
Poetry

I love going to Nana's on Saturday nights.
She has pizza, popcorn and movies,
But I hate being at Nana's Sunday morning.

Why do I have to wear these?
I don't like dresses or dress shoes,
And I really don't like bows in my hair.

The drive is the worst.
It is always hot, and
I don't like the old music she plays.

There's more music when we get there,
And then the bald guy yells and sweats on stage
For a long time.

Nana underlines things in her Bible
And says amen sometimes.
I don't say anything.

I touch the sentences on the page.
I figure what she underlined is important,
So I ask her to tell me what it says.

The Lord is my shepherd,
But the greatest of these is love,
For God so loved the world...

I look at the lines on the page for a while,
Wondering why she likes those words so much.
Maybe one day I'll like them, too.

For now, I'll take pizza, popcorn and movies.
I love going to Nana's on Saturday nights,
But I hate being at Nana's on Sunday morning.

Theatre at Night
Tatiana Garrison
Color Photography

COLLAGE

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About Collage

Collage is a biannual production of the Middle Tennessee State University Honors College. All submissions are reviewed anonymously and selected by a student editorial staff. The materials published by *Collage* do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *Collage* staff, Honors College, MTSU student body, staff, or administrators. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form without written permission from the editor or adviser of *Collage*. Inquiries should be addressed to *Collage*, Middle Tennessee State University, 1301 East Main Street, Box 267, Murfreesboro, TN 37132.

To Submit to Collage

Collage accepts submissions year-round. A completed submission form must accompany each entry. Forms are available along with submission guidelines at www.mtsu.edu/~collage. Creative work, such as art, photography, prose, and poetry, may be submitted digitally from the website or may be turned in at the *Collage* office, Honors 224, along with a completed hard copy of the form between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Creative works are accepted from MTSU students and alumni.

Policy Statement

Collage: A Journal of Creative Expression is an arts and literary magazine featuring top-scoring submitted work chosen by a volunteer staff in a blind grading process. The staff attempts to choose the best work without regard for theme or authorship.

Although *Collage* is a publication of the University Honors College, staff members and submitters are not required to be Honors students. Staff members are selected each semester from a pool of applicants and must have at least a 3.0 GPA and two letters of recommendation.

Creative Expression Awards

Each semester the *Collage* Faculty Advisory Board selects submissions to receive Creative Expression Awards, one from each major category: art, photography, poetry, prose, and alumni. Literature winners receive the Martha Hixon Creative Expression Award, and visual winners receive the Lon Nuell Creative Expression Award. Winners receive \$50 awards.

Columbia Scholastic Press Association Awards

Gold Medalist Certificate – 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010
Silver Crown Awards – 2007, 2008 & 2011

Production Notes

Technology

Adobe InDesign®
Adobe Illustrator®
Adobe Photoshop®
Apple Macintosh Platform

Typography

Futura Medium
Museo Slab
Garamond

Paper

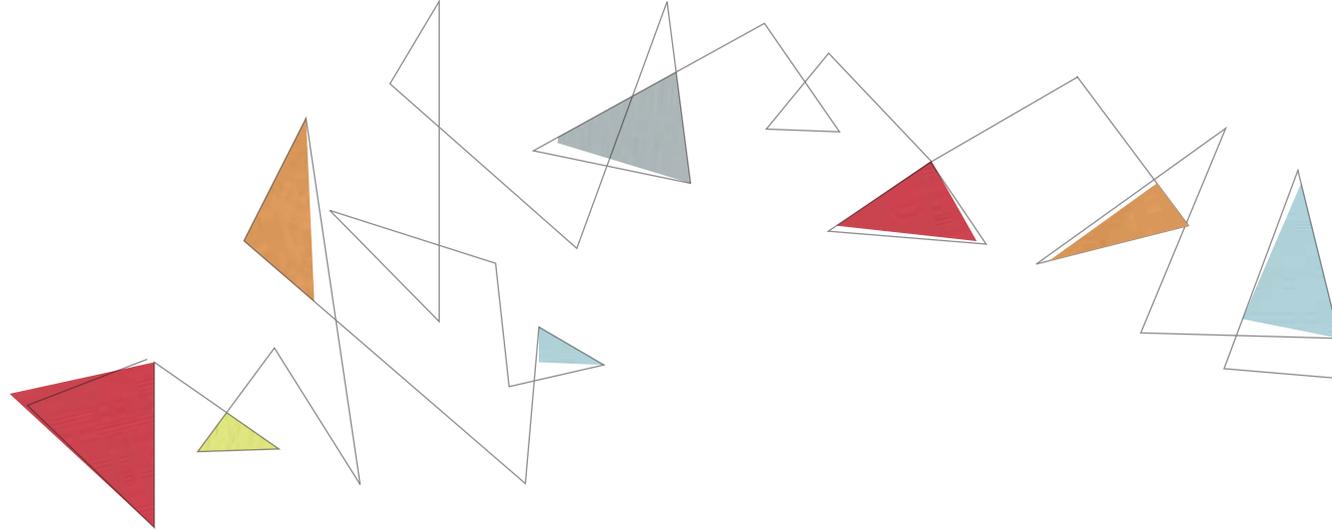
100 lb. Dull White Cover
80 lb. Dull White Text

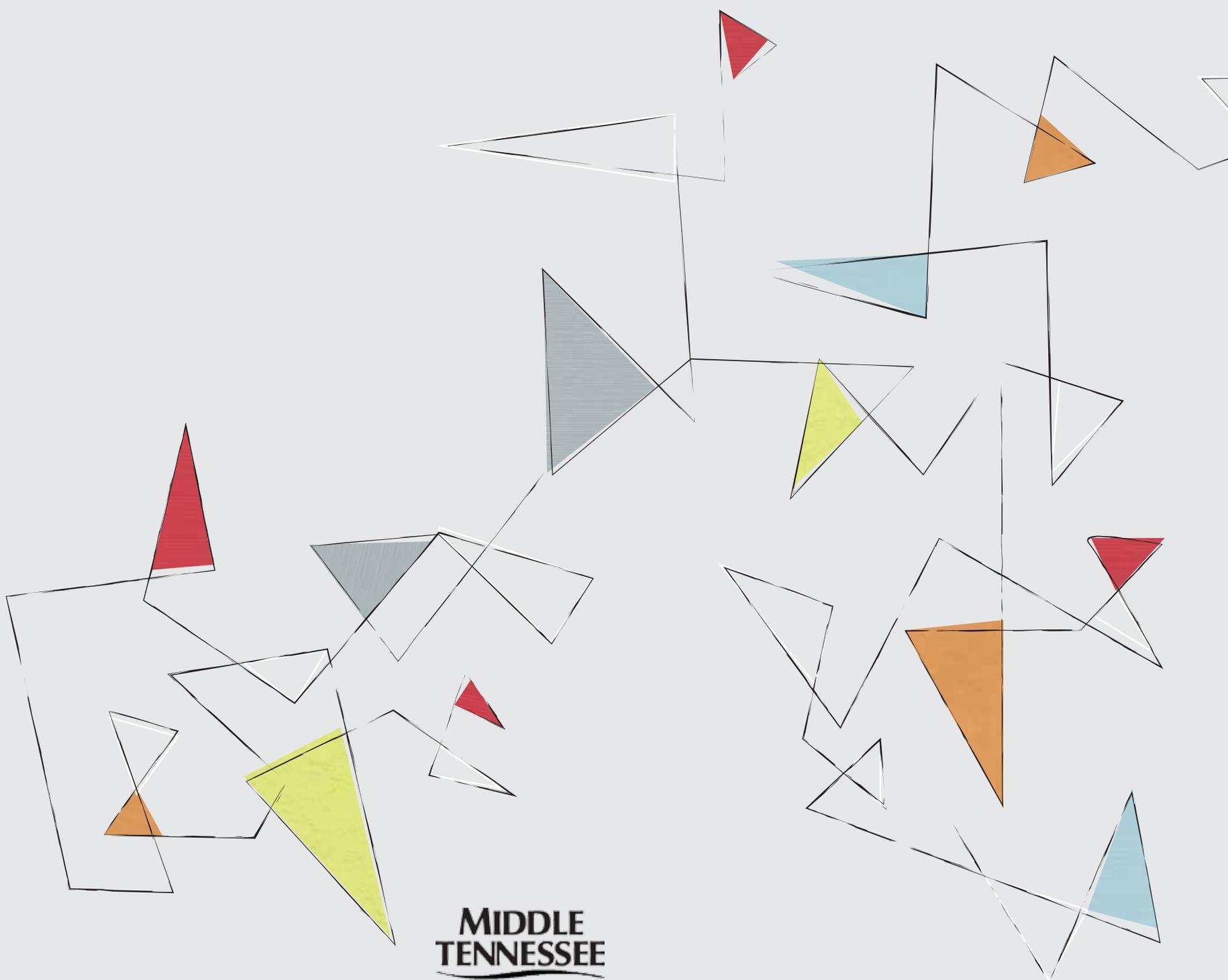
Binding

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