

LINCOLN LAND review



\$5.00

L I N C O L N L A N D **review**

*A collection of visual
and written work
by students of
Lincoln Land
Community College*

Lincoln Land Review is published once a year by:



Lincoln Land Press
c/o Department of English and Humanities and Department of Arts and
Communication
Lincoln Land Community College
P.O. Box 19256
5250 Shepherd Road
Springfield, IL 62794-9256
lincolnlandreview@llcc.edu
lincolnlandreview.wordpress.com

Printed in the United States by Production Press, Inc.

Copyright 2021 by Lincoln Land Review All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of the publishers.

Submission Information

We are looking for high quality writing, digital media, and fine art submissions from students of Lincoln Land Community College for next year's edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*. We will accept work between May 15, 2021 and January 15, 2022.

Instructors or students may submit students' best artwork, fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, academic non-fiction (properly formatted, cited, and scrupulously proofread) via the *Lincoln Land Review* submission link on the LLCC Press webpage: www.llcc.edu/llcc-press. For each work that is submitted, be sure to also fill out and give permission to publish on the Microsoft Form. Editors reserve the right to make corrections or slight changes in written works accepted. Preference is given to essays, stories, research papers, etc. that are under 20 pages long. Please contact one of the editors at the review email address: LincolnLandReview@llcc.edu if you have questions.

Lincoln Land Review (Print)
ISSN 2152-4467

Lincoln Land Review (Online)
ISSN 2152-4475

Editors' Note

Like others in the Lincoln Land community, throughout the country, and around the world, the dramatic change in our lives due to the pandemic has been a time of introspection for us at the *Lincoln Land Review*. The shift toward web-based instruction and other forms of remote learning has, unfortunately, kept us out of the classroom and away from our main campus, hindering our efforts to promote the journal as widely as in years past. The result is a somewhat smaller selection than we had hoped to offer. Nevertheless, our commitment to showcasing and celebrating the best examples of academic non-fiction, narrative, and creative writing as well as graphic and fine art has not been compromised. We are excited to present this newest edition and hope that it inspires you to share your own work with us in the future!

We are proud to announce the winners of our annual “best of” contest in the following categories:

Fine Art—Margaret V. Miller, *Terra*

Digital Media—Vlada Popyk, *When Will We Be Free*

Academic Nonfiction—Matthew Cook, *Create a Character, Not a Post*

Nonfiction Narrative—Luis Andrade, *He Played with Dolls*

Poetry—Paul Watson, *I Think of Giraffes*

2021 Review Cover—Wilma Wofford, *Cleaning Up America*

The digital version of this edition can be found on our Lincoln Land Press webpage, www.llcc.edu/llcc-press and on our *Lincoln Land Review* Facebook site.

The magazine is only possible with the support of the LLCC community, most specifically, The Lincoln Land Press. Thank you, Press founders Ryan Roberts and John Paul Jaramillo. We are so grateful for the production expertise of Graphic Design Specialist Misty Hagstrom and for the promotion assistance of Lynn Whalen, Chief Communications Officer and Kyla Kruse, Assistant Director of Public Relations. Dr. Vern Lindquist, Vice President, Academic Services, Dr. Joel Dykstra, Dean of the Department of English and Humanities and Adam Watkins, Dean of the Department of Arts and Communications support us behind the scenes as well, and kudos to all faculty and support staff who guide students in their continuing academic and creative experiences.

Faculty Editors

Eric Stachera (Writing)

Cara Swafford (Writing)

Laura Anderson (Art)

Student Cover Art

Wilma Wofford, *Cleaning Up America*

Table of Contents

W R I T T E N W O R K

Academic Nonfiction, Creative Nonfiction and Poetry

Luis Andrade – He Played with Dolls	7
Alicia Blood – I Hate My Guts	11
Natalia Cina – Linking Idea	16
Matthew Cook – Create a Character, Not a Post	44
Paul Watson – I Think of Giraffes	48
Ben Yutzy – We Should Not be Afraid of Selfish Actions	50

2021 Paul Simon Essay Contest Winner

Makenzie Hereth – The Best Decision of My Life	55
---	----

V I S U A L W O R K

Fine Art and Digital Media

Allona Beasley Mitchell – <i>Pink Peonies</i>	19
Allona Beasley Mitchell – <i>White Amaryllis</i>	20
Art Silver – <i>The Next Move</i>	21
Carol A. Bauer – <i>The Message</i>	22
Carol A. Bauer – <i>Egret Catching Fish</i>	23

Christina Pierson – <i>After Picasso</i>	24
Ellen Pierson – <i>The Plague</i>	25
Julie Shaul – <i>Fish Eye</i>	26
Kristin Hall – <i>The Knot</i>	27
Madison Ulrici – <i>Vincent Squarepants</i>	28
Margaret V. Miller – <i>Terra</i>	29
Quinn Brown – <i>Knot</i>	30
Seth Jacobs – <i>Lotus Giver</i>	31
Seth Jacobs – <i>Careless Beauty</i>	32
Sierra Emmons – <i>Abstract Chaos</i>	33
Sierra Emmons – <i>Dead Things</i>	34
Suzanne Traylor – <i>Mitch</i>	35
Vlada Popyk – <i>Monogram</i>	36
Vlada Popyk – <i>When Will We Be Free</i>	37
Wilma Wofford – <i>Cleaning Up America</i>	38
Wilma Wofford – <i>Sunday’s Children</i>	39
Grace Underfanger – <i>Rude Invite</i>	40
Grace Underfanger – <i>Swiss Poster</i>	41
Noah Davis – <i>Self-Portrait</i>	42
MacKenzie White – <i>Self-Portrait</i>	43

LUIS ANDRADE

He Played with Dolls

Best of Nonfiction Narrative Winner

"I'll give you a real reason to cry!" is what my uncles would say when I showed any sign of fear after they bullied me for being too effeminate. No matter how scared I was or how much something hurt, according to all the Hispanic males in my family, if you cry, you're a girl—and god forbid any boy to be called a girl. In middle school, Alex Gonzales and his buddies made sure that I was familiar with the taste of dry California dirt and the feeling of hot asphalt ripping the flesh off my knees and the palms of my hands. "You like butt-sex, you like butt-sex!" was a song written and sung by Alex that I swore would make Casey Kasem's top 40 since it was the song on everyone's lips.

At that age, I believed that living in constant fear and being bullied was just a part of being gay. If you couldn't hide being gay, you had to learn how to survive with it. I often wondered if maybe there was something about me they were afraid of. Something that made them feel they had to show me how much stronger and more powerful they were. I'd love to say that it all got better when I would finally make it home, but it didn't.



Alone, by Norbert Eder

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/legalcode>

Home should be a place free of fear, a sanctuary for a child. Emotionally, that wasn't always the case for me. Hiding in a closet or in a shed was where I found my safe places. I'd hide and write poetry. Writing scripts for plays and acting them out with my sister's Barbies was a daily ritual. Creativity and imagination were the only ways I knew how to escape real life. It was the only thing that kept me from taking my own.

"You're playing with dolls again! What are you? A Fag?" was one of the famous lines my mother would yell when she would find me on one of my imagination retreats.

The abuse went on into my 20's. When I was 18, I got a scholarship from a famous voice teacher in Los Angeles. "What are you giving him or doing to him in return?" was my mother's reaction when I told her because, you know, it couldn't have had anything to do with the fact that I have an amazing voice.

Social Science teaches us that fear is a feeling that is triggered by the perception of danger, whether it's real or imagined. Most of us fear the unknown or things we can't understand, making us bullies ourselves—at times. When in danger,

our subconscious instincts kick into fight or flight mode to protect ourselves, loved ones, or things we hold dear, such as values and beliefs. The child bullies chose to fight a danger that posed an imagined threat to them, unlike the real physical threat and the danger they actually acted out towards me. My mother knew nothing about gay people aside from the stereotypes she had learned at church and in communities of people who weren't cultured or educated. I never thought my mother would disown me or stop talking to me for coming out. I was afraid; however, I would hurt her or break her heart. At the age of 23, when I finally told her, her response surprised me.

"I know," she said.

"Why didn't you tell me you knew? It would have made it easier. I would have confirmed sooner," I asked, confused.

"I was afraid you would say yes."

"Are you ok with it?" I asked fearfully.

"Of course! You're my son. I love you," her voice broke.

"But you called me names and said horrible things to me. Why?" I could barely talk now. My emotions started to run wild. I was choked up, nervous and scared, but most of all, confused.

"I thought I could scare it out of you," she said. "I didn't know what else to do. I'm sorry."

A few years later, while living in the sunny state of Florida, I got up the courage to quit my job and move to New York City. I had never been to NYC before. In 2009, just three years after moving, the recession had finally caught up to me. The store I was managing had closed, and I had a lot of time on my hands, which I spent mostly on free walks through Central Park. Free. Very important at the time. That spring, while walking my dog Addy through the park, I noticed someone passing out flyers. It was common for people to advertise free art or theater events, so I went over and asked for one.

"What's going on?" I asked.

"Broadway Impact is hosting a Marriage Equality rally downtown on Saturday. You should come!"

"I've never been to one. I don't think I even wanna get married."

"Well, that's why you should come to see what other people have to say. Maybe you'll change your mind. Some of the cast of *Sex and The City* will be there!"

"Well," I chuckled, "in that case, I'm totally there!"

When I got home, I researched Broadway Impact, "the first and only grassroots organization to mobilize the nationwide theater communities in support of marriage equality," and I found information on an opposition rally that was happening just a few hours before. I decided I would take my camera and attend

that one as well.

When I arrived at the opposition rally, I could feel the fear in the pit of my stomach. At the entrance, I was greeted by a woman wearing a white robe raising a Bible in her hand. At that moment, for whatever reason, I looked into her sunglasses, reached into my pocket, and pulled out a rainbow pin I had gotten at a Pride rally the year before. She noticed it and frowned. She was getting angry. I placed it on my chest next to a Human Rights Campaign sticker and walked towards her. I could hear my heart pounding. When I tried to pass her to get in, she was the first but not the last to spit in my face. As I walked through the crowds, people chanted, "Gay sex is a sin. Repent!" and "Don't pervert marriage!" Signs read *Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve*, while Leviticus 20:13: "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood upon them" painted the fronts of canvases.



Slowly moving through the crowds, I felt an all too familiar feeling. Here I was again—a 13-year-old boy being pushed and shoved, spat on, and smacked with what had been a notebook in middle school but was now a Bible. This is where my fight or flight instinct would normally have kicked in, but there was no library or bathroom stall I could run to, nor did I want there to be. There was no joke I could tell to keep me safe, and yet it didn't matter. I could fight and hit back, or I could fly and run, but I didn't want to. I kept moving through the crowds, taking pictures, taking the abuse, listening to the hate, wondering—why don't you just get to know me? I'm just like you. I don't pose a threat to you or your beliefs. There's no need for hate. There's no need for suffering.

I kept pushing through, and minutes seemed like an eternity as my vision blurred from what must have been a mixture of spit and tears covering my eyes. The bruises on my arms, forming from all of the physical violence that was afflicted on me by angry people, took their toll. Before I was ready to give up, I was grabbed by a couple on the sidelines opposing the opposition rally.

"What are you doing?!" the woman asked with a look of concern in her eyes and an "are you crazy?!" tone in her voice.

"I don't know," I responded, feeling relieved it was over.

My attendance at the rally lasted for about 30 minutes but felt like a lifetime. The nice couple offered to get me a cab to take me home, but this day wasn't



over for me. I invited them to go to the Broadway Impact rally with me, and they did. I'm sure they were just keeping an eye on me to make sure I was fine. When we arrived, the streets seemed as if they were painted by the rainbow. Signs of love and togetherness covered the New York skyline from the ground. People were

singing and joining hands. The fear and anxiety I had felt only moments before had gone. All around me now were beautiful human beings with faces full of hope and love, the total opposite from the opposition rally attendees whose faces were filled with hate and anger, filled with fear.

After that emotional journey, I jumped on the subway and went home to my Central Park North sublet. I ordered a pizza, poured a glass of two-day-old Trader Joe's wine, and turned on the TV. After a couple of unsuccessful channel surfing rounds, I finally gave up clicking and stopped at *Star Wars*. As I dozed off into a wine-induced coma, I heard Yoda say, "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering." I now understood.

In our current social climate, we have been driven by people in power through media and social outlets to the highest level of polarization this country has seen since the Civil War, and fear is the Death Star. Children are becoming murderers; parents are being killed by those placed in roles to protect us. After attending that opposition rally, not only did I revisit the fear I felt my whole life, but instead of allowing the power of my subconscious to choose fight or flight as a response or defense, I chose neither. What I chose was much harder. I chose courage to sit with the fear and break the cycle of fear, anger, hate, and suffering.

That summer, I became a public speaker for Marriage Equality. I was terrified to speak at my first rally in Queens, New York. When it was my turn to speak, I took my first step towards the podium, and my mother, who was standing off to the side with me, grabbed my hand and walked out as well. For the first time in a long time, I felt safe with her by my side. This bully, who was once motivated by fear, who showered me with anger and what sometimes felt like hatred and caused me suffering, was now motivated by hope because she wasn't afraid anymore. There we stood strong, fearless, and hopeful for change and we eventually won it. I'm now married to a wonderful man and have a strong family base. There have been ups and downs, but one thing is for sure. There is an abundance of love and very little fear here.

ALICIA BLOOD

I Hate My Guts

As I sit and recall the past several months, I can't help but absentmindedly check my colostomy bag for any leaks. Unfortunately, I have been prone to bag leaks ever since I was gifted with this abomination. Of course, I should be grateful since this bag saved my life, but I have to say that it has been a hassle. I have to change it every two to three days and have to be mindful whenever I lift items over one pound. On top of that, I am currently dealing with a skin rash due to the bag leaking almost regularly now. The waste that is emptied into my bag comes from my stomach and, needless to say, the waste that comes out is more acidic than normal since it isn't being processed through my colon. The skin on my stomach is red and often burns, but I've been trying to keep the rash down with a powder and disinfectant wipes to prevent further irritations or infections. I glance at the calendar and look ahead to December.

"Only seventy-six more days..." I keep repeating to myself over and over, "Only seventy-six more days." I was in my second year of college back in 2019. The fall semester just started in August, and all the students, and staff too, were still groggy from their summertime high. They had gone from drinks by the pool and long distance vacations to study sessions in the library and late night cram sessions before exams. I felt good about this semester, as if nothing could go wrong. I took about four classes ranging from the typical Geography to a poetry writing course. The first day back was nothing new to me, but as the semester progressed, I began to notice something that was a bit off. Around late September, I began to have these "attacks," as I so cautiously dubbed them: I would wake up at around two or three o'clock in the morning with a stabbing pain in my stomach, I would throw up about two times, and I would spend the rest of the night dry heaving as I dealt with these breath-taking pains. It felt as if a knife was not only stabbing me in my stomach but was twisting around and seemingly slicing deep into my mid-section.

The next day, I stayed home from school, of course, where I took it easy and camped out in my living room on the couch, sipping my water or Sprite and watching my ghost-hunting shows. I went back the next day and explained to my friends what had happened. They were concerned for my well-being.

"Sounds like you just had a small bug," one of my friends said, "Probably just a one-time-thing."

But then about two days later, the same thing happened again. And as I was slumped over the toilet bowl, exhausted and weary, I couldn't help but worry that there was something more to this whole ordeal. Grabbing some toilet paper and wiping my mouth clean, I shakily stood and flushed the used tissue and the

remnants from my stomach. I stood and glanced in the mirror as I washed my hands and rinsed my mouth out from the acidic taste. I was absolutely exhausted, and my face gave that away. Sighing, I meandered back to bed, hunched over like Quasimodo. But unlike him, I wasn't born this way: I was in a humongous amount of pain. I tried to keep up with school, I truly did. But my stomach had other plans for me. Every two to three days, I would wake up with the same stomach pains and continue my vomiting/dry heaving. Something was definitely wrong.

"It's possible to have the stomach flu for a month," another friend of mine said matter-of-factly.

Though she acted concerned, that's all it was: just an act. I could tell she was concerned with her own life, such as what new tattoo she should get or where her next piercing should go. But that's beside the point. Either way, I knew this wasn't the stomach flu.

Through the past few weeks, I had chalked it up to stress and had looked up what stress could do to your body. Vomiting and stomach cramps was a sign of extreme stress, so I decided to try meditation and relaxation techniques. Needless to say, they didn't work.

My parents were beginning to get concerned, too. They could see the change in my attitude and appearance and didn't know what to do. I could see the changes, too. I looked in the mirror after a dry heaving session, raking a hand through my disheveled hair. My eyes had dark circles around them with deep, almost heavy bags to accompany them, and my face looked as if I hadn't slept in days. To say I looked like a ghost was an understatement. I looked worse than the living dead and even zombies would run and hide if they saw me. I couldn't help but sob. What had happened to me? I had gone from carefree and loving college life to depressed (more so than usual) and just wanting to stay curled up in bed. I was beyond terrified and worried if this was all in my head. Maybe I was just complicating things.

October rolled around and while others were excited for the fall weather, apple cider, haunted houses, and hayrides, I was in pain and fighting the urge to just end myself in order to make the pain go away. I was tired of being in pain all the time and I had begun to skip meals. I was so afraid to even drink a glass of water because I knew that I would regret it later on and spend the night in pain again. I was losing a ridiculous amount of weight, but not the way I wanted to. I was borderline anorexic and things were just getting worse and worse. As others were excited for Halloween and watching scary movies, I was living a horror movie.

I went to prompt care and the only thing they told me was that I had IBS, or Irritable-Bowel Syndrome. This was of no help, and I felt even more frustrated. This basically meant that I had an upset stomach with no discernable cause. It was an umbrella term, so to speak. IBS means that you could have anything, ranging from

Crohn's disease to Ulcerative Colitis. It was, basically, the doctor telling me, "I don't know and I don't care."

Soon after, I went to my primary doctor. She told me that I had Acid Reflux. Even though I explained my symptoms, one of which was most certainly not heartburn, she waved me away and just prescribed me pills that I didn't need. I was even more discouraged because this diagnosis had nothing to do with what I was experiencing. I felt as though things were never going to change and I was going to be stuck in constant pain.

Finally, at about nine o'clock at night on a Sunday about six days away from Halloween, I was rushed to the emergency room by my parents. I don't remember a whole lot during the ride there. It was most certainly dark out, and it was pouring rain. Again, this sounds like something right out of a horror movie. "On a dark and stormy night, a young adult spent most of the day vomiting and was being rushed to the hospital." Almost cliché if you ask me. Anyway, I couldn't recall much. The only thing I really remembered that night was sitting in the passenger- seat and holding tightly onto an old Folgers plastic coffee container as I pretty much just dry-heaved into it.

The nurse gave me a muscle relaxer and I immediately felt more at ease than I had ever been. I can vaguely remember walking down the hallway with the nurse as she took me back to get a CT scan, asking me various questions along the way as I padded alongside her wrapped in a wool Mickey Mouse blanket and wearing Freddy Krueger fuzzy socks. I shivered, and she covered me with a warm blanket as I laid down to get the CT done. A while later, a doctor came back and explained that I had a partial bowel obstruction.

"It's no wonder she's throwing up so much!" he exclaimed. "She's in so much pain because she's so far backed up."

I was admitted into a room in which my treatment started. I wasn't allowed to eat or drink anything for a day or so and from there, I had to wait until my obstruction passed. It took about three days before I was able to eat solid food. I had started the first day eating nothing. I couldn't even have water. The second day, I was allowed ice chips and the third day, I progressed to Jell-O and apple juice. By the fourth day, I was eating soup and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I won't go into too much detail, but let's just say that I had to use the bathroom several times by my second day of recovery. The doctor's plan of passing my obstruction had worked, and I was on the road to recovery. By the fifth day, I was ready to go home after being confined to my room with only *Hocus Pocus* playing on repeat on the TV. It was the day before Halloween when I was released from the hospital.

For the next few months, I lived on prednisone, and I was loving it. I felt free and as though my problems were all over. Until I got a call from the gastroenterologist, that is. She wanted to schedule an appointment for a

colonoscopy because it looked like the area where the blockage was found had Crohn's disease. I was in absolute shock. I had heard about Crohn's before (I even know several people who have it) and seen commercials on TV, advertising different medications to help with Crohn's. But I never even once thought there was a possibility I could have Crohn's. Needless to say, I was off my 'happy high' and felt depressed more and more as Christmas began to approach.

Finally, the day arrived. The day after Christmas I mean. I went through the gruesome preparations (have you tasted magnesium citrate? That stuff should be illegal) and finally I had the procedure. I waited patiently for my results, praying that I didn't have any type of disease. Unfortunately, the results for Crohn's came back positive. I had never been more scared in all my life. How was I supposed to deal with this? I'm only nineteen years old. I'm too young and this could hinder my plans for the future. What about children? This could cause me to have a stillborn birth or something worse. What about dating in general? Nobody is going to want to go out with me knowing I have a disease that I'm stuck with for the rest of my life. My thoughts were running amuck.

Later on, the time came to choose my medicine, which I would be on for the rest of my life, even if I went into remission, which is a period of time in which someone doesn't experience Crohn's symptoms. I was put on mesalamine, small red pills, and I would take three a day.

These pills were working until later on during the Spring semester of 2020. I noticed I wasn't digesting the pills and I began to have continuing stomach cramps, though not as bad as the blockage cramps, mind you. I tried contacting my gastro doctor, even after I got my monthly blood work done. I waited three weeks to hear from her, and still nothing. I had had enough. I moved forward and found a different gastro doctor, recommended by a friend from church.

Immediately, this doctor told me about the medication I was on.

"It's no wonder she isn't digesting the pills," he explained while looking over the records on his clipboard. "These pills aren't even designated for the area where her Crohn's is located."

He then immediately got me started on shots, one every other week. At first, I was worried, but eventually I became used to the little pinch in my leg. The shots were about the size of an EpiPen and were quite easy to get used to. Finally, I was beginning to feel better—until the cramps started yet again.

This was just a never-ending cycle of pain and different medications. I felt hopeless, alone, scared. I felt as though I was stuck in a perpetual loop with only pain and misery. Things were just not looking up for me.

I went back in for another CT scan and the results weren't pretty. The doctor said I had a lot of scar tissue build-up and no amount of medication would be able

to help. He said I was going into another partial blockage and that surgery would be absolutely necessary.

Long story short, the surgeon agreed and immediately scheduled an appointment on September 1st for a bowel resection in which he would take out the diseased portion of my intestines and connect the good tissue together. He also explained that he would be taking out my appendix while I was there since it could cause issues down the road (appendicitis for one thing).

The day finally came when I went in for surgery. I was nervous, but I was also excited. Would my pain finally be over with? Was I finally at the long-awaited end of my story? As soon as I awoke from surgery, I was greeted by my mom, who was wearing a proud smile on her face.

"Do you know what they did, sweetie?" she asked with a sympathetic smile.

"It's gone, mom." I said with a loopy grin, referring to the diseased portion in my gut.

"Well...not exactly..." she said, frowning ever so slightly.

They didn't take the diseased portion out. As soon as the surgeon went in, he had to quickly empty my system because I was merely a few days close to a complete blockage. He consulted with my mom, and both agreed it would be wise to hold off on the resection. Instead of my intestines being the size of my thumb, they were about the girth of a baseball bat. They were extremely angry and inflamed, and he would just have been connecting enflamed tissue with even more inflamed tissue. Of course, that would mean even more problems for me. So, for now, he has given me a colostomy/ileostomy bag and is giving my guts some time to heal up. The nurse even informed my mom that while I was in recovery she emptied my bag within a half hour.

Now, I sit at home, writing fanfiction, slowly recovering, and mooning over Tom Hiddleston. It certainly has been a journey, but it isn't over yet. I can only have a positive outlook and continue my healing processes. But for the time being, I only have one final thing to say:

I really hate my guts.

Afterword: Alicia's bag was removed three months later, and she had resection surgery in which 14 inches of her intestines were removed. She has been living a healthy Crohn's-free life and has been enjoying herself to the fullest.

NATALIA CINA

Linking Ideas

Connecting concepts throughout a story is crucial to a reader's understanding of a book. Some authors take this concept further by including reoccurring ideas, themes, or events in order to emphasize significance. In the collection of short stories, *Look Both Ways*, Jason Reynolds is intentional about highlighting reoccurring elements to give weight to specific occurrences. In this book, aspects of literature are redefined because he connects ten stories into a single work. Connecting these ideas does not have to be so apparent, however. In *The Graveyard Book*, by Neil Gaiman, one can see reoccurring elements between chapters. Together, these stories allow readers to develop an enhanced awareness of interconnecting stories and the importance of repetition in different works of literature.

The Graveyard Book seems to be a consecutive narration of a story surrounding the main character, Bod, but it also includes patterns between chapters that connect the entire novel. When readers look closely at the chapters separately, aspects such as the setting, pictures, and themes emerge as distinct in each chapter. One of the most prominent examples is the constant setting and relation to the graveyard in which Bod lives. Yet, this framework can be developed further with the specific occurrence of an individual leaving the graveyard. Bod reveals this event in his first sentence of the novel, "Why amn't I allowed out of the graveyard?" (35), and in this way, he displays how important the reoccurrence is for the remainder of the story.

The importance of departure from the graveyard is only understood with the development of the novel as a whole. Each chapter includes at least one departure from the graveyard. An example of this includes Silas leaving Bod to pursue unknown ventures on page 67. The first departure in the novel is perhaps one of the most significant because it depicts the man-Jack leaving the graveyard. The fact that his departure includes the knowledge that "his knife was in his pocket, safe and dry" (33) is only by the grace of police sirens, and this allows Bod to begin his life there. Without this original departure, the entire book would never have matured into the story that follows. Other significant departures included in the story symbolize significant happenings in Bod's life. This includes the rebellion of Bod when leaving the graveyard in pursuit of a headstone for Liza (119), and his coming to the age of making his own decisions. In addition, this extends to Scarlett permanently removing herself from Bod (288) and revealing the maturation from the beginning of the story. Each departure develops Bod on a personal level and

advances the story as individuals leave and enter his life.

All of these reoccurring events of departure hold substantial weight in the development of Bod leading up to the final chapter when he discovers “the world is a bigger place than a little graveyard.” (307). This departure is what categorizes the novel as a coming-of-age story. At this moment, Bod himself realizes the significance that leaving the graveyard has established in his life. In this final revelation, the importance of departure reoccurring throughout the book comes into view. On page 307, Gaiman allows the reader to also come to the revelation that “There was Life; and Bod walked into it with his eyes and his heart wide open.” Ultimately, the departure into the unknown is the message Gaiman leaves with his readers.

In *Look Both Ways*, Jason Reynolds intentionally associates the short stories with one another by reoccurring patterns and ideas throughout. This interconnected nature is performed by arranging ten short stories into a single book format. By doing this, Reynolds allows the readers to consider how each story is supposed to be connected to the others. If readers scrutinize the text more carefully, they are able to identify a key component of the bell reoccurring in the book. This bell symbolizes the ability of characters to become who they are in some regard, though it can be different between individuals. Without the bell signaling to the characters they can change, the readers would never discover certain elements about them. This can range from Fatima beginning her checklist with “bell rings” (61) to the bell allowing Ty to run from the boys that had jumped Bryson (90). All of these events move the story along differently, but they all hold substantial weight in the character’s development.

For many of the characters in *Look Both Ways*, the bell does not change the personality of their character, but it allows them to enter places they can become themselves. For example, Pia Foster does not hide her character in the school because as Kenzi reveals “Pia skated through school.” (102). However, the bell allows the readers to understand her to a greater extent because only through her ability of entering the streets does she share certain events in her life. Some of these explored characteristics include her friendship with Marcus or her sister’s death. Cynthia also shares otherwise unknown information after the bell because she is able to engage with her grandfather, Cinder. Her striking character does not conceal itself when she is in the school, but she does enter a different version of herself when the bell rings. For example, she searches for “giggles” in the graveyard (146) and allows her grandfather to “believe he wrote [her joke]”(152). These would likely not be easily shared in the school setting, and they allow readers to relate to Cynthia differently. Only in this way does the significance of “Cynthia’s grandfather

was her superhero" (141) begin to hold importance for the story. The bell allows both Pia and Cynthia to present themselves in a way that would not be previously accessible, and the characters become united with the readers in new ways.

The story of Kenzi and Simeon present the bell in a different way than some of the other characters because Reynolds presents the bell as the signal to transform. While in the school, the two boys do not completely halt their personalities; however, after leaving they reveal that "this was where they could get loose." (107). They are able to enjoy complete comfort in their environment. The reoccurring bell allows them to boost their own characters and enter into the characters of "pretending to dunk" or balancing "on the tip-top of a fire hydrant" (107) that they feel they truly embody. Without this defining feature repeated before and after other interconnected stories, the readers could easily miss what indicated their ability to enter into their own individual characters. This change can take place in a different place for characters from hallways to streets to homes, but each shift originates from a single source: the bell.

Connecting each section of a book is an art that many are not able to execute successfully. Reoccurring patterns are often never seen by a reader and lose their importance as a story is developed. However, Gaiman and Reynolds exhibit the connection with significant weight in the construction of each story. The magnitude of Bod's final departure from the graveyard would be diminished because previous connections would not exist. Reynolds incorporating the reoccurring bell into his stories displays that the bell is the factor that allows the characters to enter into a different part of themselves. Joining stories by linking the book in apparent ways builds the theme and characters in a fashion otherwise unobtainable. This interconnected nature allows a different outlook for the readers as they relate to the exchange of information.

Works Cited

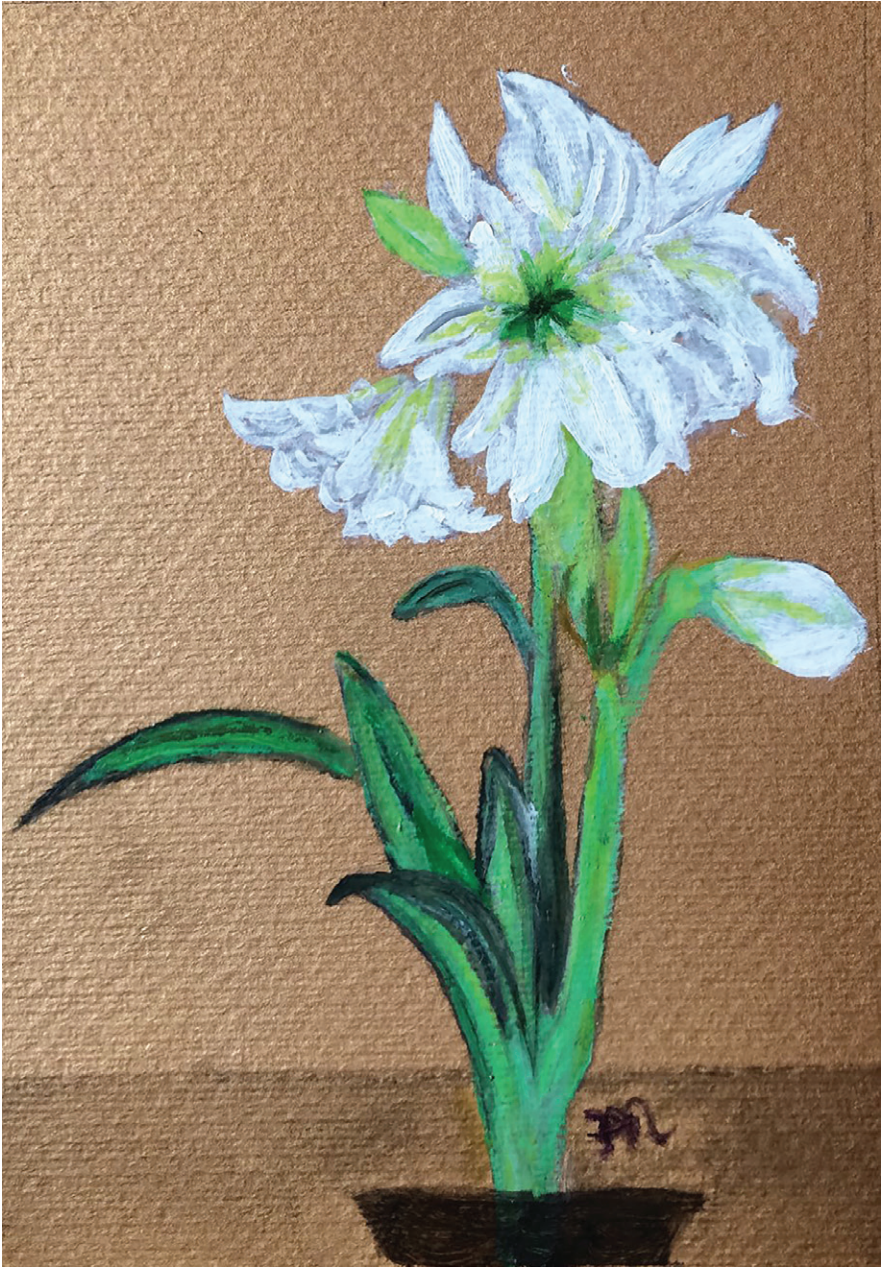
- Gaiman, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. New York, HarperCollins Children's Books, 2008.
- Reynolds, Jason. *Look Both Ways*. New York, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2019.



Allona Beasley Mitchell

Pink Peonies

oil



Allona Beasley Mitchell

White Amaryllis

oil



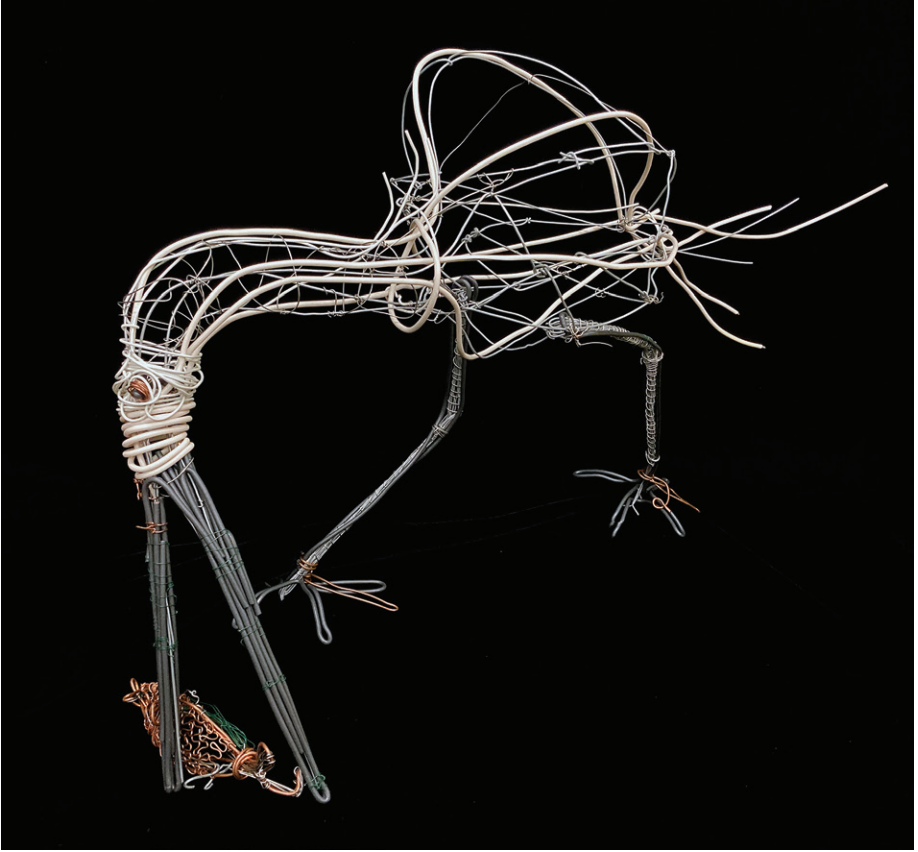
Art Silver
The Next Move
acrylic



Carol A. Bauer

The Message

wood and agate



Carol A. Bauer
Egret Catching Fish
wire



Christina Pierson

After Picasso

cardboard



Ellen Pierson

The Plague
acrylic



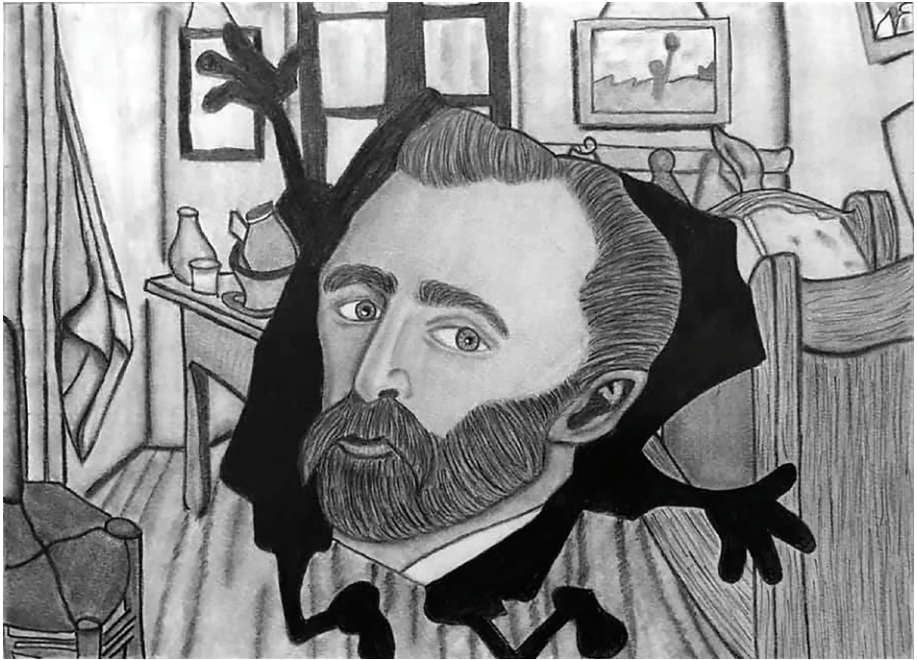
Julie Shaul

Fish Eye

watercolor



Kristin Hall
The Knot
charcoal



Madison Ulrici

Vincent Squarepants

graphite



Margaret V. Miller

Terra

wood and stones

Best of Fine Art Winner



Quinn Brown

Knot

charcoal



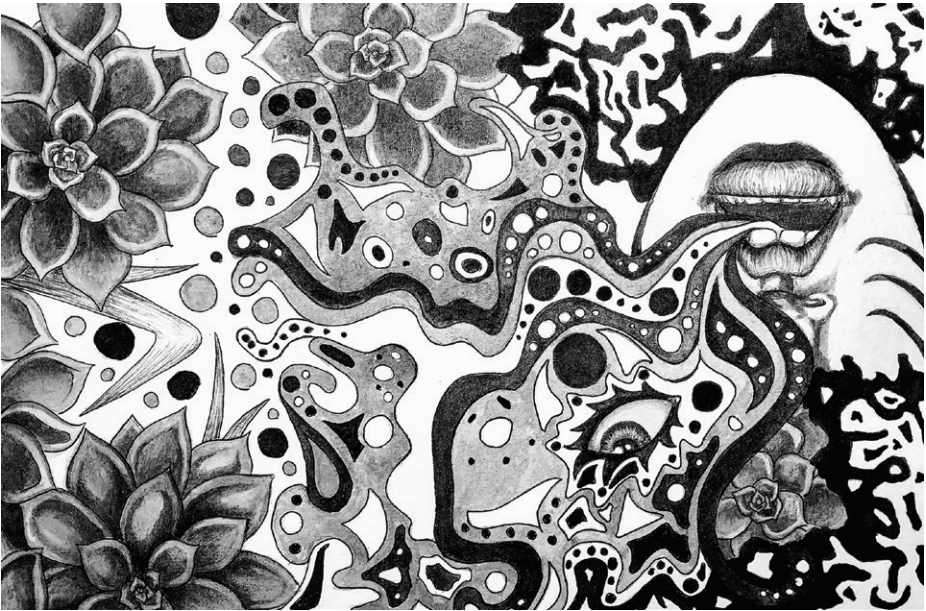
Seth Jacobs
Lotus Giver
cardboard



Seth Jacobs

Careless Beauty

wire



Sierra Emmons
Abstract Chaos
graphite



Sierra Emmons

Dead Things

ink



Suzanne Traylor
Mitch
oil



Vlada Popyk

Monogram

digital media



Vlada Popyk
When Will We Be Free
digital media
Best of Digital Media Winner



Wilma Wofford

Cleaning Up America

oil

2021 Review Cover



Wilma Wofford
Sunday's Children
oil



Grace Underfanger

Rude Invite

digital media



Grace Underfanger

Swiss Poster
digital media



Noah Davis
Self-Portrait
digital media



MacKenzie White
Self-Portrait
digital photography

MATTHEW COOK

Create a Character, Not a Post

Best of Academic Nonfiction Winner

It is 2020 and we are in the middle of a pandemic. Many mitigations are in effect, such as limits on the amount of people in a store, requirements to wear masks, and dining room closures. There is one mitigation, however, that is arguably the most detrimental to a person's mental health: physical distancing. The CDC recommends in its article "Social Distancing - Keep a Safe Distance to Slow the Spread" to keep six feet away from anyone who is not from your household. If we are to stay away from others, including friends and family, then how are we to fulfill our social needs? Humans are social creatures after all. Nancy Kanwisher, a professor at MIT, states in a presentation, "one of the most cognitively demanding things we do is to interact with other people." It would come to no surprise that as of October 2020 over 4 billion people worldwide- up 12.3 percent from last year- are active social media users ("Global"). With platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter available for anyone to use, there are many digital options to feed our social hunger. While these options are great for basic social tasks like sending a message, sharing a photo, or posting a comment, they are lacking in building social skills. However, there is a solution. Compared to social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram, Dungeons and Dragons, with its focus on teamwork, problem solving, and adaptability, is a better source to improve and sustain sociability during times of social distancing.

Have you ever been to concert and enjoyed being the only one there? Or had fun at an art festival with no other attendees? How about a sport's game with an audience of one? Going to events with others is a big part of what makes an event enjoyable. With social activities being cancelled and household isolation becoming the norm, one must worry about the detriments to our mental health. A study was conducted by Dr. Brett Marroquin, Dr. Vera Vine, and assistant Reed Morgan on the effects social distancing has on mental health. They studied symptoms of depression, generalized anxiety disorder, intrusive thoughts, insomnia, and acute stress in people who socially distanced during the early days of the pandemic compared to those who did not. Their results show an increase in each of these mental health symptoms for those who socially distanced (Marroquín, Brett et al). As the pandemic continued, people had to find ways to combat these symptoms, and social media seemed to be an answer.

Social media was already popular before the pandemic. Friends were using Facebook to connect with each other. The president utilized Twitter to share

messages with the nation. Photographers were showing off their art on Instagram. Predictably, people turned to these platforms when other forms of social gatherings were limited. With so many people using social media, it begs the question: are these options safe? According to an article on mcleanhospital.org, “the platforms are designed to be addictive and are associated with anxiety, depression and even physical ailments” (“Like”). Social media may not be the source we need to maintain our social well-being. Dungeons and Dragons, as a socially active tabletop role-playing game, offers people a much better opportunity to continue community practices that promote a healthy social lifestyle. While the game has mostly been played in person in the past, it has been adapted across the digital medium making it perfect for physical distancing.

All social media platforms focus on some type of communication, but many are lacking in a more intimate style of communicating. Someone posting a thought may receive dozens if not hundreds or more replies, including comments, advertisements, and responses to other comments. Very few, if any, may be the subject of a response from the original poster. This lack of personal communication does not help build lasting relationships, especially if the poster does not allow direct messages from commenters. Players in Dungeons and Dragons, however, often engage in personal conversations. Party members may have conversations about their backstories while traveling to the next town, or they may have a deep conversation on how a group’s decision affected them. As a game progresses, players find themselves forming friendships despite whatever differences they may have. In a study conducted by Michael Sargent, six participants were selected from multiple Dungeon and Dragons’ campaigns and interviewed about how playing the game has affected them. Five of the six mentioned that the community was a primary source of developing new relationships. Each participant was able to connect with others through in-game experiences which promoted new friendships by “simulating experiences and creating real attachments between participants” (Sargent 31).

Another way social media fails in comparison to Dungeons and Dragons is that opportunities to collaborate with others are limited or lacking. While these platforms allow for communication to complete outside team tasks, there are no specific team building activities within these programs. A few, like Facebook and Snapchat, incorporate games that can be played with multiple members, but they generally lack much depth and are rarely cooperative. Dungeons and Dragons allows for infinite opportunities to bring about a situation that requires the team’s effort. Virtually every session of the game has some sort of team activity incorporated. For example, it is the job of the dungeon master, who oversees the

campaign, to bring about encounters that require the entire group to participate in order to proceed. Each player must learn how to navigate their own goals around the team's objective as well. Robin Bates asserts in his article "Playing Dungeons and Dragons for Effective Team-Building" that the positive experience of Dungeons and Dragons helps improve social interaction and that this positivity can transfer outside the game.

A benefit of social media is how adaptable the platforms are. Not only are they accessible across computers, mobile phones, and tablets, but they are also constantly being updated to meet the demands of their consumers. As our wants, needs, and concerns change over time so do these platforms. An example of this would be how Facebook capitalized on an individual's want for a safe way to sell used merchandise. In 2016, Facebook Marketplace was released to satisfy this consumer want. This is also constantly updated by artificial intelligence working in the background to create a better system for its users (Liu). Facebook is not alone in its adaptability; however, Dungeons and Dragons is constantly updating and adapting to its community's wants as well. Currently on its fifth edition, Dungeons and Dragons' rules, mechanics, and content has changed over the years to create a game that is friendly to veterans and new players alike. With the pandemic and physical distancing in mind, one of the most important adaptations has been the utilization of the digital medium. Friends and strangers can come together on various websites like roll20.com, fantasygrounds.com, and even Discord to embark on extravagant adventures.

As we continue to distance ourselves from each other, we must keep in mind the importance of our mental health. In-person socializing will be on hold as long as this pandemic carries on. Because of this, we have to find ways of maintaining our sociability. We also must realize that Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social platforms are not sufficient in doing so. The next time you load up Facebook to satisfy the need to be social, I encourage you to message a group of friends and start a game of Dungeons and Dragons to forge a true socially healthy adventure.

Works Cited

- Bates, Robin. "Playing Dungeons and Dragons for Effective Team-Building." *Coaching for Geeks*, Sept. 2020, www.coachingforgeeks.com/playing-dungeons-and-dragons-for-effective-team-building/.
- "Global Social Media Overview." *DataReportal*, datareportal.com/social-media-users.
- Kanwisher, Nancy, director. *Humans Are a Highly Social Species*. YouTube, 8 Sept. 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyEg1ImpYi0.

- “‘Like’ It or Not, Social Media's Affecting Your Mental Health.” *How Does Social Media Affect Your Mental Health | McLean Hospital*, McLean Hospital, 4 Nov. 2020, www.mcleanhospital.org/essential/it-or-not-social-medias-affecting-your-mental-health.
- Liu, Deborah. “Marketplace Turns Two: Introducing New AI Features and More.” *About Facebook*, Facebook, 2 Oct. 2018, about.fb.com/news/2018/10/marketplace-turns-two/.
- Marroquín, Brett et al. “Mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: Effects of stay-at-home policies, social distancing behavior, and social resources.” *Psychiatry research* vol. 293 (2020): 113419. doi:10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113419
- Sargent, Michael S., “Exploring mental dungeons and slaying psychic dragons: an exploratory study” (2014). Masters Thesis, Smith College, Northampton, MA. <https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses/837>
- “Social Distancing - Keep a Safe Distance to Slow the Spread.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 15 July 2020, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html.

PAUL WATSON

I Think of Giraffes

Best of Poetry Winner

I hardly ever think in terms of power.
I don't think of the majestic giraffe.
I overlook salvation in sunlight.
I'm freer when I give away freedom.
It's not from a lack of useful knowledge
nor a lack of the capacity to love.

In ancient times, to express royal love
and to demonstrate national power,
emperors would gift kings, who had knowledge
of but had never seen, creatures called giraffes,
savannah mammals with joyful freedom
to run in the hot African sunlight.

Running in the shining savannah sunlight,
they expressed life, fleetingly filled with love
of the wild kingdom, and mortal freedom.
With eight-foot necks and a silent power,
wisdom became incarnate in the giraffes
when they asked the gods for secret knowledge.

Who are we to divine their great knowledge;
we, who'd kill a world by spurning sunlight;
we, who'd hunt to extinction the giraffe;
all for vanity and nothing for love?
What use is awesome destructive power
if it slowly drains us of our freedom?

Does the giraffe have more life and freedom
than I? What good is extensive knowledge
if it is ignored? What use is power
if it only destroys? Shining sunlight
on all the things in nature to love
may save us, the planet and the giraffe.

On vacation, I once met a giraffe.
in a zoo and he had no freedom.
I stared, awestruck, mixed with a bit of love.
The tall animal was hungry; I knew
by the arc his head made in the sunlight
towards my straw hat with all his neck's power.

I think of giraffes and ignored knowledge.
I think of freedom in any sunlight.
I think of how love can control power.

BEN YUTZY

We Should Not be Afraid of Selfish Actions

Despite truly selfless altruism being impossible, there is no reason to feel melancholic. The core belief of altruism is that we should sacrifice for the betterment of others. This idea is very basic, naturally; however, Luis Pojman and James Fieser, authors of *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, present and describe five distinctive definitions of altruistic belief and behavior. The first is called biological altruism. This is the belief that one should sacrifice his or her own ability to reproduce in order to improve the ability of others to reproduce. The second and third forms are kin altruism and tribal altruism, respectively. The concepts of both kin altruism and tribal altruism are relatively similar in that they both suggest that we should be sacrificial for certain people with whom we are close. The difference is that kin altruism refers to our close relatives while tribal altruism refers to our immediate community. Indiscriminate altruism is the opposite of kin and tribal altruism as it dictates that we should sacrifice for others who are not in our family or community. The authors explain that this particular belief may be an evolutionary glitch. The fifth and final form is called reciprocal altruism and claims that we perform sacrifices for others in the hope that they will, in turn, perform sacrifices for us. (Pojman and Fieser 164-165) While I do not believe any of these to be true altruism, I do not see any reason for shame or sadness at this prospect.

Often, people will believe that these definitions of altruism and selflessness go together. This is false, as selflessness is distinguished as action that gives nothing to the person acting while altruism may protect that person's own interests. For example, an altruistic act falling under kin altruism may be a poor man eating less food so that his children may have more. It may seem like the poor man is gaining nothing by letting his kids eat instead, but I would argue that he is preserving his genes. This hypothetical man may not be aware that he is gaining something, but it is certain that he is benefitting from it, nevertheless. In addition to his genes possibly persisting through a greater number of generations, he also gains an intangible joy from helping his family. I use this example for kin altruism, but is it not the same case for every school of altruistic belief? The preservation of genes may not be universal as a benefit, but the feeling of satisfaction is. All sacrifices have this satisfaction to them alongside more obvious benefits, effectively preventing any sacrifices to be truly selfless. Altruistic acts are possible, but these acts will never be totally selfless.

When discussing this idea with friends and family, I have found that many

feel saddened or even disagree completely to preserve the idea that selfless acts are possible. Most recognized that we, as humans, feel satisfied after a selfless action but did not necessarily equate that to a benefit from that same action. It would seem that most of the people I spoke to believe a benefit to be a tangible object or powerful feeling, but had not considered satisfaction itself to be rewarding. Some reasoned that satisfaction was gained from nearly every action and therefore was null as a reward for specifically selfless actions. I concede that satisfaction is found in most actions we pursue but this does not mean we can rule it out as a reward for our actions. In doing so, we deflate its value. Interestingly, those who disagreed completely with my view held to the same point as the group who agreed with me. The key difference between them was the merit of satisfaction. The group who were saddened but agreed gave more worth to satisfaction than the group who were pleased and disagreed. Neither group wanted completely selfless acts to be a myth. It seems that the people I questioned gave more credence to those sacrifices instead of the joy gained from doing good for someone. This confused me, as selfless acts, by definition, are acts in which someone helps another, often to their own detriment, in return for nothing. Perhaps they did not want to feel satisfaction from their sacrifices because they feel their pride shameful. I have to wonder what those same people believed was the reason for being selfless as opposed to altruistic. Why do we value being selfless more than taking joy or satisfaction in our good deeds?

Humans have developed many skills to survive over our evolutionary course. One of these skills is empathy. Pojman and Fieser state that empathy, in biology, is when, "The subject has a similar emotional state to an object as a result of the accurate perception of the object's situation or predicament" (159). In simpler terms, this means that an organism, upon seeing another organism in a certain situation, feels similarly to it based on the original organism's perception of the situation. This is one of the greatest skills humanity has ever made use of. Empathy allows us to see others in distress and helps us understand their emotions. It is an incredible tool seemingly designed to make us altruistic and cooperative. It is apparent that empathy allows us to make sacrifices toward others, but on what basis does it accomplish this? My friends and family may think it is only kindness or logic that dictates we help others. In fact, most of our society would be inclined to agree with that sentiment; however, I believe we are biologically wired to feel joy when we make sacrifices. For a sacrifice to be selfless, there must be nothing to gain, but without any pride and satisfaction, there would be no motivation behind these acts. An act that is truly selfless, then, would be emotionless and impersonal. A selfless act goes against logic; however, by making one's own life more difficult to make another's life easier. Therefore, I would argue that a totally selfless sacrifice without empathy leading to joy is not only impossible, but worse for all parties

involved.

As opposed to the people I conversed with, I am not saddened at the concept of truly selfless actions being false. I am thankful that we, as humans, have evolved thus far with the ability to feel empathy and care for others enough to sacrifice for them, even if they are strangers. Without this ability, I do not believe we would sacrifice for anyone unless we follow reciprocal altruism or have overarching goals under other types of altruism. Without empathy, many people may not see the point of sacrificing. Without sacrifice, we as a species might be condemned to an altogether different societal norm than we are used to now. If we try to imagine this world where we do not feel joy from being sacrificial, we can see minor issues at the start. What would happen to the homeless if no one gave to them? We might not see people hold the door for others. If we were to look at the issue on a larger scale, however, it would be revealed that laws may not treat victims of crimes the same way and families may not care for their children. This can go all the way back to when humans first developed empathy. Perhaps, in the worst case possible, humans would not even live in communities. We may be a nomadic people only traveling in families to preserve our genes where only the strongest families survive. Empathy is extremely important as it is the basis for our relationships and the reason we are able to feel joy when we sacrifice. I would not want to live in a world without this crucial ability, and it confuses me that some others would rather be completely devoid of the joy gained or unwilling to give satisfaction the merit it deserves. While I can understand the desire to be completely selfless, I cannot help but hope my friends and family will be as quick to love the joy of sacrifice as they are to love the selflessness of it.

The reason I have family and friends is due to that same empathy that would cause our downfall were it not there, I love them and I love sacrificing to help them. While all people feel the satisfaction of altruism, those whom I have encountered have not realized it is as important as it is. Empathy and the motivation of selflessness allow some of us to go to war to protect our families or sacrifice our meal for someone begging on the street. To be able to find joy in giving is a wonderful gift that is absolutely irreplaceable, and I would not be so quick to dismiss it. While I see why this is such a beneficial concept, I cannot deny that many disagree with their own good points. The strongest of these points is that if there is truly no completely selfless sacrifice we have no way of knowing what a world with those completely selfless sacrifices would be like. This is an excellent point as it reasons that no one has any way of knowing if the world would be that bad without the satisfaction of sacrifice. Some of the people I have talked with have brought this up, paired with their concerns that I am incapable of predicting what this hypothetical world would be like. Proponents of this argument have stated that it

may be better as helping someone in need would not rely on personal attachments or mutual gain.

While that is a natural concern, I would argue that even though my interpretation of a world without empathy could be debatable, all we need to do to see a lack of empathy in the real world is look around. Real people suffering from antisocial personality disorder sometimes lack this trait and it can be seen just how much this affects them in their daily lives. Sometimes referred to as “psychopaths,” these people do not feel a need to hold the door open for the next person or give to the homeless. They may not murder people for fun like on television, but they certainly do not care enough to sacrifice for others. It is an easily disprovable thing to say we have no reasoning to think of what the world would be. Some of these people cause their own downfall due to this unfortunate circumstance. While there are far too many variables to keep track of, we can start by imagining families with this disorder, then communities, and then countries. I concede that I cannot completely reimagine the world without empathy, but I do believe we can look at what evidence we do have to gather our conclusions. There are real people who can end up hurting themselves and others because they lack empathy. The ability to be satisfied, and even happy, after sacrificing something for another cannot be understated. We are able to see quite clearly what happens when we lack the tool of empathy, and I am not sure I would want a reality in which we are without it.

Works Cited

- “Antisocial Personality Disorder.” *Harvard Health*, Harvard Health Publishing, Mar. 2019, www.health.harvard.edu/a_to_z/antisocial-personality-disorder-a-to-z.
- “Antisocial Personality Disorder.” *Mayo Clinic*, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 10 Dec. 2019, www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/antisocial-personality-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20353928.
- Fonagy, Peter, et al. “Mentalization for Offending Adult Males (MOAM): Study Protocol for a Randomized Controlled Trial to Evaluate Mentalization-Based Treatment for Antisocial Personality Disorder in Male Offenders on Community Probation.” *Trials*, vol. 21, no. 1, 12 July 2020. EBSCOhost, web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/search/advanced?vid=0&sid=19164f11-84fc-4665-a088-1e61782830da%40pdc-v-sessmgr06.
- Pojman, Louis P, and James Fieser. *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*. Cengage Learning, 2017.

Sánchez de Ribera, Olga, et al. "Untangling Intelligence, Psychopathy, Antisocial Personality Disorder, and Conduct Problems: A Meta-Analytic Review." *European Journal of Personality*, vol. 33, no. 5, Sept. 2019. EBSCOhost, web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/search/advanced?vid=0&sid=9c9a0215-2966-446b-8fa4-bd7941d3cd1a%40pdc-v-sessmgr03.

2021 Paul Simon Essay Contest Winner

The Paul Simon Essay Contest is an annual scholarship competition hosted by the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA) for students attending member community colleges. Students write a 500-word essay on the topic "How My Community College Changed My Life," and each college selects the best essay from its pool of student submissions to forward to the state-wide competition for an opportunity to win a \$500 scholarship.

The LLCC Writing Center hosts Lincoln Land Community College's local competition each year in support of its mission to help LLCC students become better writers. Students are encouraged, though not required, to work on their essay submissions for the contest in the Writing Center with a writing consultant. The Writing Center staff review all submissions and make the final selections. The LLCC Foundation and the LLCC Bookstore generously donate prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place local LLCC winners.

Students interested in participating in next year's Paul Simon Essay Contest should contact the LLCC Writing Center for information. Students are also encouraged to use the Writing Center for any writing assignment they may be working on for a LLCC course. The Writing Center is committed to helping LLCC students with any writing assignment for any class at any stage of the writing process. Students can contact the Writing Center by phone at 217-2341, email at writing.center@llcc.edu, or they can view our online resources at www.llcc.edu/writing-center.

The LLCC Writing Center presents the winning essay by:

MAKENZIE HERETH

The Best Decision of My Life

Growing up, I always had a sense of what I wanted. Showing livestock gave me a huge passion for the agriculture industry and a sense of appreciation for what it does for the world. Though, I always felt this sense that I had not fulfilled the person I aspired to be. I was seeking something more, wanting to make something of myself. Through raising livestock, I grew up involved in livestock judging. When I got in touch with Craig Beckmier, the livestock judging coach at Lincoln Land, I came for a visit. One look at the fields surrounding this beautiful campus, and I knew that I was destined to go here. I had no idea that in less than a year after the

visit, my time at Lincoln Land would change my life and begin to shape the woman I always dreamed of as a little girl.

I am originally from Woodbine, a small town in Maryland. I love where I grew up, but I longed to be in the Midwest, an agriculture-rich area where I could learn more than I could ever imagine. When I got to Illinois, I was immediately surrounded by my livestock judging team members. I had never really been surrounded by a large group of individuals with similar interests to mine. Talking about livestock and issues within the agriculture industry, our conversations began to move further, and we got to know each other. We have become a family, and I could not ask for more. This is an elite group of individuals I can honestly say I trust with anything. They have taught me to see the good in the midst of a crazy world, when the bad can try and take over. Forming this bond with my wonderful team, I have been given the ability to grow as an individual in the agriculture industry. Taking agriculture classes, being on the livestock judging team, and joining the LLCC Agriculture Club have given me a sense of community that has aided in my growth as a person. Traveling through the state of Illinois and listening to agriculture leaders has inspired me. Meeting new people, I have made connections that will help me be successful in the future. I have learned so much in just seven months about how to make an impact within the agriculture industry.

I have truly learned that time flies and have come to realize these two years will be over before I know it. I am learning to be the person I dream of and the value of relationships and forming strong connections. My hope is to be an example to the next generation of agriculture leaders. Without my community college experience, I am not sure I would be able to do that. Taking in each moment and taking the time to embrace the now, community college is shaping me into the person I want to be proud of, truly changing my life for the better.

Student Contributor Notes

W R I T T E N W O R K

Luis Andrade

Luis's essay "He Played with Dolls" is our 2021 Narrative Non-Fiction Contest winner! He wrote the essay for Tiffany Elliot's Fall 2020 Composition I course. Luis is studying Journalism at LLCC and intends to pursue a career in writing. His hobbies include gardening, decorating, tending to his indoor plants, and focusing on building and rebuilding both friend and familial relationships. He says "this pandemic was a reminder that relationships are essential, and like a garden, they require love, attention, and at times, a little bit of day-drinking." What is most important to Luis is his marriage. Every time he gets the opportunity to say, "my husband," it is a reminder of all the marches and rallies he has attended and all the struggles our LGBTQ community had to go through to make it possible for him to say it. Luis plans to get more involved in politics, primarily local, "Who knows," he says, "maybe I'll get to write for a politician someday."

Alicia Blood

Alicia is pursuing an Associate's in Arts in English with an emphasis in Writing at LLCC. She wrote "I Hate My Guts" for Professor John Paul Jaramillo's Fall 2020 Creative Writing: Fiction course. She plans to continue creating stories and wants to become a writer in the near future. Her hobbies include reading, writing stories, star gazing, practicing the ukulele, knitting, crocheting, and watching anime.

Natalia Cina

Natalia wrote "Linking Ideas" for Dr. Deborah Brothers's Introduction to Children's Literature Spring 2021 course. She is majoring in Early Childhood Education and plans to pursue a B.A. at Calvin University.

Matthew Cook

Matthew wrote "Create a Character, Not a Post," for Professor Laurenn York's Fall 2020 Composition I course. Matthew is pursuing an Associate in Science degree in with an emphasis in Physics at LLCC. He plans to further his studies in the field of Astronomy. He is also interested in adventuring and storytelling. He says, "I love hiking, camping, and kayaking as much as I enjoy creating immersive stories for Dungeons and Dragons."

Paul Watson

A prolific writer, Paul has been published in our prior editions of the *Lincoln Land Review*. His poem is the 2021 Creative Writing Contest winner for Poetry for the second year in a row! Paul wrote the poem, a sestina, “I Think of Giraffes” for Professor Eric Stachera’s Spring 2020 Creative Writing: Poetry course. Paul was born and raised in Champaign in another century. He has an Associate in Science in Data Processing from Parkland College and a Bachelor of Arts in Management and post-graduate studies in Public Administration from Sangamon State University. After a 30-year career as a computer programmer and systems analyst for the State of Illinois, he returned to LLCC to study music and audio production because listening to music has been a life-long enjoyment. Paul has learned to play the piano and play the guitar better at LLCC. He has written for *The Lamp*, LLCC’s student newspaper. He graduated Spring 2020 with an Associate in Arts in Music; an Associate in General Education, Liberal Arts; a Certificate of Completion, Audio Production with honors, and is an English and Humanities Department Honor Graduate. He continues to attend LLCC part-time during the pandemic to take additional literature and music courses remotely. His plans include to continue studying creative writing and to create content. Paul lives in Springfield.

Benjamin Yutzy

Benjamin wrote “We Should Not Be Afraid of Selfish Actions” for Professor Terry Logdson’s Fall 2020 Ethics: Morality, and Contemporary Values course. Benjamin is studying Biology at LLCC and plans to transfer to a four-year university and eventually earn an advanced degree in Medicine. While Ben planned to pursue a medical degree, he has discovered a profound interest in ancient history and religion, due in part to his travels to Italy, France, Spain, and Monaco. As Ben prepares to transfer out of Springfield to continue his education, he will always hold this area close to his heart. In high school at Glenwood, he was a performer in the nationally recognized and award winning show choir, Titan Fever. In his spare time, Ben enjoys traveling all over the world with his parents and two younger brothers, Eli and Dawson. He looks forward to continuing to explore the world and finding his perfect niche.

V I S U A L W O R K***Carol A. Bauer***

Carol has two pieces featured in this edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*: “The Message” and “Egret Catching Fish.” She produced both of these works for Professor Leslie Stalter’s Fall 2020 3-D Design class.

Allona Beasley Mitchell

As in last year’s edition, two of Allona’s paintings are featured in this edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*: “Pink Peonies” and “White Amaryllis.” Both were created in Professor Al Shull’s Art Painting II class in Fall 2020.

Quinn Brown

Quinn created “Knot” for Professor Leslie Stalter’s Fall 2020 Drawing I class.

Noah Davis

Noah produced his “Self Portrait” for Professor Laura Anderson’s Introduction to Computer Art course.

Sierra Emmons

Sierra has two ink drawings featured in this edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*: “Abstract Chaos” and “Dead Things.” She created both of these works for Professor Leslie Stalter’s Fall 2020 Drawing I class.

Kristin Hall

Kristin’s charcoal drawing “The Knot” was created for Professor Leslie Stalter’s Fall 2020 Drawing I class.

Seth Jacobs

Seth created “Lotus Giver” and “Careless Beauty” for Professor Leslie Stalter’s Fall 2020 3-D Design course.

Margaret V. Miller

Margaret’s unique wood and stone sculpture, “Terra” is our 2021 Fine Arts Contest winner! She created the piece in Professor Leslie Stalter’s Fall 2020 3-D Design course.

Christina Pierson

Christina’s work has been featured in the *Lincoln Land Review* before! She created “After Picasso” in Professor Leslie Stalter’s Fall 2020 3-D Design course.

Ellen Pierson

Ellen is following in her sister Christina's footsteps with "Plague," a piece she created for Professor Al Shull's Painting I class in Fall 2020.

Vlada Popyk

Vlada created "Monogram" in Professor Laura Anderson's 2-D Design course and "When Will We Be Free" in Professor Anderson's Graphic Design course. "When Will We Be Free" is our 2021 Digital Arts Contest winner!

Julie Shaul

Julie's watercolor painting, "Fish Eye" was produced in Professor Leslie Stalter's Fall 2020 Drawing I course.

Art Silver

As it was in last year's edition, Art's work is published in this year's edition of the *Lincoln Land Review*. Art painted "The Next Move" for Professor Al Shull's Painting II class in Fall 2020.

Suzanne Traylor

Suzanne created "Mitch" in Professor Al Shull's Painting II class in Fall 2020.

Madison Ulrici

Madison's drawing, "Vincent Squarepants," was created in Professor Thom Whalen's Fall 2019 Drawing I course.

Grace Underfanger

Grace's work is published in the *Lincoln Land Review* again! This year "Rude Invite" and "Swiss Poster" are featured. She created both works for Professor Laura Anderson's Introduction to Graphic Design course.

Wilma Wofford

Wilma is a regular contributor to the art collection in the *Lincoln Land Review*. She returns this year as our 2021 cover artist with "Cleaning Up America!" Her painting, "Sunday's Children" is also featured in this edition. Wilma created both pieces for Professor Al Shull's Fall 2020 Painting II class.

MacKenzie White

MacKenzie's "Self-Portrait" was created in Krista Frohling's Digital Photography course.

