

ASUN LIT PUB

ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT LITERARY AND FINE ARTS PUBLICATION
VOLUME IV ISSUE 1 2022

FEATURED STUDENT ARTIST: ASHLEY MCGAHA



POETRY
SHORT FICTION

NARRATIVE

LITERARY ANALYSIS
RESEARCH
AND CRITICISM

VISUAL ARTS

PHOTOGRAPHY
MUSIC AND EVENTS

CAMPUS CULTURE AND COMMUNITY ARTS



DESTINY WYSS
STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

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PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY SHIRLEY

DEDICATION

IN MEMORY OF
WAVA JEAN WILCOX

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

To our community of readers,

In January of 2022, at the start of the spring semester at Arkansas State University-Newport, I asked the new group of creative writing students to discuss the genres they most enjoyed reading and what kinds of works they were most looking forward to writing for the course. Most of them said they enjoyed reading fantasy novels and stories, and many aspired to write in fantasy genres themselves. During the process of preparing this issue, I began by considering the appeal of fantasy, fairy tales, and the enduring themes of longing for escape and reprieve from reality.

As the semester got underway, I asked those creative writing students to engage in a discussion of the poetry of Anne Sexton, best known for her realistic confessional poems, but who also composed a collection titled, *Transformations*, a series of fantastical, poetic retellings of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. After that discussion, a student named Celesta Morgan submitted a confessional poem titled, "Reality and You," Sadie Burzynski submitted her poem on perception, "The Two Lights," and Ashley McGaha submitted a fantasy poem titled, "A Fairy-Made World."

These students' pieces reminded me of the divide between human existence and the alluring world of fairies William Butler Yeats and John Keats approach in their work. In Yeats's play, *The Land of Heart's Desire*, on May Eve, a fairy child entices a newlywed bride to abandon the reality of her human life and enter the domain of the fairies. Yeats revisits the lore around fairies in his poem, "The Stolen Child." The speaker tells a human child to come away, holding the fairy's hand, "for the world's more full of weeping than you can understand." In John Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," a knight relates the tale of his encounter with a beautiful "faery's child," he meets "in the meads." Though "in language strange," she tells him, "I love thee true," when he awakes from a disturbing dream, he finds that she has forsaken him. At the poem's end, the knight is "alone and palely loitering."

To escape the human condition by way of fairy abduction has been presented as a temptation, a danger, or a dream in the realm of fantasy, but the outstanding students featured in this issue have found true satisfaction through their academic and creative work, drawing inspiration from fantasy, reality, memory, and reflection. Featured student poet, Lauren Phillips remarked that her writing course had given her a respite from her demanding schedule, and she had relished the chance each week to devote some of her time and attention to one of her passions. In her poetry review, Denitra Ross analyzes Audre Lorde's "A Litany for Survival" in which the poet draws attention to the plight of those "who cannot indulge the passing dreams of choice." Hannah Taylor explores the transcendental view of self-actualization in Emily Dickinson's "My Life had stood- a Loaded Gun." Dayton Watson shares a remembrance of losing his father, the unanswered questions that remain for him, and his hope to emulate his father's virtues. Through the image of a willow tree, Malachi Gates illuminates his connection to his family and reflects on his own coming of age. In her essay, "Escape to the Cabin," Kenlee Youngblood describes the profound connection she feels to nature and the tranquility she finds within herself when she temporarily leaves behind her daily stresses and retreats to the woods. Madison Ireland reflects on the peace preserved by memories of a beautiful natural setting in her essay, "The Fields I Call Home." Conor Graves combines realistic and preternatural details to tell the story of a man's mysterious journey across an otherworldly valley. Demarcus Mooney defamiliarizes everyday objects and scenes with a fresh perspective in his poetry and artwork. In his art description essay, William Hagood examines *The Son of Man* by surrealist painter, René Magritte and its potential impact on the psyche of the beholder. Featured student artist, Austin Richardson blends realistic and surreal imagery in his digital illustrations, collages, and designs. The photography and paintings of Lucien Cook and Destiny Wyss show their talents both for capturing the beauty they observe in reality and for rendering it from imagination.

In Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire*, the world of fairies is "where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood, but joy is wisdom, time an endless song." Nevertheless, it has been wonderful to get glimpses of how these students perceive, cope with, and learn from the realities of their world and to see their imaginations and intellects take flight in their inspiring academic and artistic pursuits. We are delighted to share with you the works of these remarkable students, faculty, staff, and members of our communities who have generously contributed to this issue. Thank you for your readership.

Best wishes,

Emily Pasmare Doyle

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH



DESTINY WYSS
STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

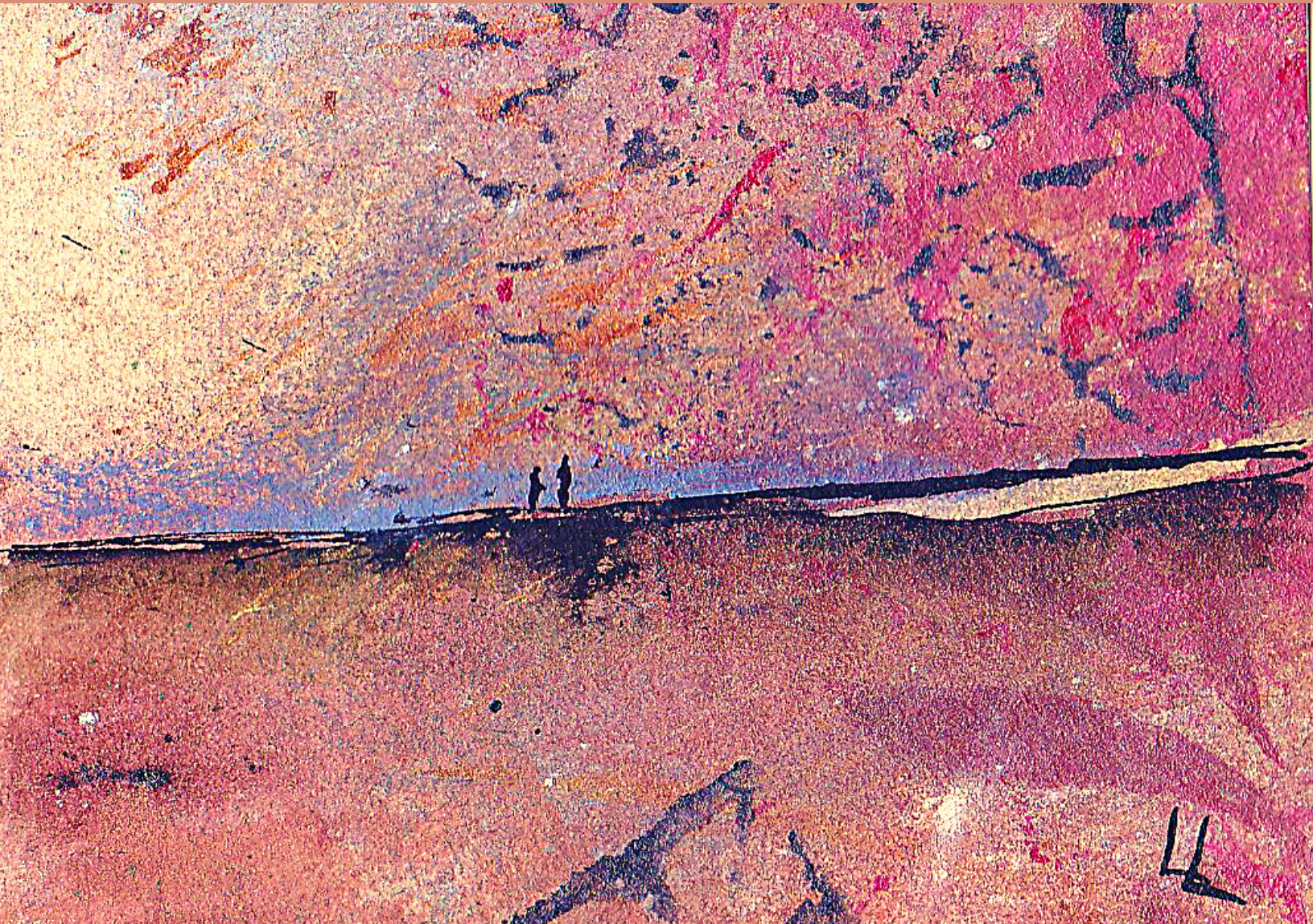


LESLIE LOVE

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT.....	1
DEDICATION.....	2
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT MISSION.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	5
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR.....	6
EDITORIAL STAFF	7
STUDENT AND GRADUATE CONTRIBUTORS.....	8
POETRY.....	12
SHORT FICTION AND NARRATIVE.....	26
LITERARY ANALYSIS, RESEARCH, AND CRITICISM.....	37
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT.....	43
FEATURED STUDENT AND FACULTY ARTISTS.....	45
PHOTOGRAPHY.....	69
COLOPHON.....	90
CONTRIBUTORS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	(BACK COVER)



LESLIE LOVE

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

ASU-NEWPORT MISSION

ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT WILL PROVIDE
ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE, INNOVATIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
THAT TRANSFORM LIVES AND STRENGTHEN THE REGIONAL ECONOMY.



LUCIEN COOK
STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

INTRODUCTION

THIS PUBLICATION INCLUDES WORKS OF POETRY, SHORT FICTION, NARRATIVE, LITERARY ANALYSIS, RESEARCH, AND CRITICISM, AS WELL AS PHOTOGRAPHY, VISUAL ARTS, AND CULTURAL EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITIES OF NEWPORT, JONESBORO, AND MARKED TREE. THIS ISSUE OF ASUN LIT PUB FEATURES ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE SUBMISSIONS CURATED DURING THE SPRING AND FALL SEMESTERS OF 2022 AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT AND SHOWCASES THE OUTSTANDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SOME OF OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS ALONGSIDE THE INSPIRING WORK OF FACULTY, STAFF, FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND OTHER TALENTED ARTISTS, WRITERS, AND MUSICIANS IN THE COMMUNITIES OUR CAMPUSES SERVE.

ASUN LIT PUB

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STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS



Ashley McGaha is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. She plans to continue her studies in creative writing and sociology and in her free time enjoys writing poetry and short fiction, as well as drawing and illustration. McGaha's artwork is featured on the front cover of this issue. There is a student artist feature about her work in the fine arts and culture section, and her poem, "A Fairy–Made World" is included in the poetry section.



Malachi Gates is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport who works as a substitute elementary school teacher. He enjoys traveling, singing, and creative writing. His short story, "The Willow on 554 Page Drive" is featured in the short fiction and narrative section of this issue.



Celesta Morgan is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. She enjoys creative writing and spending time with her loved ones and cats. Her poems, "Reality and You" and "Detached" are featured in this issue's poetry section.



Destiny Wyss is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. Wyss was the featured community artist in the fall of 2019 and enrolled in courses at ASUN the following year. She is a continuing contributor to the publication who works as a professional artist in Jonesboro, and her paintings and photography are featured on the back cover and throughout this issue.

STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS



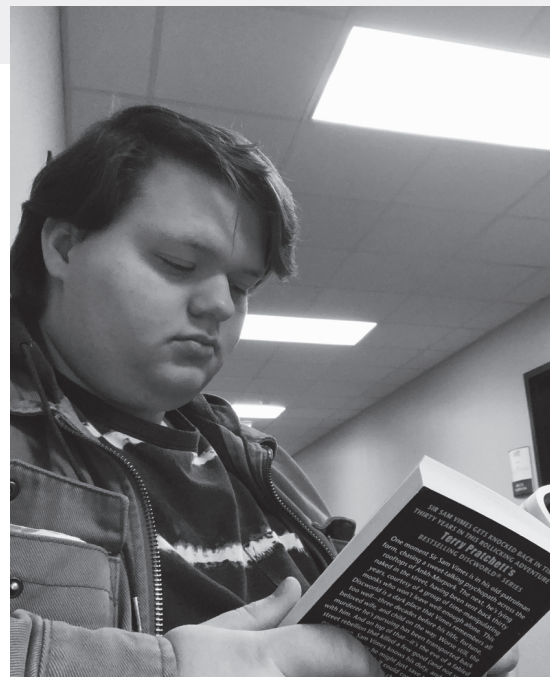
Madison Ireland is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. She plans to continue her studies to earn a degree in occupational therapy and enjoys creative writing and photography in her spare time. Her photography and her narrative essay titled, "The Fields I Call Home" are featured in this issue.



DeMarkus Mooney is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. Mooney was part of the creative writing class in the spring of 2022. His hobbies include writing poetry and creating digital illustrations and graphic designs. His poem, "The Door," and his illustration work are featured in this issue.



Sadie Burzynski is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. She was part of the Creative Writing class in the spring of 2022, and her poem, "The Two Lights" is featured in the poetry section of this issue.



William Hagood is a student in the Registered Nursing program at Arkansas State University–Newport. Hagood enjoys creative writing and reading in his spare time, and his essay on René Magritte's *The Son of Man* is featured in the fine arts section of this issue.

STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS



Denitra Ross is a student in the Practical Nursing program at Arkansas State University–Newport. She currently works as a caregiver and plans to begin her career in nursing after completing her program of study and earning her license. Ross enjoys reading poetry and spending spare time with family. Her analysis of Audre Lorde's "A Litany for Survival" is featured in the literary analysis, research, and criticism section of this issue.



Lucien Cook is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies who aspires to have a career as an educator. In his spare time, Cook enjoys painting, photography, reading poetry, and creative writing. His photography is featured throughout this issue.



Hannah Taylor is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. She aspires to earn a doctorate in occupational therapy and enjoys yoga, gardening with her parents, walking her dogs, and spending spare time with friends and family. Her analysis of Emily Dickinson's "My Life had stood— a Loaded Gun" is featured in the literary analysis, research, and criticism section of this issue.



Conor Graves is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. He enjoys creative writing and reading fiction. His short story, "The Valley" is featured in the short fiction and narrative section of this issue.

STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS



Austin Richardson is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. He enjoys creating digital collages, illustrations, and graphic designs. Richardson's designs are displayed throughout this issue, and there is a student artist feature about his work in the fine arts and culture section.



Kenlee Youngblood is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. She plans to complete a degree in Exercise Science and aspires to have a career in physical therapy. Youngblood works as a substitute teacher, and her hobbies include watching films and spending time with family and friends. Her narrative essay, "Escape to the Cabin" is featured in the short fiction and narrative section of this issue.



Dayton Watson is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. He enjoys playing basketball, reading, and spending free time with friends and loved ones. Watson's essay, "My Father" is featured in the short fiction and narrative section of this issue.



Lauren Phillips is a student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. Phillips was part of the Creative Writing class in the spring of 2022, and her poems titled, "367 Days," "Creamsicles," and "Maybe I Will" are featured in this issue's poetry section.



POETRY

CONTRIBUTING POETS

SADIE BURZYNSKI
ASHLEY MCGAHA
DEMARKCUS MOONEY
CELESTA MORGAN
LAUREN PHILLIPS
RAYNA KINGSTON
WAVA JEAN WILCOX †

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY SHIRLEY

THE TWO LIGHTS

SADIE BURZYNSKI

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

The two twinkling lights
burrowed into the plane
Keeping the memories within.
They lap up the colors in sight
Never failing when needed most.
The world is perceived by these lights
Being discovered day by day
Taking in every inch of the land
Holding it close to their hearts
Knowing there is much more to find
What shall we take in next?
They ponder.
The color of the ocean
The fur on a house cat
Nothing fails to amaze them.
One day the two lights
will gently go out
Dim down
Knowing they kept
the memories of the world
Within.



MATT E. BALL
CONTRIBUTING COMMUNITY ARTIST

A FAIRY-MADE WORLD

ASHLEY MCGAHA

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

A fairy-made world which we on earth
once knew
Not a perfect world, and yet
they couldn't see the change of wind
The scent of change
was on their waters
So steady the current of change
Without time to plan, nor falter
The fairies stood strong, with salt
a taste of human betrayal
Little did the humans know,
the fairies were neither cute nor frail
Hand in hand, the fairies guarded
their lands and trails
With the sound of defeat,
the humans had to return
with tucked tails
Never to attempt
to steal fairyland again
Lest feel the wrath of teeth and nails
No, the fairies were anything but frail.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH WEBB

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

REALITY AND YOU

CELESTA MORGAN

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

A voice, your voice
speaking gently
Not to me, or at least I don't think
Speaking of times passed,
of old memories
none of which I share with you
But a voice, your voice
Enough to raise me to heights
Butterflies in my stomach
when looking down
when looking at you
Your sweet scent,
a perfume I would like to keep with me
just to remind myself of you
speaking gently
If only I could catch your name



PHOTOGRAPH BY DESTINY WYSS

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

THE DOOR

DEMARKCUS MOONEY

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT



PHOTOGRAPH BY EMILY PASMORE DOYLE

Open the door
I'm ready to leave.
I've grown tired, so tired, of sitting in this cold cell.
My heart thumps slowly in my chest
like a clock's hands ticking forward.
My legs swing back and forth like a pendulum.
My nails scratch at my chair,
sending vibrations into my fingertips
and throughout my form.
Deep gashes have formed
in the rotting oak over the many years of my sitting.
So many years have passed,
but none of them has brought change
to my situation, my predicament,
my unfortunate circumstance.
I have stared at the door to my cell,
unblinking, for so many years now.
Its dull, rusted iron stares back at me.
My eyes grow tired
of the discolored and chipping brick walls
and the fluttering cobwebs
and skittering things in the shadows of the room.
They now focus only on the obstacle in my path,
the thing keeping me here.
For the first time in years,
I feel the need to blink, to refresh my dry, dusty eyes
so I do,
but now the door has changed.
The room has too.
It's a little brighter inside, a little warmer.
Bright, sparkling sunlight is flooding in.
The door is open now.
It has always been open.
I can leave at any time, yet I continue to sit.

CREAMSICLES

LAUREN PHILLIPS

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

How did we go
from being little girls,
dancing barefoot in the sun,
to this?
Giggling deep into the night,
eyes getting heavy
but hearts growing larger,
to this?
I can still taste the creamsicles
we feasted upon
while lying poolside in your backyard.
They taste different now.
Everything feels different now.
When did it change?
When did it start?
Fourteen years old,
lying in the tub,
You called me.
"I can't do it anymore," you said.
You were far too young
to want to die,
and I was far too young
to know how to get you to stay.
What should I have done?
What should I have said?
When someone you love
fiercely tells you they want to die,
you do not scramble for words.
You do not lie there in shock.
You do not let them
slip through your fingers.
Time.
Time, you are a liar.
With your skewed perception
of what was
and what could have been.
Would it have made a difference?
Creamsicles,
giggles,
and dancing in the sun.
Maybe we danced too close.



LESLIE LOVE

367 DAYS

LAUREN PHILLIPS

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT



PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH WEBB

It's been 367 days
since we last crossed paths.
367 days and here I am,
again in your arms.
Skin on skin,
bodies entangled,
hands knotted in hair,
I ask myself,

Am I home to you too?

367 days of trying
to erase you,
but my bones will always remember
the sound of your laugh.

Do you remember mine?

My lungs fill with the same cologne
you used then
the only thing that hasn't changed.

A "simple" embrace with another
rarely is simple.

I hope you can hear the whispers
from the tips of my fingers,
the pleas from my heart beating
in time with yours:

Please stay. Please stay. Please stay.

MAYBE I WILL

LAUREN PHILLIPS

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

A box
Rather, boxes
How could we live without them?
Day after day,
I pick up this box and stare into the void.
Colors, sounds, shapes that do not exist
fill my space.
I am transported through space.
I meet people I will never see.
I talk to people I will never speak to.
I see hands that I will never hold.
Here, time does not exist.
It can be day no matter the time.
Here, I can be whoever I want to be.
Tall? Small? Brown hair? Blonde?
I am anything I decide.
I am in control.
I am in control.
I am in control.
Until I am not.
Messages roll in
like the rush of an ocean wave,
strong and cold.
There is no escape.
Their words are like knives,
their fingers lightning bolts.
"I'm sorry!" I say,
but they do not hear.
Here, it is cold.
Here, is not for the faint of heart.
Here, I am afraid.
I forget I can turn it off just as I turned it on.
What time is it now?
How much time have I wasted
that I have been gifted?
Oh, little box
You have taken so much precious time.
You have caused so much heartache.
Oh, if only I could stop reaching for you.
Maybe
Just maybe, I will.

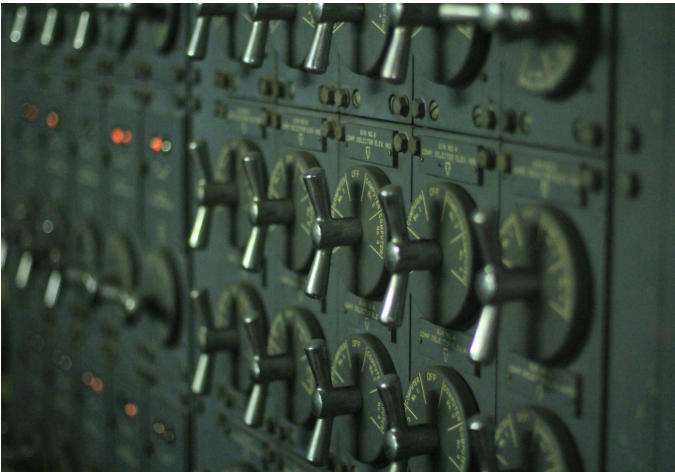


MATT E. BALL
CONTRIBUTING COMMUNITY ARTIST

DETACHED

CELESTA MORGAN

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY SHIRLEY

I motionlessly sit
Detached from the inside out
Focused fully on my lungs
Breathing in and out on counts
Focused on the sounds and smells
Silent and indifferent stare
I feel like I've been set on fire
Of life outside, I do not care
I've torn my limbs off in my mind
A thousand times or more
Contorted, twisted into shapes
Writhing on my headspace floor
Information age, they call it
Every answer in its ink
But pondering if you are real
Is not important, so they think
They say the information age
Is the one we're in
But where is my solution
To the stranger in my skin

JUST PLAIN POOR

WAVA JEAN WILCOX †

CONTRIBUTING COMMUNITY POET

Sitting here with memories
running through my mind,
thinking of where I am
and where I've been,
memories come back
about one ole rooster and one ole hen.

The house where we lived
was run down and old.
The wind came through
the cracks in the door.
You could even see the chickens
through the cracks in the floor.

Yes, we had a toilet and a path, a number-three
washtub for your bath, but what made that tub
we bought so good, you see,
was the water was free.

Our dear Mother
She did her best with what she had,
never complained or said it was bad.

One day, good fortune came our way.
Mother worked hard all day for a friend,
and he paid her
with one ole rooster and one ole hen.

Until then, water gravy and water biscuits
were a treat
'cause we had no hogs, so there was no meat.
So the ole hen would lay eggs for us to eat.
Now that the egg made the biscuit and gravy
taste good, that's what we called real good food.

I remember that time as if it were today.
My mother would look at us, and I'd hear her say,
another day, another dollar.
Then she'd say with a sad little grin,
to get that dollar
we'll have to sell that ole rooster and one ole hen.

The ole hens would strut across the yard.
They knew our biscuits were hard,
and the gravy was thin,
and we'd go to the nest
expecting to see one egg
hoping for three
'cause we knew tomorrow for breakfast,
eggs with gravy we would eat for free.

As the sun sank slowly in the west,
we all knew we had done our best.
We'd come in at night from working the land
with a team of mules and our bare hands.

As I look back to long ago,
we made our living with a pick sack and a hoe.
Planting, hoeing, and picking cotton
No, those days I haven't forgotten.

At last the day would end.
We had finished our chores,
could sleep peaceful at night
without locking our doors.
We'd blow out the lights and say good night
ask God to watch over us through the night
and we'd start a new day come daylight.

We'd leave for school with lunch in hand,
books on our shoulder tied with a band.
Peanut butter and jelly sandwich was a treat
especially if there wasn't anything else to eat.
For me, I played it cool.
I knew what I wanted, so I went to school.
There have been and always will be,
Kids in school much richer than me.

Pride and determination play a crucial part
as to where you end from where you start.
Mine started with an egg and a little grin
From one ole rooster and one ole hen.

Now times are good.
Got lights, heat, and plenty of food,
but what would have happened
had it not been for one ole rooster
and one ole hen?

The good Lord has blessed us from that day to this.
If I didn't give Him thanks, I would be remiss
for what he has done for us now and then,
for the ownership of one ole rooster
and one ole hen.



PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH WEBB

BELIEVE IT

WAVA JEAN WILCOX †

CONTRIBUTING COMMUNITY POET



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY SHIRLEY

As the old saying goes, "time waits for no man,"
so we would head for the fields and the burning sand.
We'd grab the hoe and chop the cotton,
but that didn't mean all else was forgotten.
The boys thought about hunting and fishing.
The girls thought about dating and just wishing.
The older folks worried about making the next meal.
To those folks, that thought was very real.
But soon night would come
Back to the house we'd run
When we hit the front yard,
we forgot about being tired.
We would rest and eat our food
watch TV if there was anything good
We'd go to bed and thank God for the day.
Then start tomorrow the same ole way.
But tomorrow if the rain came down,
We would get sad and wear a frown.
When the clouds disappeared, and the sun came out,
we would run and play, yell and shout.
In the winter, when it began to snow,
we'd have to stay in 'cause there was no place to go.
Sometimes in the morning, we'd get up late,
but breakfast was ready, so we ate.
Morning would pass. Lunch would be soon.
When the clock struck twelve, we'd call it noon.

After lunch now, I have nothing to do.
I've cleaned the house through and through
The washing and ironing is all done.
Today I didn't have two loads, just one.
So from this time till dark,
I think I'll take a coke and go to the park.

AFTERMATH

RAYNA KINGSTON
CONTRIBUTING COMMUNITY POET

No one ever tells you
how to go on,
after the light
has faded from
your lover's eyes.
No one tells you
how to put the pieces
back together
before your heart
ends up looking
like a jigsaw puzzle--
a cut-and-paste hack job.
No one tells you
about waking up
to an empty bed
that was once
a sacred space.
No one tells you
to take time
and grieve what's ended.
Everyone tells you
"It will be okay," or
"You're better off without them,"
or some other advice
you don't want to hear.
They forget to tell you
about the pain, left behind
like popcorn scattering the floors
of a movie theatre.
No one tells you
that your feelings are valid.
No one tells you
how to be strong.
You just learn on your own.



ASHLEY MCGAHA
FEATURED STUDENT ARTIST ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

The logo features a large black circle containing the text 'ASUN Coffeehouse Events' in white. The circle is supported by seven vertical black lines of varying heights, resembling a signpost or a stylized tree trunk. The text is centered within the circle.

ASUN Coffeehouse Events

Join us on campus for

Coffee
Poetry Readings
Live Music
and Campus Culture

Admission-free events
open to students, faculty, friends,
family, and community members

Presented and Hosted by ASU-Newport

Performances Welcome!

ASU-NEWPORT ARTISTS AND WRITERS

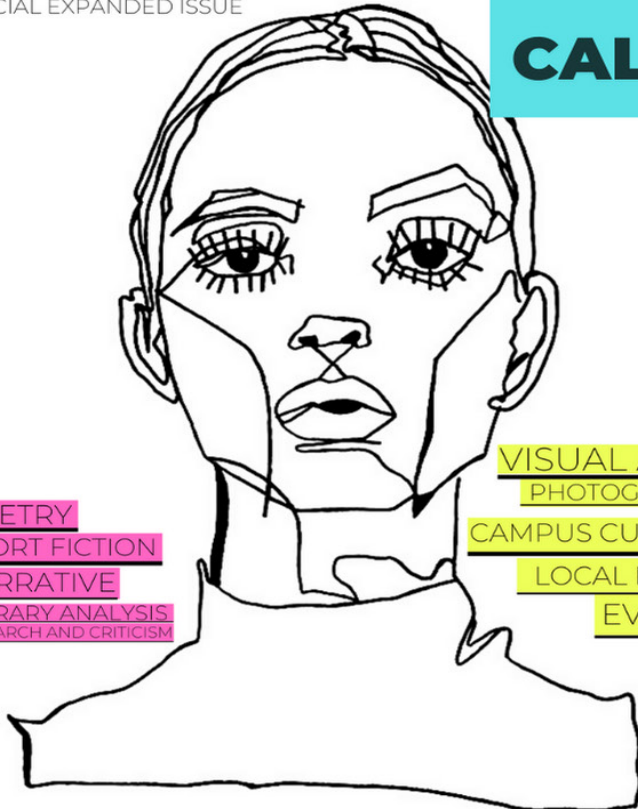


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ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT LITERARY AND FINE ARTS PUBLICATION
SPECIAL EXPANDED ISSUE

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

FEATURED COMMUNITY ARTIST: BEAU JONES



POETRY
SHORT FICTION
NARRATIVE
LITERARY ANALYSIS
RESEARCH AND CRITICISM

VISUAL ARTS
PHOTOGRAPHY
CAMPUS CULTURE
LOCAL MUSIC
EVENTS

STUDENT TALENT AND COMMUNITY ARTS

POETRY

FICTION

NARRATIVE

ACADEMIC WRITING

PHOTOGRAPHY

PAINTING

DRAWING

ILLUSTRATIONS

COMICS

DIGITAL ART

MUSIC



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DESTINY WYSS
STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

SHORT FICTION AND NARRATIVE

CONTRIBUTING STUDENT AUTHORS

MALACHI GATES
CONOR GRAVES
MADISON IRELAND
DAYTON WATSON
KENLEE YOUNGBLOOD

THE WILLOW ON 554 PAGE DRIVE

MALACHI GATES

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

The child, so innocent and free, longed for the sight of the playground that sat behind the white house. He always anticipated arriving at Nannie and Papa John's house. It felt euphoric and exhilarating. Seeing his grandmother on the doorstep, he expected fun, but the word fun could never appropriately express what was coming. Nothing could compare to the joy that was found underneath the willow on 554 Page Drive.

Age eight- The child could feel the kiss of summer as he would dart around the three acres (about half the area of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool), running and playing in what looked to him like an immense forest. These trees separated the house from the farm. Curiously, he would run up to the pasture, carefully rest his hands on the barbed wire, and admire the Holsteins grazing on the grass. Still this domain could never compare to the joy that was found underneath the willow on 554 Page Drive.

Age eleven- The willow always made the statement when driving by, and the brown-eyed, sandy-haired boy always knew his location based on the willow. His grandmother would take him and his little brothers out to play basketball or to build kingdoms in the sand dunes. When it was time to go inside, the boy would catch himself glancing at the weeping tree as he passed by it. Its luscious branches hung down as a wall between the young child and the world around him, keeping him from the evil that lurked beyond. The child had experienced a lot of trouble in his short life, words thrown at him piercing deep, and friendships that had been murdered by a stab in the back. The willow was a place of security. This sacred place, the willow on 554 Page Drive, allowed the boy to see beyond the territory of pain and opened his eyes to what could be.

Age thirteen- Some days, the boy would notice the willow's limbs showing off their freshly cut hair as his head barely reached the ends. This was a place of refuge for him. This was the age when he had undergone one of the most influential moments in his life. In an unfamiliar environment, with different folks, and new lessons, there was change, change, and more change. In all honesty, the boy was not ready. He knew this day would come when he would leave behind the things that bothered him and say hello to change, but the willow was never where he felt out of place. This was his abode. The willow always included him, and when the boy was tired from a long day, he would lie down at the base of the trunk and admire the beauty of the landscape. He could feel the coolness of God's breath there watching as the limbs floated on the breeze. For the boy, nothing else compared to the peace that was found underneath the willow on 554 Page Drive.



PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH WEBB

Age fifteen– The boy was an athlete, a basketball player. He lived and breathed basketball, yet something about the court at his grandparents' house just did not do it for him. The willow was his kingdom. He felt like royalty underneath the willow. He felt at home. His world was captivated by the mirrored effect the shadows of the willow gave. The boy felt this was where he needed to be, where he wanted to be, and where he might come to know his purpose. The peace beneath the willow gave direction, and the boy learned to look beyond 554 Page Drive.

Age eighteen– The willow tree stands as a monument to this place, this family, but most importantly, to this child. Looking back, the boy deeply misses the willow. He misses the admirable sight of such beauty. He misses the feel of the autumn zephyr combing through his hair. He misses the evenings of chasing around Nannie amid the branches and the impression of the world magically disappearing.

Present day– Now, the willow on 554 Page Drive stands tall only as a memory. The young man will never get to experience that same peace beneath it, nor shall his kids. Some days, his memory encourages a sprout, and he remembers the joy of childhood once more. Even so, I know nothing can compare to the willow on 554 Page Drive.



PHOTOGRAPH BY HOLLY ARNOLD SMITH

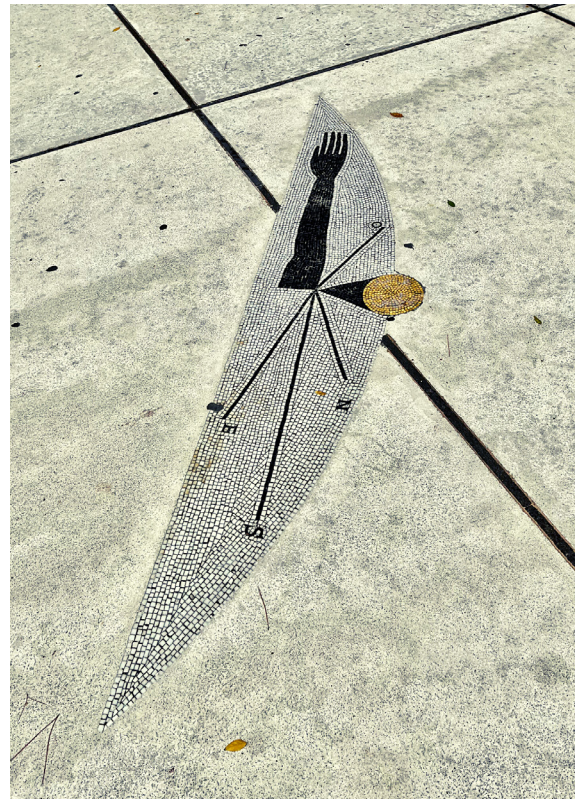
THE VALLEY

CONOR GRAVES

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

I was old, and I wanted to live forever. I did some digging and found out about a place where I could possibly do just that. I had to enter a cave to pass under the mountains. It was a vast valley I had to find first. Then, a massive castle by the mouth of a river and a lake surrounded by a city was my destination. I wandered through the narrow cave tunnels till I entered the valley through the exit of the cave. I could see the whole valley before me. It was hot and dry, and the valley went on for at least a hundred miles, being about ten miles wide. It curved to the left slightly starting at the middle, so I could not quite see the end. The mountains around the valley were as tall as clouds. Nonhyperbolically, they reached the high up, big, fluffy gray clouds that engulfed the sky. The mountains also seemed to have an exponential curve to them, going from very high to a slight slope very quickly. In the center, there was a long lake spanning most of the valley. It was fed by various rivers and streams coming from the melting black ice of the mountaintops. The water was dark and cloudy with little to no shimmering. The land of the valley was scattered to and fro with sharp spiky rocks and boulders. The grass of the valley was ashen gray with no trees. As I walked down the mountain, sweat dripping from my brow, I could see a walled, gray-stone city with at least ten thousand or so buildings surrounding a large, steep, rocky hill with a massive castle perched at the top of it. The castle's shape conformed to the hill where it sat atop the flattest parts. There were massive rock faces and boulders along the steep sides of the hill, so no one could easily walk up to the walls. There was no light emanating from the buildings of the city or the castle. The city was by the lakeside and near the largest river that ran into the lake. The city was roughly in the shape of a quarter circle since the river intersected the lake at about a ninety-degree angle. The city was still miles away, so I kept walking.

I eventually came to fields and could then walk on worn farmers' trails. In the fields where the farmers grew their crops, there were jagged rocks that stuck out from the growth in neat rows. The rows had thin, thorny, vine-like rocks protruding from the top of them. I soon came upon a pit-field that was nearly ten feet deep and at least an acre wide. The beasts had two heads with three straight ivory horns sticking straight out above their brows. Their heads were black bullheads with short, spiny trunks instead of noses. They ate the gray grass with two mouths stacked on top of one another. Their teeth were ivory and jagged like those of sharks. Their bodies were like black furry snakes. The adults were about twenty feet long with massive heads, and the adolescents were fifty feet long with tiny heads. There were about a dozen of these beasts in each pit I passed along the way. I then came to a farmer's house. As I was walking by, the farmer exited his stone house carrying a long stone trident. He was tall and slender. His white head reflected light, but his neck was so black that it absorbed all the light that touched it.



PHOTOGRAPH BY EMILY PASMORE DOYLE

I passed more pit-fields and farmers, but finally, I reached the south-eastern city gates that were in the middle of the curve of the city walls. The walls were one hundred feet tall and twenty feet thick, made of gray-stone bricks the size of elephants. The walls also had triangular crenelations zigzagging up and down the tops of the walls atop machicolations that hung a foot over the edge of the walls. Archers patrolled the walls. They were the same height as the farmers, except they wore skintight black leather outfits with seemingly no way to get in or out of them. They carried blackened steel longbows and long, slender arrows with gray stone heads. Square towers protruded from the walls every one hundred feet, and they were two hundred feet tall each and twenty feet wide. The gatehouse had two of these towers that were at least three hundred feet tall. In between the towers were fifty-foot-tall portcullises on the outer parts of the gatehouse tunnel and on the inner parts. The portcullises were long, smooth, black stone held together with blackened steel rivets. As I walked through the gatehouse, drenched in sweat and my legs aching, I looked up, and there was a murder-hole that went up so far I could not see the top. I was in the city now. The stone streets were desolate, and it looked like the layout was designed by a spider. The only sight that kept me on track was the castle in the middle of the city. Eventually, I reached the steps that led to the castle's gatehouse. It was reminiscent of the city gatehouse but smaller. I walked through and came out into a throne room. The throne room was tall, narrow, long, and had an arched ceiling. The surprisingly narrow walls of it were lined with windows that had obsidian panes in them barely letting in any light.

At the other end of the room sat a giant on a throne flanked with arched doorways and tall and slender guards in full suits of blackened steel gothic armor with great swords longer than the guards were tall. The giant on the throne was about twenty feet tall. He was in the form of a man with massive black bat-like wings, a crown of six ivory horns, and the face and body of the Statue of David. He stood up and said to me, "Sutivad, evlas." I replied, "Sinoitavoner mus cih tu, tiuf suus eropmet coh." He said in response, "Mutcaf." He then snapped his fingers, and everything went black.

I woke up in my soft bed. My skin was smooth, my body virile, and my mind sharp. It was a long, hard, and bleak journey that first time, but it seemed to get easier and less strange with each successive trip there. I have done it many times before, and I will do it many times again to stay on this mortal plane.



PHOTOGRAPH BY HOLLY ARNOLD SMITH

THE FIELDS I CALL HOME

MADISON IRELAND

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

The city did not particularly care about the homes and roads in the small community of Nuckles. With the nearest neighbor being almost a quarter mile down the road, we were mostly overlooked. We might have only lived there for a portion of my life, but it is still my home. The gravel roads led to the homes of farmers who never seemed to stop working no matter the weather. The asphalt roads were rough and jarring from where they had been repaved. The roads surrounded by fields were the roughest from the farmers flying down in their tractors and dump trucks. The wildlife was my favorite part; the squirrels, birds, and rabbits were always out looking for food to provide for their tiny families.

When I let my mind wander back there, the smell of wet dirt and dew fills my nostrils as the early dawn comes from the horizon. The smell clears my head of any remaining sleep that may have stuck to me. The Northern Cardinals and Goldfinches wake the world around them, playing songs whose notes only Mother Nature knew. It is quiet, but not the eerie quiet that comes with the setting of the sun. It is the peaceful quiet of a new day. The feeling is not worry or fear, but with no one else in sight, it is lonely in a way.



PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH WEBB

I still prefer the silence of the early morning to the loud sounds of midday. It is a time where I can appreciate everything I have and everything that surrounds me. In my mind, along the fields I call home, the only sounds are those of nature and the occasional train horn in the distance. I imagine a dog runs up to me, whining and shaking with excitement. His fur is stiff, yet soft to the touch. His collar shakes as the tag clinks on a clip. I can feel the cool morning air and the warmth the sun promises for the day on my back. There is fog; it is not heavy, but it clings desperately to the wet ground, not wishing to retreat from the night's cool air. The air around me almost tastes sweet and earthy, like freshly plowed dirt from the wheat crops. The railing of the porch feels cool and wet under my hand, a reminder of winter soon approaching. The boards of the porch and steps creak beneath my weight.

There is a soft breeze rustling the trees, along with the bird feeders gently swaying in the wind. Blue jays fly from one Bradford Pear to another, excited and ready for the new day like children running in a circle. A semi-trailer truck rumbles down the gravel as thunder rumbles the sky before a storm. I hear the sound of a crop duster flying low overhead. The dog huffs and licks my hand. As I walk down the steps of the porch, each step produces a hollow thud, intruding on the quiet dawn. I walk across the yard, reach my car, and take one last look at the rising sun. The orange light bounces off the water of the pool. The driver of a lonesome tractor is working in the field, far enough away that the sound is hardly noticeable.

As dawn approaches, the sky is ablaze with reds and oranges. The waxing gibbous moon stands defiantly in the sky against the rising of the sun. The remainders of night retreat in the sun's glory. The gravel crunches under my feet, and there are holes in the ground from the red squirrels burying their acorns. The corn stalks rustle as the wind picks up, throwing my hair around in a chaotic symphony. My gaze travels up to see the storm clouds closer now, and the smell of rain is thick in the air. Once again, I feel as if I am intruding. The birds once chirping, now hide in preparation for the storm. Only the dog remains by my side, a faithful companion. I look back again to the house I once called home, yearning for the warmth of my bed. The movement of a rabbit in the overgrown garden catches my eye. The sun has finally risen in earnest. Its light washes over everything it can, bringing warmth and sight to all creatures.

The morning reminds me always to see the beauty in everything around me from the pastel colors of the rising sun to the mysterious night retreating. Even the coming storm is beautiful. The dark clouds bring the promise of rain and a cool night. My car door is cool to the touch, and the windows and mirrors are still covered with dew. I start the car, and the noise disrupts the once peaceful quiet as if I am disturbing something I should have never witnessed in the first place. The birds still chirp, but their song is muffled. The dog still whines, not wanting me to leave. Even the sun and the moon are still having their struggle for dominance in the sky. I drive the car under the archway of trees and down the driveway, appreciating the sound of driving on gravel.



PHOTOGRAPH BY EMILY PASMORE DOYLE

MY FATHER

DAYTON WATSON

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

On February 26th, 2003, I came into the world crying to the best father and mother anyone could ask to have. My father served in the military as a combat medic, and my mother worked at the daycare I attended. My mother would video chat with my father every day at four in the morning, and I would run and jump into her lap to talk to him. I would ask him if he was getting the bad guys on his secret missions, and he would ask me about school and if I was taking care of Mom. We would send him little care packages with things he needed like baby wipes, or food from back home, or just little toys I thought he might need. He would return home for weeks at a time after six-month-long deployments. This cycle continued on and off until September 22nd, 2007.

My grandparents lived in a small home they had built together in the early '80s. It was a three-bedroom house that was no longer than a school bus. The wallpaper was a light tan covered with images of flowers and their scientific names. The floor was covered in a soft and fuzzy blue carpet. My mother and I stayed in one of the tiny back rooms while my father was deployed in Iraq.

It was a chilly Saturday night at my grandparents' house, and my mom was finishing up laundry while I played in the living room. Around seven o'clock, my grandparents called all of us to the kitchen for dinner. My grandparents had cooked us steaks, mashed potatoes, and macaroni and cheese. We all ate together as a family. It was something we had always done. After dinner, I made my way to the living room while the adults stayed in the kitchen to talk. I was watching reruns of *Tom and Jerry* when I heard a knock at the door. I ran through the house down to the bedroom window to see who it was, but all I could see was the closing of a door to a yellow taxi. I rushed back to the kitchen where I saw my mother standing up out of her seat. I rushed over to the window next to the door and pulled back the shades to get a better look. The people standing at the door were in suits and had pins all over their lapels. She made her way to the door and grabbed the doorknob. When she opened the door, she instantly began crying. After they finished talking, the people who had come to the door walked back to the taxi and left. My mother and my grandparents spent a long time in the bedroom together. I repeatedly asked what was wrong, but every question went unanswered. The crying and screaming were beginning to worry me a lot. Finally, after a long wait, my mother came out of the bedroom and told me something I would not fully understand until later. She said to me with her eyes still full of tears, "Daddy won't be coming home."



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY SHIRLEY

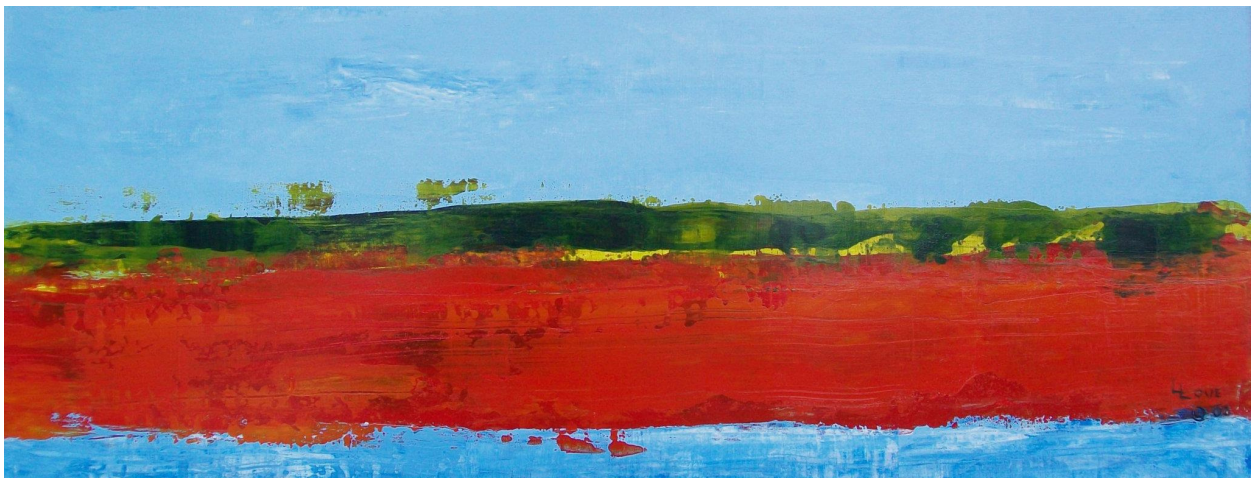
My father's visitation had to be moved to the Tuckerman auditorium because the funeral home did not have enough space to house the number of people who wanted to attend. It was a very bright and sunny day. There was very little wind, and everything seemed to be at a standstill. Cars were lined up on the sides of the road all the way to the highway. It felt as if there were a thousand people in attendance. The silence of the building gave an eerie feeling. The auditorium was packed to the doors. People came up to me, giving me condolences, and I would just nod my head. Afterward, we had a city-wide parade where we got a military and police escort. People from all across Newport and the surrounding cities came to watch.

My grandfather gave me a poster with the words, "My father is a hero" written across it. The parade went from downtown Newport all the way down to the old Ford dealership and picked up again and went all the way through Tuckerman and past the school. I remember going home and seeing my family on all the news channels and local newspapers. I finally realized what it all meant.

The next several weeks were hard, lying in my bed with the sounds of my mother crying carrying through the hollow house. My mother would cook meals for me but never for herself. The sunshine of every day and the person I looked to for everything had everything drained from her. She spent many days lying in bed until late in the afternoon. Her sense of hopelessness was beginning to spread to me. I could not do anything but just lie beside her and hug her as she leaned on me and cried. There is nothing like the feeling of uncertainty. The television no longer played in the background. The windows no longer let in the cool wind. There was nothing to fill the void my father had left.

It was not until six months later that my family finally received my father's belongings from Iraq. After his death, the Army kept all of his personal items and everything on him for a time. This made my family very upset, along with the families of the other fallen heroes. When it was returned, his wallet was filled with photos of me and my mom, rings, and letters my mother had sent him, but nothing left me with more questions than a single laminated piece of gauze. It had no marks, and it seemed to be unused, but it had been laminated for no apparent reason. The government can give my family and me free healthcare, schooling, and other benefits, but these will never bring my father back nor make up for all the vague and shallow responses to questions surrounding my father's and others' deaths.

Years later, my mother told me I was the only reason she had kept going. I was the last part of my father she had left. Now, sometimes when I am at Walmart or at a restaurant, I will come across one of my father's friends who will remind me of what a good and kind man he was and tell me funny stories about him. These interactions give me something to think about the rest of the day, and it gives me a good feeling knowing that so many people had a favorable opinion about someone I admire so much. I want to be just as good a person as he was. He left me his boots to wear. Now I just have to fill them.



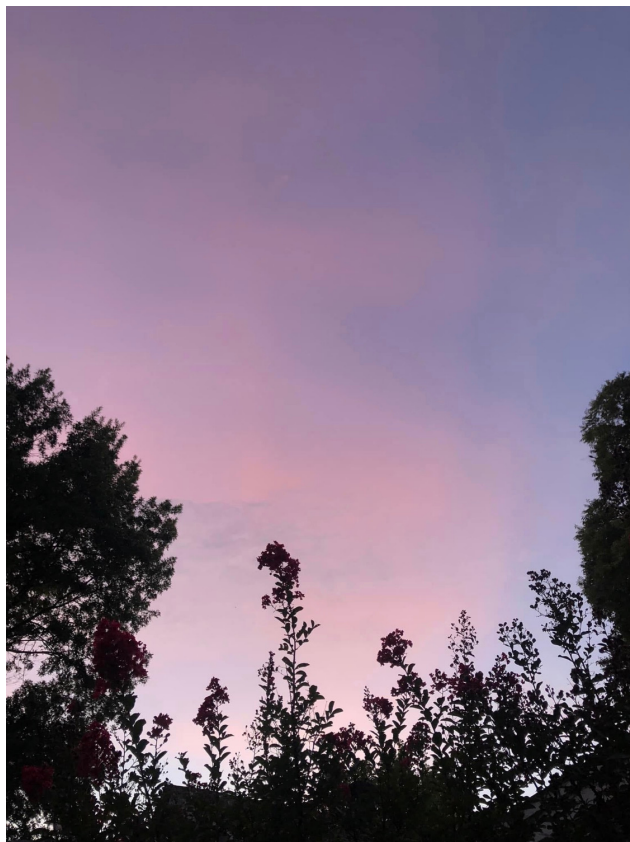
LESLIE LOVE

ESCAPE TO THE CABIN

KENLEE YOUNGBLOOD

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

The town has a charm floating on the air. The people who call it home are soft-spoken and gentle. They welcome us into their charming town, as if it is our own. They speak to us as if we are there throughout every season. We only get to witness the charm of Salem, Arkansas during the fall and again in the spring. The opening season is when the town of Salem sees us the most. My father and grandfather bring me along every year. I am grateful I get to experience the peaceful and quiet environment of the cabin. The cabin itself is not where the peace comes from for me. The peace comes from the crisp morning breeze that I feel when I am walking through the woods. The woods are filled with different trees and textures. I am surrounded by cedar, pine, and oak trees. I examine coulter pinecones and leaves from the cedars. The pinecones are always hidden beneath the leaves. They create a crunching sound under the rustling as we walk through the woods, and the scent of cedar stays with me as if it were a perfume. My dad always complains about the leaves. He claims the deer can hear the crunching under our boots, but I never did mind scaring off the deer. My dad enjoys the hunt. I, on the other hand, long for the peaceful walks and scenery. My dad enjoys it all. He loves the peaceful feeling that nature provides. He loves to hunt, and he is skilled at it. He knows nature and how the animals react to it. I watch him as he listens to the wind. He pays attention to the weather and the noises around us. Although I am not as skillful in that way, I enjoy watching this process.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DESTINY WYSS

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

Through the years, I have realized that learning is not always done through words. You can learn so much through observing. Not only can you learn new skills, but you can learn a lot about yourself. Amid the peace of nature is where I can think the most. I feel connected to the earth. I feel connected to God. I can leave the anxious world behind and enjoy the earth. I admire the quiet sound of nature. I love being away from the busy world with loud noises. Here, there are not any obligations to be met. There are not any wandering eyes waiting for you to fail. Here, the air is pure. I have come to love how nature has no expectations. It does not expect you to be anything other than who you already are. I feel comfortable, at home. It is bizarre how I feel less alone walking through the woods than I do in a room full of people. In the early morning, when I am overwhelmed by thoughts of rest and my eyes are tired, I walk as if I were a tired deer myself. My feet shuffle against the ground like the feet of children waking up for school. My eyelids begin to feel like weights as I struggle to keep them open. The sun is not out yet, so the air is somewhat chilly. I long for the cabin and its warmth.

The cabin is small. The inside has two rooms. Because there is no electricity, the cabin door stays open when we are there. The sun lights the cabin enough for us to see during the day. There is a porch that is wrapped around it. There is a grill and a table on one side of the porch. On the other side, there is another table with a sign hanging above it. The sign says, "Funny Farm." I always loved that sign. I love the fact that my Pops made it even more. There is a dart board that hangs on the outside of the front door. I always throw one dart as soon as we arrive. It has become a tradition. The porch is the part of the cabin that holds its sense of peace like a treasure chest. The feeling of peace washes over me while I stand on the porch. This feeling comes from the environment surrounding the porch, not the porch itself. The cabin sits on a hill directly in front of a circular pond. The water is light and gentle. The only movement that occurs is the rippling on the surface. I can feel the cool of the water from the soft wind. When the sun is shining down, I can feel my face heat up from its warmth. My eyes forcefully squint as I try to look up at the sky. The trees are making music from all directions of the cabin. I watch my dad gathering firewood.

My Pops, as usual, is singing as he rakes the leaves. When I give my attention back to the pond, I witness the light bouncing off the water, and it shimmers. My eyes flinch at the light that reflects on the pond. I watch the calm chilly water as my brain grows quiet. My mind is suddenly alone in an empty room. It is alone without thoughts and fears. The only focus I have is the stillness of the sparkling pond. If I listen closely enough, I can hear the water as a slight wind blows it. Occasionally, a fish leaps from the water. We fish in the pond quite often, but we always put them back again. It is another tradition to catch a fish every time someone kills a deer.

Across the pond, there is another hill. This one is much larger than the one on which the cabin sits. There are tall oak trees surrounding the edge of the hill. The wind slightly moves the trees. The sound of stirring leaves is quiet and subtle. The middle of the hill is covered in flowing weeds and dead grass. We occasionally see deer roaming around on the hill. Most of the time, it will be a lone doe that we see. My Pops loves to watch for deer from the porch. Unlike my dad, he does not enjoy hunting. He loves watching nature. He enjoys the peace. He and I are a lot alike in that way. On the hill where we watch, there is one tree that stands out to me. It is bare, but there are a few thick branches at the very top. It is an old tree. It is near a large deer feeder. The feeder lets out a ringing sound as it gives out feed. I spend the rest of the morning observing the setting in peace before I must return to reality.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DESTINY WYSS
STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY SHIRLEY

LITERARY ANALYSIS RESEARCH AND CRITICISM

CONTRIBUTING
STUDENT AUTHORS

WILLIAM HAGOOD
DENITRA ROSS
HANNAH TAYLOR

TRANSCENDENTAL SELF–ACTUALIZATION IN EMILY DICKINSON'S "MY LIFE HAD STOOD– A LOADED GUN"

HANNAH TAYLOR

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY–NEWPORT

Emily Dickinson is an important figure in American poetry whose poems often explored the subjects of death, nature, love, longing, immortality, and self-actualization. Dickinson's work often defied the conventions of notable literary movements of her time, but the tone and subject matter of many of her poems belong to the transcendental movement. Transcendental poetry often focuses on the importance of seeking individual truth and becoming self-reliant. Three essential characteristics of the transcendental movement are individualism, idealism, and the divinity of nature. In "My Life had stood- a Loaded Gun," Dickinson uses personification, metaphors, and symbolism to reveal her transcendental view of how control inhibits the individual's natural longing to find meaning in life.

Dickinson wrote "My Life had stood- a Loaded Gun" around 1863, but the poem was not published until 1929. The poem is one of Dickinson's most controversial and has been interpreted by readers and scholars in a multitude of ways. Dickinson's poetry typically includes inward reflection on one's internal state, but readers are often left reflecting on not only themselves but also the world around them after reading her poems. In the first line of "My Life had stood- a Loaded Gun-," Dickinson compares the speaker's life to a loaded gun. This metaphor represents the potential or power that is on standby, waiting to be used. The speaker appears to be sharing her feelings regarding her own life throughout the poem, feeling as if her life is full of unused potential. In the line about a "Vesuvian face," Dickinson refers to the volcano in Italy, which on the surface looks calm but internally is explosive and unpredictable. This metaphor suggests that the speaker is trying to convey how she feels, although she is forced to mask her feelings. To help show her perspective, Dickinson personifies the loaded gun, giving it the human quality of servitude. The gun represents a life that is lived only in service to someone or something else, what the speaker calls an "owner" or "master."

Dickinson does not clearly define what the "owner" or "master" is, but some readers perceive the figure to be God, a controlling lover, self-rage, or perhaps the demands and process of artistic expression itself. All of these interpretations are merely speculation, but an absolute definition of the "owner" or "master" is not essential to the reader's understanding of the poem's meaning. The "master" represents the idea of living a life in service to someone or something else in the absence of self-actualization.

The gun waits in a corner until the master carries it away to use it for hunting in the woods. The gun also "speak[s] for Him." At night, the gun guards his master's head, sharing a pillow with his master rather than resting on his own pillow. The gun states, "To foe of His- I'm deadly foe-," implying that the gun protects his master from his enemies. The speaker says, "Though I than He- may longer live," meaning the gun will still exist, even after his master has died. The gun goes on to say, "He longer must- than I." Here, the gun is pointing out that although the gun itself will never die, the gun's owner is the one who will have lived longer. These lines express the poet's message, that the gun has never truly lived because the gun has existed only to fulfill the duties of its master, never experiencing life for itself or its own purposes. Therefore, the speaker, the gun, has "the power to kill, -Without the power to die-."

Emily Dickinson's "My Life has stood- a Loaded Gun," offers readers valuable insight into how control and servitude can diminish a person's natural capacity for self-actualization. Dickinson's personification of a loaded gun, along with her use of metaphor and symbolism, helps convey the poet's transcendental view of the importance of self-reliance and shows the overall theme of the poem, that the effects of control can take away an individual's quality of life.

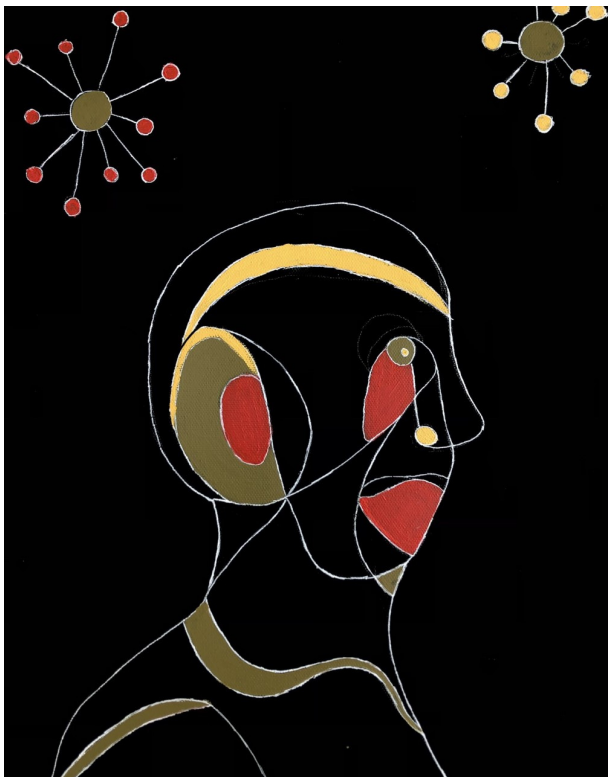
NEVER MEANT TO SURVIVE: VOICES OF THE OPPRESSED IN AUDRE LORDE'S "A LITANY FOR SURVIVAL"

DENITRA ROSS

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

Audre Lorde, an award-winning, Black, lesbian poet, composed the poem, "A Litany for Survival," which depicts life for the oppressed as a state of permanent fear of abuse, even during the best of times, but the poet offers inspiration to those willing to use their voices to effect change. In this poem, Lorde brings attention to the oppressed, their struggles for acceptance, and the generational fear they carry. "A Litany for Survival" displays how an individual can be fearful of society because they are different from and ostracized by people around them. Audre Lorde uses metaphors, similes, and social commentary to bring awareness and give hope to generations of the oppressed who are in fear of rejection, failure, ridicule, and violence.

Audre Lorde uses several poetic devices in "A Litany for Survival" such as imagery, simile, repetition, and metaphor. When commenting on Lorde's celebrated collection, *The Black Unicorn*, Jackie Kay, a Scottish poet, playwright, and novelist observed that metaphorically speaking, "A Litany for Survival" is a work that calls out to "those of us that were factored into the system as riddles of bodies that were meant to be solved and as people who were never meant to survive in this violent world." Kay also explained that Lorde "was always a woman ahead of her time, and now she's walking with us in ours," adding "when people are brave, bold, and brilliant, they risk the wrath of people of their own time."



DESTINY WYSS

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

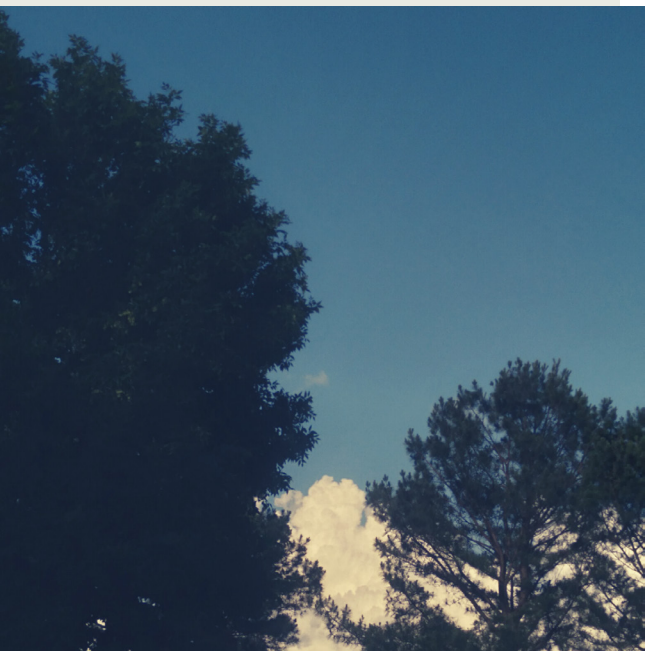
Lorde expresses the trepidation of generations of people who live in fear of persecution. Groups of which Lorde was a part, lesbians and Black Americans, are taught that as they go through life, they will face oppression. The poet brings attention to the ongoing fear that marginalized communities experience in societies where they are oppressed and the ways this kind of fear can silence their voices. These oppressed people learn from a young age to be afraid or skeptical even of comfort. Lorde shows this conflict through the image of a "mother's milk." Lorde's repetition throughout "A Litany for Survival" of the words, "For those of us who..." is a reference to marginalized communities that are not explicitly defined. In the third stanza, Lorde emphasizes contrasting symbols of nourishment and ceremony, and she highlights how each of these images includes something to fear. Lorde employs remarkable similes in lines 10-12 "seeking a now that can breed/futures/like bread in our children's mouths" and in lines 15-17, where the speaker refers to "those of us/who were imprinted with fear/like a faint line in the center of our foreheads."

In “A Litany for Survival,” Audre Lorde describes the lives of those who do not have the luxury to enjoy passing dreams. Instead of dreaming, they must fight for their survival to make it in the reality of this cruel world. Ramona Lofton, better known by her pen name Sapphire, is an American author and performance poet. Sapphire notes with regard to the context of Lorde’s work, “there was a great terror about being different in those days, and for her to stand up and say, ‘I am a lesbian,’ was not just moving a mountain, it was creating a new world for us.” Through the social context of “A Litany for Survival,” the reader can assume these groups could be any who have been marginalized and those who have experienced suffering in their efforts to find a place in the world. Furthermore, readers can better appreciate the message the poet is portraying by also understanding Lorde’s experience as a civil rights activist. In her work, Lorde aimed to emphasize the idea that oppressed people must focus on maintaining the dreams of their children. In this poem, Lorde also seems to say, the oppressed are meant to struggle and fight, not knowing if they are going to survive, but hopefully, this resistance gives the children of the oppressed the motivation and strength to fight for their survival.

Although the speaker of “A Litany for Survival” describes life as a state of permanent fear of personal annihilation, Audre Lorde, the Black, lesbian, feminist poet and activist, reminds readers that they ignore differences among people at their peril. Lorde suggests that differences in race or class serve as a reason for celebration and growth. The poet’s most vital message is that people and groups must find a way to shake off their fear of speaking out and say what needs to be said to effect progress. Otherwise, little will ever change for the better.

Sonia Sanchez, American poet, writer, and professor stated, “[Lorde] gave us the guide and showed us how it’s possible to come together as women and as a people. We have to work together because that powerful coming together is the only way to change.” If marginalized people are going to be subject to fear either way, then someone must break the silence. Oppressed people have triumphed by surviving and need to use the power of their voices to ensure their further survival.

The poet uses her voice through “A Litany for Survival” and made a difference by speaking, writing, and fighting for the rights and freedoms of Black and LGBTQ+ groups facing racism and oppression in our society. Although Audre Lorde states in the last line of her poem, “We were never meant to survive,” readers can see that she hoped for the oppressed to keep expressing themselves and fighting for a better future.



PHOTOGRAPH BY LUCIEN COOK
STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY–NEWPORT

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RENÉ MAGRITTE'S THE SON OF MAN

WILLIAM HAGOOD

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

Cesar A. Cruz once said, “Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable.” Nowhere is this more apparent than in the work of Belgian painter, René Magritte, especially in his famous painting, *The Son of Man*. This work is a haunting piece that still impacts the world to this day, a testament to Magritte’s unique style. Magritte’s ability to disturb is apparent in dozens of his paintings even through circumstances that were out of Magritte’s comfort zone. His was a style that only deepened in its meaning as the painter aged, especially at the time in his life when he painted *The Son of Man*. Through subtly nightmarish design and mystique brought about from fear of the unknown, Magritte created a painting that firmly places itself in the beholder’s mind. Without a doubt, *The Son of Man* disturbs the comfortable and, on a certain level, comforts the disturbed with its unnerving, haunting beauty.



THE SON OF MAN BY RENÉ MAGRITTE

The Son of Man is a surrealist painting of a man standing against a waist-high wall made of grayish-brown porous brick. The wall is set against a backdrop of the sea and an overcast sky, and there is no sign of life other than the man in the dead center of the painting. The man is wearing a black overcoat with a black bowler hat. In general, the color scheme is subdued-- with some notable exceptions. In particular, there is the vibrant red tie that rests firmly on the man’s chest and the bright green apple that is obscuring the man’s face. The painting itself was a self-portrait that Magritte was commissioned to make by a friend. Creating the painting was difficult for Magritte because he struggled to do self-portraits. He believed that self-portraits were a “problem of the conscience,” suggesting that the painter wished to avoid vanity and self-reverence in his work. The painting’s dimensions are approximately 116 x 89 centimeters. At the time he painted *The Son of Man*, Magritte’s preferred medium was oil on canvas. Magritte finished his work on the painting sometime in July 1964. Today, the only way to view the painting is through images online or the recreations done by other artists because *The Son of Man* is currently in a private collection, further adding to its mystique. Even the painting’s name has a certain uneasiness to it because it gives the impression that the person in the painting is someone important, if not a divine or biblical figure.

Magritte had a habit of creating paintings with the specific motif of people with their faces obscured by various objects and entities. Other examples are *The Lovers* and *Man in The Bowler Hat*. In *The Son of Man*, Magritte produces an inescapable feeling that what one observes is wrong or at the very least should not be perceived. Magritte stated that the theme he was attempting to create was one that inspired conflict between the visible that is hidden and the visible that is present. He succeeds in this aspect in that there is a conflict happening within whoever perceives the painting. A viewer can become fascinated by the feelings that arise, yet at the same time, the image is so surreal and odd that one might want to look away from it. This uneasy feeling is exacerbated when one notices that the man's face is not entirely obscured. The man's left eye is peeking ever so slightly out from the top of the apple. Taking notice of this is even more unnerving for the beholder. However ridiculous, the thought comes to mind, *please don't let me see the rest of his face*.

Regrettably, this was one of the last paintings Magritte ever made. The artist died in 1967 from pancreatic cancer at the age of sixty-eight, but whether he intended it or not, Magritte made one of the most psychologically thrilling paintings in history with all its understated terror.

The Son of Man is by and large Magritte's most popular painting because it sticks with a person who sees it. It has a haunting simplicity. The subject is at the end of the day just a man with an apple in front of his face, but even so, the image creates an almost sinister impression, causing the urge deep down to look away, but in the end, it holds the viewer's attention like gravity. Was all of this Magritte's intention? Most likely not. However, it can be argued that a painting's impact on a person is not solely limited to what the artist intended. Perhaps *The Son of Man* was merely meant to create an itching feeling of intrigue in the back of one's mind, rather than a cold weight in someone's stomach as the beholder has to grapple with the fear of the unknowable man's face. Maybe it was meant to be enjoyed in the daylight with awe and wonder, not to have it creep its way into a person's mind in the middle of the night as it does with so many. Truly, it is difficult to put the painting's depth into words. On a certain level, it needs to be experienced by oneself.

The Son of Man is an ideal surrealist painting. It is just complex enough to befuddle and intrigue the art enthusiast while at the same time, simple enough for the casual viewer to enjoy. Whether through its drab color scheme, its demonstration of the fear of the unknown, or its undisclosed whereabouts, *The Son of Man* makes people think. *The Son of Man* does not need to try to be more than it is. People do that for it with their own interpretations. It is not scary to some people but terrifying to others. *The Son of Man* is more than just a one-off self-portrait that Magritte did at a friend's request. In the end, Magritte did what all artists should strive to do. He created art that comforted some disturbed people and without a doubt, disturbed some comfortable ones. Its ability to affect people just by being observed in the end, is what makes *The Son of Man* such a profoundly beautiful and disturbing piece.



PHOTOGRAPH BY LOTHAR WOLLEH

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



DR. AMBER GRADY
DEAN FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION



Dr. Amber N. Grady is ASU-Newport's Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and she leads the college's DEI council, along with the council's chair, Sheila McNeal. Dr. Grady is originally from Newport and served as Arkansas State University-Newport's Counselor for Student Services from 2007 to 2014. She returned to the college in the fall of 2022 when she accepted the dean's position.

Prior to joining the administration at Arkansas State University-Newport, Dr. Grady served as the Dean of Students at Williams Baptist University where she was responsible for directing student housing and the Student Services division. Dr. Grady also served as the Associate Director for College Readiness and worked as the Academic Outreach Specialist at the University of Arkansas in Diversity Affairs. While serving in these roles, Dr. Grady committed to advocating for social justice, ethics, and equity to ensure positive learning environments for all students, faculty, and staff.

Grady holds a Doctorate in Higher Education from the University of Mississippi. In addition to her doctoral degree, she earned a Master of Science in College Student Personnel Services and a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature. In our recent interview, Dr. Grady shared that while professional and academic success are important to her, "the opportunity to influence and mentor children and young adults is the most rewarding." In addition to her work in higher education, Dr. Grady is also dedicated to helping others through a variety of community outreach efforts. She has hosted a series of virtual talks on the subject of teenage pregnancy prevention, and she volunteers as a mentor for the women's empowerment group, *Beautiful Beyond Sight*. She says one of her greatest passions in life is helping others to overcome obstacles by discovering who they are and who they can be.

ONE OF DR. GRADY'S FAVORITE QUOTATIONS:

"NOTHING CAN DIM THE LIGHT
THAT SHINES FROM WITHIN."
—MAYA ANGELOU



Since Dr. Amber Grady began her work as the Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at ASU-Newport, she has been responsible for the implementation of several workshops, training programs, and institutional research initiatives on ASUN campuses including the Center for Community College Student Engagement's Survey on Race and Ethnicity and her monthly column for the Aviator Inclusion Newsletter in which she provides DEI council updates and offers practical advice for engaging the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Dr. Grady expands upon the ideals of DEI by employing action verbs beginning with the same letters such as "Decide, Embrace, Inspire," "Discover, Exude, Imagine," and "Demonstrate, Encourage, Identify." In each of her columns, Dr. Grady poses a challenge to readers to incorporate these actions into their efforts to promote the ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their work and in everyday life.

"THIS IS MORE
THAN JUST MY WORK.
THIS IS WHO I AM."
—DR. AMBER GRADY



In the fall of 2022, Dr. Grady also created and hosted a series of *Lunch and Learn* presentations during which she sought to bring awareness to the college's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. She expressed that it is her goal to reach out to and connect with as many people as she can in the communities the college serves in order to make each person she meets feel valued, adding "if I do not interact with you directly, I might miss a great opportunity to learn something about you I cannot see." She also shared that during her interactions with students, faculty, staff, and community members, she found that there was a need to bring awareness to more applicable definitions of the term, equity. In the 2022 *Lunch and Learn* series, Dr. Grady offered the insightful perspective that equity is value, and this insight directly aligns with the themes of the series' three installments, "I Am Here," "I Belong Here," and "I Matter Here." Amber Grady is clearly invested in her objective to acknowledge and value the individual experiences of the people she meets, but she also expressed her sense of gratitude and the duty she now feels to invest back into the communities that have invested in her. Dr. Grady insists that when the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion is done correctly, "it's for everybody."

FEATURED STUDENT ARTIST

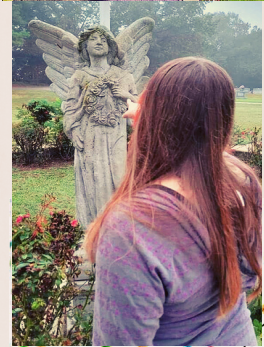
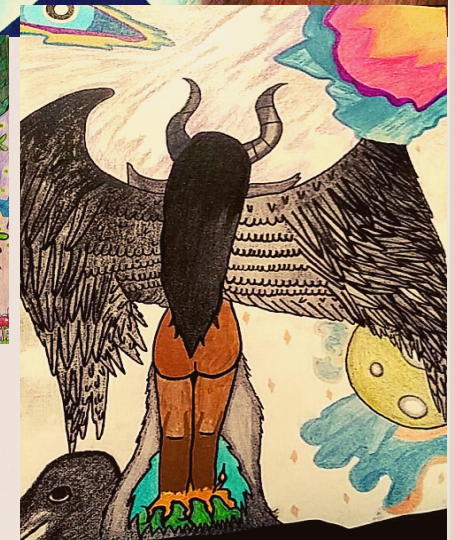
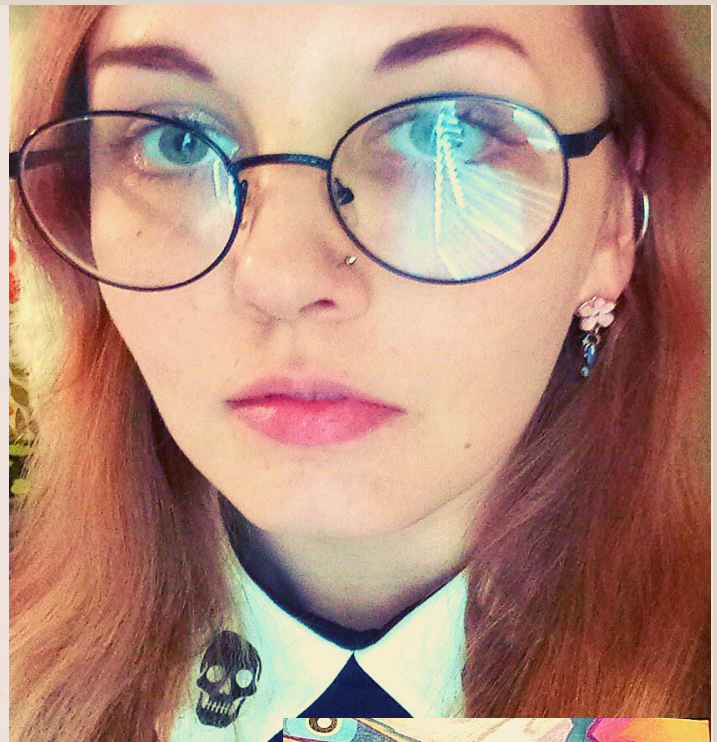
ASHLEY MCGAHA

Ashley McGaha is a current student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts in General Education Studies. She was born in Jonesboro and lived in Memphis, Tennessee for many years but moved back to Jonesboro to be closer to her mother who she says has always encouraged her to keep drawing and writing her fantasy characters and stories.

In addition to drawing and illustration, McGaha also enjoys photography, writing poetry, and reading novels, biographies, and manga. She shared that she has often written and illustrated fantasy stories since she was a child and has consistently kept a journal of her sketches, poetry, and observations. Her literary influences include Emily Dickinson and Mary Shelley.

After completing an Associate of Arts at ASU–Newport, McGaha plans to continue her studies in creative writing and transfer to Arkansas State University to complete a bachelor's degree with a major in English and a minor in sociology. She aspires to improve her creative writing and artistic technique in order to have a career as a published author and illustrator of fantasy psychological fiction and poetic comics.

McGaha remarked that before enrolling in courses at ASU–Newport, she never had thought she would make it to college, but by focusing on her education, she has gained confidence. Despite the personal turmoil she has endured, she has begun to find "true happiness in the little things," and hopes to connect with others through her art and creative writing.





ASHLEY MCGAHA

FEATURED STUDENT ARTIST
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

E V A N G E L I O N



AUSTIN RICHARDSON

FEATURED STUDENT ARTIST
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

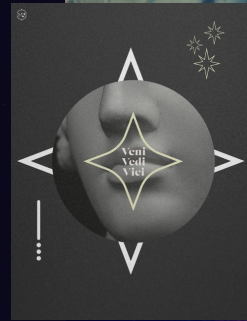
FEATURED STUDENT ARTIST

AUSTIN RICHARDSON

Austin Richardson is a current student at Arkansas State University–Newport pursuing an Associate of Arts. He was born in Cedar City, Utah, lived in Anaheim, California during his adolescence, and currently resides in Diaz, Arkansas. Richardson's interest in art began during his childhood when he progressed from doodling to sketching and formal drawing. He began practicing digital illustration using an iPad, and his preferred medium is digital collage. Richardson also enjoys creating digital drawings, illustrations, and designs using software and applications such as Adobe Express, Photoshop, and Procreate.

Richardson often includes Christian imagery and popular culture references in his work, and he draws inspiration from vintage and Y2K fashion, contemporary video games such as *Cyberpunk 2077*, *Battlefield*, and *Need for Speed*, as well as organic and brutalist architecture. Some of his artistic influences include fine arts media and commercial artist, Takashi Murakami, fashion designers, Christian Dior, Tom Ford, Gianni Versace, and Virgil Abloh, architects, Frank Lloyd Wright and Frank Gehry, and graphic designers, Alex Trochut, and Khoi Vinh.

Upon completing an Associate of Arts in General Education at ASU–Newport, Richardson plans to continue his studies at a four–year university where he aspires to earn a degree in graphic design.





ASHLEY MCGAHA

ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT FEATURED STUDENT ARTIST



THE DEAD
STILL WALK



Salvation

OFF
LIMIT

AUSTIN RICHARDSON

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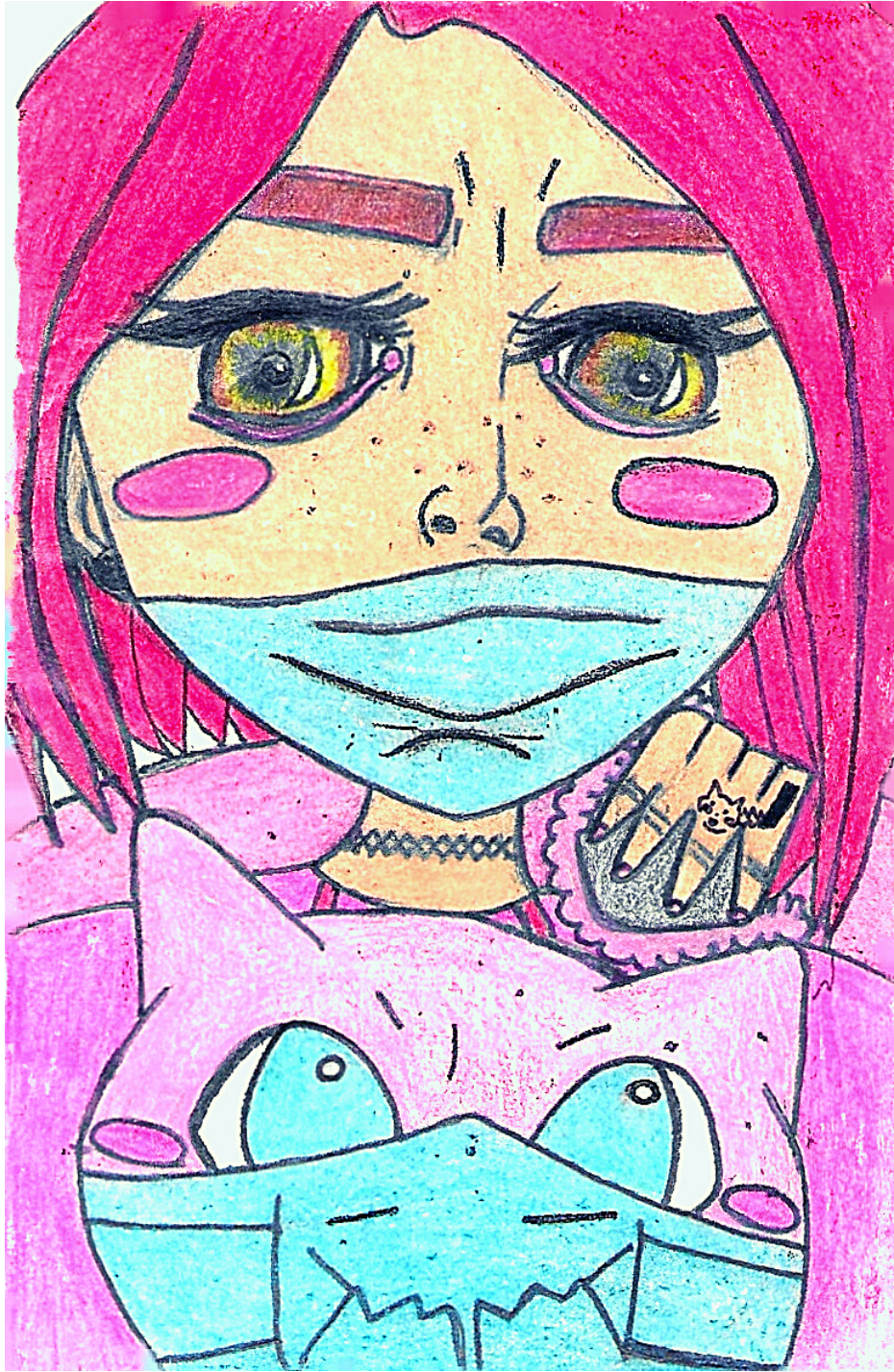
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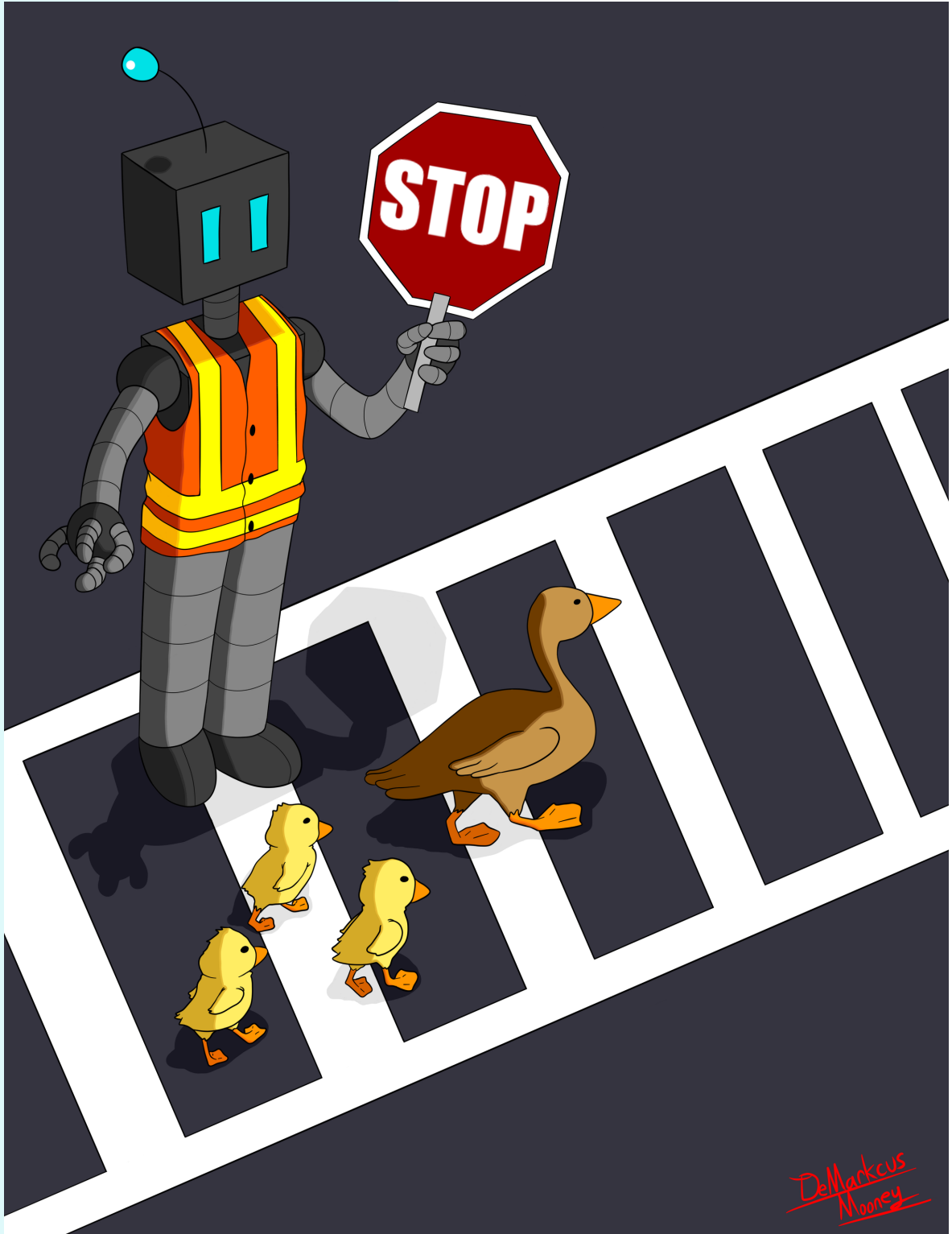
LESLIE LOVE

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT



ASHLEY MCGAHA

ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT FEATURED STUDENT ARTIST



*DeMarkcus
Mooney*

DEMARKCUS MOONEY
STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

Konichiwa!



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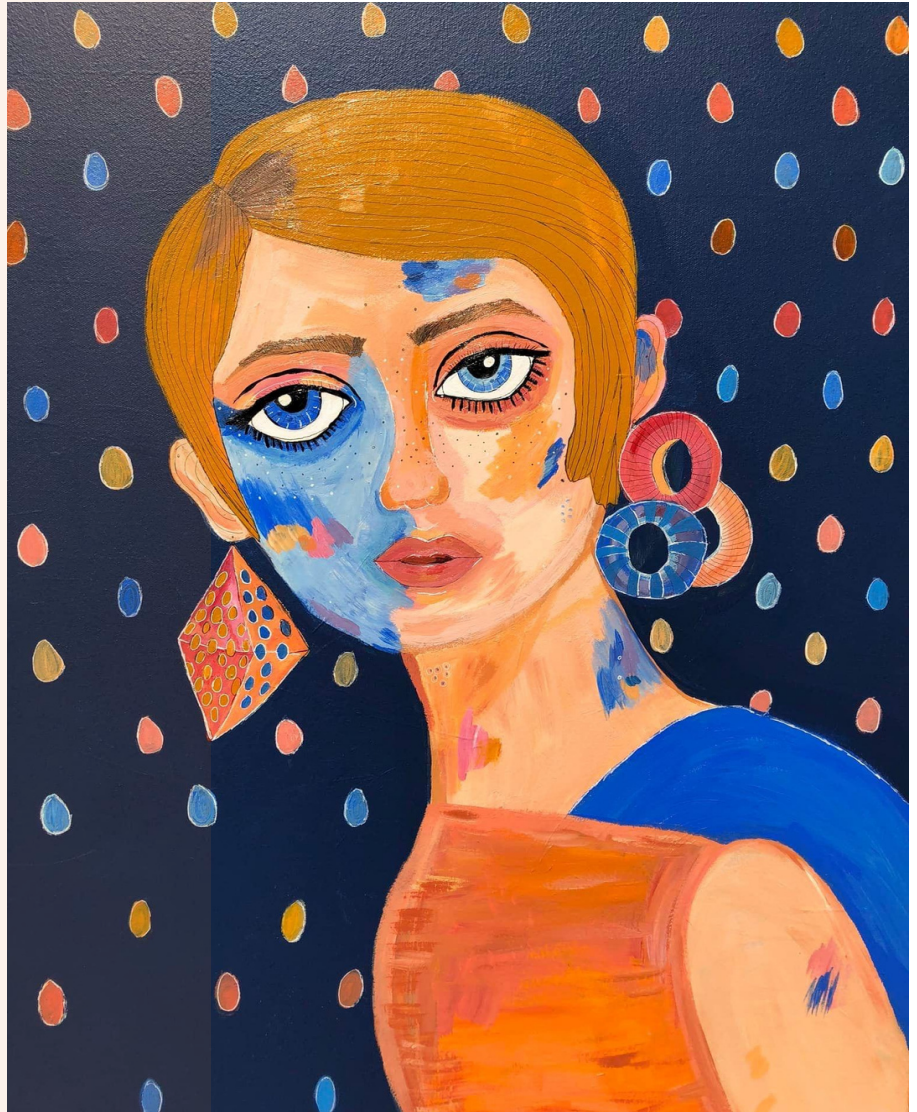
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ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT



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Beauty In The Eye



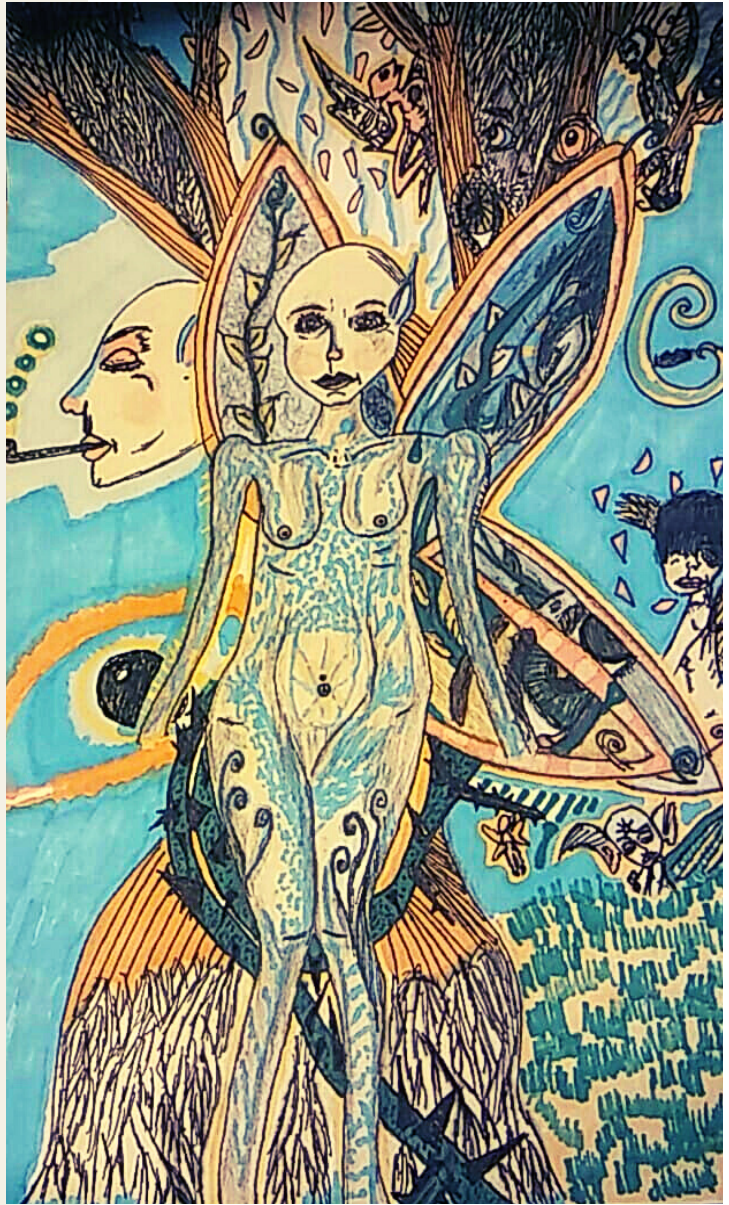
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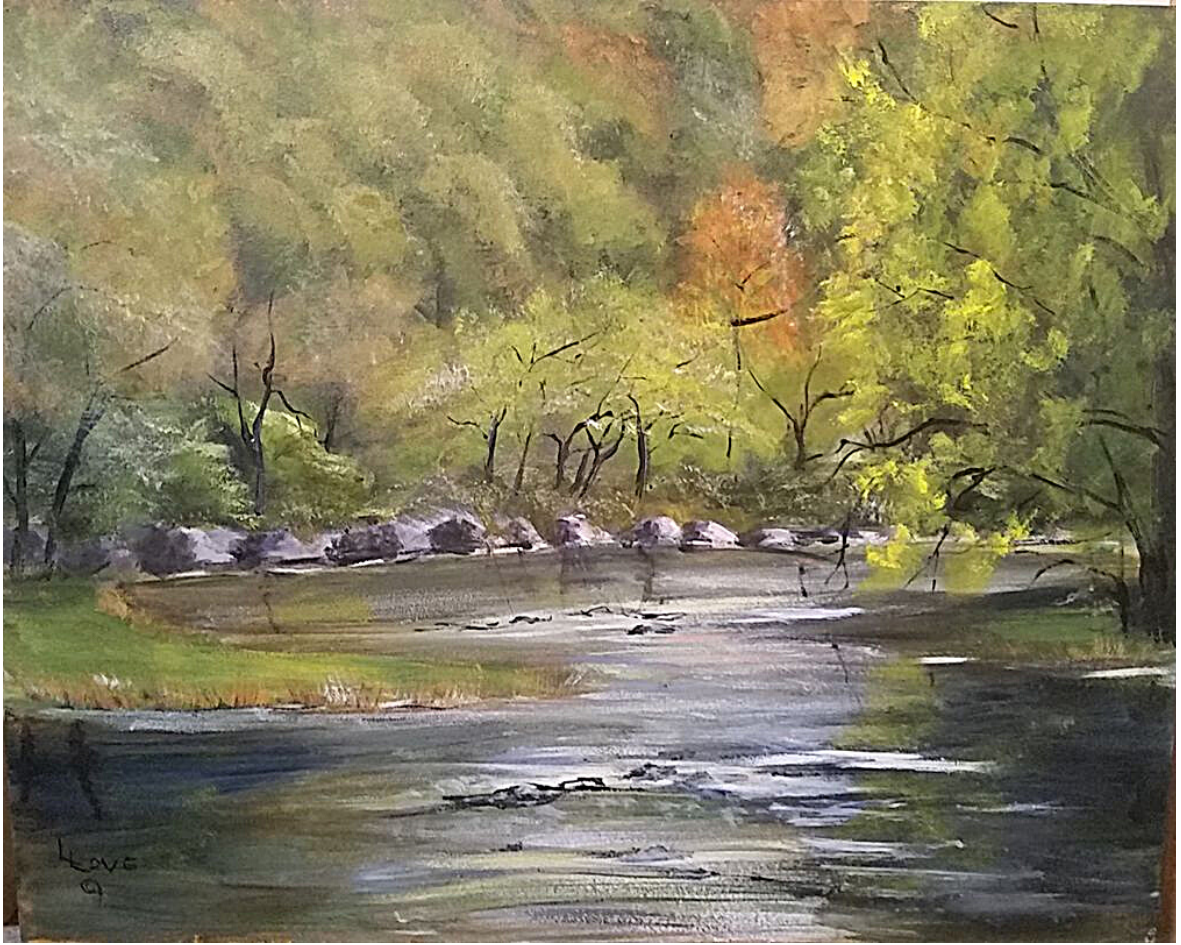
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ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT



LESLIE LOVE

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

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MADISON IRELAND
STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

PHOTOGRAPHY



LUCIEN COOK

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

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LORI POLSTON

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

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SARAH WEBB

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

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DESTINY WYSS

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

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STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

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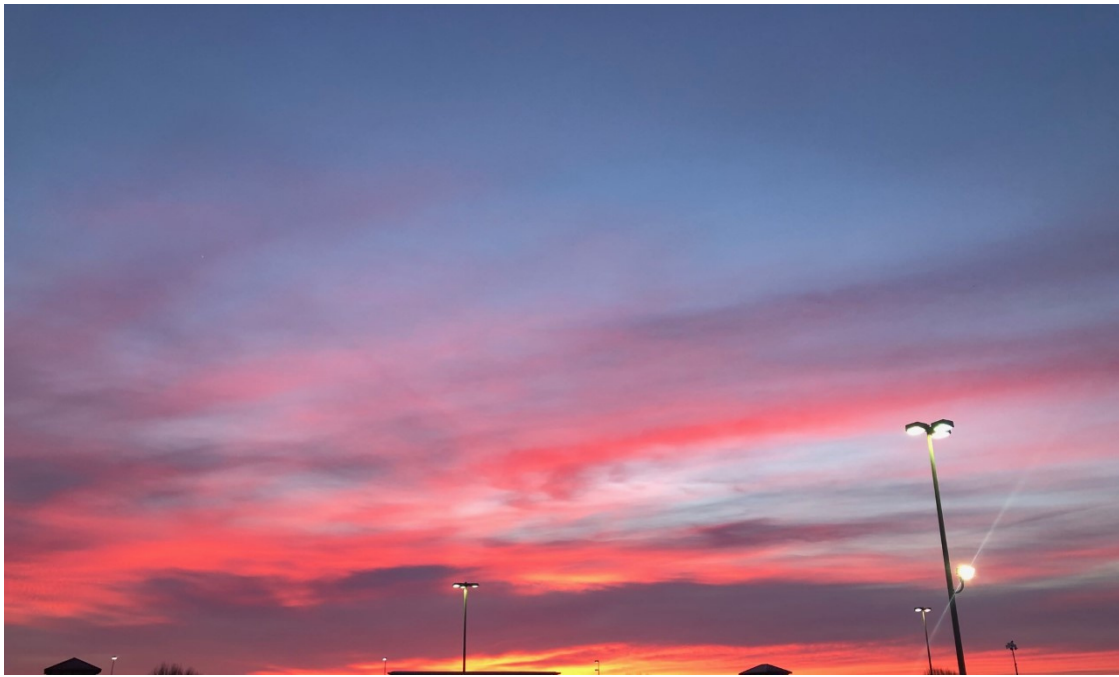
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ASHLEY TALLANT
CONTRIBUTING COMMUNITY PHOTOGRAPHER

PHOTOGRAPHY



DESTINY WYSS

STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

PHOTOGRAPHY



JEREMY SHIRLEY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

PHOTOGRAPHY



SARAH WEBB

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

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SARAH WEBB

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

PHOTOGRAPHY



AMBER JOHNSON
CONTRIBUTING COMMUNITY PHOTOGRAPHER

PHOTOGRAPHY



MADISON IRELAND
STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

PHOTOGRAPHY



JANNA K. ELLIS

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY- NEWPORT

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JEREMY SHIRLEY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

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MADISON IRELAND
STUDENT AT ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

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JANNA K. ELLIS

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY - NEWPORT

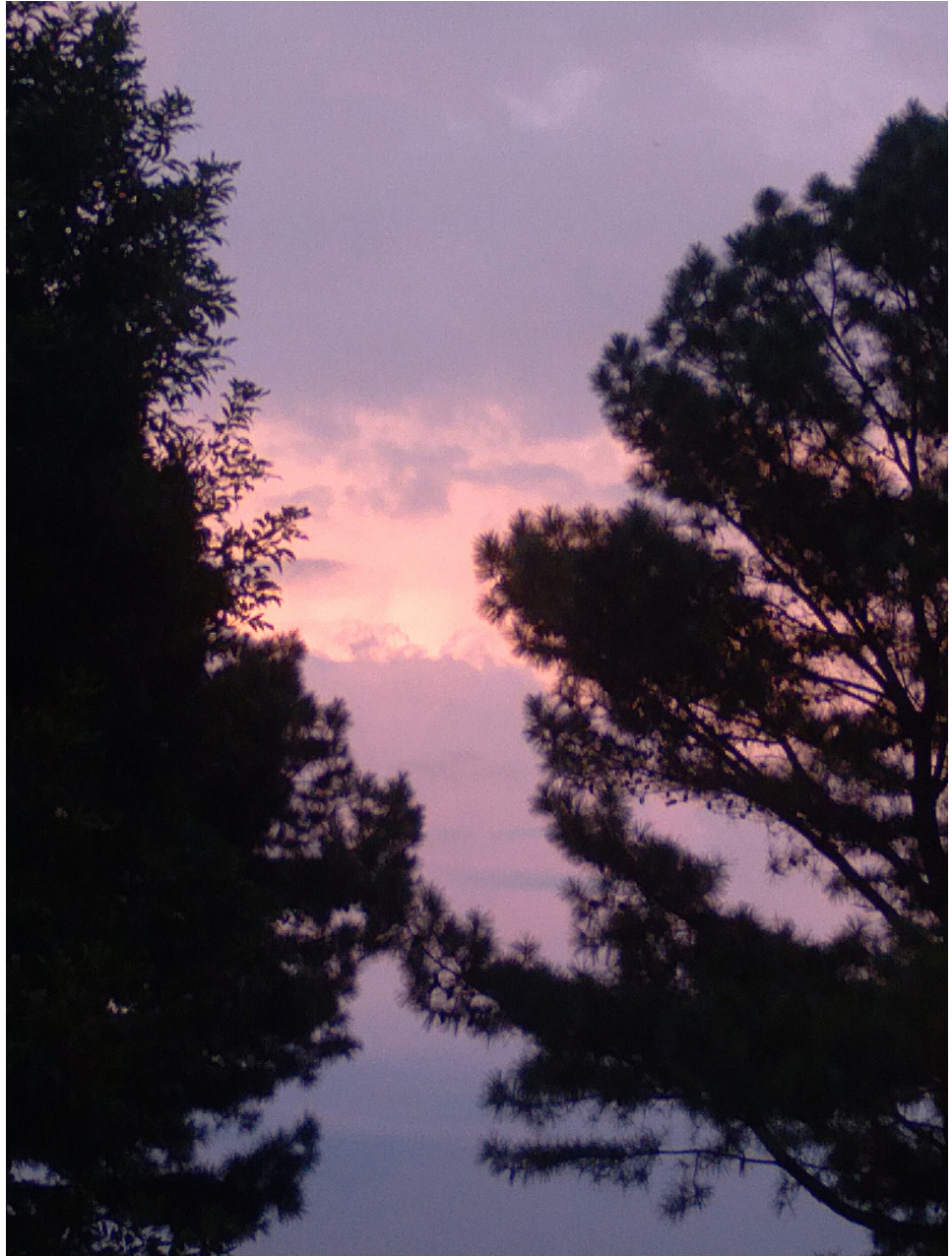
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ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LIFE SCIENCE
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT

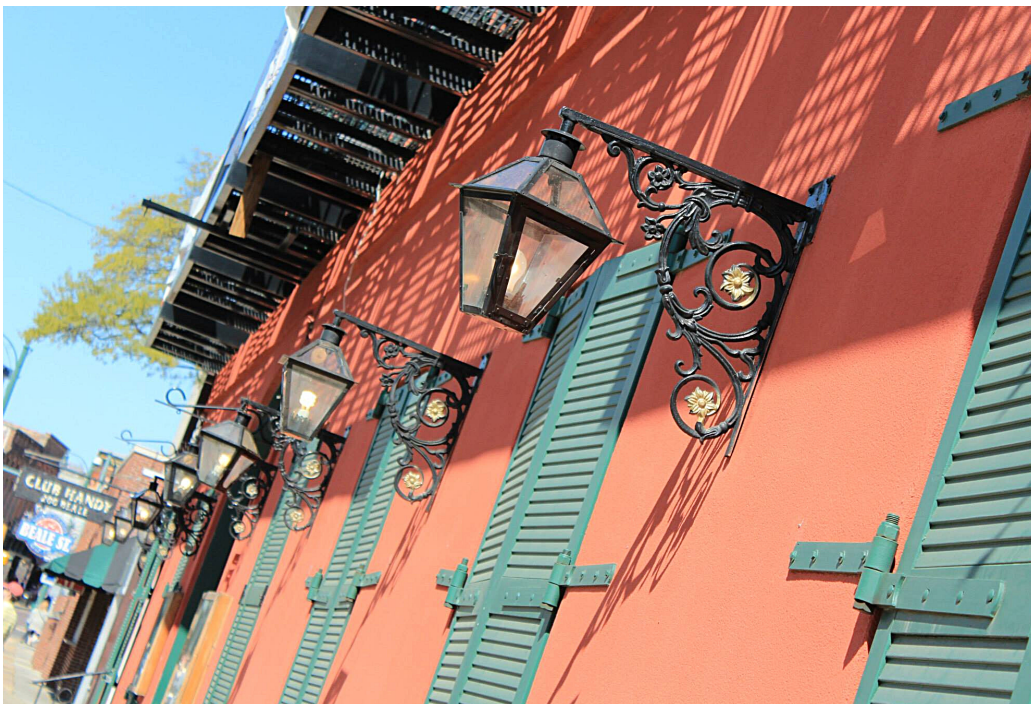
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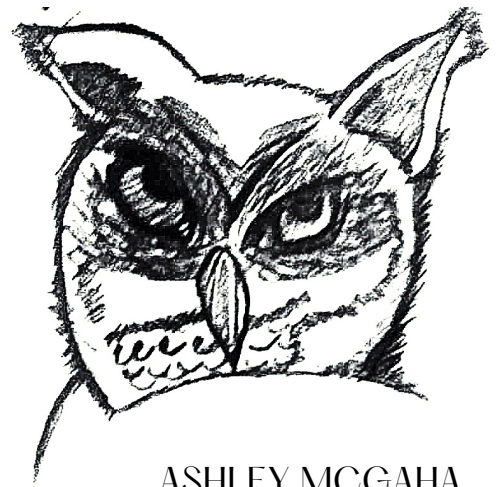
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ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-NEWPORT



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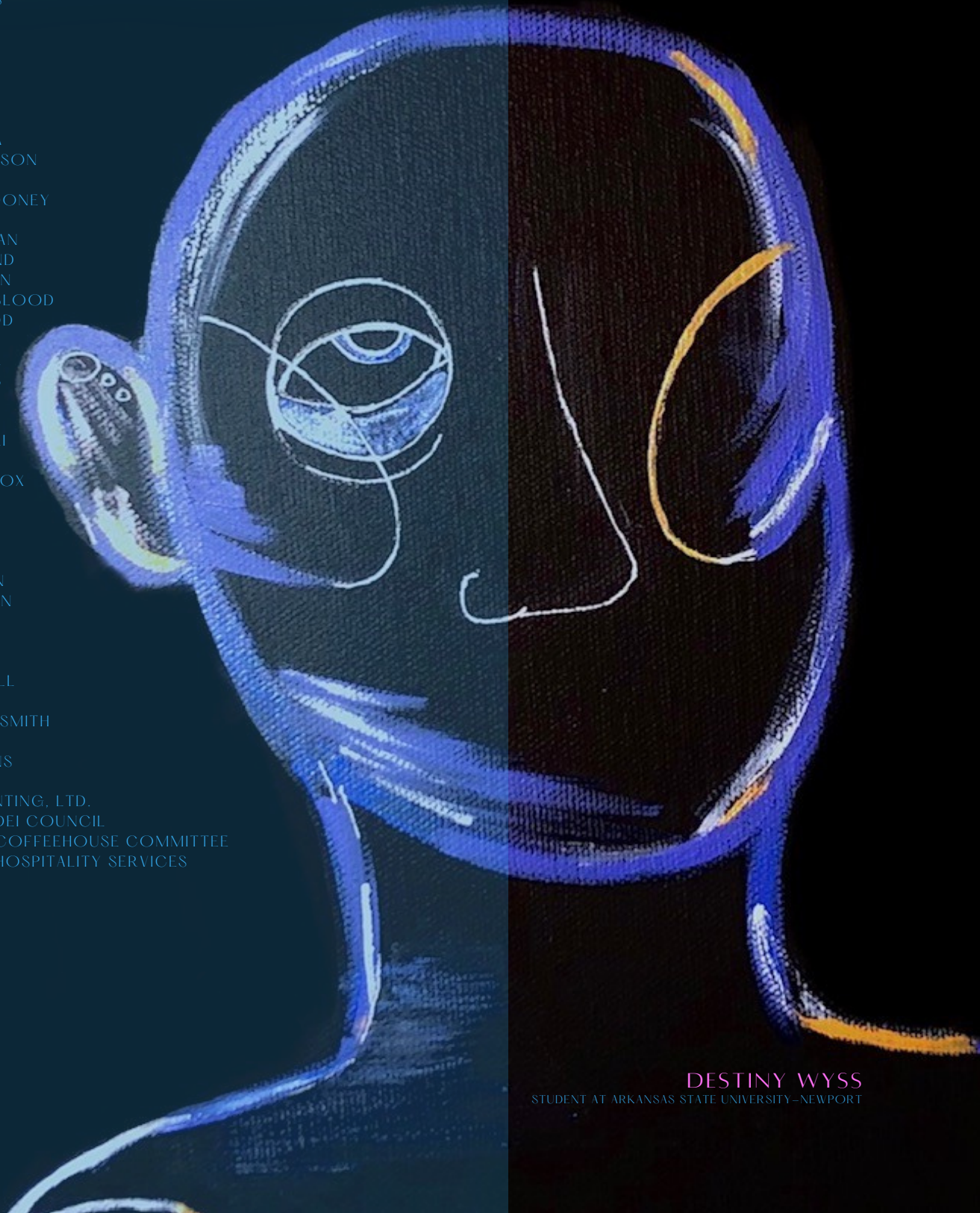
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Contributors

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JOHNNY MOORE
TYPHANIE MYERS
IKE WHEELER
KRISTEN SMITH
ADAM ADAIR
LORI POLSTON
JEANNA MASON
MARTI LITTLE
ASHLEY MCGAHA
AUSTIN RICHARDSON
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DEMARKCUS MOONEY
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