



# COLLAGE

A Journal of Creative Expression

Issue **12** Fall 2010



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# COLLAGE

A Journal of Creative Expression

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Issue **12** Fall 2010

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# LETTER *from the* EDITOR

Middle Tennessee State University continues to grow and change with enrollment at the highest it has ever been and with the development of new buildings and renovations across campus. One thing that will not change is the creativity and talent of our students. I continue to be amazed each semester at the artistic abilities of our students and alumni. *Collage* has showcased this creativity for more than 40 years.

*Collage* is also continually growing and changing. We developed and revamped our online submission system this semester, which has made it easier for students to submit their work. We received more submissions than ever this issue and expect the number continually to increase in subsequent semesters.

I would like to thank all of the editors, staff members, and advisers for all of their hard work and dedication they exerted for this semester's publication. I would especially like to thank the submitters, because without their creativity and talent, *Collage* would not exist.

I proudly present the Fall 2010 issue of *Collage*.

*Caitlin Orman*

Caitlin Orman

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**Yellow Dress**  
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The night sky shimmers with stars all aglow  
Some stars whose fire died long, long ago

And yet their light still shines on  
Although the source has since been gone

We, too, can be just like their kind  
If we're careful to leave a legacy behind

A story to tell of who we were then  
What we strove for, what we believed in

A picture to show what we hoped and dreamed  
What we thought it all should be and what it seemed

A memory to stand as a monument to our kind  
A star in space for new generations to find

**Giggling**  
Jaime Luna  
*Poetry*



I never forgot her.  
Sparkling at the height of three foot three  
and in a blue dress that had millions of reflecting stars dancing in front of a crowd.  
Cute as a gumbop,  
she grabbed her pre-school graduation diploma  
while she was covered in remnants of our arts and crafts battle royale.  
Thus,  
she smiled with glitter across her body,  
googly eyes across her face,  
a young boy's taste on her lips,  
and half the boy's bubble gum in her mouth.  
She smiled at her parents,  
and she giggled with me.



**Etheleen**  
Jacob Basham  
*Color Photography*

## The Family That Eats Together, Stays Together

Brooke Rooney  
*Fiction*

**A** cool fall breeze blew into the Marvin household through the screen door and into the living room. There, the entire family had assembled in wait for their weekly meal. Mr. and Mrs. Marvin had three children who were all married and had kids of their own. Every Sunday night the family would get together to eat like they had for hundreds—if not thousands—of weeks before, and this Sunday was no different.

“Ma, can I help you with anything?” Anne, the oldest child, offered her frail mother. Anne’s muck brown hair

was pulled back into a messy bun on the top of her head, with glasses framing her equally dull brown eyes.

The feisty old woman shook her head and replied, “You just get on back in there and mind those kids of yours.”

Anne chuckled and obediently went back into the living room where the family patiently waited for Ma to finish getting dinner ready. Anne offered to help her mother with the preparation every week, and each week Ma just waved her off.

The old china plates already decorated the long dining room table that had been in the home since before all three Marvin children had been born. Ma carefully adjusted the glasses nearest to her and sighed with content—another perfect meal. The grandkids’ table was

set up in the far corner of the dining room and consisted of a tacky, yellow card table with plastic plates, cups, and silverware.

“Pa, will you help me cut the meat?” Ma hollered from the dining room.

After a loud groan and the decisive shuffling of feet, Pa Marvin entered the dining room as he did every Sunday night. His thin hair was gelled back smoothly on his head at the request of Ma, and he wore his favorite flannel shirt with brown suspenders hugging the sides of his large belly.

“When will you learn to cut the damn meat on your own?” he grunted, passing into the kitchen.

“I learn every Sunday night when you do it and forget every Monday morning when I wake up. Now hurry and



get some meat on the platter before the children starve to death.”

“Them kids will *never* starve to death,” Pa muttered, grabbing the long carving knife near the sink. “Where’s the meat?”

“Where it always is, Pa. Hurry with it,” Ma pressed, scooting her aging husband into the garage where the other fridge was located.

“Ma?” Her youngest child, Joe, called out from the dining room.

“What is it?” Ma croaked, annoyed by the disturbances.

“Can I get a wet rag? Chris got sucker all over his pants.”

Ma sighed and opened the door for her only son to get through. “Why was he havin’ a sucker in the first place?”

Joe knew not to upset his mother and quickly apologized, wetting a kitchen rag and scrambling out as fast as he could. It wasn’t fear that drove the Marvin children to obey their mother; it was sheer admiration of that tiny, no-nonsense frame of hers that kept the children in line even as grown adults with children of their own.

The garage door creaked open and Pa came waddling back in with a large plate full of fresh meat. “Still warm,” he grinned, hardly able to set the heavy platter on the counter.

Ma set her hand on her hips. “Good. Now go and get the children so we can eat, you hear?”

Pa nodded with a roll of his eyes and a flick of his irritated hand, but did as Ma told him without question. The old woman wiped her tired hands on a rag before heading into the dining room where the family had begun to swarm towards their usual seats. Tonight was a special treat for the family because the Marvin’s middle child, Grace, had just gotten remarried, and it was her husband’s first Marvin family dinner.

“Joe, go get the meat in the kitchen, would yah?”

“Of course, momma,” her son replied, leaving his wife alone to coax their anxious son into his seat at the kids’ table.

Ma cleared a place in the middle of the table for Joe to set the meat platter, which he did carefully and precisely—

just the way Ma liked it.

She smiled beside her seat at the far end of the table and spread out her arms. “Children, shall we pray?” Everyone bent their heads in silence.

Ma closed her eyes and sang, “Thank you for the world so sweet. Thank you for the food we eat. Thank you for the birds that sing. Thank you, God, for everything.”

“AMEN!” everyone chorused, immediately beginning the challenging task of loading their plates with food.

“Momma, this looks great,” Joe announced, taking a large helping of potatoes.

Joe’s simple wife, sitting at his side, nodded in vigorous, silent agreement.

“Make sure you try everything, Albert,” Ma reminded the newest member of the family.

Albert smiled nervously at the people around the table, his black mustache bending comically with his grin.

“Best food you will ever eat,” Grace reassured him, giving his hand a gentle squeeze.

Albert intercepted the bowl of greens and heartily filled his plate. “I can’t wait to try everything twice.”

The whole table chuckled as the last few plates made their rounds, Ma and Pa being the last to fill their plates. The kids had always reckoned that growing up during the Depression had made Ma and Pa bitter towards parents eating their fill before the children—Grace always blamed her weight issue on that trait—but they didn’t know for sure. Neither Ma nor Pa had ever talked much about what they had gone through and so the kids never brought it up. A solid twenty minutes of comfortable silence went by before everyone began pushing plates away from them.

“Ma, you outdid yourself again,” Anne chirped from the corner, wiping her child’s face.

“Glad you appreciate it, darling,” Ma smiled, rubbing her bloated stomach. “Have you heard from James?”

Anne shook her head as she shuffled back to her seat. “Not for a few weeks.”

“He’s fine over there. I betcha he’s been kickin’ more ass than any other soldier!” Pa exclaimed.

“Thanks, Dad,” Anne muttered, barely able to form a smile.

“How long has he been over there?” Albert asked.

“Long enough,” Ma replied in her daughter’s stead. “How did you like the food?”

“Mrs. Marvin, that corn bread was some of the best I’ve ever had,” Albert announced, stuffing another piece into his mouth to further prove his point.

“Boy, you ain’t seen nothing yet,” Ma laughed. “Wait till dessert!”

“There’s more!?” Albert exclaimed.

The three Marvin children laughed; he knew nothing yet.

“How did you like your steak?” Pa asked from the other side of the table.

“It was fabulous, Mr. Marvin, simply the best meat I’ve ever tasted.”

“Did you know they butcher the meat in this very backyard?” Joe added, slipping a kiss on his wife’s cheek while leaning across her to talk to Albert.

“Do y’all really?”

Pa grinned, “Sure do.”

“ ‘Did you know they butcher the meat in this very backyard?’ Joe added...”

“We’ve been havin’ meat like this our entire lives,” Grace whispered proudly.

“I’d sure like to see what y’all feed them cows!” Albert exclaimed with a laugh.

“Wouldn’t we all,” Joe mused.

“Hey, Pa? Which one did you...use for tonight’s supper?” Anne asked, pushing the last of her greens around her plate.

Pa thought to himself for a moment before replying, “I think it was Laura May.”

“Oh, really?” Anne replied sadly. “I liked Laura May; she was the sweetest old thing.”

“You know how hard they are to take care of if you wait too long,” Ma added. “They don’t have wonderful children like we do to take care of them when they get old and sick,” she joked.

“Y’all name your cows?” Albert asked, chuckling.

"Odd, don't yah think?"

"What's so odd about it?" Pa demanded, eyeing his new son-in-law.

Albert immediately began to backtrack. "Well, nothing really, but... I was raised on a farm like this one, and our dad used to give us a good lickin' if we ever named the animals. He said making any sorta connection with an animal you're going to eat wasn't right—emotionally I mean."

"Well we ain't children, are we?" Pa replied sternly.

"No sir," Albert muttered, embarrassed.

"Ma, did you hear Mrs. Rita's running around town accusing aliens of taking her friends?" Grace laughed, desperate to ease the attention off of her new husband.

"Our neighbor, Mrs. Rita?" Ma asked.

"Yes ma'am! I was in town earlier and she was running up to everyone askin' if they've seen her friends."

"Odd," Pa croaked, comfortably resting his hands on his stomach. "Do you know who it was?"

"She never told anyone a name. She just begged everyone to look for them. How am I supposed to look for someone when I don't know their name, let alone what they look like?" Grace chuckled. "I feel kinda bad that Mrs. Rita is upset, but I think she's going a little crazy."

"Every town has a resident crazy person," Albert joked, obviously relieved that all attention was now averted from his earlier comment.

"The day someone I know goes missin', I'm raisin' hell," Anne added, looking at her father. "But I doubt that will ever happen."

"Does she think there's someone running around snatching up old people?" Joe laughed, his wife joining in.

"Oh yeah, I've got 'em all stuffed in my basement," Pa joked, cracking a wide grin.

Ma politely excused herself from the table, taking as many plates as she could hold with her. Albert attempted to rise and help her clear the table, but Grace quickly yanked him back down after a stern glance from Ma.

"Ma's kitchen is like her own private church," Grace whispered.

"Ain't no one allowed in there but her," Joe added from his seat, his arm around his silent wife's shoulders.

"Ain't no one allowed in my basement, either," Pa added.

The whole table erupted in laughter as Ma continued to enter and exit a few more times clearing all the dishes before setting new bowls and spoons on the table.

"Albert, this is my special ingredient gelatin. It's Grace's favorite."

"Ma! That's so sweet of you," Grace beamed, eagerly accepting her bowl as Ma spooned out each helping.

"Dig in!"

The room was full of pleasurable moans and sighs as the clinking of silverware on china rang through the silence.

"Opinions?" Ma demanded of her newest son.

Albert slowly put the last spoonful into his mouth and swallowed before replying, "Very... uh, different."

Ma's brow creased, adding even more wrinkles to her aged face. The three Marvin children instantly sensed their mother's displeasure at his response.

"Albert," Grace whispered, squeezing his hand hard.

"I love it, Momma," Joe piped in, but Ma quickly silenced him with her stare.

"Did you like it?" Ma slowly asked Albert.

"What's that special ingredient?" Albert asked, avoiding the question.

"A smart young man would know not to bother an old woman with such a ridiculous question."

"I didn't mean to offend you, Mrs. Marvin. It's just that this gelatin tastes oddly like—"

"Like heaven?" Grace offered.

Albert closed his mouth and slowly looked around the room at every face staring back at him. The way each face had an odd tint of yellow to it—even the spouses'—suddenly startled him. Why hadn't he noticed that before? His eyes fell to rest across the table at Anne, who looked back at him with eyes full of unspoken misery. Albert felt his stomach churn as a squirming, disgusting thought entered into his mind.

"It... it was delicious, Mrs. Marvin," Albert managed to mutter while keeping the bile from creeping up his throat.

Ma nodded triumphantly and replied, "I know it was." ●



**Disperse**  
Maggie France  
Oil & Acrylic on Canvas

## The Gentle Sun

Michael Lampley

Poetry

I watch the light dance down from the moon,  
I wonder, how can there be light in such blackness?  
For that light is shed upon me from so far away,  
And yet here I gaze at the moon and feel as though  
It watches me from behind its veil of clouds,  
The single eye that sees in the night,  
So stark in contrast to the light of the blinding sun,  
So mellow, gentle, and seemingly kind, the light splits the night,  
The sky is opened and reveals only the workings of a true artist,  
For the one who made the sun was mistaken:  
That light is too bright and demanding,  
If only it could be more melodious like the moon.



Untitled  
Emily Roley  
Oil on Canvas



**The Telephone Line Musician**  
Rachel Nokes  
*Color Photography*

### For a Trimm'd Tree

Taffeta Chime  
*Poetry*

How sad the face of a denuded tree!  
The arms that once reached to the sky now torn.  
Once glory, now naked, no crown of green,  
No elegance, no shape to which 'twas born.  
Limbs useless, lifeless lay, denied of air,  
Strewn rubbish same as trash piled at its feet.  
A chilled wind blows in sighs of despair.  
Grey skin and chest: a heart that has no beat.  
The neighbors fancy trimming back a tree—  
New branches promise fullness, fluffy, ripe.  
I suffer watching, can't bear it to see.  
I grimace, shudder, nauseated gripe.  
But deadened winter will come all too soon,  
When ev'ry tree looks like the ones trimm'd now do.



**Joy Ride**  
Kevin J. Bernatek  
*Digital Photography*

### New Pavement

Haley Burklow  
*Poetry*

Smooth road.  
New pavement.  
Wheels glide like blades on ice,  
a leaf flowing on a river.  
Complete silence:  
only the engine competes for attention,  
usually going unnoticed  
against the noise of the road.  
Unbreakable blackness  
with painted yellow ribbons,  
spreading into oblivion,  
and Georgia "red clay"  
powdered along the edge.  
Then two bumps;  
one for each set of wheels.  
The dreamy silence ends  
and rugged traveling begins,  
marking the end of the construction.

**Wonder Air**  
Margaret Hoffman  
*Monologue*

**SETTING** A Wonder Air aircraft  
**TIME** Present day

*(PENNY, mid 30s- 40s, dressed in her flight attendant attire, stands, talking into a speaker.)*

**PENNY**  
Also, please assure that your tray tables are in the upright and locked position and that all carry-ons are stored properly in an overhead bin or beneath the seat directly in front of you. Please turn off all electronic devices and keep those cell phones off and stowed for the duration of the flight. As always, you know we thank you for traveling with us on Wonder Air, and we hope you enjoy your flight. This is your flight attendant, Penny, and if you need anything, just ask...

*(Pause. PENNY puts the speaker down.)*

**PENNY** (cont'd)  
*(To audience)*  
Yes.  
I.

I am your flight attendant, and I am here to save you all from the perils of this floating oxygen vacuum: from drowning, from accidental unbuckling of seatbelts, from...dehydration from too many peanuts. I will trample any attempts to decay, demolish, or otherwise defile your lungs with my federal violation warning against puffing

your cigarettes anywhere near my iron lungs of righteousness, and, with the utmost grace, I will suffocate your anxiety in my inflatable life vest, throwing your fear out the door without a viable floatation device. In the case of an emergency, I will direct your body to one of the six emergency exits at the front, middle, or end of the plane.

**“ Be it blanket or barf bag, I will be there. ”**

Yes, I, Penny, am here to pick up your trash and make sure that you have your snack bar in a convenient and compact box of quickly digested, semi-nourishing carbohydrates. I will dutifully get paid my royalties at \$7.75 an hour for my faithful service to you, the innocent public. But this? This is not about the money. No. This is about duty, about loyalty, and about holding up the support beams of justice on my back and carrying the people of this nation with a calm and assuring tone of voice. I used to want to be a nun until I found out the requirements for such a job, and so I have answered to a higher calling: to serve my fellow citizens by confining their carry-ons in the overhead compartments, replacing the generic two-ply in the 5x5 claustrophobic enclosure, and disposing of all hazardous trash in my plastic receptacle.

Yes, I, The Wonder-Air-Flight-Attendant-Woman, shall accommodate your every need with my utility pad and golf pencil, ready to take your order. Be it blanket or barf bag, I will be there.

*(PENNY magically produces a snack tray.)*

**PENNY** (cont'd)

Here I come, armed and ready to nourish your weak, feeble bodies from the threat of starvation. Yes, I- I will save your life with wheat crackers and pretzels and, in the case that a flailing crumb should become lodged in your vulnerable human throat, I will rush to your side with my CPR-certified self and breathe the life back into your clogged esophagus. No thanks needed...

*(Turbulence begins.)*

**PENNY** (cont'd)  
What's this?

*(Over speaker)*

Excuse me, passengers, please return to your seats as the Captain has turned on the fasten-seatbelt sign.

*(To audience)*

But never fear, as I will be here accommodate to your every air-travel trial. Mr. Trouble never hangs around when he hears the gentle whoosh of my elegant body, when he feels the radiating heat emanated by the solar lasers of the ultra-white shine of my bleached smile.

Yes, I will be by your side at all times.

And I'll never get lonely.

I'll just fly away. ●



**Bite**  
Lauren Athalia  
*Digital Photography*

## **The Haunting** Bruno DiGiorgio *Poetry*

She haunts my dreams, walking through the drawing rooms of my mind as if she has lived there all her life or perhaps all of mine.

Hers is the voice that whispers behind the door I closed so long ago but could not lock, the promise of my youth set free from its imprisonment wandering from room to room; half temptress, half old friend; alluring, familiar, dangerous.

Free to roam, her ubiquitous presence in my dreams has become as inevitable as the night that brings the sleep. She's the silhouette against the glass on a lonely, rainy night in a black & white New York, the mysterious beauty standing at the periphery as the wheel is turned in Monte Carlo; the girl on the platform at Victoria Station.

She is a Constant: always there, yet always on the edge, an immutable reminder of a memory never made; a visitor from that place where destiny goes to live out old age when the promise of life doesn't work out.

She is a Tormentor: living in my half-sleep where pictures of fantasy and reality bleed colors into one another until they are indistinguishable.

She haunts my dreams, and, if I'm fortunate, no amount of reason will exorcise her from them.

## Onliest

Kaitlin Jones

*Prose*

Sometimes, when I'm intoxicated, I notice how beautiful music can be, how amazing the wind feels on my body, and how each breath is a new chance at life. Consider the saying, "You can never step into the same river twice." No two seconds are the same; no breath inhaled or exhaled is equal to the one before it.

Similarly, while all flowers may look like Xerox copies of each other, they truly are not. The veins that reach our across their petals, the hairs sticking off their stems, the placement of leaves—all unique. While the basic molecular structure of one may be close or identical to another, there is a world of meaningful complexities beyond the first glance. Even the simplest difference is important to a honeybee or a caterpillar. It is important to the child who picks the flower and gives it to their grandmother, who then places it in a small bottle on her windowsill to look at and smile over while she sips her morning coffee. The importance of that singular flower is immense.

I wish that, with an ambition equal to that of the Latter-day Saints, I could spread the belief that we are all unique individuals; that it is beautiful to be human; that it is nothing short of exhilarating to learn the outer ridges and delve into the inner labyrinth that makes a person who they are.



**Untitled**  
Kallie D. Jackson  
*Acrylic on Canvas*



**Saw blade & Lace**  
Heather Moulder  
*Relief & Emboss*

## Paper Products

Jolene Barto  
*Poetry*

My twelfth birthday party.  
Mother laughing boorishly,  
her voice echoing from the kitchen.  
From his office, my father sighing,  
“Honey, enough. I said, Enough  
now. Please now.”  
The clang of the glass doors  
of the liquor cabinet slamming  
from the kitchen.

The press of Jack Taylor’s knee  
against my cotton-covered thigh.  
We crowded ourselves closely  
on my sofa, our laps covered  
with Styrofoam plates and our  
hands gripping waxed Dixie cups.

Pizza boxes littered and  
stacked haphazardly.  
Chris Lewis, a strawberry-blonde,  
running around my living room  
with a water gun, shooting  
Scarlett Rogers repeatedly, shouting,  
“Yarrrrg, me matey.” Scarlett Rogers  
chiding, “Ihateyou.” She was  
laughing, always having some  
strange, bad luck of being  
an easy target.

Jack’s knees, naked, freckle-dappled  
and growing a soft, peach down.  
I drew circles on my shin  
as I watched him drink  
punch slowly,  
a lump bobbing in his  
throat hypnotically. He turned  
to me, whispered, “I think the world’s  
*damned crazy.*” Jack was thirteen.

Chris Lewis yelled, “FeFiFOFUM!”

As I pushed my leg closer to Jack,  
I sliced into my red velvet birthday cake.  
My mother had never baked before.  
She was always too busy  
clanging doors and clinking glasses,  
collecting brown shopping bags.  
So, the middle of the cake undone, the middle  
dough, the middle oozed out, leaving  
a rust-colored stain on my shockingly  
white plate.



## Remembers, Remembering

Juliana Cheij

Poetry

Remember the seven brothers  
(or was it seven swans?)  
Whose sister, silent seven years  
Weaved seven shirts, coarse cloth  
And saved seven souls in her endeavor

(or was it swans?)

The seventh son, the youngest one  
Swears, the second sleeve  
Of the seventh shirt (his particularly)  
Was missing. In its place  
(replacing it)  
The wing of the seventh swan.

His sight smoky (cloudy)  
Seeing still in swan  
Remembers, remembering  
Shaded, slanted memories  
Of shadowed stilettos  
Remembers she, the swan.

The missing second sleeve  
Of the seventh shirt, the scar  
And he, the seventh one  
Wishes, wishing  
For sleeves

(or was it wings?)



**Moment of Enlightenment**  
Will Cameron  
*Color Photography*

# Almost to Eden

Book Review

by June Hall McCash

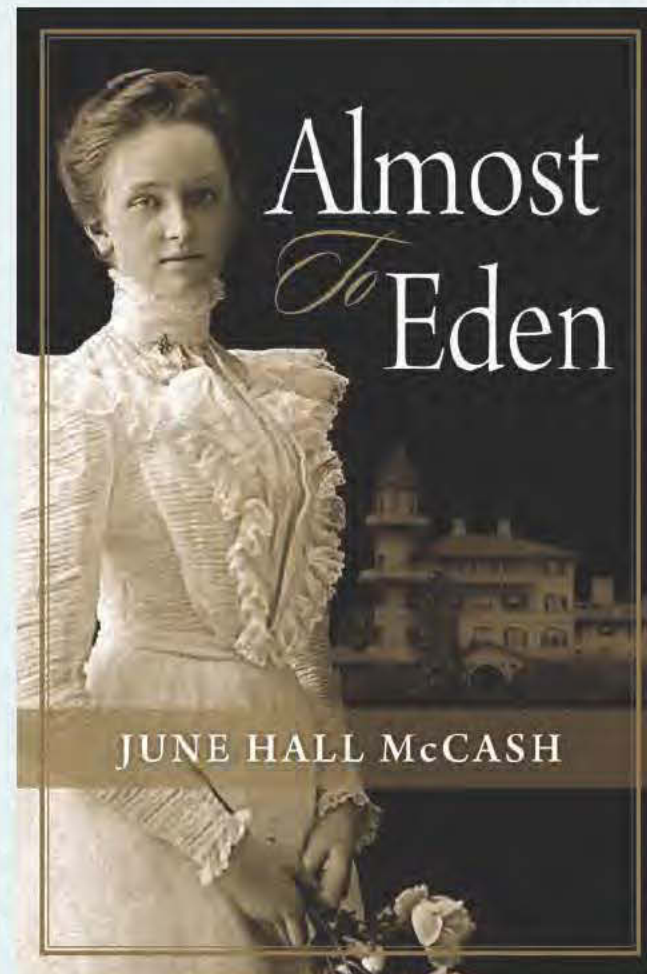
*Almost to Eden* is the first novel by June Hall McCash, an expert on medieval literature and Jekyll Island, Georgia. The book is a delicately crafted piece of historical fiction, the tale of a young Irish immigrant, Maggie O'Brien, who leaves her home along the Irish coast to travel to America. There, she finds work on Jekyll Island and becomes irreparably entangled in the lives of the workers and members of the notorious Jekyll Island Club, where the richest and most famous vacationed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century until the onset of World War II. To get a sense of the extravagant atmosphere of the place, one must consider the patrons of the Club, which include, among many others, J.P. Morgan, Joseph Pulitzer, and William H. Vanderbilt.

My first glimpse of Dr. McCash was more than a year earlier than my acceptance to the *Collage* staff, and more than a year before leaning that she had written a work of fiction. Dr. McCash spoke for the Honors Lecture Series in a semi-crowded lecture hall in the Honors Building on the Middle Tennessee State University Campus where I was in attendance, but simply saying I was one among the crowd of people to see her speak is not a thorough explanation of the experience that unfolded itself before me. One does not merely "see" Dr. McCash speak. As sometimes happens with such dynamic people when they appear in your life for a brief moment and say

or do something that affects you (however great or small be the effect) one must experience her presence and her story. I did not speak to her then, but I felt as though I did meet her and that I knew her. That Monday evening, she told that small crowd of students, professors, and other interested persons the story of the beginning of the Honors College at MTSU. She had fought long and hard for what was at first called the Honors Program and became its first director. Her story of the battle she fought, and the extra challenges of being a woman fighting that battle, stuck with me. She made me feel like I could do anything. I believe it was her obvious knack for storytelling and her honesty to the story of the Honors College, that pulled me into her presentation and left me feeling as though I knew her, had met her personally, and that she had given me a renewed sense of purpose in my academic career.

As a result of my previous knowledge of Dr. McCash, it was with great interest that I picked up Dr. McCash's first foray into fiction writing. *Almost to Eden* is fiction, but it is deeply rooted in history and fact. Dr. McCash is intimately acquainted with

Jekyll Island, having published three non-fiction works dedicated to telling the real story of the Jekyll Island Club prior to embarking upon this detailed fictional account of a young woman's experiences, both good and bad, in the new world. Aside from the main protagonist, many of the characters of the novel were real, living people. In fact, it turns out that *Almost to Eden* is not intended simply to be the story of the fictional Maggie O'Brien. In an interview conducted with the author, I was told that she wrote with



the aim of giving a voice to a young waiter at the Jekyll Island Club who died at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Dr. McCash: *When I first started working on the research for my Jekyll Island books.... I came across a tombstone on the island...It's a family cemetery, and the names were different from any members of the family, and the date was also 1912, whereas these other people had all died in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. So I was very curious about who the tombstones belonged to; no one seemed to know.... I have an insatiable curiosity, and I had to find out, so I found the dates and went back to the newspapers from that time and discovered that they were both waiters at the Jekyll Island Club—there were two tombstones—and they had died on the same day. And that, I think, was the beginning of the impetus for the book, when I found out that Hector Deliyannis died at the age of 23. I just wanted to give him a life.... I wanted to give him a story. The events that occurred to him and to his friend on that day are accurate.*

The novel is an excellent example of history colliding with fiction and the author's personal experiences on Jekyll Island, creating something both beautiful and moving. While the beginning may start slowly, the attention to detail and historical fact makes this more than okay, and perhaps even desirable, as it gives one the chance to soak in the time period and become acquainted with the world as it was 100 years ago. As events move along in the story, it becomes apparent that this is a work with themes much broader than its 344 pages. It becomes a story of what it means to immigrate and all but lose contact with home while attempting to create a new life in a strange place where not everyone is kind. It then shifts, becoming a wonderfully exhilarating piece of literature in which the ending, no, is not exactly a happy one, but it is not a sad one either. *Almost to Eden* can be a tearjerker, but don't let that scare you away. I bawled my eyes out at both the injustices and the beautiful moments that Dr.

McCash so elegantly illustrated in this book, but that is because of the craft of its author and her extensive knowledge of Jekyll Island and the time period.

I asked Dr. McCash if she had any advice for *Collage* readers and young writers:

**“Don't just assume that you write something and it's perfect the first go-around.”**

*I have actually just finished reading a book that I would recommend to any beginning writer, and it's by Stephen King, called **On Writing**. It's a really extraordinarily important book, I think, to writers. The thing that resonated with me most of all is he didn't start out being a big best seller, and no one ever does. But if you really think you've got what it takes as a writer, don't—give—up.... The other thing I would say is keep working on your craft. Don't just assume that you write something and it's perfect the first go-around. Any good writer is going to revise again and again and again. His advice...is to write the first draft just from your own heart. Get it all down, and then go back with an eye that is more objective.... You keep discovering things about your book as you go forward with it.... You see more and more things that help it become a real work of art as opposed to just being a collection of words. And I could go on and on...don't ask for compliments, tell [the reader] to be critical, and listen to them, but remember, in the end, it's your work. ●*

Book Review by  
Casey M. Gaddis  
Fiction Editor

*Dr. June Hall McCash has published multiple non-fiction books, including Jekyll Island's Early Years: From Prehistory through Reconstruction, The Jekyll Island Cottage Community, The Jekyll Island Club: Southern Haven for America's Millionaires (co-author William Barton McCash), The Life of Saint Audrey, a Text by Marie de France (co-editor and translator Judith Clark Barban), The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women (edited by June Hall McCash), and Love's Fool: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto, and the Parody of the Courtly Lover.*

*She is a former professor and Honors Program director at Middle Tennessee State University, and holds a doctorate in Comparative Literature from Emory University. She has won multiple literary awards for non-fiction, fiction and poetry, and for her teaching, research, and career achievements at MTSU.*





Bedroom #2  
Betsy Ochoa  
Pointillism

**A**nd that was it. Another one for the back pages of the memory book. I was tired of thinking in depressing song lyrics, of having empty air around me where an embrace used to be, of staring down that pear-shaped figure in the ever-critical, unlying mirror and wondering if anything could ever be just right. That was how it was after every single breakup. It was time for something to change.

First, there was Sam. We were best friends for a long time in high school, and I really *like* liked him but didn't say anything because I didn't want to hurt our friendship. Finally, though, he called *me* and said he wanted to date. Yet something came over me as soon as I heard him say those words, and all the feelings went away. I told him that I was flattered but that I thought we just needed to be friends. Back page.

Then there was Robert. We dated for a dizzy while. After about a year, though, I called it off. I mean, like chocolate-covered cherries: I love them, but they don't go with everything. I couldn't take the combination anymore.

Next came Justin. Oh, he was *hot*, and he really cared for me too. Then Blake, the supersensitive and understanding one. It was the same song: all great guys that I really did care about, but I realized after a while that we just didn't...I don't know! They just didn't end well.

It was the ending that kept getting in the way. Get this: Sam Wigglebottom. Robert Heiney. Justin Bottoms. Blake Butts. My latest dump development? Kyle McRear.

It's something I've noticed. As soon as a girl realizes she likes a guy, she automatically imagines her full name if she and he were to marry. It doesn't even matter if she's even thinking about *thinking* about marrying him or not! If the name's "got a ring to it,"

who knows! If not, *not*! Still, it's rarely like the thought of Geronimo without a 'chute. Unfortunately for me, though, everyone I've dated—albeit absolutely amazing—had one of *those* names. And I can't even bear the thought. I've even thought of dating some guy who has a really great name solely for that purpose. I mean, how cool would this be: "Hello, I'd like to introduce you to Dr. and Mrs. Fun," or, "Sweet, party of two?" or, "May I speak to Mrs. Divine, please?"

Then I found Mr. Right. His name was Harry. I knew. I just knew he was the one—so handsome, so sweet, so debonair and continental. So I asked him to concede my one strange request: just keep it at Harry. I didn't want to know his last name. I had hopelessly fallen, and I didn't need a parachute.

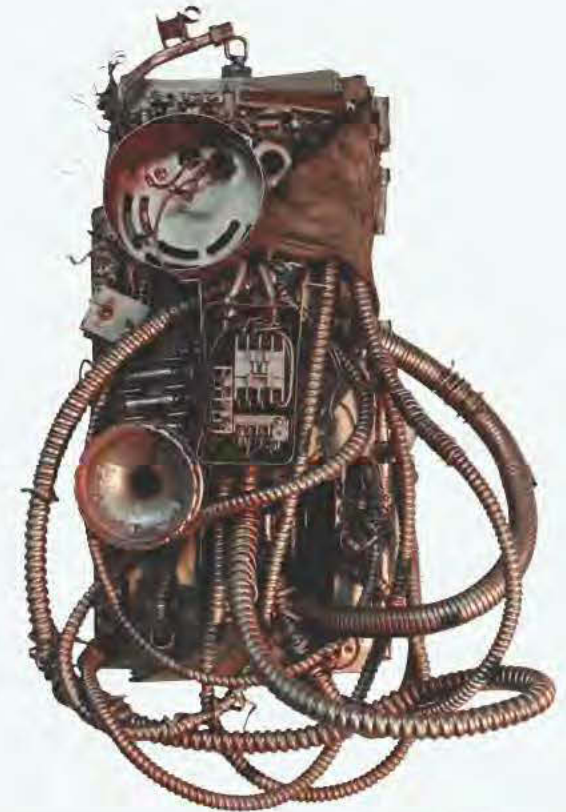
It became a game of sorts—as if I were dating an international spy, or a celebrity *incognito*, or even some notorious bad boy in the Witness Protection Program. If there was a time when we were meeting someone new, Harry would say, "Hi, my name is Harry—oh, honey, cover your ears—we're on a first name basis, you see," and casually explain to those often bewildered faces. I never collected his mail, I never used his credit card, and I never looked him up on Facebook. In fact, his last name was a playful, teasing threat.

"You're going to learn it eventually," he said to me one romantically foggy evening. "It's going to be *yours*." My head shot to him. He smiled and added, "It's inevitable if you say 'yes.'" He handed me the small black velveteen box, and I couldn't believe it was happening!

I didn't know Harry's full name until our ceremony. All the guests at the wedding knew it *and* knew about our quirky promise. Never has the air hung so still, and never has the earth turned so slowly as it did in that moment before the preacher pronounced us man and

wife—and then the roar!

"I must say, though," I told Harry one night, "that I couldn't be happier being Mrs. Derriere!" ●



Found Metal  
Brandon Woods  
Sculpture

**Regret**  
Jared Burton  
*Poetry*

Striking down all of those hands of protest  
I wandered free into the night  
I claimed no greatness for I was so young  
But my heart was hard and bright

I burned my home and then I left all I knew  
So many tried to stop me then  
But I was restless in the land of patience  
And I longed for a taste of sin

I ventured forth into a world of darkness  
A place where youth is betrayed to age  
I spent my dreams like the coins from my purse  
And I lived in a dying rage

And then one morning I awoke much older  
And I reminisced all I'd never learned  
So I closed my eyes just like lids to coffins  
And I dreamt of the home I'd burned



**Clean Streets**  
Jason Brock  
*Pointillism*



**Jesse**  
Nataly Morales  
*Digital Photography*

## The Book of ART

Ari Constantine

Poetry

ART was strolling the streets one day  
And noticed that He'd been wrong:  
People want what they can't have,  
Only missing them after they've gone.

People hate their fathers, brothers,  
Mind the priests and kill their mothers.  
"But I am ART," said ART, said He,  
"And I belong to me!

For I belong to stone and sea,  
And I belong to me.

I dance with rivers,  
I bow to storms,  
Drinking Echo and  
Healing sores.

For I am ART," said ART, said He,  
"And I belong to me!"

Along the shore, ART found a boy,  
As adventurous as He.

"Who are you, boy?" said ART, said He,  
"Do you indeed know me?"

The boy, he nods, and churns the sand  
With toes of innocent glee.

"You are ART," said the boy, so free,  
"And you belong to me."

"So it is," said ART, said He,  
"For I belong to all.

The heat and cold,  
The kings, the worms,  
The people and the Sun.

"I belong to those spirits  
Who are boundlessly free,

For life is a prison,  
Yet I am the Key.

For I am ART," said ART, said He,

"And I will set you free."



American Dreamsicle

Steve Christopher

Mixed Media



**Ho Pais Kalos**  
 Darby Shepard  
*Black & White Photography*



**Self Portrait Number 4**  
 Dave Rollins  
*Pointillism*

## Answer Years Late

Kyle Pack  
*Poetry*

The high school guidance counselor seems required to torment everyone at least once about the future. When it was my turn to suffer the question, I had never given any thought to the future beforehand. However, for the sake of not wasting any more of my life there, I muttered, "Maybe writing or something" (even today I haven't a clue what I meant). I began to wonder how anyone could resign themselves to her life. Did she say, "I want YOUR job," when asked the same thing years ago? After reminding me how unlikely it is for someone to get anywhere by writing, I'm finally excused to go on with my life. However, if asked that absurd question again, I would tell her:

I want

To bring down Mount Everest around my ears with nothing but the beating of my blood

To delve down into the deepest sea in a cheap tuxedo with a tulip in my left hand and a box of chocolate in my right so even the strangest fish will know I love them

To be shot out of a cannon into the Ether where I'll drink whiskey while dancing with the Man on the Moon to the rhythm of the Spheres

To visit New York's famous French maid, Red light held aloft inviting men in by the millions

To get lost in the crowd of wristwatch faces and rejoice in the masquerade of heavy time

And at last to die with a howl of defiance ringing from my lips that would shake the world so even the laughter of the gods would fall hollow at their feet

I want all of this and more,

But most of all, to defy the fate staring blankly from the other side of that desk.





Veneer  
Jess Cavender  
*Color Photography*

I sat on the bed next to his, listened to the irregular shallow breaths, and wondered if this one would be his last. The “veil of death” had entered his body and cast a mask where his face had been. He looked so different from the man I had known. His eyes appeared hollow and sunken, the wrinkles around them had all but disappeared, and the cheek bones were more pronounced due to his weight loss. His skin was creamy white and smooth, with the look of fine porcelain. The hair on his head seemed to be quite straight, unlike the curly locks of his past. His hands appeared frail, and he was cold to the touch. He now mumbled inaudibly. This unknown person was my father-in-law.

I had been in the room for three hours when the other family members began leaving for the night. They went back to the family home to get some rest. Cris, my wife, insisted that she was not going to leave her dad’s side. The room had two beds and one was empty, so in order to get some rest, we arranged our bodies to fit on to the empty hospital bed beside her father’s. I didn’t expect to get any sleep, and I wasn’t disappointed. Listening to the weak breathing from the bed next to me, I hoped for each breath and then admonished myself for wanting him to endure any further pain. Just living took all the energy he had.

Throughout the night, nurses came in to administer injections of morphine in an attempt to keep their patient comfortable. His breathing would go from struggling to calm and somewhat steady after he received the shot.

Morning came, and I felt exhausted; I couldn’t go to sleep, and I couldn’t wake up. I was just there, watching a man inhale and exhale. Family members began arriving at eight a.m. I think I got up from the bed and washed my face, but I am not sure. I was exhausted. Cris’s oldest sister had brought us breakfast. I left the room with my food, but my wife still could



**A Portrait of Childhood**  
Jennie Schut  
Clayboard Etching

not leave. I walked to the dining room, happy to be leaving my post of standing vigil. I enjoyed the coffee, and I ate half of my breakfast sandwich. I started thinking that I had been gone too long, so I threw away the rest of breakfast and went back to the room. The staff had brought some coffee and donuts for the family and more morphine for the patient. I thought, *Man, how much morphine can a guy take?* I tried to think of how many injections I had seen him receive. It had to be at least one per hour since I had been there. “I guess that makes seventeen,” I said to myself. I was so tired that I couldn’t do the math.

I sat down on the bed next to my wife. Friends of

the family were coming in. They talked to my mother-in-law and seemed reluctant to get near her husband. Death scares people; it reminds them of their own mortality. More friends and loved ones came and went as the morning turned to afternoon. The family minister came by with a harp to play. That’s right, a harp! Oh, it was small, but nevertheless, a harp! The minister, Keith, played as he stood next to the bed. All I could think was, *What do you have to do in life for a preacher to come to your deathbed and play a harp?* The minister played for about thirty minutes, then talked with the family. He spoke from the Bible regarding death. I guess I was fully awake by this time because I was really getting into what he was saying. I am not heavily religious, but it made sense to me. Keith finished by saying, “Reg has done his job on Earth. Now it’s time for him to go home.” Before he left, the minister prayed with everyone for “God to take his son.”

By now it was around four in the afternoon. We had been at my father-in-law’s bedside for over twenty hours. Our nurse and her assistant came into the room to take vital signs. I happened to notice the nurse’s assistant looking under the sheets at the patient’s left leg. She studied it for a moment and then said something to the nurse, but I couldn’t discern what she said.

By this time, I needed a break and walked out of the room into the hall. While I leaned against the wall, the nurses appeared from the room and gently closed the door. I got the assistant’s attention. “If you don’t mind me asking, what were you looking at under the sheets?” The assistant looked up at me, and her expression was somewhat blank and clinical.

“I was looking for mottling,” she replied. “He has some around his knees.”

“What does that mean?” I asked.

The senior nurse replied, “His heart is failing to pump blood. He doesn’t have much longer. Is all of the family here?”

“Yes, we’re here,” I responded.

She said, "That's good," and began to walk down the hall with the other nurse. I returned to the room, knowing the vigil would soon be ending.

Scanning the room as I entered, I saw faces expressing exhaustion and sorrow. They all seemed to be waiting for the final outcome. The room was silent except for the wispy breathing coming from the person who had brought us all together. Surrounding his bed were his baby daughter, Cris; his oldest daughter, Tomi; his middle daughter, Kathy; and the second oldest child, his only son, Denis. They each took turns holding their father's hand and talking to him.

He could not respond.

The children were telling their father that it was all right to go. His children were with him at this important moment in his life. It would be an important moment in their lives as well. I studied their faces as they each waited to be next with their father. I saw regret in some of them. Their guide in life was leaving them. Had they asked all the questions?

My mother-in-law, Betty, handed me her keys and asked me to go check on their dog. I told my wife good-bye and left the room, welcoming the break from the tension. Leaving the nursing home, I drove the mile or so back to the house. I let myself in and let the dog out. I grabbed a cookie out of the cookie jar and leaned back against the kitchen counter while I ate it. Chomping away on the cookie, I continued having the internal struggle of needing to be at the bedside and yet not wanting to be there. Five minutes passed, and the dog barked. I was afraid I was too late, so I drove quickly back to the nursing home. I handed Betty her keys. "Mutt's fine," I said.

Then, out of nowhere, Denis asked in a smart tone, "Did you eat a cookie while you were there?"

"Yes," I replied, confused as to why he asked.

"Did you knock?" The children always had to knock on the cookie jar as if it were a door, to ask permission before taking a cookie. Their mother would then

respond, "Come in," which meant they could reach in the jar.

I replied back to Denis, "I don't have to knock!" I never should have said that. The room erupted with every child yelling, "Oh, yes, you do!" Every child, all at once, seemed to be stating the outcome of not knocking. The once silent room was now full of loud

talk and laughter at my expense. The intensity of the situation had been lessened.

It was at that moment, while the entire family was laughing together, that Reginald Thomas Lovell took his last breath. ●



**Hands**  
Aline Pellizzaro  
Oil on Canvas

## Thoughts of Rain

Joseph Lampley

*Poetry*

a young plant's second love

falling down on me  
like tiny accusations

soaking my hair,  
disguising the fact that  
I'm still wet between the ears

the first few drops  
dance a tattoo on  
dry highway dust  
then obliterate their handiwork

still making rainbows  
even when there's no sun,  
polychromatic stains formed in  
gasoline puddles in front  
of my old garage

with the aid of a  
tin roof voice box  
speaks to me in a voice  
of pitters and patters

seems to only come  
after I've spent five bucks  
at the carwash

pouring like birthing waters  
from a cloud bank womb

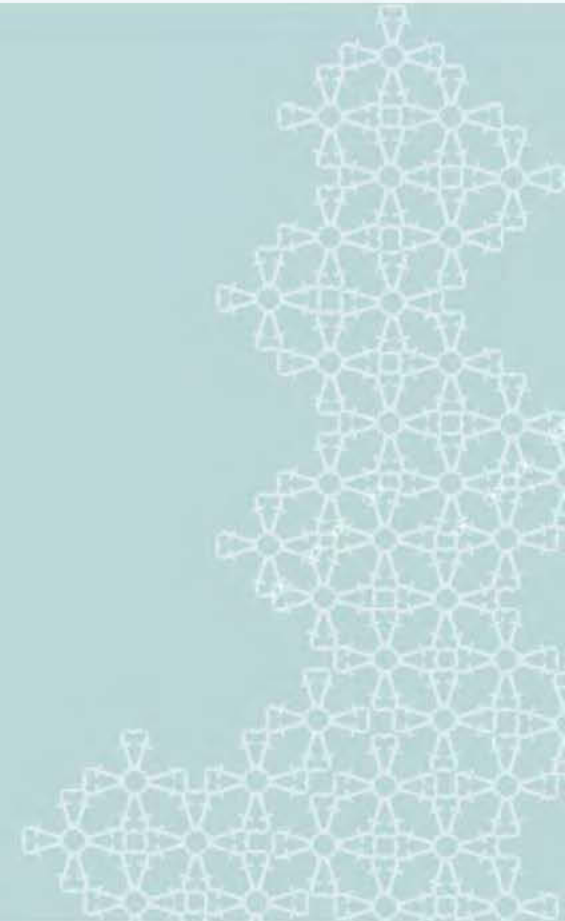
nature's tears of joy



### This Side of Blue

Elizabeth Burton

*Color Photography*



**Innocent, Yet Affected**  
Hallie Sullivan  
*Color Photography*

**Namaste, Brother**  
Abigail Blythe Stroupe  
*Poetry*

The child in me sees the child in you.  
I want to take your bleeding hands  
and cover them with sloppy kisses  
and gather the tears on your cheek  
to wash the dust from your feet.

The broken in me sees the broken in you.  
I want to take your heart  
and wring the sadness from it  
and massage joy into the cracks and crevices  
and make it beat again.

The hopeful in me sees the hope in you.  
I want to take your tired head  
and give you the rest found upon the warmth of my lap  
and chase the nightmares back into the closet  
so you can find sleep again.

The Living God in me is the Living God in you.  
I want to spend my eternity discovering Him, bit by bit,  
in your curious eyes,  
and being clothed in compassion,  
We won't have to see.

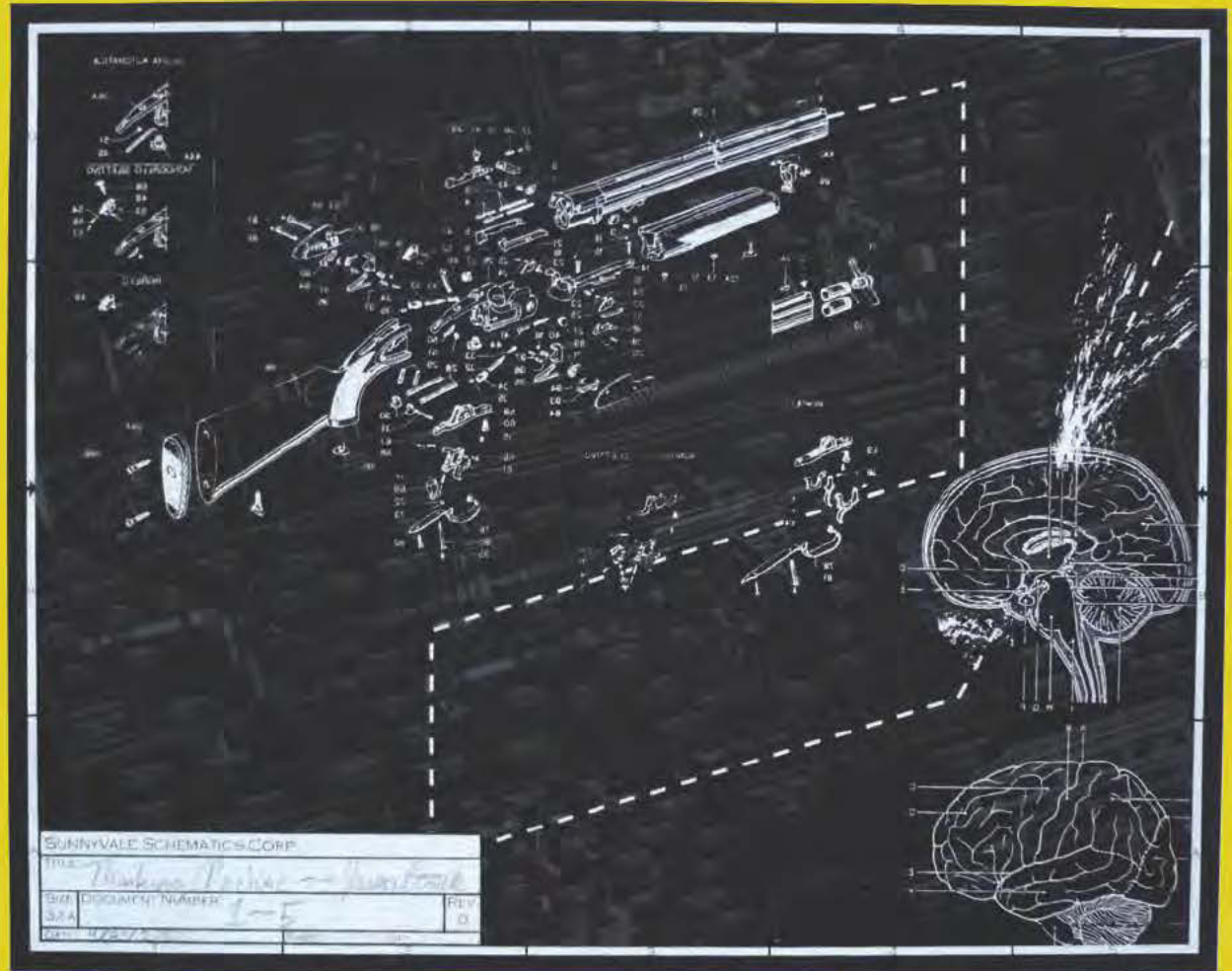
## The (Not So) Final Eulogy of Print, Beloved by Many

Abigail Blythe Stroupe  
*Poetry*

Print was pronounced dead.  
Wrong place. Wrong alleyway.  
The fleeing murderer never discovered  
(though time was a suspect).  
It grieved the young writers that he died  
alone, bleeding out in the darkness.  
The old writers wept, realizing  
his final words would be lost forever.  
Others looked on and shrugged,  
unimpressed. He had been old, anyway.

A blogger had found his crumpled frame  
and hadn't recognized his face.  
Blank and dirtied.  
Stone-faced blue suits took hold of the scene.  
The paramedics didn't bother to attempt revival,  
their ashen faces formal and emotionless.  
The scene was ticker-taped.  
The mortician called.

The funeral was held the following day,  
and Print was buried in the graveyard  
behind the crumbling library.  
The building towered over the tombstone  
like a never-ending epitaph.  
His funeral had the greatest attendance  
the world had ever seen, with thousands of faces  
jumbled together and sloppy with tears,  
all come to pay their respects.



**Thinking Machine**  
Jason Ptacek  
Silkscreen

Not a single word was spoken  
for the entire fifty-six minute service.  
Their mouths were filled with sorrow  
and many were choking on denial,  
struggling to breathe normally  
between sobs.  
But writers aren't so easily defeated—  
no. One by one,

ballpoint pens and stubby pencils were  
produced from pockets and bags,  
and the writers began to  
write, painstakingly,  
with cramped fingers.

Blog on that, bastards.



**Evanescence**  
Samuel Johnson  
*Silkscreen*

### **A Bruise Pristine**

Sarah Finchum

*Poetry*

I want the world to see me  
Deep and dark  
Shallow and light  
Purples then yellows  
Compliments making a composition  
Dark in the shadows  
Bright in the light  
Red lines leading nowhere  
Rising up to reach new height  
Far away and bold  
Close up subtle  
A bruise pristine

## My Father's Ashes

Jack W. Butler

Non-Fiction

**N**o way!" Angie said. "He really broke your jaw?"

"Yes, he did," Jake replied. "I must've been about four or five. Hell, I could've been ten or twelve, for all I know. That was a long time ago."

It's hot, Angie thought, *even for the month of June*. The south Texas wind roared through the windows of Jake's '67 Mustang coupe as the two of them drove down Interstate 35. The landscape of scrub oaks, mesquite trees, and prairie grass had already turned a dirty brown from the summer drought and flowed past them like sugared molasses. An occasional jackrabbit hiding in the underbrush, a wandering armadillo with its scaly armor, and a darting chaparral running down the side of the road were the only signs of life surviving in the Texas heat.

The afternoon sun baked Angie's right arm and beads of sweat rolled down her cleavage. Her abandoned bra was lying somewhere strewn across the back seat and had been there ever since they passed through Dallas. *It must be around one o'clock in the afternoon*, she thought as she looked out the window at the loneliness. Her mind drifted back to the glass, steel, and concrete mountains that she watched slowly grow in the windshield, only to see them disappear again in the side view mirror. All the while, she couldn't help but wonder about the people who lived and worked behind those windows. Were they happy? Sad? Were they like Jake's father?

"You normally can't tell how badly it healed," he said, "until I put my canine teeth together. That's when you can see how the bottom jaw drops over a quarter of an inch to the right."

Angie cringed as she imagined how hard Jake's father must have hit him. She felt sick to her stomach and was at a loss for words.

"I don't tell the neurologist what happened, of course, when she's treating me for the migraines," Jake said. "Every time a man tells a doctor he was abused, you can see the light bulb go off in their head. 'Eureka!' they shout. *That's the reason your crap is brown!*' They



### Stuck in a Rut

Samuel Johnson

Cut Paper & Chalk

start patting themselves on the back for such a brilliant diagnosis and write a prescription for Paxil. So I tell them the injuries were from playing sports when I was a kid: bicycling usually, sometimes football. Of course, women, like my two sisters, can't pass them off that easily—the injuries, I mean. Some genius doc always wants to send them to therapy so they can admit to having sexual fantasies about their father and be taught how to masturbate."

"I never thought about it like that," Angie said. "How did you...your family ever survive?"

As Angie watched closely, Jake momentarily turned away from the endless lines of highway to look at her. "Sara, my oldest sister, ran away from home and got married at 14. I think she is on husband number five now. And Jenifer? I hardly ever see her anymore. We talk on the phone a few times a year. In truth, we're just survivors," he said, and looked ahead again. "Like the seedlings that fall too close to the tree, I guess. We struggle to get enough light and water and enough air to breathe. But we survive—stunted in many ways, I guess,

and stronger in others; we're able to see things that most can't."

*Jake's face has a different look to it*, she thought, as her lingering stare slowly faded back to the highway. *For almost nine years now, we've shared some laughs, some tears, and a bed. But Angie had always known that there was a part of Jake he kept hidden away, rolled up neatly inside of himself. Is he letting it out now? she wondered. Did it take the death of his father to free Jake—the real Jake?*

The rusty, wrought iron gates of the Bell County cemetery stood tall against the backdrop of the late afternoon sun. Angie stared at them as they drove past, squinting her eyes. Tires ground into the pea gravel road that twisted and turned throughout the cemetery and made an ominous, crunching noise. After they got out of the car, Angie watched as Jake methodically tried to read head stones with worn away-names, touching them with his fingers. She couldn't help but stare at the faceless



marble figurines of angels and the mausoleums blackened from age. *They all morph together in some hideous, three-sided panorama*, she thought.

\* \* \*

"It's getting dark," Angie said. "We've been looking for hours. Maybe we should try to find your father's parents' grave site again in the morning, when we can see more clearly."

"I thought I had finally shut him out, Angie," Jake said after reading a few more head stones. "I thought my skin was tough enough, the armor thick enough that he couldn't hurt me anymore."

"I don't understand, Jake," Angie said. "Who could hurt you again? Your father?"

The last rays of sunlight slipped through an opening in the tall oaks as the chill of the evening crept in on Angie's arms. A few scraggly, oddly shaped saplings, bent and twisted, soaked up the life-giving warmth that the errant rays of light provided. Behind the saplings, in a long-forgotten family plot, was the stump of a once formidable tree rotted in its roots, broken and hollow.

"When I was a child," Jake said, "I had these recurring night terrors. A dinosaur, the T-Rex, was always chasing me. I would run inside of our house to hide, only to see those horrific teeth with their ravenous hunger tearing through the roof and the walls as though nothing could ever stop them. I would run from room to room trying to get away, but they just kept tearing down the walls with those twitching, angry jaws. My mother was always in the house, smiling and laughing as though she didn't have a care in the world, as if she couldn't see the monster destroying our home. Finally, knowing I had no place to run and no way to fight him off, I would grab my mother's arm and just curl up in a ball beside her, waiting for the end to come and yet still hoping that the terror would just go away. It wasn't until my early thirties that I understood the meaning of those nightmares. It was my father destroying the home; he was the monster. And my mother, just like in the nightmares, my mother would turn a blind eye to him, no matter what he did to us."

Angie watched as Jake stepped onto a family plot and opened the urn. Glistening ashes drifted in the dim yellow slivers of the full moon peeking over the Texas horizon. A chill raced over her as the fine dust floated toward the east and formed horrific images in her mind. Jake stood there in the midst of the drifting chaos, calm, and indifferent.

"My father bought this rifle," Jake continued, "and every now and then, he would take it to the lake with us when we went fishing. We wouldn't go hunting with it; we would just target shoot things like bottles and cans. Then one day at the house—I don't even remember what I was doing at the time—but somehow, I realized I wasn't helpless anymore. I must have been around sixteen at the time when I realized I could control my own destiny. I made the decision that if he ever beat me with that belt again, I would kill him with that rifle. At that very instant, I lost my fear of him. I think it showed, too," Jake said and turned to look at Angie.

"What do you mean, 'it showed?'" she asked, as she shivered and looked around the cemetery at all the strange wonders of this new world.

"After that day, he never even raised his voice at me again," Jake said.

Angie looked at his face, and watched the darkness fade as the light of the rising moon filtered through the

👉 ***My mother was always in the house, smiling and laughing... as if she couldn't see the monster destroying our home.*** 👉

trees. She watched new shadows draw eeriness on Jake's face, and wondered why she expected to hear the tone of bragging in Jake's voice. She wondered even more why his tone was flat and empty.

"All those years after that, I just tried to heal. Nothing he could say or do would hurt me again. I felt strong—no more anger or fear, only pity. Yeah, I even learned how to pity that rotten son-of-a-bitch that made my childhood a living hell."

"You pitied him?" Angie crossed her arms, trying to fend off the invading cold. "Why?"

"I finally realized, Angie, that in order to do the things he did to us, he really had to hate himself, maybe even more than he hated life. So after mom died and we put him in that veterans home, I thought it was over, that there was nothing he could ever do to hurt us again. And I'll be damned if he didn't find a way to get to me and hurt me even more than he had ever hurt me before."

Angie looked at Jake and felt the tears welling up in her eyes. "I..." Angie choked on her words. "I don't

understand."

"How did he hurt me again?" he said and smiled at her. "He started crying. And he had the nerve, the very nerve, to ask me to forgive him for the way he treated us as children." Jake tossed the urn and its lid into a vine-infested ditch. "He even begged, with real remorse." Jake nodded his head several times. Angie studied his face as he watched the last remnants of dust settle to the ground. "That was more than three years ago," he said, turning in her direction. "I never went back there. I never cried for him again."

Angie's eyes burned from the tears that she couldn't hold back any longer. The ache in her chest stole her breath. *This is Jake*, she told herself. *This was the other side of him—the side he had never let out, the side she had longed to know but had never asked about. And now she wondered if she could ever see him in the same way she used to. More importantly, would Jake ever be the same person she had once known, or at least thought she knew? Would he ever be the same Jake she loved?*

"My sister Jenifer told me over the phone yesterday that every time we took that rifle to the lake, he would wait until I was in the car and then he would walk back into the house to get it. As he strolled out the front door he would turn to her, cock the gun and say, 'This is the day I'm going to kill your little brother.'"

"Why, then," Angie asked, wiping the tears from her cheeks, "did you bring his ashes back here, all this way back to his family's burial plot, if you couldn't forgive him?"

"Hell, I have no idea whose burial plot this is," Jake said, laughing. "I don't even know if this is the right cemetery. I've never been here before."

"Jake, I'm..."

"Confused?"

"Yes."

"Self respect," Jake said, smiling. "Although I will never be able to forgive him for what he did to my sisters and me, I at least understand that he, too, was a victim of someone else's anger and hate. Tortured and tormented, he choked on every living breath filled with fear—the fear of never being good enough and of never even measuring up to his own expectations of himself. The fear that every single face he saw was laughing at him. I simply gave my father's ashes the one thing he could never have in life."

"What's that?"

"A place where he could be left alone." ●

## Such a Shape Is Dull at Best

Rory Miller

Poetry

Just because  
the blues and greens  
of the rectangle mistress  
are reflected in your eyes  
does not mean I am not  
looking into them.

Why can't the angled vision  
just go black?  
Lord, I pray for static.  
For thunderstorms and wind advisories.  
For a missed bill or a loss of power.

The fact that,  
when I stare into it,  
I don't see your curved cheeks,  
oval eyes, wavy lips,  
means nothing.

Love is a circle, a heart at worst.  
How could a cube compare?  
Such a shape is dull at best.

Step out of the squared circle.  
Why must I have to choose?  
You are not so separate.  
It sings to me when I can't sleep.  
I can push your buttons, too.



**Striving for Perfection**  
Whitney Keels  
*Encaustic with Wax*

# COLLAGE

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Murfreesboro, TN 37132

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

## Creative Expression Awards

Each semester the Collage Faculty Advisory Board selects five submissions to receive Creative Expression Awards, one from each major category: art, photography, poetry, prose, and alumni. Literature winners receive the Martha Hixon Creative Expression Award, and visual winners receive the Lon Nuell Creative Expression Award. Award recipients receive gift cards.

## Columbia Scholastic Press Association Awards

Gold Medalist Certificate – 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010

Silver Crown Awards – 2007 & 2008

## To Submit to *Collage*

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

## Policy Statement

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

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

## Production Notes

### Technology

Adobe InDesign<sup>®</sup>  
Adobe Illustrator<sup>®</sup>  
Adobe Photoshop<sup>®</sup>  
Apple Macintosh Platform

### Typography

Rockwell  
Goudy Old Style  
Georgia

### Paper

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

### Binding

Saddle Stitch

### Printing

Franklin Graphics of Nashville, Tennessee printed approximately 3,000 copies of *Collage*.

The image features a repeating geometric pattern of light blue and white star-like shapes on a teal background. A large, dark maroon cloud-like shape is positioned on the left side, partially overlapping the pattern. In the center of this maroon shape, the university's name is printed in white.

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TENNESSEE**

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