

ALABASTER ECHOES



2024

ALABASTER ECHOES

**Northwestern Oklahoma State University's
Art & Literary Magazine
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Issue I

Alabaster Echoes publishes original work by NWOSU students. The editorial board values work that demonstrates imagination, mastery of form and style, or fresh uses of language and visual art. We hope the publication represents and speaks to the diversity of the NWOSU community.

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Introduction

In the cave's dark, your voice reflects off the stalactites hanging like icicles from gypsum, soundwaves reverberating. Yet it isn't exactly your voice. There is a strange quality here. The voice is your own, and yet it isn't. A voice that is almost your own, but somehow deeper, more earthen. A voice like a chorus that echoes on and on.

Here at Northwestern Oklahoma State University, our students are brimming with artistic energy. While many of the students in these pages have had the opportunity to study their craft in creative writing, photography, painting, and sculpture courses, that only tells part of the story. Many of these extremely talented, emerging artists and writers are self-taught as they pursue degrees outside of Fine Arts and the Humanities. This inaugural issue is a testament to Ranger creativity and passion seen in every classroom. The students who reach for their camera as the sun pinkens the horizon. The students who ponder a more perfect word. The students who found that through creativity you can give a voice to the ineffable. The students in this issue are true artists and writers that are sure to inspire.

The Alabaster Caverns nearby are more than just a local namesake for our art and literature magazine. They are a reminder that our voices amplify one another. That our art and words have meaning. That our echoes travel deeper than we ever imagined possible. That our time at Northwestern Oklahoma State University reverberates ever onward.

– Brendan Stephens

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Backyard Drilling



-Katie Dahn-

Tests

The ink rushes to the first line of the test
like the blood rushing in my veins,
my heart pounding out of sync
nothing about this moment is right.

The ink rushes to the first line of the test
and it's the wrong line at the wrong time
for the wrong person.
I'm a wrung person.

The ink rushes to the first line of the test
then to the right line to let me know that this is
real,
not a fluke
but I feel like I've been fileted.

This is the first test I've prayed to fail because
this test of motherhood is not one I can study for.
No-- what's more true
is that it will ask me to do things for another life
that I cannot even do for myself.
I'm not ready, I will never be ready.

The ink has doubled,
two pink lines,
positive.
The heartbeat in my ears becomes two
drumming loudly.

-Paige Swatek-

Oklahoma Flag

When I think about the Oklahoma Flag
I think about its colors
Colors that have more meaning than life
If your mind could really see
You'd know the colors the same as me.
You'd be blinded by the colors of:
Red, Blue, Green, and Brown
Of our sacred flag.
It sings with open mouths
About our glorious fields
But the sunsets that I look at just
Plain show off our beautiful skies
So when the winds are howling strong
I'll be standing in that Oklahoma Sunshine
But you didn't even notice
On the pulse of morning
Where the sun is warm and bright
And the air is high and clean
It offers you space
To place new steps of change
So I can wake up fresh with a yawn
Where I hear Oklahoma singing
Singing from the everlasting hills of wheat
To the divine prairies
Where they hold a million treasures
To be found
So wave to the cool and clean valleys
And you'll see a piece of my sweet Oklahoma
Here in sweet Oklahoma
How sweet can it be?
And sweet Oklahoma
Is a home for me

-Katie Dahn-

The Angel of the Creek

It was a warm spring morning in the forests of Colorado. It was that time of the year when the snow was freshly melted, and the mule deer were coming out of their dens to graze on the tender green tufts of grass that had freshly sprouted. The sound of the wind whistled through the leaves as the birds sang their melodies and the squirrels squeaked as they traveled from tree to tree, branch to branch, above my head. The crisp wind made the air cold enough that I had to don my flannel coat along with my hiking pants and boots. Just to the front of me, my foxhound Bailey traversed the faded path in search of signs of mule deer in the area. "Don't wander too far now, Bailey," I spoke as she wandered happily a little ahead of me, smelling every blade of grass she could with the occasional pause to look up at the squirrels and birds overhead.

As we got deeper into the woods, I could hear the sounds of the water of the creek nearing closer. The subtle splash of the water against the rocks was a gentle melody in perfect time to the soft pounding of my footsteps and the swish of my hiking stick in the tall grasses. As we began to draw near, Bailey and I stopped a moment, hearing an unfamiliar strum of notes that stood out in stark contrast to the nature around us. It was beautiful in its own way though, melding cords streaming together in rhythm with the sharp staccato pluck of fingers against string. Bailey bounced ahead and stopped behind some rocks that were closest to the creek before letting out a low, ominous bark followed by a grit-filled growl. Like a rock against glass, the song shattered, the only sound in the air a sharp inhaled gasp, then **SPLASH!** In the space of a heartbeat, I was at Bailey's side, eyes scanning the familiar scene for any differences. Until I saw it, there on the other

side of the creek, sitting atop a rock close to the water's edge, sat a harp. Its gilded frame caught the light shifting through the leaves and its silken strings glistened like fresh snow. It was the kind of harp that brought to mind the angels of heaven itself.

The water below the harp rippled to make perfect circles on the surface. Something, or someone, had clearly fallen in. With a couple of taps to the thigh of my leg, I rushed over to the other side to where the golden harp stood with Bailey following close by. We stopped by the edge and peered into the transparent water. The surface had now settled, and water appeared as if nothing had disturbed it. The water was deep enough that someone could fall below the surface but shallow enough that they could sit up with ease with the waterline falling mid-torso. Looking in I could see no sign of life aside from the small fish and rocks. I was perplexed until a shimmer of scales caught my eye as the water glided over them. It was a mermaid, one with a beauty no mortal could hope to claim. Every feature on her angular face was expertly carved, the symmetry of her features perfectly framed by long hair that carried the blue hues of the creek itself.

Then as quickly as I had glimpsed her, silvery skin disappeared beneath the surface of the churning water of the falls, the frothing white foam swallowing the soft splash of her tail. In a daze, I felt myself fall down onto the prickly grasses and warm, solid stones of the riverbank. Every child in these parts had heard stories of the Angel of the Creek. As we grew older we would listen to the old-timers tell their tales with the smug grin of those who stopped believing in such childish things. Yet here in this moment, I was once again a bright-eyed child.

-Kaitlynn Marie Swank-

Natural Nature



-Diamond Choate-

Weighing Me Down

I carry my burdens on my hips
Like a mother with too many children
And just like her
I feed them and watch them grow
Until I can no longer hold them

-Rose Negelein-

Glimpse

I

it's always good
to catch a glimpse
of Nature's gift
auburn leaves shimmer
in sun kisses while
brown branches reach
for blue skies
only a glimpse
is good

II

it's always good
to catch a glimpse
of space's canvas
stunning stars blaze
through black ink
neighboring galaxies of
sprinkled stardust
blanketing infinite universes
a glimpse is
all we get

-Ash Crites-

Crow



-Rose Negelein-

A Survival Guide of an Immigrant Girl

Life in America is like a novel. Read in between the lines, be attentive to the patterns, and analyze the plots to guess the outcomes. If you do this right, you'll do more than survive, you'll surpass expectations and overcome the challenges only those from the free land can.

You have to remember an important element: you are not like them. You are not the same, and you cannot see yourself nor even think you are in the same step as them— you are not even on the same stairs. If they try hard, you try even harder. If they did good, you have to be excellent. You don't run the same race as they do, you can't expect to be part of the same competition when you don't even qualify for it.

Your name is a stone they can't touch. Your name becomes a whisper in your mind that can't be part of your new life. You have to cut it in half: a name and a surname that they'll misspell, then you'll correct; they'll apologize and everyone will laugh. All this just for the scene to replay a thousand times before you get bored of repeating yourself, again and again. Either way, it's just half a name for half a girl.

No matter how hard you try, they'll never truly understand. You are translating your whole personality into a new language that your identity becomes anew. You have to build yourself up from the bone. You learn to love, laugh, and think their way, but they will never do the same for you. Your tongue is more than a few words, it is your life and your persona. Your language runs fluid with your sentiment, humor, culture, and history, and they can only stay true to it from those who understand it. A phrase doesn't impact the same

in different languages, and neither do you. You can get close, but it's never as pure as the original. Learn to live with your new, perfectly transformed person, and you'll fit just fine.

Now, don't forget the most important factor: always be in control. You will always have to watch and think before you act. If you misstep, maneuver around the situation to plan the ideal pathway that creates the perfect outcome, but beware that even the smallest mistakes have the potential to be the worst of consequences. You can't use foul language, and you can not allow yourself under any circumstance to use less than adequate words. If they ask you to repeat yourself, keep your tone calm, repeat yourself clearly and without getting too loud. You have to regret nothing, and if you do, don't show it. Confidence is the key to victory. Control of a situation is not an option, it is a must.

It will be overwhelming, drowning yourself in an ocean that only seems to get deeper. The memory of your past self, a whisper in your skin, a touch with a left behind scar. Follow the plan and excel in the performance. You aimed for your heart and gave your tears and blood for this. You can't keep staying awake at night, tossing the blame, and getting drunk on the pain. Sacrifices were made, a responsibility laid out on you that can't be denied anymore. You have to stop cursing her name and wishing she stayed. You are breathing just fine and living the dream that everyone wants. You are burning as a fire that won't die, and you have to make sure it stays alight. You have to have it in yourself to continue with grace. We could go anywhere we want, anywhere... but back there.

-Lilian Higareda-

Indigenous Radiance



-Libbie Mabra-

Pretty Privilege

I've been assigned to fill a page with words.
To fill a page is a tall order.
Like me— 5'10,
Tall and thin.
Pretty, not nice, right?
My mirror looks at me like I'm unconventionally
attractive,
And I believe it,
But I've always been told, "Good thing you're
pretty."
Guess it is a good thing,
Because without it, I'd get nowhere.
Never mind niceness or politeness— it's for show.
Shallow, superficial, skinny,
I can't be sad, I'm pretty.
Nothing in my life can be that hard,
I'm taken at face value.
Eating a burger must make your brain big,
But why must my thigh gap be as open as the
thoughts in my head?
It's actually hard being underestimated all the
time.
That word, "actually."
It is a rare realization that is greeted with shock.
Oh wow! You're actually smart,
You're actually funny.
As if I don't actually know what you're actually
thinking.
Too pretty to be depressed,
Others have it worse for sure.
Who am I to expose this conceited inner conflict?
Simply sharing thoughts that are thought of me,
not by me.
Though, I just don't get why people only 'see'
me...
But I guess I don't 'get' a lot— good thing I'm pret-
ty.

-M'Cheila Rader-

Little Moonbeam

I walk through the darkest of nights,
My heart unloving, my soul ruthless. The shadows
run in fear
You did not exist in my world, Little Moonbeam

I pass seasons and centuries alone,
The cold unrelenting, the heat scorning. My feet
crushed ruined grounds
You were not a thought in mind, Little Moonbeam

Yet, time was not merciless. I found the light in
the darkness

I found happiness in the brightest of nights,
The flowers blooming, my heart warmed. My hap-
piness running through gardens
You were in my visions, Little Moonbeam

I held a hopeful future in my arms,
My tears pouring, the laughter souring. The
once-ruined heart now beats anew
You have given me a joyous life, Little Moonbeam

I thank the Moon in the night sky for sharing such
treasured light

-Bea Penaflor-

Zahara



-Bea Penaflor-

The Enigma of Mr. Anderson

The Victorian house stood tall and imposing, its windows shrouded in mystery and intrigue. Emily, a young and ambitious journalist, had been assigned to interview the reclusive author who resided within its walls.

With trembling hands, she pushed the old wooden door, and it creaked open. The room was cloaked in darkness but filled with shelves upon shelves of dusty, forgotten books. The young journalist, Emily, stepped cautiously inside into the dimly lit foyer, her heart pounding with a mix of excitement and trepidation. Emily couldn't help but notice the peculiar artifacts scattered across the room. A vintage typewriter sat proudly on a worn-out desk; its keys stained with ink from countless stories. Thoughts of the clickety-clack of its mechanism echoed through the silence in her mind, evoking memories of a bygone era. Emily caressed the keys, wondering if the secrets of Mr. Anderson were locked within their metal curves. Photographs adorned the walls, capturing familiar landscapes that tugged at her memory, even though she couldn't place them. A single ray of light penetrated the gloom and illuminated a worn armchair facing a floor-to-ceiling window.

As Emily made her way deeper into the room, the smell of musty pages tickled her nose, and the faint sound of rustling papers drew her attention. Finally, she laid her eyes upon a figure hunched over a desk, pen in hand, surrounded by stacks of handwritten manuscripts. It was him. She had been assigned to interview a reclusive and mysterious author, known for his enigmatic stories that captivated readers all around the world. Little did she know that this assignment would unveil a truth she had longed to uncover.

Her voice trembled as she spoke the words she had rehearsed in her mind a thousand times. "Excuse me, Mr. Anderson. I'm Emily Thompson, a journalist from The Times. I've been assigned to interview you."

Mr. Anderson, the elusive author, emerged from the shadows, his eyes harboring secrets that seemed to dance with mischief.

"Emily," he whispered, his voice like a sigh in the wind. "I've been waiting for this moment."

As they sat across from each other, the air thick with anticipation, Mr. Anderson began to weave a tale like no other. Words flowed effort-

lessly from Mr. Anderson's lips. Every sentence he uttered drew her deeper, awakening a longing within her that she couldn't comprehend. But amidst the enchanting stories, Emily sensed a deeper message, a hidden confession within each word.

Emily's journalistic instincts kicked in, urging her to ask probing questions. But as she looked into his gaze, she couldn't shake the inexplicable sense of familiarity that consumed her. Minutes turned into hours, and yet, it felt like mere moments had passed. Emily couldn't help but hang on to every word, every gesture, the unspoken connection between them growing stronger with each passing moment. The truth was emerging, piece by piece, like a jigsaw puzzle finally coming together.

As the interview continued, Emily couldn't help but notice how Mr. Anderson's hands trembled whenever they spoke of a particular manuscript hidden away in his study. The story, he claimed, held the key to unlocking a truth that had eluded him for years.

In the corner, a stack of manuscripts teetered precariously. Emily reached out, her fingers grazing the edges of the parchments. The words danced before her eyes, weaving tales of love, loss, and the triumph of the human spirit. But before Emily could unravel the mystery that lay before her, a gust of wind blew through the room, causing the pages to flutter, extinguishing the light, and sending a chill down her spine. Now in complete darkness and obscuring the words that could hold the answers she sought, the interview ended. Mr. Anderson bid her farewell, leaving Emily with a tantalizing mix of satisfaction and unanswered questions.

Days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months. Emily couldn't shake off the feeling that their encounter was more than just a chance meeting. She delved deeper into Mr. Anderson's stories, searching for hidden clues, while grappling with her own emotions. Intrigued and captivated, Emily embarked on a literary pilgrimage hoping to uncover the source of his supernatural storytelling abilities.

She had searched high and low, uncovering only fragments of information. The whispers of the townsfolk greeted her ears. They spoke of Mr.

Anderson's mesmerizing talent, his uncanny ability to capture the essence of every soul that dared to read his words, how he could captivate an entire room with the mere power of his words. But no one could explain the secret behind his writing, the magic that made his stories come alive. And Emily found herself wondering, was he merely an author, or was he something more? A guardian of forgotten memories, a weaver of dreams?

One stormy night, as Emily sat in her study, poring over one of his books, a flash of lightning illuminated the room. As she leafed through "The Forgotten Symphony," Emily stumbled upon a passage that sent shivers. The words danced off the page and resonated within her soul. She found herself pouring over ancient texts and losing herself in the labyrinth of clues left by Mr. Anderson. The story mirrored her own experiences, thoughts, and emotions, as if Mr. Anderson had reached into her heart and turned her life into art.

Emily's quest to decipher the manuscript consumed her every waking moment. The manuscript bore her experiences and her deepest desires. It was a story handwritten that mirrored her own, yet she had no recollection of ever writing such words. Unable to comprehend the inexplicable connection she shared with the reclusive author; Emily was left with more questions than answers. Who was Mr. Anderson? How had he accessed her memories and her emotions, and captured them within the pages of the manuscript? And most importantly, what did it all mean? Exhausted but determined and surrounded by stacks of books and her own handwritten notes, she saw on the last page; she had found it. As the final pieces of the puzzle came together, Emily's heart raced with anticipation. The truth, however, would prove to be stranger than she could have ever imagined. – a handwritten note, penned by Mr. Anderson himself.

"Dear Emily, the reason my stories felt so familiar to you is because I possessed a unique ability as a writer to make my stories familiar to all my readers. Allow me to take you on a journey through the magic of words. Our paths were meant to cross at this very moment. The stories I write are not mere figments of imagination, in each word I write, I hope to find redemption."

Emily's eyes filled with tears as she read

those heartfelt words. The storm raged outside, mirroring the tempest within her soul. As Emily closed the manuscript, a faint smile danced upon her lips, a glimmer of understanding in her eyes. The enigmatic author had left her with a puzzle that could never be fully solved, a mystery that would haunt her for eternity. Mr. Anderson's note had not been a confession of his own abilities, but a challenge for her to discover the power within her own words. She was left with a bittersweet realization, there was never a Mr. Anderson. He never existed but only in her mind. The story of her own writing had only just begun. The note, a mysterious enigma, had become a catalyst for her own journey of self-discovery.

With newfound inspiration, Emily poured her heart and soul into her own stories. She wove tales of love, loss, and the human condition, infusing every word with a touch of magic. And as her stories found their way into the hands of readers worldwide, she discovered that they too felt a sense of familiarity, a connection to the universal experiences of the human spirit. And as she continued to write, she left her readers wondering if their own stories were intertwined with hers, longing to find a glimpse of themselves within the pages of her books.

In the end, Emily understood that Mr. Anderson's writing was not about him, but about the ability of words to touch the hearts and souls of others. Perhaps, in the hidden corners of our own lives, we may find traces of his ethereal presence, whispering secrets that defy explanation.

-Crystal Hooten-

Ethereal Elevation



-Logan Mercier-

The still Stillwater squirrel



-Ingrid Maldonado-

Love, Papa



-Aleya Johnson-

An Infernal Desire

She's the forbidden fruit that I can never have
that I can never touch or taste or pick
from the Tree in fear that I may be struck down
by the Heavens and cast into the pits of Hell

But oh, how her presence feels as if an angel
has descended from above,
blessing me, tempting me, a pitiful and unworthy
human,
with her divine presence.

How I wish to sing her praises to the Heavens
and fill books with poems speaking of her grace
and beauty.
For her, I would eat that forbidden fruit just to get
a taste,
and gladly spend eternity in Hell atoning for my
sins.

-Naomi Soderstrom-

Symphony

Cautiously I walk.
Oh, how I wish to not make a sound.
All their eyes on me,
Yet I am not in the spotlight.
This is a performance,
Audience of One.

The chorus swells with joy,
Wildly contagious.
In harmony, it fills the atmosphere,
Impeccably encapsulating the Orchestrator's
works.
Their voices exclaim in praise,
Each footstep drawing nearer to the One
Who wrote them into the ensemble.
Oh, how I long to join the symphony.

Listen to the symphony.

Listen.

-Jillian Bouse-

Untitled



-Delaney Lambert-

Redeemed

I smiled as I took a bow, but, when I stood up again, no people were clapping. When I stood again and looked out at the crowd, there were no faces, just heads. One person remained clapping. He stood up and approached my stage.

"A wonderful performance Nat, one of the best you've put on." He smiled at me.

It wasn't much longer after that I was in my dressing room once more, no it wasn't a dressing room not anymore at least. I was forced back into my cage until that psycho wanted another show.

Show...the word was almost laughable. I knew very little of what happened outside of my performances, but I did know when I stepped on stage there was an audience, and when I stood up from my final bow, skulls were staring at me. I tried to escape twice, but I quickly learned that doing so was impossible.

"Captivating, absolutely captivating, as you always are Nat." A guard leaned against the frame of my cage.

"What...happens when I perform?" I couldn't help but ask him.

His eyes darkened, and he shook his head. "You shouldn't ask questions you know, it upsets the boss." He reached to his ear and clicked what I could only guess was a Bluetooth earpiece.

"But what do I care about upsetting a man who is not my master? We're getting you out of here Nat."

"We're? It's just you though." As soon as the words left my mouth a group of four other guards came down the hall, two male and two female.

"We have ten minutes before they search here, the explosion should hold them off for a few more minutes. We've gotta get out of here Isa." A female walked up to him and told him as the other grabbed a flame thrower and looked at me.

"Might want to step back there Natalie." She smiled as I stepped away from the bars. Once the bars melted some siren started to go off and Isa grabbed my arm dragging me down the hall as the other four followed us.

We got to a car and they quickly pushed me in before getting in themselves.

"What's going on?" I asked in a panic.

"We're saving your life," one of the males started to tell me as he took off his sunglasses and put them on my face, "and totally annoyed some old mafia boss while doing so a win-win for us honestly."

"Who are you all?" The girl who first spoke to Isa handed me a jacket to put on.

"We," she smiled, "are the redeemers."

"Redeemers?"

"Welcome to the club Nat."

"What are you talking about?"

"We," Isa started to talk as his focus stayed on the road, "were all like you once, our powers abused."

"Powers?"

"The ability to stop time before your final bow, that's your power. Chris is like a male Medusa. He can turn people into stone, hint the sunglasses. Emily is a pyro, literally, she can make fire with her hands. Peter when he's running creates as much dust as a speeding car on a dirt road. Mia here is connected to technology, and I am the mastermind. We call ourselves the Redeemers because we are redeeming the world."

"By saving those like us?"

"By bringing justice to the world," Emily told me as the car parked at a run-down factory.

-Jessica Schieber-

Untitled



-Emily Wright-

Illusory love

恋の予感

Koi no yokan

The premonition of love

I fell for the broken boy who could be healed by
my love

You fell for the temptress who would break you

We fell for the illusions

Not the casters

I crave the flora of honey's hope and the soft em-
brace of the light you provide

You crave the sickly sweet metallics of blood and
the coolly comforting passion of pain

Opposites attract but you want me to hurt you

But I refuse anything but agape

The twisted love of abuse is all you know and so
you find comfort in familiarity

All I have to give is an abundance of cumulus and
baby's breath

A seraphic love that you don't want

You thought me Ada but I was Clara

To my dismay your cure is sophrosyne you've yet
to find and that is a dose I can't administer

好きという気持ちが嫌いだった

Suki to iu kimochi ga kiraidatta

I hated the feeling of being in love

私たちの運命は決まっているから

Watashi-tachi no unmei wa kimatte irukara

because our destiny is decided

-Jaden Matthews-

Ode To The Mighty Oak

The Mighty Oak

starts as a tiny acorn

growing a labyrinth of roots

from a seedling into a tree,

leaves changing colors, falling.

The Mighty Oak grows tall and strong.

Through the newness of spring or hot days of
summer

through the relaxing days of autumn or freezes of
winter

there is no falling

Just a resilient life.

I am like The Mighty Oak

with a deep root system

that makes me strong and holds me up.

My moods change

like the changing color

of the leaves of The Mighty Oak.

Through life's seasons

happiness or sadness

peace or storms

there is no falling.

I bore tiny acorns

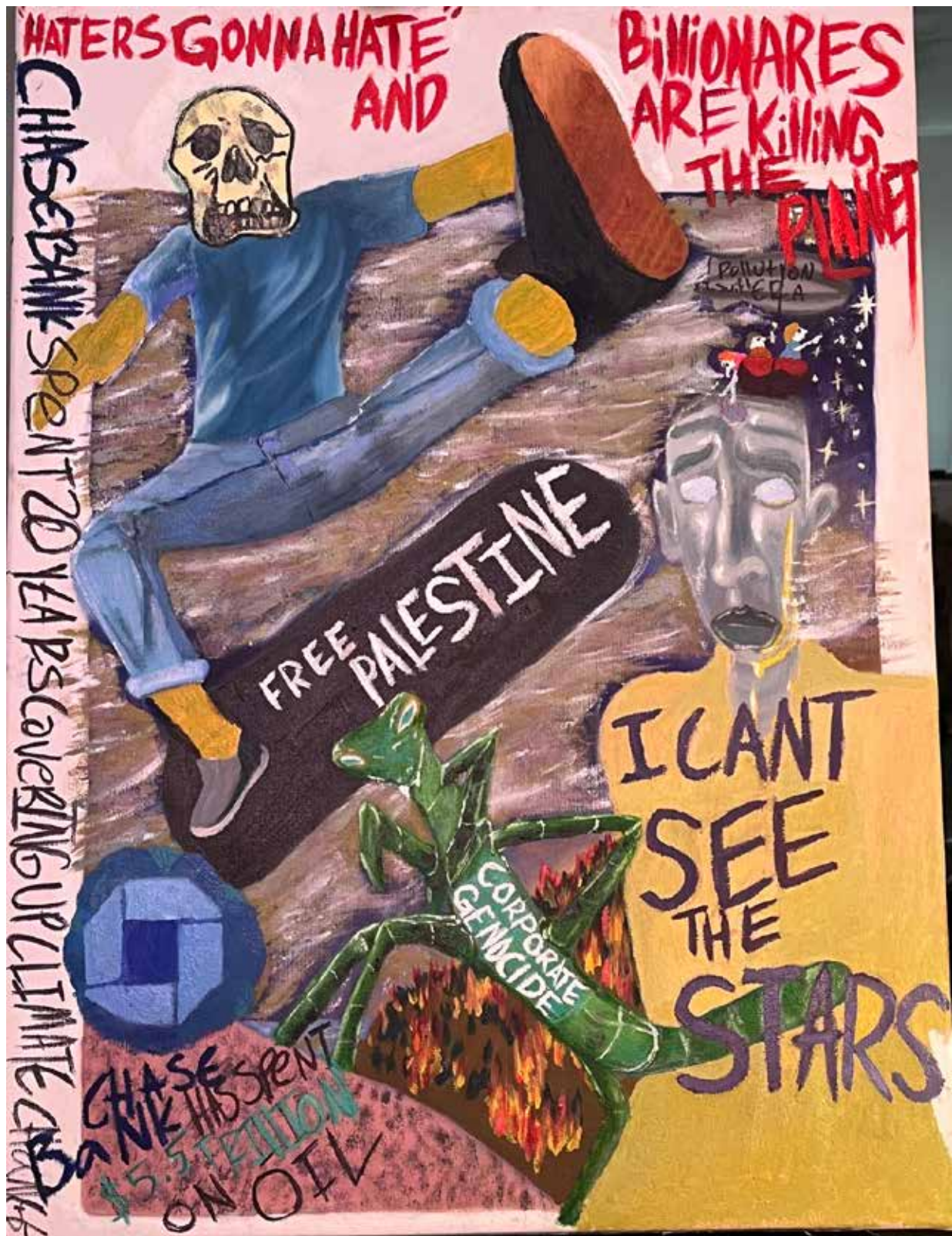
planting their own deep roots

Like The Mighty Oak

I am resilient.

-Terri Carroll-

Pollution Era



-Kelli Ruwaldt-

Sacrament

"But you promised...." Elisa whispered.

"No," Deacon said coldly, pushing aside the tree branches as he maneuvered through the thick forest.

"But you promised...." Elisa repeated, barely holding in her tears. The little girl with brown ponytails couldn't see Deacon's face, as his back was to her. She couldn't even see his bald head as the military veteran with scars all over his face had his hood pulled up on his muddied camo jacket.

"I said no, Elisa," Deacon said, this time with a hint of aggression in his voice.

"B-but we can't j-just leave him there!" Elisa objected, now on the verge of crying.

"Sweety," Maria said gently. The elderly woman with long white hair and a hunchback placed her hand on Elisa's shoulder. "You saw that David was surrounded by all those mean men with guns. You know that your brave big brother wouldn't want us to get ourselves killed as well."

"He isn't dead!" Elisa screamed. Tears were now rolling down her cheeks.

Within a split second, Deacon spun around, clamping his hand on the little pale girl's mouth with an aggressive force. "Shut it," he growled.

"Deacon, please," Maria said frightfully. "She's upset."

Deacon shoved his face into Elisa's, a look of pure hatred and resentment filled his brown, wrinkled face. "Listen here you goddamn brat," he said in a low voice. "David is dead. Maletch doesn't take any prisoners, especially not mutants. The sooner you come to terms with that, the better off you'll be."

"You... promised," Elisa muttered through his hand. "You promised Mommy you wouldn't let anything happen to us!"

Deacon stared at her unblinking for what felt like hours, saying nothing. Slowly, he pulled his hand away from Elisa's mouth, before slapping her into a nearby tree.

-Kevin Kaumans-

Lineage Vol. I

My mother is a constable.

She governs our home with the ferocity of a general and the poised kindness of a queen. She wraps our wounds in lace and raises her weapons to those who dare lay a finger on her children.

I am my mother's daughter;

I believe in second chances and that the dead know when we miss them.

When I see a lost penny, I assume my grandmother sent it.

I wonder if she is proud of me. I take care of everyone else before myself because that is how I show I love you.

I am my mother's daughter;

I never had to be taught how to build a home.

Sunlight streams through the windows on Saturday mornings. Dandelions bloom in the gaps between my teeth.

-Kylee Harzman-

Fairy 2



-Amanda Cremers-

The Kingdom That Was

The light used to be sparable to anyone who needed it. It helped everyone it touched, banishing the darkness from anybody it glowed upon. It had no form, or at least not one that could be comprehended. It protected the land and brought good fortune upon all. One day though it sensed a darkness far beyond anything the land had ever seen. The two beings clashed with one another, their battle threatening to tear the earth asunder. The guardian, using its light to shield the land and burn away the invading shadows. The invader, molding the dark around it to spawn nightmarish servants and weapons to combat the onslaught of radiance. In the end, though the light was the first to cow, it did not give up. It pleaded with the darkness to spare the land it protected. At first, the darkness would not negotiate, but eventually, it decided on one request. "Come with me and I shall spare this land a horrid fate." The guardian knew it could not leave, for without its light there would be no protection from the dark, but if the light were to go out, then the darkness would prevail anyway. Reluctantly the light agreed to the aggressor's terms, but the citizens would not let their protector go without a fight. They threw themselves at the darkness, but alas they were nothing but mortal in the end, torn asunder by what lay within the inky black depths. That day, the land lost not only its light but any sense of life ever existing there. This is the land that once was.

-Darian Smith-

A Delicate Notion

A whisper of worlds,
Yet only some may hear.
Quiet, but screaming all the same,
Yet only some may hear.

Joyful somber singing in their minds,
Beckoning those who can, ever nearer.
Angry tears fall on paper,
Beckoning those who can, ever nearer.

Screaming metal clashes stone,
Echoes of souls up in the air.
Hearts will meld & break with bone,
Echoes of souls up in the air.

Bows drawn & lungs shaking,
The call of peace, true and fair.
With a final breath, he opens his mind,
The call of peace, true and fair.

-Greysan loerger-

Stars as My Witness

Looking up towards the sky.
I don't think the stars ever lie.
Allow myself to let go and start new.
Allow myself to see this through.
I try and take each day as it comes.
Even if it feels like I am the only one.
I have to do this because I want to.
Pain my lawyer told me not to sue.
I know I am prone to fail.
But let this story prevail.
Even if it's difficult to accept.
Don't let me live with regret.

-Justin Coppock-

Freedom in Christ

My sweaty palms gripped the hard pew in front of me, turning my knuckles white. My heart races as my mind ponders the question: If you died today would you go to Heaven or Hell? All my life I had heard about Jesus, and I knew a lot about Him, but does that save me? Does that get me into Heaven? What if it doesn't? I don't want to spend eternity in Hell, but what do I do?

I grew up in a good Christian home with good Christian parents. Pretty typical, I know, but I could not be more grateful for the upbringing I had. My parents always tried their best to protect me and even though I didn't always appreciate it in the moment, looking back now I couldn't be more thankful. My childhood memories consist of Vacation Bible School every summer. The nostalgia of a week filled with cheap snacks and theme songs floods my brain. I learned many things about God in those fun-filled weeks, like how He sent His one and only son to die on a cross for my sins. My elementary brain had trouble wrapping its head around that idea, but it's what I had been taught for so long it must be true, right? In Sunday school, we learned stories of what Jesus had done in the Bible, but those stories seemed old and outdated. I sometimes questioned myself, "How do I know this is true?"

Being a "Christian" in grade school and junior high often made me feel uncomfortable. I was known as the "goody-two-shoes" and the "church girl." And of course, no one wanted to invite that girl to their birthday parties or sit by her at sports events, they just wanted to be nice enough that she would give them answers for homework or a test. I just wanted to be a good kid and stay out of trouble. I didn't want to disappoint my parents. I wanted to fit in and be liked.

As I got older, I began to not care as much what other people thought of me and lived my life shameless. I attended my hometown church every Sunday and found myself on the worship team. I hadn't ever done anything really bad, and I went to church, so that saved me right? That made me have a place in Heaven instead of Hell, right? These questions ran through my mind often during the day as well as at night. I lived in constant anxiety about the future.

During the summers of my high school years, I would go to Falls Creek. Falls Creek is a

youth camp in what feels like the armpit of Oklahoma. In southern Oklahoma, there are trees, and with those trees come humidity. When you think of rain, you think of the air being cool and refreshing, but that is not the case at Falls Creek. It seems even stickier than it was before. Your hair becomes moist and sticks to your skin.

The summer of my junior year of high school I went to Falls Creek again, expecting another regular camp experience, cute boys, late-night talks with the girls, along with utter exhaustion. We arrived at camp on the Fourth of July. We unpacked our bags and made our creaky, not quite twin-sized beds for the week. After putting on a new set of clothes that were not yet sweaty, we headed to the Tabernacle where all the sermons for the week were taking place.

Walking to the Tabernacle in the scorching heat, you could hear the roar of the massive air conditioning units outside the building. As we got closer, we could start to feel the cool breeze of the Arctic air coming out of the many open doors. Inside, it is an organized chaos of 8,000 students frantically searching for their seats amidst the foggy, dark atmosphere created by the smoke machines. We found our place in the massive building and seated ourselves in the cold, plastic chairs. The excitement and anticipation in the building is something that you can't describe; you have to witness it for yourself. That night in the Tabernacle changed my life forever. The message preached was out of Luke 19, the Parable of the Lost Son. In the story, Jesus talks of the son who took his inheritance and spent it all. After he wasted all his money, he had no job and no home. He decided the only thing he could do was go back to his father and ask to be a hired hand. When the son got close to home, he could see his dad waiting for him. The father ran to meet his son and was rejoicing that his lost son was now found. I love this story because it shows how Jesus isn't just waiting for us to come to Him, but He is running to meet us where we are. At the end of the sermon, there was an invitation call and they said that anyone that needed to accept Jesus should stand up from their seat. My heart pounded and my fists clenched the cold chair in front of me. I knew in my heart I needed to stand up, but what would everyone think of me? I had claimed to be a

Hope

Christian my whole life, and suddenly I was saying I wasn't. In that moment, I decided that all those things didn't matter. The only thing that mattered was that I knew where I would go when I died. I stood up from my seat. My best friend held my hand, and I knew it was all going to be okay. We walked down the aisle to the stage where I sang "Living Hope" by Phil Wickham and gave my life to the Lord. The peace that flooded over me surpasses all understanding. It felt as though a heavy weight had been lifted off my chest. I was free, and ironically, it was the Fourth of July.

Life after accepting Christ has not always been easy, but it has given me a joy that I couldn't find in worldly things. I know I have God to help me through any situation. Jesus met me where I was in my confused, lonely, struggling state and he picked me up and gave me hope. I no longer only know about Jesus, but I have a personal relationship with Him. I now live every day not wondering and worrying about where I will go when I die. I rest assured that it will be Heaven and that it is only by the grace of God that I am saved.

-Janie Rempel-

There is something between my angel and I
I can't deny it even when I try.

This could just be the answer to my happiness,
This could be the turning point in my life.

I'm already starting to see, it when I'm near them,
And when we talk I feel safe and secure.

Almost as if the world is dormant, It's just every-
thing

Else is just a blur, I see Hope for us. I can start to
see

The light piercing through the darkness, releasing
and breaking

My shackles the dark has on me, setting me free.

Then I see the face of the champion and Realize
that He is truly my Angel and Guardian.

-Logan Hicks-

Autum Trail



-John Hofferber-

Beauty Is Her Name

Beauty,
that is her name.

From the roots of her tree to the stars implanted
so gently in her eyes, beauty finds a way to make
her presence known. Beauty is kind. Beauty is
gracious. She is so soft and bright.

Beauty does not boast. Or envy. She sits there.
Day in and day out. Wishing for someone to see
her.

Oh Beauty, what a joy you are! What are these
strange and sad thoughts you're thinking?..

Well.. you see, beauty is my name, but no one
sees what hides under the strained, everlasting
pain.

Beauty is my name, but what lies underneath, is a
troubled girl wishing to be seen.

Oh, silly beauty, we talk about you all day! Your
hair, your eyes, you're never in the way!

Thank you, friend, but that is not what I mean.
What is my favorite color? My favorite food? My
favorite tea?

What keeps me up at night, when my mind is has-
tening for hours upon hours leaving me sad and
in dismay? What do I want to do when I'm versed
and grey? Why am I so hushed and reserved? Does
anyone know? What is my middle name? It still...
seems unknown. I remain quiet throughout my
days. Just observing. It seems inescapable like I'm
a burden in the way.

Well, I apologize beauty, I didn't know that you
grieved such things. We all assumed you were
fine...Your smile that always shines and your
words that leave everyone stunned and filled with
warmth.

Oh friend. It's no one's fault! It's just the life that
beauty lives... she can only hope for someone to
see her... It is no one's fault, only the person al-
ways looking back at her. Always judging through
that clear glass pane. Always looking at her a
certain way.

It is not your job to learn me, friend. Though, it
would be nice... I learn everyone, but I do not
expect it in return. That is not my purpose here.
I am here to listen, to learn, to help you grow.
Moreover, continue to come to me. I will always
be your shoulder, no matter the strain or weath-
er, friend.

-Aleya Johnson-

Contributor Biographies

Jillian Bouse is a senior in the biology program. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, hunting, reading, and drawing. This is her first published poem.

Terri Carroll is a graduate student from Wister, Oklahoma. She teaches at Carl Albert State College and enjoys spending time with her family, especially her seven grandchildren. In her free time, she runs and plays pickleball.

Diamond Choate is a senior majoring in General Studies.

Justin Coppock is a senior computer science major. He is a math tutor at the academic success center.

Amanda Cremers is senior majoring in Special Education.

Ash Crites is a junior and an English Education major. They are the president of the First Gen Club and the Vice President of the Oklahoma Intercollegiate Legislature's NWOSU delegation. This is their first published poem.

Katie Dahn is a full-time student and has a full-time job at the Woods County Sheriff's Office. Currently, she is a Junior majoring in Computer Science and minoring in Criminal Justice, while looking at applying in the "Growing with Google" program to further her education. When Katie is not working, she is traveling with the NWOSU XC/Track Team, Oklahoma Rainbow for Girls, or working on some new crafting project.

Kylee Harzman is a recent 2023 graduate of Northwestern Oklahoma State University, where she obtained her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. She is involved with Writers Roundtable and NWOSU Theatre. Her creative non-fiction and poetic works debuted in the Spring 2023 issue of *Outrageous Fortune!* literary magazine.

Logan Hicks is a freshman that is studying psychology and minoring in sociology. This is the first time that he has shown or let alone published one of his writings. He started creating in high school, and it turned into a hobby. Ride Rangers Ride.

Lilian Higareda is a concurrent student from Woodward High School. She was born in Guadalajara, Mexico. She enjoys doodling and writing and aspires to be an international journalist.

John Hofferber is a junior majoring in Psychology.

Crystal Hooten is involved in the Writers Roundtable and a member of the International Association of Professional Writers & Editors. She has contributed guest columns to *Northwestern News*. Currently, she is a junior majoring in business administration and accounting.

Greysan Ioerger is a sophomore hoping to enter the nursing program. He is a member of the University Band and Chorale. This is his first published writing.

Aleya Johnson is a freshman from Lawton, OK and is a Music Education major. She plays volleyball and is involved in the choirs here at Northwestern Oklahoma State University. This is her first published poem!

Kevin Kaumans is a freshman at Northwestern who's majoring in English. He self-published his first book, *Wolves Of The Tundra: Sharp-Eye's Growth*, under the pseudonym Samuel Seeker. Kevin is currently on the journey of traditional publishing and is looking for literary agents to represent him.

Delaney Lambert is a senior majoring in English Education.

Libbie Mabra is a sophomore majoring in Mass Communication.

Ingrid Maldonado is a junior majoring in Business Administration with a Marketing minor.

Jaden Matthews is a sophomore transfer student. She is a Speech Theatre major and English minor. She is involved with the NWOSU theater.

Logan Mercier is a sophomore seeking a Bachelor of Science degree but has not decided upon a major yet.

Rose Negelein is a Biology major and Visual Arts minor. She enjoys writing poetry, painting, and nature.

Bea Penaflor is 6th year student at NWOSU and is currently majoring in psychology. She is part of the Chem Club but has participated in other NWOSU clubs from time to time. This will be her first published writing.

M'Cheila Rader is a senior English major and Spanish minor. She is a third-generation Ranger and the President of NWOSU's English Honors Society, Sigma Tau Delta. When she is not reading or writing for classes, she enjoys playing with her cat, Mookie.

Janie Rempel is a freshman majoring in Elementary Education. She loves spreading the joy of Jesus and being an active member in the NWOSU BCM and the First Baptist Church.

Kelli Ruwaldt is a junior majoring in Sociology.

Jessica Schieber is a freshman English major. She is a member of Writer's Roundtable and in the NWOSU band. She was born and raised in Okeene, Oklahoma where she returns each week-end to spend time with her family and her pets.

Darian Smith is a 6th year senior whose dream is to create something that'll help people get through the dark times in life, whether it be from writing, music or art. He is part of numerous organizations such as NWOSU Singers, Writers roundtable, and the local Smash Bros Esports team. This is his first published writing.

Naomi Soderstrom is a sophomore and an elementary education major. She is the president of Writer's Roundtable and loves reading in her spare time. This is her first published poem.

Kaitlynn Swank is a senior hoping to become a middle school English teacher. Although she likes to write and draw in her spare time, this is her first published work.

Paige Swatek is a senior and English major, who will be entering the American Studies graduate program at NWOSU in the fall. She enjoys spending her time cooking and hiking with her fiancé, son, and 4 animals. This is her first published poem.

Emily Wright is a junior majoring in Mass Communications.

Participating Clubs

Writer's Roundtable is a creative writing club that welcomes all writers interested in poetry, short stories, creative nonfiction, and more. There are no requirements. If you have a story in your head that you wish to express, this is the club for you. For more information contact Dr. Brendan Stephens at bcstephens@nwsu.edu.

The NWOSU Art Society was officially welcomed to Northwestern in Spring 2004 after two freshmen students decided there needed to be an on-campus club to support the arts. The Art Society's mission is to encourage, stimulate, and maintain an excellence in the field of art at Northwestern Oklahoma State University. Our goal is to heighten awareness both on campus and in the community of the many cultural backgrounds and talents of the students, through which all will foster a synthesis of the appreciation, knowledge, and awareness of art in all styles and mediums. All students are welcome. For more information, contact sponsor Tom Cornell at tacornell@nwsu.edu.



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