

FLIGHT

SPRING 2023



AN ANTHOLOGY OF STUDENT ART AND WRITING

MOUNT SAN JACINTO COLLEGE

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THIS SPRING ISSUE OF FLIGHT MAGAZINE, UNITY, ASKED ARTISTS TO ENGAGE WITH UNITY IN ITS VARIOUS FORMS, AS WELL AS WAYS UNITY CAN BE UNDERMINED OR BROKEN.

THE STAFF APPRECIATED THE CANDOR AND HONESTY WITH WHICH ALL ARTISTS APPROACHED THIS THEME.

THIS ISSUE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE HARD WORK AND DEDICATION OF THE STUDENT EDITORS:

A'SHIYA DOBBS

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FICTION AND CREATIVE NONFICTION

MICHAEL WETZEL

POETRY EDITOR



Media Worker After Hours, photos by Sauvignon Tan

My Metal/Our Metal

by Alice Romero

My Metal/Our Metal
By Alice Romero
The metal shines on each vehicle.
Each car moves on a different path,
No pattern and no prediction.
I'll move on that path, maybe.
Maybe my vehicle will come. My metal.
I'll sit on that bench, they will come soon.
I'll watch the cars drive past me,
I'll wait on the bench for my metal.
I have no car. And I have no legs.
But at least I have my metal, the metal carries me.
That bus. There is a bus? It's just metal.
Maybe it will come soon. Everyone has their own metal.
That metal is ours. Our bus.
We'll wait through traffic.
We'll wait through empty buses.
We'll wait through insufficient funds.
Maybe it will come if I wait long enough.
Until everybody is in a car, and there is no one left to ride a bus.

Evolution Edit

by Riley Sherman

It was a long time ago when Earth finally took its last labored breath, but we were prepared. We were used to conquering. It was 1957 when the first satellite launched into orbit around Earth, and 3028 when Mars was officially declared a habitable settlement. The irony was that Mars quickly became industrialized, and resembled the exact thing humans were running away from on their home planet in the first place.

It was 3579 when the Annex 2 space shuttle reached the Andromeda galaxy, and 4001 when both Earth and Mars had reached their capacity for life. People were dying, and so was everything else, it had seemed as though it was the only thing advanced technology could not fix.

So we moved to distant galaxies, looking to faraway stars for warm light amidst the vast expanse of cold darkness. Earth-2 (scientists always had been awful at naming things) was found 10 years later, and the name suggests exactly what it was; a second chance, the perfect balance of sun and atmosphere. It was almost as if whatever higher power was up there knew it would eventually come down to this, that humans would inevitably make mistakes of global proportions.

So we made sure not to fuck it up this time, with flying cars that didn't generate carbon emissions and factories with limited fossil fuels. Sure, by now they had already conquered 20 planets and 3 galaxies, but this was not about what they could conquer, not anymore. This was about everything they had lost; a home, where humanity began as quickly as it ended, and was destroyed in an attempt to accommodate all the people that merely desired to survive. It was ripped apart with war and famine in a last-ditch effort to salvage anything that could protect the human race from going extinct.

Many died, so you've been told. That's just how it goes.

Earth was no more. We were now living in the future, where tales of antiquity and cavemen are foreign languages only the well-educated may discern. Centuries of culture lost, and for what? Selfishness?

Maybe, some argue, that is what humans are born to do; be selfish. As shown by the test of time, there is no love without greed. No matter where humans end up, no matter how much they attempt to occupy their brains with logic and technology that drives them apart, there is no escaping the universal constant of love. Love, not just of another, but of a lost home mourned.

Scientists say there is nothing faster than light speed. Loving, however, is exactly that, like corruption far worse than political or monetary greed. It has been there since birth and lives past death. Akin to a parasite, it manifests inside of everyone, and in just the right light it looks almost exactly like hate.

Just as soon as humans would animalistically kill for our kin, we also kill for our beliefs, rooted in anger and malice unexplainable by any 41st century scientist. There is no strict explanation for why we act this way and there never will be, because some things about human beings are far past elucidating. In that sense, we are alien to ourselves, on a foreign planet in the middle of a universe that is constantly expanding away from us.

And we never fail to expand away from ourselves either, creating colonies that become states, that become nations, that become countries, all confined to a replacement planet that is trying so desperately to be what it once was. Earth-2 will never be Earth, but humans unfortunately will always be human.

The ultra-futuristic society you find yourself living in is evident of this. As a native of Earth-2, you have seen the world grow by the minute, and you have seen it collapse just as fast. We yearned for utopianism, but your

generation proved that concept will always be a fantasy, just like the great authors of Earth predicted; their philosophy sticks, tried and true. The cost of rebellion is war, but that's no surprise to anyone.

You have paid the price. When you were 18 years old, you were drafted, taught and given all the right tools to hate. One would think, after conquering 20 planets and 3 galaxies, that this would no longer exist.

But it does. Because evil is not foreign, but rather innate; it pervades itself in the massive abyss of space. It is living itself, the forever unexplainable dark matter that makes up so much of the universe. It curls its inky tendrils around you, while you sit in a home you cultivated through the years with all the love you could give it. You are old now. War was a long time ago, but still it leaves an imprint on your heart. How ironic, that something so hateful could scar

the part of you that loves?

Yet, you hold tight to it. You do not want to let that hate go, no matter how fine it would be to divorce yourself from it. The ring of scars still lay upon your finger, evident of your age and your existence. You grasp it tightly, and you refuse to let it go. You refuse to let your existence be insignificant, even if human beings evolve much faster than your lifespan could ever comprehend. Just like space transcends time, the love for living will always transcend hate.

Looking out your apartment window into the expanse of Earth-2, you compare its infrastructure to the ancient relics of our long lost home planet, Earth. The blue sky sits above you, unassuming, the water shimmering as a sun reflects across its surface. In spite of all that has happened, you still think it looks beautiful.



Sculpture *Fist Bump* and Photo by Michael Wetzel

Tales of a Forbidden Love

by Logan Barr

A ship sailing in a broken sea,
crashed into a clamshell
Holding me.

Crack crack
I hear from outside my shell,
I must go save them from a world of hell.
Peel back the layers of my clam,
Ones hardened from when I was
Tortured in the sand.

One by one flakes rip off
Exposing my heart to those beyond.
Against the ripples a broken soul awaits,
I hold their hand with hopes to change their fate.

Your eye catches mine,
Something new.
A presence radiating
Midnight blue.

Folded together
Like seaweed and driftwood,
We share our secrets
Of wreckage and pride.

Deeper and deeper you fall
Under a spell,
But not one I've casted,
One sent from hell.

Your depths cannot even be reached
By the goddess of love.
Forever sinking
In an unrequited love.



The Happiest Place on Earth

by Valentina Munoz

My family often tells the story of my grandpa James, the man who traveled around the world and visited the happiest place in the world. Even after his death, his great adventures are still remembered at family reunions, along with his greatest desire to visit that magical place, and the great mystery as to why his adventurous spirit had seemingly abandoned him the day he returned home. My grandma used to tell us how every time he came back from a new place, he made sure to invite the whole neighborhood to a party to tell them about the magnificent experiences he had. But the day he came back from the happiest place in the world, my grandpa never said another word, and spent most of his time inside the darkness of his studio. No one had any idea what experiences he had in the happiest place in the world, but my grandma was convinced that it was due to a great sadness that got to him when a tragedy forced him to come back home.

Whenever I visited them in the summer, grandma recounted that despite the fact that his last trip had taken away grandpa's voice, he became a much more loving and understanding man, and that his actions said more than a thousand words ever could. And while I always enjoyed her stories, I could never convince myself that grandpa James could have been that kind of person behind his depressing eyes and his mouth shut.

That same afternoon, after listening to my grandpa's stories from the lips of my elderly mother, I explored for the last time

the house that had belonged to my grandparents. A large but dilapidated place still standing by a miracle, my mother and her siblings decided it was best to demolish it and sell the land. Entering my grandpa's studio, I encountered the smell of old, damp wood that reminded me of his sad eyes looking at nothing through the window.

I turned around to leave the sad and gloomy room that creaked with the blowing of the wind when suddenly, a hole opened between the old floorboards and swallowed my leg. I fell violently and scraped my thigh from the aged splinters. My attention was caught when, recovering from the fall, I noticed a small diary and a Walkman hidden under the worn floorboards. I took both in my hands, wiped the dirt off the Walkman, and read the blurred title of a song, "We'll Meet Again" on the cassette inside. I opened the diary with its yellowed pages, and as soon as I read the first page, a chill ran down my spine.

The happiest place in the world.

January 1, 1985.

My adventure through the magical lands of this country has begun. A new year has come to the happiest place in the world, the colorful, tropical place that newspapers and television talked so much about, the place where fireworks illuminated the dreaming eyes of families, and where New Year's rituals filled with hope the hearts of millions of people.

I see the smiles of those who, with music and party, heal the sorrows of the

year, that leaves through the ashes of a burned Año Viejo, a rag doll dressed in old clothes and decorated with elements that represent the pain that people want to burn into oblivion. While the fireworks announce the new year to begin, people dance and sing around the burning Año Viejo in the middle of the street, in a celebration that infects any foreigner whose curiosity has brought them here. Seeing so much joy unfolding in the streets makes me want nothing more than to stay a while longer, and continue living the happiness of the happiest place in the world.

My outsider's eyes open with the melody the parrots sing outside my window, my nose inhales the smell of freshly made coffee in the morning, my ears do not understand the chatter of the language of happiness. My mouth does not stop delighting in the exquisiteness of a tamal and arepas with hot chocolate, that warms my heart with each bite.

A humble family welcomes me and gives me shelter for the coming months in this beautiful town called Armero, near the imposing Nevado del Ruiz, a snowy mountain that is home to a sleeping volcano. It is full of warm and friendly people who offer to show me every corner to explore. Here, I meet the son of the family, Ramiro. An intelligent and outgoing young man whom almost everyone in town knows and likes. Ramiro reminds me of myself when I was younger, in fact, our very similar appearance makes us look like brothers and we become the topic of conversation for a while.

"Los hermanos de otra madre", they say, "Brothers from another mother."

Even though he doesn't understand anything I say when we meet, I realize it takes him an impossibly little amount of time to learn my language, and he becomes the only one who communicates with me, as he slowly teaches me his language; the language of happiness.

April 12, 1985.

I should have gone back home a long time ago, but to be honest I didn't want to leave this beautiful place. I sent letters to my beloved wife trying to convince her to come with me and start a new life here, in the happiest place in the world, but unfortunately, she refuses to come because of her father's illness that holds her to his side until the end. I had planned to go back home when I found out, but my wife encouraged me to stay here for as long as I wanted only if I promised her that one day I would return.

Today, while we helped Ramiro's mom to cook sancocho soup on the banks of the river in what they call "Paseo de Olla", or "pot trip", I observed a

large number of fish that seemed to be dead or dying in the crystalline water. I asked Ramiro what this was about, but the young man and his parents seemed as perplexed as I was.

September 25, 1985.

Ramiro has taken me to explore the Nevado del Ruiz mountain, a frozen paradise that I never thought possible. How can a snow mountain be just a few kilometers away from the eternally warm weather of Armero?

I would love to be able to show my beloved wife this place, that way she might understand my despair to cling to it.

MY ADVENTURE THROUGH THE MAGICAL LANDS OF THIS COUNTRY HAS BEGUN

While we took some pictures in the snow, we were perplexed to witness ash falling from the sky. Ramiro's eyes too seemed confused, but we laughed and enjoyed the magical moment while he turned his favorite song on a Walkman he always seems to carry with him. I asked if he understood the words to the song and he shrugged his shoulders.

That night, I went to sleep humming "We'll meet again..."
November 13, 1985.

While we wait for Ramiro's mother to finish frying some plantain slices, for the third time that week, a letter arrives at the house urging Ramiro's family to evacuate the city due to the imminent danger of the volcano. Once again, for the third time that week, I see Ramiro's mother laugh at the letter and discard it in the trash.

"¡A otro perro con ese hueso!" she says, "To another dog with that bone". I understand, but Ramiro must have seen the confusion in my eyes, and he explains with a smile, "You can't fool me".

While I repeat in my head what Ramiro's mother said once and once again, since I was determined to learn the language of happiness, Ramiro takes out his Walkman and starts humming along to his favorite song. He gets up and sings to his mother until she relents, and dances with him in the middle of the kitchen. Ramiro's father stops looking at the newspaper and, giving them a smile, steps into the kitchen to make sure his favorite patacones don't get burnt.

It takes that image for me to realize that the language of happiness is sometimes silent when actions tell more than a thousand words.

November 13, 1986.

On this day, after a year, I have worked up the courage to open this jour-

nal to complete the story of my old friend James. On the morning of November 14, 1985, clinging to a tree and praying el Rosario, I opened my eyes to find a horrifying image. My precious Armero disappeared under the mud after the eruption of the volcano caused the snow mountain glacier to detach and become an avalanche.

Next to me is James, the foreigner who kept calling my country the happiest place in the world. His right leg is missing after being torn off by the avalanche and no matter what I did, I couldn't make the large wound stop bleeding. To my surprise, his eyes were still as bright as when he arrived at Armero.

He began to sing, "Keep smiling through just like you always do..." He hands me his journal and with one last smile, he adds, "Please, dear brother. Let me stay forever in the happiest place in the world, let me stay here and take care of your parents as long as eternity allows me to, I promise you we will meet again..."

My parents and James are part of the 25,000 souls that today rest forever in the sacred land of Armero, the happiest place in the world. A country that hides tears and pain with the parties and fireworks that James loved so much, where suffering is drowned in the promises of years to come, and where food fills the emptiness in our hearts. But James's kind heart was too pure to see it that way.

To be honest, I've never had the courage to confess that it wasn't James who came home. When I went to visit his house, his wife saw me and she embraced me in her arms as if she knew me from before. She told me how relieved she was to see me after she saw in the news what had happened in the happiest place in the world. She noticed I looked different, but didn't really care because me being alive was the

only thing that mattered to her. I tried to tell her the truth multiple times but I could not even get my lips to move. The days turned into weeks, and the weeks into months, and I still could not get any words to come out of my aggrieved mouth. Every day until today I wondered when I was ever going to be able to speak again, and writing this journal the answer finally presented itself.

Even if someday my voice decides to come back, my mouth is to remain sealed until the day I die.

It is now that I realize I have only one dream to fulfill; to make sure that no one in James's family suffers his death. I will use

his name as my own and honor it until the end comes. I will carry in my back all the sorrow in complete solitude so his family only lives in happiness. I will speak to the silent language of happiness, and give the best of me to keep his memory intact. In the happiest place in the world wait for me, dear brother and let's meet again some sunny day...



Unity Colors by Carmelo Andrade Cisneros

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West Lilac Bridge by Michael Wetzel

World Seen Through a Butterfly Lens

by Logan Barr

Light captured at angles humans cannot see. My heart bleeds for ones like me. Built with complex minds. Told to be a puzzle piece and stand in line. But no matter the things I read, the things I see—at the end of the day I am still me.

I still have my butterfly eyes and caterpillar mind. When milkweed is restricted, I search for a peace I cannot find. No human came about offering their advice, giving me the information crucial to my survival. I am plucked by a bird and thrown to the ground, stepped on, my glamorous arrival.

Why has this happened? What is wrong with me that I cannot see? Why does the world hate me? Blood in my veins now splattered on the floor, seeping into the cracks everyone ignores. My butterfly eyes only appreciated when put to human design, and thrown away when I feel more complex things in my caterpillar mind.

Feed me, feed me my milkweed. Let me cocoon and grow. Let me flourish, let me show. Don't force these humans down my spine. Let me be among the other butterflies, those with minds like mine.

CONTRIBUTORS

Joseph Awad

This sculpture, created in 2020 under the guidance of the esteemed late professor Zabouni during my tenure in the Levant, draws inspiration from the transgender icon, Amanda Lepore.

Embodying the power of owning one's identity, she symbolizes universal ideals of queer beauty and self-love, regardless of societal norms and prejudices.

Often perceived as extreme and comical, this depiction of Amanda incapsulates the lived experiences of many in the queer community worldwide. She illustrates the unity and resilience of queer individuals in the face of discrimination and marginalization.

Logan Barr

A student at MSJC.

Carmelo Andrade Cisneros

The work I did was unique do to the theme it is meant to resemble individually between people. Each color was to represent people for all around. Coming together to create something beautiful. Both pieces are same same but different each having there own personality and style. The pieces where inteaded to bring people together. In simple terms.

Valentina Munoz

The tragedy of Armero is a real life event that broke millions of hearts and is also my main inspiration for the creation of this story. "The Happiest Place in the World" was inspired by the place where I come from: Colombia. A country often perceived as one of the happiest countries in the world but is, ironically, the place where poverty and corruption are hidden behind those celebrations and smiles. This story is just a symbolic way to express those mixed feelings I have when I look back and see the the place where I was born: happiness, longing, and sadness.

Alice Romero

A student at MSJC.

Ry Sherman

With the prompt being unity, I wanted to convey the idea that it is not only endless, but it can be derived in hate as equally as it is derived in love. Human beings are driven both towards and away from each other through this intense and universal constant. To quote the 2014 film *Interstellar*, "Love is the one thing that transcends time and space."

Sauvignon Tan

Black and white photography relies on light, shadow, texture, and contrast to convey emotion and tell a story. The subject of this work is a media worker's after-hours. The elements include a newspaper box and a magazine in the model's hands. The shooting location is on the streets of San Francisco, and the time is late afternoon around 5pm to capture the after-hours' light. The cars in the background show the fast pace of the city.

Michael Wetzel

West Lilac Bridge is a painting meant to represent an ideal structure to unify two opposite sides. An iconic landmark to anyone driving the 15 freeway in North San Diego County, the West Lilac Bridge left a deep impact upon this artist for its simple beauty and elegant design. Acrylic on canvas, 12"x 24". *FistBump* is a sculpture of two right hands meeting in unison. Although the fist can represent myriad of meaning, the emotional impact of a fist bump is now seen as a greeting of respect as much as a handshake can. This sculptor believes the fist bump will replace the handshake in the future. Clay, 10"x12"x18".



Sculpture and Photo by Joseph Awad