

Fall 2018 Volume V Issue 3



# CORNERSTONE

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A Christian Journal of Literary Arts at Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design

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# Our Mission

Cornerstone is a publication that celebrates the truth and beauty of the Christian Gospel in order to glorify God, edify the Church, and reach the non-believer. We aim to provoke spiritual thought on and around the campuses of Brown and RISD. We publish works of art, prose, and poetry of all denominational persuasions that exhibit intelligent and creative approaches to current events, history, and our Christian faith.

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*Port of Entry, Kathy Luo '19*

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# Letter from the Editor

Dear reader,

I won't lie, sometimes I feel a lot of pressure writing these. Where do I start? What do you expect me to say? What kind of things am I *supposed* to say, being the Editor-in-Chief of a Christian magazine? Every time I sit down to write another Letter from the Editor, thoughts like these run through my head. Right now, though, I'm baking my brain particularly hard trying to do it, and I think it's because this reflexive, self-judgmental process is inevitably tied to the very theme I'm trying to write about: Real Christianity.

What does the word “real” imply? Something like truthfulness, transparency, or trustworthiness, maybe. If you were to sit down and chat with a “real” person, you'd probably expect to meet a whole, unfettered version of who he or she was. So what about real Christianity, then? Does a similar image come to mind when we hear the word “Christian”?

Unfortunately, I'd say it's quite the opposite—Christians are often criticized for being some of the most hypocritical people in society, using faith to mask all sorts of personal, social, or political agendas. But if the crazy televangelist is on the extreme end of the spectrum in the struggle to be real, perhaps the average Christian is on the everyday side of it. On one hand, we say we're a family in Christ, but on the other, we keep some of our heaviest burdens to ourselves. We tell each other that suffering produces perseverance, but when trial does come, we fight the passive battle of simply waiting for God to take it away. Despite the fact that everyone has encountered hurt, doubt, and frustration, it feels wrong to be dealing with it—and so we pull back, hide behind a mask of faith, and hope that maybe when these complications all go away, we'll finally be good enough to call ourselves “real” Christians.

This can't be the vision of faith God has for us. In fact, admitting to our imperfections isn't just a neat self-help tip—it's the foundation of the gospel. If we were as perfect as we strive to be all the time, there would be no need for Jesus. He didn't come and die only for us to remain slaves to the pursuit of perfection. Instead, God says that there is no need to fake any

thing for Him: He knit us from our very mothers' wombs, and we are fearfully and wonderfully made.<sup>1</sup>

Our staff decided that the theme Real Christianity could be a reminder of that. In these pages, we exhibit pieces that are unafraid to show weakness, doubt, and uncertainty, bringing these struggles out of the darkness and into the glory of God. “Prayer,” “Manna,” and “Irrelevance” come clean about spiritual pain, hunger, and self-worth. “Darkness” is a story of keeping hope in spite of hopeless circumstances. There are also pieces about God appearing in unexpected places, from the verses of Kendrick Lamar to *A Wrinkle in Time*. Pieces like “Sojourners of this World” and “Happiness/Misery” introduce us to places we've never been and lives we've never met, making family out of strangers through faith. And of course, “Real Love” tackles the realest, most important question of them all: what is love? In the end, we hope that together, these pieces paint a picture of humility, hope, and most importantly, a more honest faith.

Of course, I can't guarantee we've accomplished that mission perfectly. I *can* guarantee there is a typo in here somewhere (and the fact that I read over the final copy at least twenty times trying to prevent that typo). I can also guarantee that if this magazine makes it into your hands, we went broke in the process (rest in peace, Cornerstone bank account). But that's just the truth of the matter—behind the glossy pages and stylish fonts, Cornerstone has never been a perfect magazine, and I have never been a perfect writer. But by His grace, we've printed again, and by His grace, I'm closing another one of these up. We hope you are as blessed reading it as we were making it. Thanks for joining us for the ride—it's been real.

Yours truly,  
Kathy Luo



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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 139: 13-14



*The Potter's Room, Julie Joo '19*

# Flame

Pablo J. Caban-Bonet

I believe in you with this weak flame,  
with this tiny spark, illuminating my whole body;  
Hear this my plea: that you explode into countless fires,  
that you reduce these whimpering doubts to ashes:  
I desire faith like a tongue of flame.

*Pablo Caban-Bonet is a freshman intending to concentrate in  
Comparative Literature.*

# Sojourners of This World

Karis Ryu

I'm jolted awake by a bright light. My mother stands in the doorway, one hand on the light switch, the other keeping the door open. "Get up," she says, "it's time for church."

The clock on the wall reads 9:20. It's a good twenty-minute drive to church and the orchestra practices at 9:50, which gives me ten minutes to get ready. My sister and I jump up and hurry to pull on the most decent-looking clothes we can find hanging out of our closet, then scramble to locate our violin and cello.

"There's *tteok* in the kitchen for breakfast," calls my mother. She's running late for choir practice, and my sister and I are very close to being late for orchestra. My father's already at church; it's his duty as the head chaplain of the 11 o'clock Cornerstone service at South Post Chapel. My brother's taking his time. Sometimes there are leftover sandwiches in the chapel from the R.O.C.K. (Relying On Christ in Korea) service before us, so to him, there's no rush for breakfast.

Eventually we rush out of the apartment, pulling on our shoes and lugging our bags, trying to remember which basement level my mother parked the car last at. It's usually the third floor of the garage. She revs the engine and turns a twenty-minute drive into ten minutes.

Urban pavements turn into brick fences lined with wire. My mother turns left into Gate 1. The guard at the gate leans in through the driver's seat window. My mother wordlessly hands over our military IDs, which he scans and returns before allowing us in with a salute.

Here, the road transforms from one with a Korean name I can never remember into Eighth Army Drive. It slopes over a small hill down a stretch of land, and from the top of the

incline, where we are, you can see rows of buildings, different shapes and sizes, different colors, the product of sixty years of mix-and-match construction. To the left is a parking lot, sandwiched between the USO and the revolving doors of the Dragon Hill Lodge, guarded by two stone haetaes (lion creatures of Korean mythology) and bordered by a line of sleek, black international taxis, the only taxis that can travel both on and off base, waiting for customers. The high school, middle school, and elementary school sit snugly together across the street. This is the hub of U.S. Army Garrison Yongsan: my home of one year.

My mother swerves right, in front of the high school into a side lot, past a sign that reads "South Post Chapel" until we reach a plain white two-story building with heavy glass doors. She finds an empty space, and we unload our things.

At the time of the base's creation, these buildings were little more than Quonset huts: lightweight steel structures used as portable facilities during World War II. Now, over the course of sixty years, they're full, permanent structures. Though old, they're rich with history.

The chapel is filled with a cool, sharp smell that I can only describe as military. My brother dashes in to find a friend. My mother, sister, and I climb the steps to the main sanctuary and enter our respective practice rooms. We're late, as usual, but we settle in quickly to review the selections for the day: four praise songs, the choir special, a closing hymn. At around 10:50, we seat ourselves in the orchestra's designated area by the pulpit as people pile in for the 11 o'clock Cornerstone service.

There are four sections of red pews inside the sanctuary, all angled towards an elevated platform where the pulpit sits, surrounded by bright flowers selected by one of the women from the Hangul Ladies Bible Study. A mosaic depicting Jesus and his followers on the path to heaven lines the front walls: Israelites, American GIs from various generations, men and women in hanbok, Native Americans, a Roman soldier, families and children of all shades. On a sunny day, this mural illuminates the sanctuary in brilliant colors.

The congregation is a modern-day reflection of this mural. American soldiers with shaved heads and flushed faces. Elderly international couples of Americans and Koreans who have watched this base transform over the past decades. KATUSAs: Korean men serving their mandatory military service through the U.S. army. Ms. Kim leading the orchestra, Mr. Chancellor conducting the praise team. Active duty service members. Department of Defense school teachers. Civilian contractors. Families of all backgrounds, interracial, multicultural, from Texas, California, Hawaii, Japan, Germany—

This is the Cornerstone service of South Post Chapel.

This is the kingdom of God.

The praise team is in full swing as people arrive. Principal Williams is on piano, his preteen son (and my brother's best friend) on drums. On the mics, singing, are my friend Gina, Mrs. Ancheta, Teen Vision youth ministry leader Mrs. Deanna (a.k.a. "Momma Nix"). As everyone settles into the pews, my father (or, as he is listed in the day's program, Chaplain Major Tim Ryu) steps up to the pulpit and clears his throat to officially welcome the congregation with a call and response. Mr. Chancellor warms up the congregation with a lively selection of praise songs.

It is time to welcome visitors. The camera projected onto the big screen behind the pulpit hovers over each pew as Mr. Chancellor calls for newcomers to introduce themselves. A

relative visiting family. A veteran returning to Yongsan after fifteen years. A newly PCSed ("permanent change of station," which we use as a verb) family from Fort Campbell, or Okinawa, or Italy.

**My father once told me, and continues to tell me, that being military helps us understand what it means to be Christian.**

We sing our welcome song. "Oh, I love you in the love of the Lord," the screen reads. "I love you in the love of the Lord, I see in you the glory of the Lord, oh, I love you in the love of the Lord." Then, in Korean: "Ju-ae sarang-eu-ro sarang-ham-ni-da, ju-ae sarang-eu-ro sarang-ham-ni-da, hyung-jae-ahn-ae-seo ju-ae young-kwang-eul-bo-nae, ju-ae sarang-eu-ro sarang-ham-ni-da."

My favorite part of service is when we, the orchestra, play "야곱의 축복" ("Ya-kob-ae Chuk-bok," translated as "Jacob's Blessing") while members of the congregation greet each other. It's a Korean song, one that brings me back to my elementary school days, when my father was stationed in D.C. and we attended a large Korean church in Virginia. It's a simple song sung to children, happy and light. The lyrics aren't sung as we play, but I hear them in my head: "Neo-nun ha-na-nim-ae sa-ram, ah-reum-da-woon ha-na-nim-ae sa-ram, na-neun neol wi-hae ki-do-ha-myeo ni gil-eul chuk-bok-hal-kkeo-yah." *You are God's child, God's beautiful child. As I pray for you, He will bless your path!* I see multiple worlds fusing together in front of me: young and old, American and Korean, civilian and military.

The most bittersweet part of service is the farewell. It doesn't happen every week, but it happens too often. Farewells are a sad reality of military life. Sometimes it's an old couple retiring to the States, or a military family receiving orders for a new assignment yet again, or a high school graduate heading to college. It's amazing to see just how many people who leave, people I have only ever gotten to know the faces of, have given so much to Cornerstone. An usher who has faithfully passed

out programs and collected offerings for three years. A children's ministry teacher. The dedicated sound technician.

My father, as the senior pastor, knows them all. He shakes their hands, hands them each a U.S. Forces Korea medallion. He thanks them for their contributions to the service and lists each one by heart. Then they take the mic and offer their own thanks. Cornerstone is a blessing, they say. It's a source of love during a challenging first overseas assignment. It's a haven of stability for raising a family. It's a network of support when you're separated by an ocean from your loved ones. Their final word of advice is always to volunteer in the chapel, to be an active part of such a caring and loving space. Then my father leads the congregation in a pastoral prayer.

In this world, a world of change, of pain, of wandering, our prayers take on a solemn gravity. We pray for deployed service members. We pray for their waiting loved ones. We pray for smooth PCSes and the strengthening of family amidst the trials of transient military life. We pray for the mental health of those involved in military life, for persecuted brothers and sisters in war zones, for the pain and suffering present all over the world that we know too personally. Most importantly, we pray that God guides us in every step of our lives. We pray that He prepares our hearts for each change, readies each new destination with people and experiences that will strengthen us, and assures us that though the earth changes, His love is eternal.

During these times, I think about my life before Yongsan. The eight schools I attended. The places I lived, from D.C. to Kansas to Daegu. My longing to be anchored to something. Feeling tossed around like a bottle in the ocean, battered by move after move, afraid that I had become entrenched in a cycle I was unable to escape. My despair and confusion whenever someone asked me where I was from, and I couldn't find an answer.

My father once told me, and continues to tell me, that being military helps us understand what it means to be Christian. "We don't belong to one place. We are sojourners of this

world. We don't have a home on earth because our true home is not on earth, but in heaven."

Psalm 31:24 says, "Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord." This is my favorite verse in the Bible. It encompasses the spirit of the military: Through constant endings and bittersweet goodbyes, emotional turmoil and perpetual hardships, we continue to have faith in what God has in store for us next.

Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." People are always coming and going in the army. My family is one of hundreds that have passed through the South Post Chapel doors. But Cornerstone is a breath of normalcy in the midst of chaos. Every Sunday, the very presence of the congregation, the exuberance of our volunteers, everything serves as a reminder that amidst constant change, God has provided us with a family, and He is watching over us as we come together and bring our lives to Him.

When I think of the body of Christ, my mind immediately searches for my congregation across the ocean. We are a family of wanderers. Unlike other churches, our congregation is always fluid, and our pastors change from year to year. But amidst uncertainty and impermanence, Cornerstone was and is a spiritual sanctuary. It's a place where people of God from all over the world, while broken shards of glass on our own, come together to create a brilliant mosaic of rich and vibrant colors.

*We are God's children, God's beautiful children. As we pray for each other, He will bless our paths!*

*Karis Ryu is a freshman intending to concentrate in History.*

# Do Not Be Afraid

Mikaela Carrillo

He says do not be afraid  
Do not be discouraged  
Yet I fail at every waking hour  
To cast off these heavy burdens

I'm frazzled and fretting  
Flowing streams of anxious thought  
They are playing on repeat  
In this web I am caught

Lost in my own head  
I still think I know more  
Hand power to the Enemy  
Let him convince me of what's in store

Drowning in shallow waters  
Of these temporary despairs  
I'm met by the crashing, bottomless waters  
of His love, grace, and unyielding care

The God of creation  
Speaking truth into me  
A promise in motion  
If I'll only wait and see

He whispers do not be afraid  
Do not be discouraged  
And I cling wholeheartedly  
Sing unabashedly  
Pray unrelentingly  
To Him who sets me free

*Mikaela Carrillo is a freshman intending to concentrate in Public Health.*

*Honey, Julie Joo '19*



*Underground, Julie Joo '19*

# Irrelevance

Mikaela Carrillo

*“These broken, wounded, and completely unpretentious people forced me to let go of my relevant self — the self that can do things, show things, prove things, build things — and forced me to reclaim that unadorned self in which I am completely vulnerable, open to receive and give love regardless of any accomplishments.”*

*~ Henri J.M. Nouwen*

*Faithful, Julie Joo '19*

Inadequate. Incompetent. Irrelevant. Those three words have been trailing me all year, tainting my highs and justified by my lows. In a place teeming with so much talent and vibrant intellectual thought, I wondered what value I brought to the table—both within the friendships I forged and the academic and Christian communities I became a part of. I had wrapped my head around the truth that my identity was to be found in Christ—at least I thought I did. I understood that all God wanted from me was my heart and my devotion. Nevertheless, I could not shrug off the nagging insecurity that, while I was enough in God’s eyes, I was not enough in the eyes of my peers and closest friends here at Brown. That bothered me. If I could not provide anything of value, was I of value?

If someone were to ask me whether all life was valuable, I have no doubt I would resolutely declare yes—no questions, qualifications, or caveats. Yet, here I was questioning my own inherent value because I felt I could not contribute and be enough for those around me. This, in combination with the impression that being worthy in God’s eyes was insufficient in light of my earthly surroundings, forced me to confront the train of thinking that led me to such faulty and self-deprecating conclusions. In truth, my insecurities stemmed from a burning desire to identify myself by labels: artist, athlete, musician, writer, performer, you name it. I felt like none of these things. I was a jack-of-all-trades. It stung most when people asked me what “I did” or what were my hobbies—it was in

these moments when I longed for the security of a label, for the comfort of having some ability in which I could ground my identity.

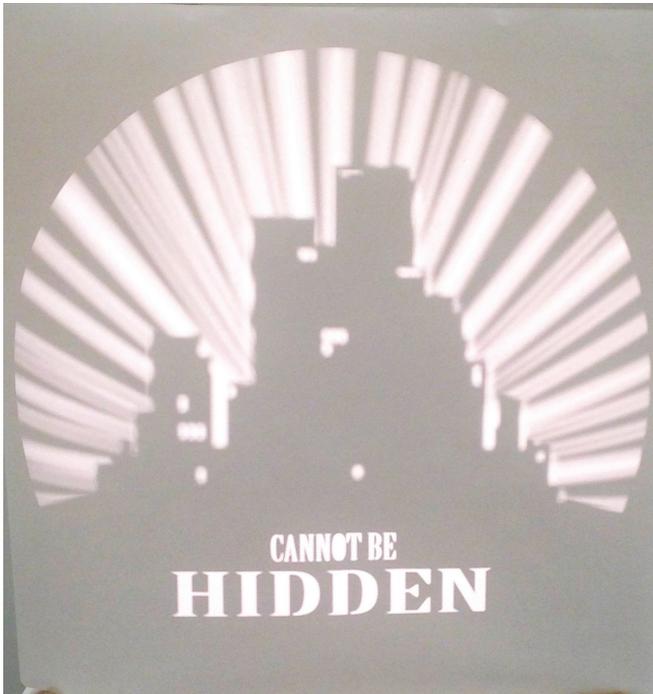
Yet, I have never found real comfort in labels nor my real identity in my abilities. I have chased after the labels and endlessly sought to root, and therefore, define myself by what I do, yet I have never found the peace, joy, and purpose God has drawn out for me. Agonizing over what I felt I could not contribute blinded me from His calling; when I surrendered the longing to define myself by what I do and sank into who I was supposed to be, it was then that I could follow God's plan. And so, I let go of my relevant self, or at least the relevant self I strived to be. I chose to fight the invisible pressures that gnawed at my confidence in my God-given identity and attempted to convince me to root myself in what I alone could

do and provide. The truth of the matter is I could not and cannot do this life alone without God; all ability I have comes secondary to the power and strength I find in Him.

Standing in front of the mirror, stripped of everything of relevance and unadorned, God is showing me that who I am and what I was called to do here on Earth is not my work of art. I am not the artist. I am not the author of this story—God is. Believing I am the author of my life and purpose inevitably will lead me to putting my value in what I can do and contribute, not just for the sake of doing so, but for the validation and sense of worth I receive from those around me. Believing God is the author of my life and purpose, I place my value in what He says: that I was created by Him with a purpose laid before me far better than anything I could plan. By stepping into the vulnerability of letting go of my relevant self, I can receive and give love not based on accomplishment or talent or ability, but instead mirroring God's raw and unfiltered love, which is untouched by the things I have sought to define myself by here on Earth—they are irrelevant.

Seeking to be relevant is like chasing after the wind, a human attempt to finding meaning, value, and purpose amongst ourselves instead of looking to God, who with a vision greater than all ours combined, sparked into life all creation. So I let go of my relevant self, not necessarily striving to be irrelevant, but rather putting to an end the perpetual drive to define myself by what I do and the validation of others. I place my trust instead in God to show me where to go, what to pursue, what to say, and how to serve; as for those around me, if they have a heart like God's, I hope they will see me like He does.

*Mikaela Carrillo is a freshman intending to concentrate in Public Health.*



*Matthew 5:14/SHINE by Katie Hay '18*

# A Clash in the Cosmos: Reflections on Madeleine L'Engle's Classic Novel

Naomi Kim

*"All through the universe it's being fought, all through the cosmos, and my, but it's a grand and exciting battle."—Mrs. Whatsit*

*It was a dark and stormy night.* So begins Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, the Newbery Medal-winning 1962 novel. Meg Murry huddles up in her attic room as the storm rages outside, battling public gossip and private fears about her scientist father's disappearance. But soon Meg is whisked away through space and time to rescue her father, accompanied by her brother Charles Wallace and her new friend Calvin O'Keefe. Their story, though, is about more than Meg's quest for her missing father: the three children find themselves in the midst of a battle against a terrible darkness preying on the universe. Meg, a classic unlikely and awkward hero, ultimately confronts this evil face-to-face.

In many ways, this is a familiar story, sharing elements with countless other novels of the fantasy and science fiction genre. I thought I knew exactly what to expect when I recently revisited this novel to refresh my memory for the new film adaptation. But while rereading, I found myself constantly surprised by the things I'd overlooked or underappreciated when I was younger. I was struck by L'Engle's concise explanations of tesseracts and dimensions, by her explosive imagination—and most of all by the strong Christian influences in the novel and its rallying message of hope and encouragement.

Madeleine L'Engle herself was a devoted Christian, a member of the Episcopal Church and a Universalist, penning books like *Walking on Water* to more deeply express and explore her faith. While not everyone agrees with L'Engle's Universalist theology, it's hard to deny the Christian themes present in *A Wrinkle in Time*. L'Engle's most direct allusions to Christianity

come in the form of Bible verses she uses in her characters' dialogue. I was startled to stumble across several verses pulled from the King James Version hidden in plain sight. Meg's father voices Romans 8:28, encouraging Meg not to spiral into angry hopelessness because "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." 2 Corinthians 4:18 unexpectedly crops up to remind Meg of what matters the most, for "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." However, by omitting citations, L'Engle integrates the verses into characters' speech so that anyone unfamiliar with the Scripture might never know the lines came from the Bible—unless, of course, there are explicit references to God. L'Engle's method of embedding Scripture into the novel allows her to quietly and indirectly present Christian ideas to a largely secular audience without alienating non-believing readers. In a way, L'Engle's approach to including her faith in her fiction reflects an approach to Christian life: one that may not always speak overtly about Christianity but that is nonetheless permeated with its principles.

Christianity colors the novel not only through Bible verses but also through elements crucial to the story's central conflict. Like the writers of the Bible, L'Engle does not shy away from the reality of evil but instead rallies readers to fight against it. From the very start of Meg's adventures, three magnificent and celestial beings (Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which) make it clear that the stakes are quite high. The powers of evil manifest themselves as a terrible shadow, a "Dark Thing" so strong that it succeeds in extinguishing starlight. This shadow imagery is perhaps a nod to the language in

Psalms 23:4, which references the “the valley of the shadow of death.” In *A Wrinkle in Time*, this shadow attacks planets and stars throughout the universe, and Earth, of course, is not by any means free of its influence. As Mrs. Whatsit explains to Meg, “That is why your planet is such a troubled one.” But while the presence and power of this evil is disheartening, there is still reason to hope and to fight. The entire cosmos is waging a war against this invading darkness, and *everyone* is called to take a stand—to be lights in the darkness, or, as Paul puts it in Philippians 2:15, to “shine like stars in the universe.”

Love also plays a central role in *A Wrinkle in Time*, just as it plays a significant role in Christianity. John 3:16 proclaims that it is because “God so loved the world” that Jesus descends into it and all its brokenness. It is out of love that Jesus sacrifices himself, saying in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” When Meg’s little brother Charles Wallace falls under evil’s control, Meg descends into the “dark planet” of Camazotz, which is essentially a version of Earth that has completely submitted to the darkness. At the peak of her struggle to win back Charles Wallace, Meg realizes that evil has the power to hate but not to love, and it is through her love that she manages to save her brother—just as it is through Christ’s love that He has redeemed us.

But perhaps the most interesting way in which Christianity influences *A Wrinkle in Time* is in its intersection with science. While many argue that science and faith are incompatible, L’Engle suggests that the line that divides them is not so hard and fast as it might seem. *A Wrinkle in Time* is obviously influenced and inspired by science and by faith, combining ideas

L’Engle’s approach to including her faith in her fiction reflects an approach to Christian life: one that may not always speak overtly about Christianity but that is nonetheless permeated with its principles.

from both to build the plot. Perhaps the best example of this creative interplay between science and faith is in the characters of Mrs. Who, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Whatsit. These “angels” or “messengers of God,” as Calvin O’Keefe later calls them, are the ones who explain tesseract, dimensions, and time as they take the children through the universe. L’Engle clearly takes care not to reject the material world entirely in favor of the spiritual. Far from condemning this reality, she affirms the goodness of God’s creation by drawing inspiration from space and time and by showing that the even the stars are sacrificing themselves in the war against evil. Creation’s involvement in God’s work aligns with the praise in Psalms 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” L’Engle argues that the whole universe plays a part in the battle to drive back the dark—and that this creation is worth fighting for.

*A Wrinkle in Time* might open with an ominous dark and stormy night, but the novel goes on to triumphantly remind us that love and light will ultimately prevail. Similarly, Christ’s death and resurrection remind us of this victory over darkness, and furthermore, point to redemption for all creation as well, in the form of a new heaven and a new earth. “Weeping may remain for a night,” Psalms 30:5 declares as well, “but rejoicing comes in the morning.” In the meantime, L’Engle prompts us to do what Paul likewise urges us in 1 Timothy 6:12, to “fight the good fight of faith.” *A Wrinkle in Time* calls us to give it our very best—to resist evil, to use love as our weapon and our shield, to join the whole cosmos in this battle.

*Naomi Kim is a freshman intending to concentrate in English.*

# Happiness/Misery

## Students of English for Action

My name is Nari Kato, and I am a class facilitator at English for Action (EFA), a non-profit Adult ESOL school in Providence's Olneyville community. Together with University of Rhode Island's Nancy Alvarez, I work in a classroom of about 15 people, all immigrants from Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Colombia, and other Latin American countries.

This is a part of a poem that our class wrote together. The piece is titled "Happiness/Misery," and it is a conglomeration of sentences that each of the learners wrote. Inspired by the song "Happiness" in *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown* and the picture book *Black Misery* by Langston Hughes, each of

these lines reflect the everyday feelings that learners feel in their lives. They were completely made by them. I merely re-organized them.

For many in the classroom, God is an essential part of their lives. Until I began working with EFA last September, I never realized how important He can be, especially for these hard-working people navigating through this country. Nancy and I only meant this poem to be a English learning assignment, but the final piece is something much, much more.



Misery is never eating with someone  
Misery is getting along here in the United States  
Misery is being hungry in the desert  
Misery is seeing a lot of injustice in the world

Misery is feeling the lack of love and compassion of some people

Misery is not being able to see my family

Misery is feeling discriminated  
Misery is when I cannot write  
Misery is something happening in front of you and you can't say or do anything  
Misery is living away from my parents

Misery is thinking that  
we are all children of God and  
there are so many who don't accept it

\*\*\*\*

Happiness is waking up every day because God gives me another day of life

Happiness is the 4th of July party  
Happiness is when I speak better English  
Happiness is playing *futbol*  
Happiness is my daughter's birthday

Happiness is traveling around the world

Happiness is being yourself

Happiness is drinking tea while watching the sunset

Happiness is my family at a party

Happiness is learning English  
Happiness is riding my motorcycle  
Happiness is seeing Messi become the best in Russia  
Happiness is waiting for my first son

Happiness is thinking about my family,  
going back to my country,  
my beautiful Guatemala

*Happiness is God  
He is my life,  
with Him, I have everything*

Happiness is laying down at night, grateful because God gave me another day of life

# Real Love: A Reflection

Cindy Won

*“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal”  
(1 Corinthians 13:1).*

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul challenges us with how Christians should perceive love in their lives:

*“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails”  
(1 Corinthians 13:4-8).*

I really thought I knew what love was. I thought it was the feeling of happiness inside when someone that I cared about showed some type of validation back, whether it be a simple gesture of kindness or a gentle yet memorable conversation. My heart inflated like a balloon with pride, with a self-righteousness that I had mistaken as “love of the people.”

I really thought I understood what Paul was going for. There are moments even now that I still believe that I love people more than others do. But ultimately, real love is quite the opposite.

Even though I know that this ultimately would never provide me satisfaction, I still search for this self-seeking “love.” I continue to search for the secular satisfaction that the world tells me I need to have, these strong emotions we arbitrarily label as “love.” I search for it in my friends, in my acquaintances, in imbalanced relationships. I search for it in the milestones of my life, my grades, and in the achievements that the world perceives to be successful and would provide me future stability. I try to exhibit acts of love from my own strength, expect-

ing the others to perceive value in the effort that I put in and to be rewarded with their “love” and care. I expect an output for my input. What even is love?

By the end of my first semester of sophomore year, my heart had shriveled up like a prune with bitterness from unrequited love. How could I have invested so much of my time, energy, and—ultimately, hope—into something as unsteady and un-

**I will never understand what love means if I only search for its meaning and purpose in the physical life that I know.**

stable as people, grades, or work? Why did my investment become as forgotten as the wind? Who cared?

Perhaps because what I had perceived to be love was the twisted, selfish version of a search for a personal validation that this world offers, even while knowing that He is the one and only true embodiment of a jealous love for humans who do not deserve anything besides death.

He loved us first. And quite frankly, did not have to at all. But He still did.

*“As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20:21).*

My eyes trailed along this simple verse as I scrolled through a Bible reading on my computer screen around the beginning of March. The simplicity of the command stopped me. I distinctly remember that day, my mind clouded with sadness towards rocky friendships and anger towards the smallest details from the things that I had said. Why was my own effort not enough?

But as I read this verse, I realized that the command that Jesus gave to his disciples was exactly the answer. The Father has

sent me to this campus to be a vessel through which He can shine his light and, more importantly, His love. He is the ultimate embodiment of love, a grace that searches for us wherever we are. The only way I will ever come to even taste the sweetness of this love is understanding His command to be His daughter on this campus. This entire command does not mention once that I must put in a certain amount of strength and specific words to win someone's heart. Not once.

I don't have to do anything. Except to let Him do the work for me and use me as a vessel for Him.

Since that day, I would like to believe that He has been constantly teaching me about love through using me in my daily life. However, this also does not mean that I do not doubt like I did before about people. On the contrary, I become more conscious of this in the interactions I have with others and in the work that I do. I can feel myself becoming possessive and butting heads with God in what we believe to be the right "act" of love. My mind latches onto these whirlwinds of emotions like a dog gnawing on a gaping wound, refusing to let go and trying to heal the wound himself. I still experience doubt about whether I should stop because I do not receive anything in return.

He is the ultimate embodiment of love, a grace that searches for us wherever we are.

But the difference between the end of the first half of my sophomore year and that first week of March was the understanding that in the end, love cannot ever be expressed through my own strength. He provides this peace to the storm of my doubt and loves me through it all. He has continued to provide me patience with a variety of people, and has specifically been showing me how true love can never be self-seeking.

I will never understand what love means if I only search for its meaning and purpose in the physical life that I know. I have no idea what the future will bring, who He will bring

into my life, who I will learn to love and who I will learn to let go. All I know is that I must hold on as I walk with him through this journey, following the command He has for me and many others on this campus. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "I need Christ, not something that resembles Him" (A Grief Observed). And to me, Christ is love. He is love that I need, and love that I want to share with those around me as His daughter.

*Cindy Won is a sophomore concentrating in Biochemistry.*

# Manna

Pablo J. Caban-Bonet

When I left Egypt  
my heart rang like a cymbal,  
It sung canticles to the sky,  
Then came famine:  
I walked without water or bread  
through the endless sands of the desert,  
And my breast reddened with rage,  
drawing claws, sharpening its teeth,  
Ready to spring upon you, Lord;  
Yet, along with the dew  
fell drops of frost:  
Like flakes filled with honey—  
What was this?  
Neither abundant nor scarce,  
Enough to keep me going,  
I ate and I continued.

*Pablo Caban-Bonet is a freshman intending to concentrate in  
Comparative Literature.*

# DAMN: Kendrick Lamar's Radical Lament

Kion You

*"I love when artists sing about what makes Him happy. My balance is to tell you what will make Him extinguish you."*

Kendrick Lamar is currently one of the world's most talented lyricists, a generational storyteller, and a Christian grappling with eternal condemnation. Christianity has always been an integral part of Lamar's albums: 2012's *Good Kid M.A.A.D. City* heavily featured justification by grace, and 2015's *To Pimp a Butterfly* focused on the ascendance and sanctification that followed. However, Lamar's 2017 *DAMN* takes an entirely different focus, centering on personal and societal shortcomings and their eternal consequences.

*Good Kid M.A.A.D. City* opens up with gang members reciting the sinner's prayer ("Lord God, I come to you a sinner ... Thank you Lord Jesus, for saving me with your precious blood"), and *To Pimp A Butterfly* opens with "Wesley's Theory," which describes how Lamar's candid storytelling has not only lead to success, but a "pimping" by the music industry. Thus, it becomes no surprise that *DAMN*, in which Lamar reckons with salvation and manipulation, bookends this religious triad. "BLOOD," the first song on *DAMN*, opens with a narration in which a blind woman tells Lamar: "you have lost something. You've lost ... your life."

Bēkon, a guest artist on *DAMN*'s single "FEAR," drives in the central feeling of the album: "God damn you / God damn me / God damn us / God damn we / God damn us all." In a response to a *djbooth* article on *DAMN* and religion, Lamar emailed in, saying "Our God is a loving God. Yes. He's a merciful God. Yes. But he's even more so a God of DISCIPLINE. OBEDIENCE. A JEALOUS God. And for every conscious choice of sin, we'll be corrected through his discipline." Lamar chooses to push a side of God reminiscent of His Old Testament actions, a God of stern correction who

will perform surgery on both Lamar's soul and his home city Compton.

Underneath the street preacher polemics, however, *DAMN* really is an album about desperation. Kendrick does not hold back regarding his sins, his past life gang banging, or his current life as a self proclaimed "king." Throughout the album, Lamar tells of the immense anxiety and depression that has come with the fame he has accrued, as well as the expectation that he speak for the plight of all African Americans. With telling his life story has come a burden of responsibility, a belief that his music must somehow spark societal uplift. How, Lamar implores, do Christians operate under a societal framework that not only destroys the moral fabric of their communities, but also destroys their souls? How do Christians rise out of complacency in their sins?

Christian music fans love raising up Lamar as a cultural icon, a religious voice that seamlessly intermingles with mainstream society. I wonder, however, how much selective listening occurs when Christians listen to *DAMN*, how much Christians praise Lamar's lyricism and instrumentation while ignoring the fact that his prophetic lament is meant for his Christian listeners to receive and act upon. This message appears to cut especially hard against American Christianity, particularly its White Evangelical variant and its "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" suburban megachurch triumphalism. Millions worldwide swarm around Lamar's cult of personality, and yet, as Lamar declares countless times in *DAMN*, "ain't nobody praying for me." Are Christians heeding *DAMN*'s lament? What would our society look like if we lived out Lamar's conviction?

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*“What’s up, family? Yeah, it’s yo cousin Carl, man, just givin’ you a call, man. I know you been havin’ a lot on yo mind lately, and I know you feel like, you know, people ain’t been prayin’ for you. But you have to understand this, man, that we are a cursed people. Deuteronomy 28:28 says, ‘The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart.’ See, family, that’s why you feel like you feel like you got a chip on your shoulder. Until you finally get the memo, you will always feel that way...” (intro to “FEAR”)*

In “FEAR,” Lamar uses his struggles to identify with the biblical Job, seeing him as model of faith. In it, he raps, “all this money, is God playin’ a joke on me? / is it for the moment, and will he see me as Job? / take it from me and leave it worse than it was before?” Lamar has witnessed a great precarity in his success: the chance at conquering the world and being eternally condemned at the same time. This is no different than the life of Job, a biblical figure who, according to Job 1:3, had 10 children, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 3,000 oxen, 500 donkeys, and a large number of servants—the ancient equivalent of Lamar’s eight figure salary. Lamar is bracing for a fall.

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).. Lamar, at age 30, is currently Job at the peak of his life, before all his family and possessions were taken away. For Lamar, it is not just that “with great power comes great responsibility,” but that “with success comes an absolute course of destruction.” Just like Job, Lamar struggles to persevere until all he has left is God. Much of *DAMN* can be seen as a reflection of Job’s statement that all the material success in the world means nothing in the face of a God who has created the universe.

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*“We used to have these successful people come around and tell us what’s good and what’s bad in the world...but when we walk outside and see somebody’s head get blown off, whatever you just said went out the*

*window. And it just chips away at the confidence. It makes you feel belittled in the world.” (interview with i-D Magazine)*

In other words, Lamar believes God’s wrath to be inescapable—he downplays a grace gospel simply because the reality he sees does not reflect that, and seems to ask, *how can Christians outside these communities simply peer in blithely?* Lamar posits that the only explanation for this chasm, one driven by race and class, is that his community is smitten by God.

Lamar’s response is sad, but unsurprising, and does not feel far off from the cry of the Israelites and their ruined Jerusalem in the book of Lamentations. The Israelites’ ultimate answer and redeemer is Jesus, and Lamar has also accepted Jesus as his savior—but in the moment, both parties lament and grieve over the current period of suffering. Lamentations 5:1 asks, “Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us,” and *DAMN* serves the exact same purpose of taking notes of the times.

“See in a perfect world, I’ll choose faith over riches / I’ll choose work over bitches, I’ll make schools out of prison / I’ll take all the religions and put ‘em all in one service / just to tell ‘em we ain’t shit, but He’s been perfect, world.” These final words on “PRIDE” illustrate the extent to which Lamar grapples with the institutional oppression on his community, how he both criticizes himself for complacency while lambasting just how broken his community is. Lamar accepts no cheap grace.

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However, the last song on *DAMN*, “DUCKWORTH,” is not a lamentation on structural and personal dilapidation, but a song of hope, a breaking of intergenerational trauma. In it, Lamar tells a story of how his father, who worked at a fried chicken place, avoided being robbed and killed by Lamar’s now record label manager, “Top Dawg” Tiffith, through generosity: by giving him extra biscuits. If his father’s resta-

rant had been robbed, as it had been the year prior, Top Dawg may have been imprisoned, and his father may have been killed. But out of this unlikely union, Kendrick Lamar emerged. A radical fracture of intergenerational suffering ended with his father's decision of generosity, and Lamar has been its product. "Pay attention, that one decision changed both of they lives / One curse at a time," Lamar raps in the last verse. There is freedom from damnation, Lamar states. There is grace.

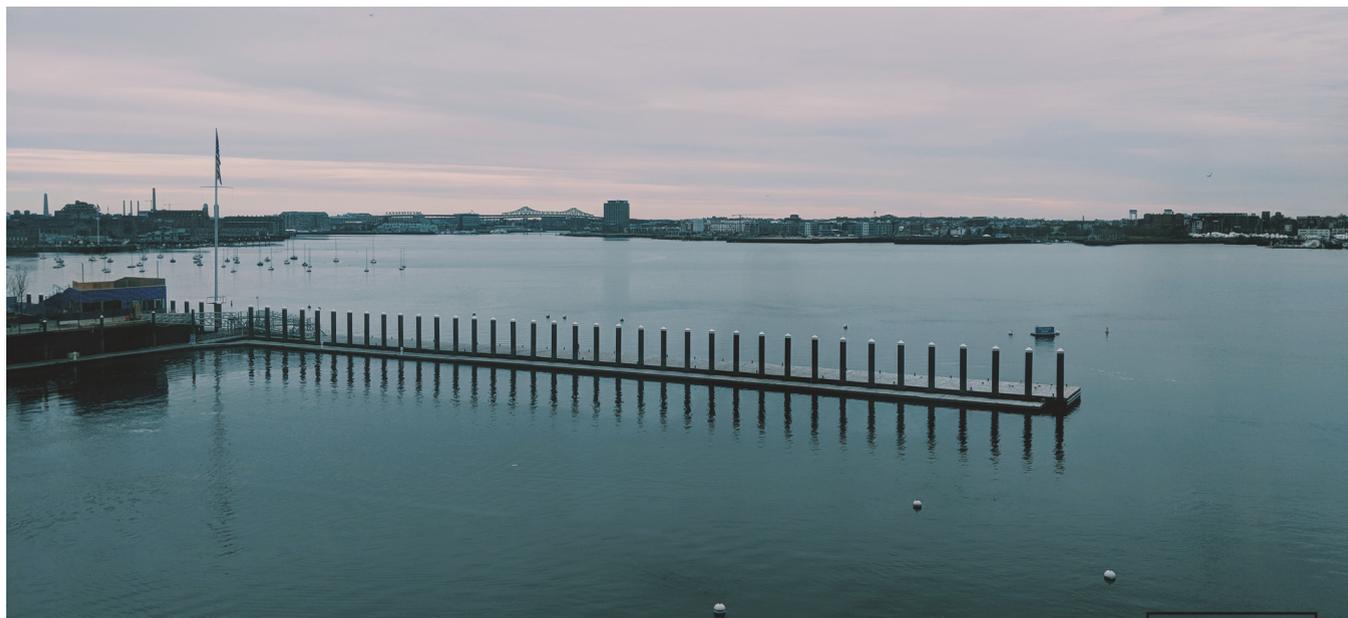
By ending the album with "DUCKWORTH," Lamar opens up a sliver of hope, a small opening into reconciling his inner self. Just as the power of God is used to condemn the unfaithful, so can it be used to radically uplift millions facing racial oppression and structural poverty. There is a fatalism to Lamar's theology, but a fatalism that allows space for hope, mercy, and salvation—or just the simple hope that Lamar can return to the person he was on *Good Kid M.A.A.D. City*, an ex-gang member submitting before the grace of God. The

entire album seems to build to this moment, a moment when hope can persist even though anguish appears inescapable. The ending of *DAMN* parallels the last verse of Lamentations: "Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! / Renew our days as of old—/ unless you have utterly rejected us, / and you remain exceedingly angry with us."

Lamar spoke on his personal role in an interview with the *New York Times*: "I'm the closest thing to a preacher that they have. I know that from being on tour—kids are living by my music." He added: "My word will never be as strong as God's word. All I am is just a vessel, doing his work." For non-Christians, *DAMN* provides a deep exploration into Lamar's humanity, the dissonance pulling at his faith and his stardom. However for Christians, *DAMN* is something much more. *DAMN* is a grieving album, a lamentation, but also a vehement invocation to do away with a triumphalistic, individualistic Christianity that does not address societal suffering, and to start somewhere to address the spiritual pitfalls in America.

*Kion You is a sophomore concentrating in English.*

*Still, Julie Joo '19*





*Shallow Waters, Julie Joo '19*

A landscape photograph of a river at dusk. The sky is a mix of light blue and soft orange, with wispy clouds. A bridge spans the river in the background. In the foreground, there is a grassy hill. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

*He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings utter darkness  
into the light.*

*Job 12:22 (NIV)*

# Darkness

David Ferranti

“Do not lie to me, sister,” you say. Saliva gathers in your mouth, and you pull back your lips from your teeth in a snarl that transforms your thin, wan face into the face of a predator. “Do not lie to me.” Your jaws ache. They’ve ached for what feels like days.

“You are changing,” your sister says. “Why deny it? Would you be standing here, drool falling from your mouth, on the home world? Would you?”

You take several deep breaths. When you speak again, the rage has vanished from your voice, but not your thoughts. “No,” you admit.

“We are both changing,” she continues. “Time has changed us, time and this...place.”

She waves a gloved hand at your surroundings. In front of you looms the wreckage of your ship. You are not sure how long it has been there, but it looks like it always has. A beached sea creature, a wingless bird, cast down and left to die.

The ship’s formerly gleaming exterior is now caked with dust and dirt: neither you nor your sister have the energy to clean it anymore. You tried to at first, after the crash, but it was no use. So you stopped.

Several things survived the crash. You. Your sister. A generator. Enough nutrient paste to survive on while you learned to hunt and forage and find water.

You remember the crash as a blur. Something—some piece of debris—must have been sucked into one of the ship’s engines. The noise woke both you and your sister. You felt the lurch as the ship’s innards ruptured, and you felt the panic as the planet below began to pull you in. There was no time for you to try to change your course. As you fell through the atmosphere,

the ship bled fire and metal into the thick air. You remember strapping yourself into the copilot’s seat. You remember the impact as a dull roar, and then your chair tore free from its base and was sent spiraling around the cockpit. Lances of searing pain marked where your bones broke.

You remember your sister dragging you out of the smoldering wreck. You remember lying there, in the ruined ship’s cargo hold, as she coaxes your body into mending its dozens of wounds.

And you remember when she tells you: there is no day and no night on this planet. Every complete rotation of its axis is matched by a complete revolution around its star. So half of it is always shrouded in darkness. And the other half is forever bathed in light.

But your ship crashed in the dark. You have never seen the star your new planet orbits. Not from the ground. You can’t even see the stars anymore. The thick clouds hanging perpetually overhead have stolen them from your sight.

You remember the first day you were healed enough to walk outside and sit on the hard-packed dirt. Your sister had set-up a semicircle of illuminators to provide some visibility around the crash site you now call home.

The sky was solid black. The surrounding land was lost in shadow. You sat there for what must have been hours, waiting for it to grow lighter or darker.

That was when your sister approached you. She’d been butchering the ship’s carcass when she wasn’t treating your wounds, trying to find the pieces she needed to get the generator running. Just so there could be light.

“It’s not just changing us,” you tell her. “It’s going to kill us.”

The planet almost has several times already. The weather is not harsh, there is drinkable water, and the creatures you have found are not poisonous.

But the darkness is everywhere. And there are things in the darkness you have no name for. Things without eyes, whose other senses were attuned long ago to hunting prey in the depths of the darkness. Things with claws bigger than your entire body.

The illuminators your sister set up do nothing to deter them. But they dislike fire. Your sister thinks it might be the smell. You don't care what it is, but you keep one burning in the center of the circle at all times. The shriveled fungi that make forests in the darkness burn well and are easy enough to cut down even with a knife. You learn quickly to always keep the fire burning.

"Everyone dies," your sister replies. "What does it matter if it's here?"

"I don't want to die in the dark," you say.

Your sister turns away from you, but you know she is wearing the self-assured smirk of the elder sibling. "It won't matter," she mutters. "We're dead. We died the moment that meteorite destroyed the engine."

"We wouldn't be dead if you would let me set off the beacon," you say. Your sister turns back around and shakes her head.

"You'd never make it through the atmosphere. Even if you did, would anyone even see it? What would be the point?"

You grind your teeth together. "Even if I did die, I could see the stars again. I could touch the light one last time."

"The light?" Your sister makes a choked sound. You are not sure if it is a laugh or a sob. "Do you know what would happen if you saw the light?"

"How can you know?" You cross your arms defiantly. "You've been just as blind as me down here."

Your sister shakes her head slowly, ever so slowly. "I've seen real light again," she whispered. "The illuminators."

You blink. This is a new variation on the old disagreement. "What? You always said to keep them low. That the generator might not be able to handle the strain."

"Yes," your sister says softly, ever so softly. "But I had to see it. And it burned me. I saw it hours later, still imprinted on my eyes. The light will always burn me now, don't you see?" She makes that choked sound again.

And you stand there. A growl builds up in your throat, but you freeze it before it can escape your lips. Your sister lied to you, but somehow you cannot be angry with her. For now you can see how this place has changed her.

She kept you alive after the crash. She was here, alone in the dark, while you shivered feverishly beneath a blanket in the wrecked ship's hold and whispered the names of people and places you might never see again. She dragged the generator off the ship and made it sing again. She did all that and kept you alive. But that dark time cast a shadow across her. It tainted her with despair, just as your helplessness has tainted you with rage.

"We were born beneath a golden sun," you say at last. "We played and laughed in its light."

"We were," your sister replies. "And we did. But we will never see that sun again, or any other star. And if we did? It would consume us."

"It would not," you declare. You can feel your anger stirring again but force it down. "Trust me, sister. Let me carry the beacon past the clouds into the sky."

She looks at you, silent. Her black-gloved fingers twitch.

“I would rather die now, and see the sun one last time,” you tell her, “than live for eternity in this place. I would rather be burned by light than drowned in darkness.”

A long moment passes. Then your sister makes a tiny nod, and you begin to walk to the ship. There was something else that survived the crash.

Your own breath echoes in your ears. The flight apparatus is sealed tight, or the cold would have already stolen your consciousness and then your life.

The flight pack itself is a dull howl battering against your helmet. You could ascend faster, but then there might not be fuel for the descent. You know the risk. If your fuel supply fails, you will not descend, but fall. You hope your sister’s calculations can hold. But neither of you know how high the clouds go.

Your left hand is held tight against your body. Your right hand grasps the beacon clipped to your belt. You are already lost in the clouds. You’re flying blind.

Your sister said goodbye down on the ground. She could fly too, if there was another suit. Solo flights are dangerous. But you are the better flier, and only one flight pack survived the crash.

“Promise me you’ll return,” she said. “Even if you can’t set off the beacon, return to the ground.”

“I promise,” you said.

And she hugged you, and for a moment you were children again. Then you engaged the suit seals, and your sister nodded, and you began the slow, steady ascent into the clouds.

When the beacon goes off in the upper atmosphere, the signal

will echo to every part of the star system for days. Any passing ship will know its exact location. With luck, they will investigate. Without luck—you push the thought from your head. There is no more room for doubt.

Your eyes flicker from side to side in the darkness, straining to see light, any light. But there is nothing, only the monotonous darkness of the clouds.

And then you hear it. A dull throb that makes your ears hurt. The beating of massive wings. Something flickers in the clouds to your left, and you instinctively manipulate the controls on the inside of your left glove. The flight pack howls louder, burns fiercer, and you veer off to the right, ascending faster than before.

The wingbeats continue, pounding inside your head, louder than any machine. You twist again, burning a fiery spiral through the clouds, but it does no good. The creature—whatever it is—stays right behind you. Sweat runs down your forehead, stings your eyes. You want to roll away and dive, but you can’t afford to lose altitude. You have to keep climbing.

You don’t know how long the fuel symbol has been blinking when you notice it. Your fuel supply is more than half depleted. But overhead, the clouds have lightened from charcoal to fog. You’re almost there.

You make the choice there and then. You imagine your sister down on the ground below, staring listlessly at her hands. You imagine the green fields and blue seas of your home world, glittering in the light of the sun. The dark has stolen almost everything from you, stolen the light from your eyes and the warmth from your skin. Only the memory of the home world remains.

You clench your left fist, and the flight pack’s howl transforms into a roar. You ignore the blinking warning sign on the inside of your helmet, and finally burst through the top of the clouds.

The world turns white.

Your sister was right. The light burns your eyes. But it has been so long that you do not shut them, even as your scream of pain resounds within the sealed helmet. You have to keep your eyes open, no matter how badly it hurts. You press the activation device on the beacon, and feel it shake in your hand. Then your flight pack goes silent, and you hear the engine cough, and you fall.

You fall forever. You can't breathe. Your lungs feel as if they have been filled with liquid fire. You can't see. The dark clouds have swallowed you again, but there is still the image of the light, branded on your eyes. Tears are streaming down your face, and you fall with that last picture cradled in your mind. Wingbeats thunder in your ears, and something seizes you in an unbreakable grip. You gasp, and then you are not falling, not anymore. Something carries you down for a long, long time. The buffet of its wings pushes against you with every beat, but it holds you steady. Even if you had the strength, you couldn't fight it. Your arms are pinned against your sides. You are burned and blind and your throat is raw, but it does not matter.

It doesn't matter that your soul has withered in the dark for so long. It doesn't matter that you have fallen so far that even the gentlest touch of the stars causes you searing agony. It doesn't matter because, even if you are going to die now to feed some creature's hunger, you remembered. You saw your sister, not the grey, haunted creature she has become, but as she should have been, bold, brilliant, and beautiful. She was laughing, flying beside you, the clear joy of her smile lighting up the sky. The ground shakes as you land. You are lowered unceremoniously to the ground, and you blink and throw up your arm, trying to clear your vision, trying to fight off what has seized you.

Nothing happens. No talon descends. You are still blind, and

you can't see it. Something moves at the edge of the whiteness that has devoured your sight—the edge of a feathered wing. Then the wing disappears, and you feel the air shudder around you as it takes flight once more.

“Why,” you whisper through scorched lips. “Why?” You feel your heart beat three times.

Then your sister is screaming, shaking your shoulder, asking you a dozen questions. You unseal your helmet and stand up as best you can. The burned-out flight pack falls from your back with a dull thud. Your vision is returning in fragments. Splinters of your surroundings, dimly lit by the illuminators

**“Yes,” your sister says softly, ever so softly. “But I had to see it. And it burned me. I saw it hours later, still imprinted on my eyes. The light will always burn me now, don't you see?”**

you spent so long safeguarding, filter back into your brain. Your sister hurries you into the hold of the ship and forces you to sit down.

“I'm not hurt,” you try to tell her. But she keeps talking, straight over you, of the winged monster that came out of the dark-

ness with you clutched in its talons.

When she stops talking, she presses a bowl of water into your hands, and you gulp it down as quickly as you can. Then comes the real question she's been waiting to ask since you returned.

“Did it work?” You sister's voice wavers.

“The beacon is set,” you tell her. “Now we can only wait.” She takes a deep, shuddering breath. Something you can't place flickers in her eyes.

“We have been waiting for years,” you continue. “We can wait a little while longer.”

*David Ferranti is a junior concentrating in Biology.*

# Prayer

Julie Joo

Lord You feel so far away  
I feel like I am constantly seeking  
But nothing is coming out of it  
I am tired

I am right beside you.  
I will meet you where you are, keep seeking me.  
I see your struggles, I see your pain

This feels like an endless cycle  
I wish that I could always be happy  
Like everyone else  
Why do you make me suffer?

This world will challenge you, tempt you, exhaust you  
Trust in me  
The happiness you desire does not compare  
To the table I have prepared for you

I feel unloved, unlovable  
Unwilling to love

You are my first love  
You will always be my love

This world is so broken  
Pride  
Greed  
Violence  
Why do you allow this to happen?

I will reach the darkest corners of this Earth  
These are not products of my love  
But of sin  
Brokenness  
Confusion  
Do not be discouraged.  
Have faith in me.

I feel alone in my struggles  
Nobody seems to understand

I will never leave you alone  
My heart breaks as yours does  
Ten times more

Were my good works not enough for you?

I require nothing of you,  
You are already good because I made you.  
You are set free because I have saved you.

I am tired

Rest in me.

I am right beside you.  
I will meet you where you are, keep seeking me.  
You are my first love.  
You will always be my love.



*Julie Foo is a junior majoring in Industrial Design.*

*Worship, Julie Foo '19*



## Senior Farewell: Josiah Jordan

“Known for its freethinker spirit and postmodern culture, Brown has immersed my faith in both suffocating, yet enriching, soil, exposing me to an intellectual hunger that drives the skeptic and believer alike. During my early years at Brown, I approached my coursework in philosophy and religious studies with many theistic presuppositions and surface-level biblical exegeses, leading me to underperform in comparison to my agnostic and non-Christian peers. They scrutinized the faith I thought I knew with such grace and intensity, revealing not only their genuine pursuit of truth but my lack thereof. I admired the rigor with which they progressed, and thus began enrolling in courses that explored topics such as skeptic/nihilistic philosophy, the diversity of world views, and biblical interpretations cross-denominationally and -religiously. I became absorbed in the process of understanding and addressing their (as well as my own) questions of why and how and immersed myself in spaces that openly discussed the Christian faith in light of the controversies regarding race, sexuality, science, and metaphysics.

At Cornerstone, we’ve worked to revise our mission statement from merely celebrating the beauty and diversity of the Christian faith to more actively reaching the non-believer by “provoking spiritual thought on and around the campuses of Brown and RISD,” with a vision to delve into the deepest and hardest issues—the most relevant issues—of the Bible and our faith. As a senior, I’ve seen my time at Brown as a commitment to understanding Christianity in the face of everything and everyone against it. And after four years, I’ve learned that this God, this Word, this faith and everything we believe in can only be realized the moment we begin questioning it, for it’s only then when we begin to genuinely pursue truth.”

- Josiah Jordan '18



*His Providence, Julie Joo '19*

# Ministry Profile: The Branch

Nikki Tully

The Branch Christian Fellowship is a chapter of Chi Alpha campus ministries comprised of students from Brown University, Johnson & Wales University, and Rhode Island School of Design. The name originates from John 15:5, which states “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (NIV)

The heart of the Branch lies in community. As the verse says, if we remain in God, we will bear the fruit of the spirit. However, we firmly believe that our walk in Christ can’t be done alone, and that the encouragement and discipleship of our fellow Christians and campus pastors is a necessity for spiritual growth and bearing fruit. The ways in which we build community are weekly core groups and gatherings, where we come together to study scripture, worship, and pray, with vulnerability and trust.

As a first year, I joined the Branch just because I felt like it was something I should do as a Christian entering a college campus. But I didn’t realize how spiritually dry I was, or how

much my relationship with God was suffering because I was lacking in fellowship with others. I remember being shocked when I first attended core group and found out that there were actually people my age who read their Bibles every day and actively pursued God. I was inspired, and over time I found myself also wanting to pursue God.

I truly think the Lord called me to Brown with the purpose of bringing me closer to Him. Over the past three years, I’ve seen tremendous growth in my faith. If you are looking to get to know God more or pull yourself out of a spiritual desert, get involved with the Branch, or any of the other many fellowship groups on this campus. God wants to move in your life, and He will do so if you let Him. Joining a fellowship and finding community is just the first step.

The Branch meets on Fridays at 7 pm in 85 Waterman room 015. For more information, you can contact myself ([selena\\_tully@brown.edu](mailto:selena_tully@brown.edu), (956)-369-7636) or Hope McGovern ([hope\\_mcgovern@brown.edu](mailto:hope_mcgovern@brown.edu), (856)-571-5074).

A cityscape at dusk, featuring a prominent modern building with a grid-like facade in the center. The sky is a mix of deep blue and soft orange, suggesting the time is twilight. The foreground is filled with dark, bare trees, and the city lights are beginning to glow.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to  
become in every respect the mature body of him who is  
the head, that is, Christ.

Ephesians 4:15 (NIV)