

Oasis



“Aftereffects”

Notes From the Editor
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Front Cover: "A study of Gripping" by
Michael Oechsner

The definition of aftereffect implies cause and effect. One action is the impetus for something new and perhaps unexpected. It might feel like nuclear fallout or a gentle rainshower. We are living with the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic ranging from immunizations to increased social anxiety. Cultural aftereffects from Black Lives Matter and the attack on the Capitol will also roll forth. In addition to societal catastrophes, our individual lives have periods of tragedy and crisis. The arts are a way to make inner pain concrete and serve as an emotional release leading to a new understanding or aftereffect. In this issue, the writers and artists try to make sense of catastrophe and pain, theirs and others. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

The editor:

Colleen Bond is a veteran of the Air Force and mother of six children. She has worked at NMSU-A for over ten years. She enjoys working with students and encouraging their creativity.
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"'Hope' is the thing with feathers "

by Emily Dickinson

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the
words-
And never stops - at all -*

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To the Moon

by Zander Baker

Arthur woke up alone in the lander. He got up, his side hurting like someone had hit him with a baseball bat. He looked around the lander. Ross and Wilkins were dead, their helmets were busted wide open. He could see their last expressions before they died. He looked away and closed his eyes. They were the men he went to astronaut training with, Arthur even went to Ross's wedding.

Arthur climbed down the bent ladder of the crashed lander. He looked down at his wrist indicator. Only a couple of hours left of air. If his astronaut training had taught him anything, this meant he had to stay quiet, which was ironic considering he had crashed within communication distance of the lunar base. He weighed the options. If he decided to reach out to the lunar base, they wouldn't get to him in time. Even though he was in comms range, he was far enough away from the base that it would take several hours to reach him. Looking back at the lander, he started to get some memories back of what had happened. He could remember something malfunctioning, his commander shouting through the comms. Arthur knew that he didn't want to end up like his crew mates. Thoughts of his girlfriend started coming back to him. He started on his way to the lunar base, dead set on surviving. If he just walked and controlled his breathing, he'd reach the base with five to seven minutes of oxygen to spare. He started walking, he knew he had to survive. For Elise.

Arthur had gone a kilometer when he started to feel something drip from his side. He knew what it was, which made his situation even more treacherous. That was when he could hear the others, calling out to him and his crew, over the radio in his helmet. They were trying to contact the lander and its crew, not knowing what had happened to either. Arthur wanted so desperately to speak, to let them know that he had survived, but that would mean wasting some of his air.

Following the map on his wrist indicator, he leaped his way closer and closer to the outpost. The radio transmissions were getting clearer as he got closer. The pain on his side got

worse and his side was entirely soaked with blood at this point. Arthur pushed through the feeling of lightheadedness. The only thing driving him at this point was his will to live. He checked how much air he had left. Time was running out. He decided to quicken up the pace.

Arthur could see the outpost's lights in the distance. He was only a few yards from it. His body wanted to give up. His mind was telling him to rest. He knew he couldn't, that would mean death. Jumping as quick as he could, Arthur made a mad dash to the airlock. He only had a few minutes of air remaining. He could feel his consciousness waning. He fell to his knees only a few feet from the latch. That's when he heard hissing. He looked down at his knees, he sprung a leak. He scrambled to open the airlock. He could feel the air getting thinner and thinner. His vision was starting to go dark. The airlock finally depressurized. With one heave, he opened the hatch. The occupants of the base came rushing to the door, unable to do anything until the airlock repressurized. Arthur righted himself against the cold metal walls of the airlock. With one twist, he took off his helmet just as the airlock repressurized. The hatch flew open and the others came rushing in, medical equipment on hand.

"What the hell happened?" Asked one of the astronauts.

Arthur remained quiet as tears of bittersweet joy rolled down his face. He was glad to be alive.

"America mourns today as news of a crash on the moon makes its way back to Earth. NASA confirms Commander Tim Ross and Lander Pilot Levi Wilkins were killed in the crash. The families of both are in mourning. Both astronauts leave behind their wives and children. Mission Specialist and former Air Force Test Pilot Arthur Young is the only survivor of the crash, barely making it to Armstrong Base. NASA is looking into why the lander, manufactured by Private company RocketCorp failed and cost the lives of two astronauts. We will report on more details when more arise. This has been a CBS Special Report, I'm Terry Bull."

Heart

by Rosali Chiovitti Cavalcante

As a baby, he cried inconsolably, a sign of his very sensitive nature. But soon he learned that boys do not cry and that he should be as tough as life.

When he was older, this lesson was reinforced by the abuse and bullying he suffered from the boys in the neighborhood. That made him suspicious of others, retracting to his own world. His mother, although loving, was weak and did not protect him. His father, a hot-tempered Italian, solved the problems at home by yelling, cussing, and slapping his family around. Where was he to go?

When he became a teenager, he started working at a paint factory. The little he received, though, was not to be used for his boyish pleasures, but was given to his father, who always had made sure to let him know that he owed him much.

He grew up to be a handsome young man, but that did not distract him from what he learned was important: his obligations and responsibilities. He was an exemplary worker, the kind who never misses a day of work, "even when he is sick", his mother would proudly say. Because of his high ethical ideals, he was admired by others, but at a distance. He really did not have any close friends.

As a father of three daughters, he was severe and strict. He worked hard to give them and his wife all that they needed, except himself. Moments of tenderness were few, affirmation words were rare and measured. Somehow, the women around him knew he loved them, but that was more a concept than an experience.

When he turned fifty, something amazing and inexplicable happened. He started painting beautiful landscapes, to read poetry, and to write a novel. He became more extrovert and did not hide much his affections. During nine years he allowed himself not only to feel more deeply, but also to demonstrate it more clearly. It seemed like he was regressing to that place of sensibility he had long forgotten.

The day he needed a heart surgery, the doctors were surprised to find inside his chest a heart almost completely calcified with tight arteries and rigid, inefficient valves. It was as if it

had built an armor around itself. Inside that armor, though, the doctors saw an astonishing fragile heart. So unexpectedly sick and feeble that it could not even find its rhythm to start beating again.

Dad

by Julia Reyes

Dad you walk around with your head held high, but why do I feel your sad inside?

Drinking your pain away ruins yours and everyone's day.

Open your heart to create a new start out of the dark. Be part of something to be proud of and create that big amazing crowd, make them cheer oh so loud. Just please make me proud.

Dad don't be mad just be my wonderful dad. I love you so much dad.

Light

by Julia Reyes

Me, now I can see this light, the light has gotten so bright. I can see this light in the day and I can see the light at night.

It's given me my insight and told me I no longer need to fight with life.

This light aligns with my life, shows me a straight line to me dying. I'm ok because I have the light by my side. I have the light inside.

Now show them the light for a new insight. Forever light have a good night.

“Agony”

by Mike Parsons



“Flash”

by Anonymous

In the beginning, the flash in my eye manifested itself intermittently. An occasional golden spark at the peripheral of my left-side vision. The visitation was rare enough to not be concerned about it. As it became more consistent, I thought, “I’ll worry about it at my next eye exam.” In the meantime, I had a clear viscous discharge that was thicker than regular tearing. My primary care physician thought it was allergies. I knew it wasn’t allergies, but I didn’t feel like fighting the medical establishment. Once again, I decided to wait for my regularly scheduled ophthalmology appointment.

What would my counterpart in the Middle Ages think of a golden flash in her vision? I like to imagine a flash of insight or a divine visitation revealing hidden knowledge. An extra bit of giftedness, an addition instead of a reduction.

At my eventual appointment, it was revealed that the flash was a growth, a cancer. Cancer has the reputation for being the Great Reducer. A reducer of ounces or pounds of flesh and tissue, a reducer of energy, a vampire sucking the vitality of life dry, a reducer of identity as bodily changes occur. What is gained often feels like a burden--fatigue, illness, a reaction to treatment. In my haunting by cancer, what can I gain from this encounter with the reducer?

Unlike my doppelganger in the Middle Ages, the divinity isn’t in my eye; the divinity is around me. In a group of friends I corralled into being my support network. Corralled by electronically lassoing them with my cell phone during the coronavirus pandemic when we couldn’t see each other eye-to-eye. The divinity continues in hymns that come to my mind as comfort. The divinity in the New Testament as I read of Christ healing the multitudes.

The golden flash in my eye is metamorphosing with treatment. First, it sent me an apparition of birds in flight. I would call out to my husband, “Look at the birds!” while he wondered what was wrong with me besides cancer. Recently, the fantasm became a dark square full of holes like something from a science fiction movie. Not a divine manifestation, but a disappearance, an erasure, a disintegration. Bestowing me with a sense of divinity in its absence and imparting previously unseen insights through the experience.

Biographies

Michael Oechsner: no info available

Zander Baker: no info available

Roseali Cavalcante is an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at NMSU-A Alamogordo. She is originally from Brazil but has made New Mexico her new home. She has two sons and five grandchildren. She lives in Las Cruces with her husband, Marcos, and her 3 cats and 3 dogs. This short story, Heart, is based on the life of her father, who died during open-heart surgery in 2001.

Julia Reyes: no info available

Mike Parsons: no info available

Anonymous: The piece is shared in a desire to make the unseen visible.

Notes from the editor:

It is magical how each issue of *Oasis* assembles itself. The individual pieces combine to make a complete whole. Themes emerge out of apparent randomness. The creative process is organic, word by word, brushstroke by brushstroke, line by line. The works grow until they arrive at a level of completion. Submitted to the zine *Oasis*, the works metamorphosis into a literary organism. Thank you to those who submitted and made this possible.

