

LAMP





Woman of the Wood Waste
Rachael Bradley

LAMP is a literary magazine which publishes creative pieces and critical essays written by the students and alumni of Liberty University; the views expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the LAMP staff or Liberty University. LAMP aspires to stimulate readers both within and outside the University with the creativity and critical work of its contributors.



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LAMP, it seems, is ever-changing, and in the past year, the changes have been particularly acute, evolving naturally in a constantly shifting university atmosphere.

In the fall, LAMP welcomed a new faculty advisor—Prof. Chris Gaumer—and, after the completion of the fall issue, said goodbye to one of its General Editors—Nick Olson. But fortunately, LAMP has never been “about” its editors, perhaps not even its writers; rather, it has always strived to put the *work* of Liberty University students and alumni at the forefront.

The creativity of this issue is showcased in specifically literary endeavors—in poetry and short fiction. While in the past we have included interviews and reviews alongside these creative pieces, those found here challenge our everyday experience and our relation to our world in their images, metaphors, and narratives. Challenging our notions of a Christian’s relation to art and culture in a more direct way remains an important task, though, and our essay in this issue, I believe, attempts to do just this.

In this, my own last issue as an editor at LAMP, I’m persuaded that we are continuing to create a publication that reflects the status of the arts at Liberty University and encourages their continuing growth and patronage.

I trust it will continue to do so.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Andrew Walker". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large initial 'A' and 'W'.

Andrew Walker

General Editor



Clockwise from top left: *Untitled* by Stehanie McGinn, *Framed* by Noah Edwards, *Shelgo* by David Steltz, *Lobster Boat and Fog, Maine* by Stehanie McGinn, *Chickadee* by Stehanie McGinn, *Rest Stop* by Stehanie McGinn, *Dorway Blue* by Breanna Barrett

Center: *Untitled* by Andrea MacBean

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Love Blindly
Michael Kerley



FRONT COVER BY KELLY REESE AND EDITED BY CARA WILLIAMS
Kelly took this photo while in India Studying the culture there. As a festive part of the culture in Amber Fort in Jaipur they like to decorate the animals with a chalk paint.

BACK COVER POEM BY LIZZY YERKE

LAMP LOGO BY JOHN CARL

Folk Song

Margaret Bush

He wrote it
in the midnight
on a robin-painted banjo:
song of lovers, rusty moonlight,
a shot of whiskey in the snow.

Some sang it
in the Sugarlands,
broken immigrant souls.
A blues porch, black hands,
crowd of angels in the cold.
They packed it
in fresh hay
to the West by desert boats.
Boys who stole it for their play—
left in the pockets of their coats.

We heard it
up in Brooklyn
Poets and peddlers who don't know
that once a man did love a woman
who drank whiskey in the snow.



Native Immigrant

Marcelo Quarantotto

The June sun shone bright through the sliding glass door of his in-laws' kitchen in Albany, New York. It created a golden glow around the room that hindered Samuél's ability to read internet advertisements. He, his wife, and his daughter arrived at JFK airport the night before from Buenos Aires, Argentina — his father's hometown. Samuél had been the graphic designer for a culture and arts magazine called *Revista Wicked?!*. When it folded, two months before, they felt their years spent abroad had ended.

He planned to get a job, any job, to save up enough money to pay off the plane tickets they bought on credit, so they could move into their own place. He was as certain of finding a job now as he had been while riding a bus from a *fútbol* game several weeks ago in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, discussing with his *porteño* cousin

"There's a ton of sales jobs," said Samuél.

Eleanor cut up fried egg with the side of a fork "You'd do that?"

"Not a chance. It's not in my blood."

Federico his need to leave. He thought they'd looked like twins, sitting in the same seat, both of them wearing glasses and the same powder blue and white striped *Racing Club de Avellaneda* jerseys.

Samuél había dicho:

—*Che, tengo que irme, Fede, pero no quiero.*

—*¿Por el trabajo?*

A dark-skinned boy with a Nike T-shirt yelled in a hoarse monotone for loose change.

—*Claro, estoy secísimo.*

Samuél looked out the window to read a street sign.

—*¿Pero, creés que vas a encontrar?*

—*Sí. Hay un montón de oportunidades allá.*

—*¿Te quedarías si estuvieran las mismas acá?*

Federico rubbed his eyes and then reached into his pocket for loose change.

—*Obvio, boludo* — *Samuél había dicho, and pushed the buzzer to stop the bus.*

Eleanor sat Indian-style on a kitchen chair to feed Graciela.

“There’s a ton of sales jobs,” said Samuél.

Eleanor cut up fried egg with the side of a fork. “You’d do that?”

“Not a chance. It’s not in my blood.”

“I’m glad you’re looking, but there’s no rush. Take a few days off.” Her lips winked open to blow on the steaming egg. “Open wide, *nena*.”

“I know. But I can’t just sit and relax if we’re broke.”

“I know — Good girl! *¡Muy bien, Graciela!*”

His father-in-law was a surgeon, and had the weekend Mercedes outside to prove it. Samuél grew up in a poor neighborhood in New Jersey. Even though he’d been visiting his in-laws for years, he always felt out of place as the only Latino in sight, and all the more so as a jobless one.

Samuél responded to as many posts as he could, and almost all of his callbacks went the same: Do you have transportation? A bicycle. Just a minute, I’m getting another call. OK ... Hey, I just got a call from a guy with a car. OK. Good luck. OK.

Around midday, Eleanor brought a sandwich, cheddar Sun Chips, and a Diet Coke to Samuél, who had fallen asleep in the backyard. His drawing pad lay next to him, open to a sketch of the *Obelisco*. It showed the structure on *Avenida 9 de Julio*, but instead of standing straight and taught and pearly, he drew it short, hunched over and filthy. Cars and people zipped and swarmed past, ignoring its decay. In script lettering above the monument, it said “*Mi Buenos Aires Querido*.”

Eleanor lowered her head down to kiss his upturned lips. She sat down next to him.

“You’ve been out for a while.”

He sat up and tried to find his pencil by running his fingers through the grass. Her father had spent a great deal of time maintaining that yard. The rectangular, green expanse was an organic shag carpet. A croquet course and badminton net stood ready for an after-dinner competition.

“Some guy called for you. I guess for yard work? He wants to know if you can start today.” She crossed her legs. They were still tan from Argentina’s beaches.

“OK.”

“Are you sure you want to do this?” she said. “I’d be okay with you taking a week off

before you start working. Maybe by then you can find something better.”

“No. I’m going. I’ll ride your dad’s bike.”

“My mom can drop you off.”

“No thanks.”



Samuél found her father’s bicycle, a Trek road bike that weighed in ounces and still had the rubber nubs on the tires. It glided. He stopped after every couple turns to check the directions he’d scribbled onto an envelope. The creases where he folded and unfolded it over and over again were splitting from overuse and sweat. He was used to weekend rides without a helmet on an old beach cruiser in downtown Buenos Aires, slipping between taxis and brushing by squealing city buses. Those streets were laid out like a grid. With a pocket-sized street map, it was easy to get anywhere.

He found the house. A Lexus SUV sat quiet. Tree limbs and plant debris lay on the lawn. A wheelbarrow had left wobbly, orange dirt tracks on the driveway.

Draught of bottled water. Breathe. OK.

A potato-shaped man in his mid-30s sauntered toward him. “Samuel?” he said. He looked vaguely Armenian or Turkish.

“Samuél,” he corrected. “ ... No big deal.”

The man stuck his hand out. “I’m Nick.”

Maybe he was Greek.

“I have another guy on the way, so let me show you around.” His speech was unlabored, borderline disinterested, or tired or drunk. “Do you know what time it is?”

“Not sure.”

Nick pulled out a large touch-screen phone. “It’s just after four. Let me show you what I need done.”

Nick had just bought the house from an old lady. Her husband had died about six years ago, and her children lived elsewhere. From the outside, the house looked even bigger than Samuél’s in-laws’, but it was girdled by a moat of wet, fallen leaves — the accumulation of each fall since the husband had died. Samuél filled large black bags high with damp roughage. His back muscles turned to cement with each trip to the curb.

After an hour of work, a pickup truck arrived and backed up onto the yard. It was hauling a tractor-sized machine that looked like an orange robot with a buzz saw at the end of its one arm.

The driver stuck his head out the window. “Nick?”

“In the house,” Samuél said, and continued raking. He wanted to appear as diligent as possible. It was the only thing he could do to dull his frustration. He was a bilingual college graduate who had worked in the Paris of South America, but now toiled as an immigrant to his own country — anonymous and sweaty.

The sound of oiled machinery stopped Samuél’s rake. He noticed that the machine had no seat or steering wheel. The man who brought it stood by the truck and fiddled with a remote.

The machine rolled onto the lower portion of the yard, near the street, where the stump of what was once a stout tree sat rooted into the ground. The machine’s blade was several inches thick and had fist-sized teeth. It began to spin. Samuél watched without speaking, his gloved hands hung at his sides. Only the robot mattered. The blade spun vertically, but moved side to side as if conducting a symphony of destruction.

Nick tapped Samuél on the arm and gestured toward the machine. “Pretty cool, huh?”

“I never knew such a thing existed. Was the tree about to fall?”

“No. It just wasn’t our taste.”

By 8 p.m., the sun began to set. Samuél had been having trouble walking; carrying another bag of leaves seemed impossible. He knocked on Nick’s front door and Nick stepped out with the same sleepy look as before, munching an apple. He pulled out a wallet made from cream-colored suede. Samuél looked away from the green bills, feigning disinterest. Nick handed him a few dollars extra and said, “Call it a first-day bonus.”



Samuél found his way out of the development and onto a road with two lanes in each direction and traffic lights at every hundred meters or so. The sun faded to a burnt orange as it descended toward the horizon. Samuél tried to imagine wide streets, headlights busy like fireflies, tall concrete houses, the whip-whistling of city buses.

Several minutes went by and he realized that he’d missed a turn. He cursed to himself in *Castellano*. Before long, he recognized the name of an intersecting street and

turned left before the traffic light. He coasted over the opposite lanes and into the curved merging lane designated for vehicles coming from the opposite direction. He figured he'd made a clever move in avoiding a busy intersection. A Ford F-150 came around the corner and sounded its horn. Samuél squeezed the breaks and the bike's new mechanics let him stop with ease. The sun had descended, and he couldn't see the face behind the middle finger. No cars came now. He put all his weight on one leg and propelled the thin bicycle forward.

A restaurant on the left illuminated the word "Ravenswood" atop its awning in bright red. A car leaving the restaurant pulled onto the road at the same time Samuél rode by. He thought he heard the frame crack when he spun counterclockwise above the road. He landed in a heap of limbs and carbon fiber.

The sun finally set and the cold crept in. Samuél waited for a Buenos Aires city bus to come and carry him home.

A bushy-haired kid wearing a Kings of Leon T-shirt stepped out of the car. Samuél looked up at him from the middle of the road and disliked him.

"Dude. I guess I wasn't ... You OK?"

Samuél stood up. The bicycle's back wheel had been bent into an impossible shape.

"This isn't my bike."

A car pulled into the parking lot and stopped between Samuél and Leon's car. The woman inside spoke:

"I saw the whole thing. Don't worry, I called the cops." Her voice was almost reassuring. She turned to Leon, "I called the cops."

When the policeman came, he asked for their identification. Samuél could only give his name and social security number. He no longer had an American driver's license.

From the cop Samuél heard: "... press charges?"

"No."

Leon's engine started. He looked both directions several times before pulling out.

"Here's my card. If he doesn't pay you for the bike, then give me a call, OK?"

"OK."

The policeman drove off. Red tail lights in the night. Samuél looked around for a payphone, but then remembered what country he was in. His back throbbed. He

wasn't sure if it was from the wreck or the work. How could he tell Nick he had to quit without sounding like a liar, or worse?

He dragged the bike over to a patch of grass alongside the road. He crouched down to sit next to it, but his legs gave. His shoulders and head hit the ground, sweaty. Samuél's lower back muscles felt like pavement on the grass. The sun finally set and the cold crept in. Samuél waited for a Buenos Aires city bus to come and carry him home.



Horse
Rhonda Anderson

LAMP

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My Great Grandmother's Boots

Lizzie Yerke

pediatric foam seeped through the seams
like ingrown hairs.

a sandy stain more bland than Bisquick's best attempt
at chicken dumplings.

ankles so hollow her raw soles played the blank space like
 hissing
 strings
at my first junior orchestra performance.

every Sunday afternoon my Toyota and I signaled into unsympathetic one-ways for
her favorite clam chowder and cinnamon rolls and

 every Sunday afternoon I read her a chapter from the Book of Psalms, as her
knotted fingers shook while she buttered her bread and

 every Sunday afternoon I gently slid those boots off of her worn heels,
tangled on the excess dry skin and

 every Sunday afternoon, a puddle of tears fell on those old boots because
she no longer recognized my salty green eyes that matched hers exactly and

 she no longer made the connection that her own first name was the source of
my middle one and

 she no longer remembered that, just a week before, I had taken off that
same pair of

boots.

American

Samantha Futrell

The draw of a Marlboro
hangs tight on his lips,
clouding the vinyl trailer,
staining walls
rooms
people-
'cuz things are easier to love when
they're yellow.
He walks outside
crunching dust,
bare bulging belly,
Fat Tire in hand,
and rests on a velvet blue
sun-stained sofa
as wind pushes grease-soaked hair
into his tired face.
For a moment, the world holds tight.
Inside, a baby wails.

Song Without Words

Samantha Couchoud

My car needed to have its oil changed. I could feel it as I drove, could feel the gummy, jerking stutters as I shifted gears. Could feel a tug each time I accelerated, a reluctant hitch with each brake as my old station wagon lumbered through the neighborhood. The wood-paneled exterior and bulky metal frame hiccupped and coughed past squat cinderblock houses covered in stucco and low-angled tin roofs. With one last shudder, my wagon labored up the clay-and-gravel driveway and lurched in behind the Astro van. The Impala was gone. I let go of the steering wheel to flex my hands.

Bett, a skewbald mutt, was already waiting next to my door. I didn't want to look into those innocent dark-chocolate eyes. I inhaled and shoved open my door, the swinging metal catching on the hinge with a creak and forcing Bett to bound away—granting me enough time to slide out of the burgundy leather seat and pull myself up the aged gray wooden steps to tap on the screen door. No matter how lightly I tapped, it banged. Bett put her head underneath my hand; her fur was warm, soft, carded wool.

I could hear Grace and Faith shrieking that someone was at the door and the piano clanged as one of them bumped it. The door swung open wide and Faith, the winner of the impromptu race to play hostess, beamed up at me. “Danae!”

I tried to smile back. “Hey, Faith. Your sister ready?”

Chastity, her narrow face severe with brown curls woven into a braid, wordlessly answered my question when she came around the wall that separated the living room from the kitchen. She navigated past the buffet, the slat-backed rocking chair, the piano bench with pieces of sheet music peeking out from under the lid, and an obscenely orange recliner, grabbing her denim purse that hung from the hook on the wall. She didn't smile.

“Where are you going, Chastity?” Faith and Grace, six-year-old twins, asked in unison.

“The library.” Her words were pinched. She pushed her hands down the arms of the periwinkle knit sweater she normally wore on brisk days; it lumped the cotton plaid button-up she wore underneath it and sat in a misshapen bunch around her shoulders. She tugged on her cuffs, pulling the plaid down over her hands and smoothing out a couple of the bulges.

“Can I come?” Grace asked as Faith nodded ‘til her curls bounced.

“No.” She closed the door on her clipped response, jerking it to make sure it sealed. Sometimes the rubber around the doorway stuck and she had to yank it. She kept her head down and ignored Bett’s wagging tail, opening the passenger door just wide enough to slip into the seat.

I scratched behind Bett’s rusty, shaggy ears, slammed my door, started the engine—which grunted—then backed out, the wheels crunching the gravel into the clay. Bett’s wispy tail swept the dust off the porch and her eyes drooped as she settled her muzzle on her brown paws.



Two dozen songs that neither one of us sang to and a thousand long-leaf pines we didn’t see later, I pulled the Buick into the parking lot of the insignificant, unobtrusive clinic in a town I couldn’t remember the name of. Two neatly trimmed shrubs sat in a bed of red cedar chips on either side of a darkly-tinted door with white lettering, spelling out names and titles I didn’t want to read. A tone pinged in the near empty waiting room, and a woman looked up from her magazine, glancing at us over her glasses.

Chastity had to clear her throat over the wailing country music the receptionist had blaring out of the radio sitting next to her tape dispenser. Long nails with a hibiscus painted on each raked back heavy bangs from a brassy, weathered face. The window scraped as she slid it open.

“Appointment?”

“Yes... at 3 o’clock?”

Two neatly trimmed shrubs sat in a bed of red cedar chips on either side of a darkly-tinted door with white lettering, spelling out names and titles I didn’t want to read.

“Are you scheduled for a procedure?”

I cringed and focused on the pens disguised as flowers sitting in a clumsily painted terra cotta pot. Chastity nodded.

“Name?”

“Reynolds?”

Even the way she typed was lazy. “First name?”

Chastity sucked her lower lip into her mouth and started twiddling with her purse strap. Her voice dropped, and she hunched toward the window. “Chastity?”

The receptionist's head jerked up, her her disinterested eyes fell on Chastity's blue ones on Chastity's blue ones. Her shoulders lurched as she clapped a hand over her mouth, snorting once. She covered up her chuckles with coughs as she shoved a clipboard with the name of some drug stamped on the handle across the counter. "Fill out all the highlighted areas."

Chastity's delicate, ladylike blush turned into a flood of color pouring into her face, ears, and neck. Her fingers absently twisted her hair as she leaned on one elbow, filling out the forms in cramped handwriting that spilled out over the small boxes.

An older woman in lavender scrubs opened the door to the office. The receptionist crooked her finger, pointing at her screen for the nurse to

look at. "Janice, would you look at this?" Her voice dropped, but she wasn't even really trying to whisper.

I turned away as Chastity pushed the forms back across the counter and saw Janice glower at the receptionist before she looked at me. I could see an apology in the melting lines of her face.



I had given up on trying to read the book I'd brought with me, a book Chastity's mother, my Sunday school teacher and the Pastor's wife, had given me, and tucked it back into my bag. It didn't feel right reading it here. The magazines spread out on the table next to me all seemed to be taunting me, the covers of *Cosmopolitan* and *Redbook* plastered with gorgeous women and advice I knew I had no reason to take. The variegated carpet was busy arranging itself into cartoons, apparently in a contest with the popcorn ceiling to see how many ridiculous faces they could make at each other. I kept thinking the other woman in the waiting room knew who I was. No. She was just looking up from her magazine.

The door at the end of the lobby opened, and Janice came through it. "Danae? Do you want to come back?"

No. No, I didn't.

I followed her around a few corners, the sterility burning my nose and worsening the headache I was blaming on the fluorescents. Janice flipped through a brown folder,

then plunked it into a clear brown plastic bin on the wall by the door, then twisted the knob and swung it open.

Chastity, so red three hours earlier as she'd disappeared through the door I'd just walked through, was somehow both green and white. Her tightly braided hair was starting to come loose and fuzzy strands were sticking to her face. Her body was still under the mint-green hospital blankets.

"She asked to be sedated, so she's going to be a little out of it." Janice's voice rang too loudly in the small, echoing space when she came back pushing a wheelchair. One of the wheels squeaked. She did a few nurse things, holding Chastity's wrist in a pinch between three fingers.

"You can sit there 'til she comes to." She pointed at a chair. The purple vinyl had split down the middle, and I knew it was going to scratch. I sat, and stared at Chastity. The door clicked closed, rattling a little against the door frame.

Two-hundred and sixteen beeps of the monitor later, Chastity opened her eyes and I was waiting by her side. She looked up heedlessly at the funny faces I knew were gawking down at us from the ceiling.

"Can I go now, Danae?"

"I think so, but the nurse didn't say, exactly."

Beep. Beep. Beep.

"Are you feeling ok?" I almost laughed. It was the only question to ask, but it was not enough. And too much. I wanted to laugh until I cried and cry until I laughed again, or until I had cried enough to wash away the need for tears. I could feel a hot river running in my bones, pulsing in my fingers, churning in my stomach, pushing against my eyelashes, and I knew I would never run dry.

"Ready to get going, ladies?"

"Yes, please." Chastity's blue lips barely moved. She signed more paperwork and was given more pamphlets, and Janice said some things about rest and fluids and antibiotics. Then she handed Chastity a vial filled with red, the lines on her face saying she didn't really want to give it up.

"Are you sure you want this, hon?"

Chastity's jaw slid forward, and I knew she was clenching her teeth. Her lips thinned into an inked dash as she took the vial, her fingers closing, clutching around it, shaking.

“Ok, well, then.” Janice pushed the handicap button to open the door to the lobby. “Take care, sweetie. Everything’s been taken care of, and it’s all in the packets. Take it easy, now.”

The door clanged as it opened, and I lifted my shoulders to my ears trying to blot out the sound as I went to unlock the Buick for Chastity. The woman in the waiting room was still there, and the clownish eyes in the ceiling watched me leave.



I sat down on the pine picnic table next to Chastity who was staring across the park, tapping the trowel on the splintered wood by my thigh. Bits of mud and grass fell onto the table. I brushed them off.

“Do you think we should say anything over...?” She asked, halting, her hands folded in her lap.

I looked back at the spot under the live oak where we had buried the little wooden box she had gotten from Wal-Mart and painted with white day lilies. I shrugged, knowing she could feel my arm brush hers and tapped the hand trowel again. One clod of dirt stuck, clung to it, stubborn. A mockingbird called down from the sprawling arms of the live oak. Ducks chattered on the shore of the pond—I knew they were hoping we had bread. A squirrel skittered through the hardened live oak leaves and long-leaf pine needles, scattering them, and left footprint scratches in the sandy soil.

My throat felt tight, thick, as I started humming, the song tingling against my lips. After the first few hushed, almost weeping, notes, she hummed along.

Amazing grace... how sweet the sound... that saved a wretch like me...



Idea
Jonny Haring

Philosophy of Fish

Derek Via

I can't help but admire
 his faith as he ascends
at the appearance of my hovering hand—

his persistent hope that
 I might drop a bit
of dried worm parts.

His faith may be greater
 than mine.
He is King of his world with glass walls—

King of fluorescent gravel
 and plastic-coated greenery.
But has he ambitions of deeper domain?

Does he thirst for the vast
 green-tossed sea
as I long for unrefined forests and
perfectly wild trees?
 I think I shall never
 set him free.

A People of the Implicit: The Place of the Implicit in Christian Life

Joshua Stone

The cultural mandate, God's call on his people to cultivate His creation, is a call for humanity to know the world. The cultural mandate includes knowing the physical (natural resources, etc.) and the immaterial (theology, morality, ethics, philosophy, etc.) and if God is truly reconciling all things to himself through Christ, then Christian knowledge is to be more expansive than the do's, don'ts, and dogmas that seem to fill much of the Evangelical Christian mind. Followers of Christ are to understand things like art, literature, history, education, and business, and there has been increasing focus in the recent decade by Christians on understanding the plenary world. Today, many Christians read *The New Yorker* or *The Atlantic*, know recent groundbreaking documentaries, and keep abreast of the latest

If Christians are to cultivate culture in a way that expands the frontier of Christian thought and expression, then understanding the implicit, what is being said without immediate expression, is vital to this mandate.

developments in high-brow music and fashion. Evangelicalism's intellectual frontier is expanding, but is this the right kind of knowledge of the world? Or does God call Christians to contend with the world in different ways? If Christians are to cultivate culture in a way that expands the frontier of Christian thought and expression, then understanding the implicit, what is being said without immediate expression, is vital to this mandate.

Today, Christians are less apt to label a particular cultural emanation as inherently "sinful" or to resist a type of artistic expression because it is at odds with a value that Evangelical Christians have traditionally held dear. Christians give art a chance even if it appears ugly, diverse musical expressions a chance even if it has in the past been used to denigrate women. They are apt to watch a movie even if it uses certain language or contains certain scenes incompatible with Christian morality. Acceptance of artistic and cultural expression is the reason that the American Christian Church is (hopefully) in the beginnings of a renaissance in which Christians are working

to revitalize the plenary Christian expression, the expression that participates with God's reconciliation of all things through Christ.

Christians are indeed becoming adept at knowing what the world is readily communicating. They know that the world says fulfillment, happiness, and meaning come through money, sex, and comfort. Christians know what Scripture says about meaning and happiness, that every heart has a "God-shaped vacuum" and Christ is the only arbiter between us and God. Though Christians understand what the world is making readily observable, rarely do we come to grips with what the world is saying to us that is not apparent. Christians have trouble reading between the lines of culture for the implicit in order to grasp to the underpinnings that support the explicit.

Often we "People of the Book" do not even understand the implicit teachings in Holy Scripture. Many followers of Christ know that Hezekiah begat Manasseh, the Israelites weren't allowed to eat shellfish, and that Rahab's house was in the wall of the city Jericho, but many only know what Scripture makes readily observable. If, for example, one were to look to the Old Testament writings on polygamy he would not find the commandment "thou shalt

Christians have trouble reading between the lines of culture for the implicit . . .

not commit polygamy" anywhere in the Old Testament. It's simply absent. Critics have used the absence of a prohibition from polygamy as proof that Scripture is an antiquated cultic relic that is to be discarded or at least modernized to fit a more proper understanding of marriage, sex, and the value of women for today. It is true that the Old Testament does not explicitly say not to practice polygamy, but it does say so *implicitly*.

A rebuttal to critics of the Bible is this: For those who practiced polygamy in the Old Testament, when does it ever go well? Take the iconic example of Abraham and Sarah's marriage. In Genesis 11 Abraham and Sarah marry, they move to a new area, and they prosper. God promises Abraham a family (he's still monogamous at this point) but they disbelieve in God's promises and Sarah "gave [Hagar] to Abram her husband as a wife," and thus begins the Israel-Arab struggle still seen in the Middle East today.

Solomon, another example of a monogamous man who turns to polygamy, leads both himself and the kingdom of Israel to suffer. The Song of Solomon – which many scholars believe was written about his first marriage – is filled both with

romantic and erotic love and best expresses monogamous sexual love. But we find out later that Solomon ends up having about 700 wives and 300 concubines. This sexual lifestyle harms both Solomon and the women, and is articulated in Solomon's dismissal in Ecclesiastes of the pleasures of sex and romantic love. This essay does not have the room to discuss Jacob, David, and many other Biblical characters whose lives were ill-effected by polygamy. Instead of God pronouncing "thou shalt not commit polygamy" in one or two verses in the Old Testament, He teaches against polygamy implicitly throughout the entire Old Testament. The Bible isn't silent about polygamy, it just isn't explicit. The penultimate act of love, the giving of Christ on the Cross, is proof that God instructs through the implicit because the meaning of this loving act was not completely clear to those watching. It just looked like another man being executed. Jesus did come preaching and teaching about the Gospel of the kingdom of God, but he also came living and teaching through is life.

Andy Crouch, the author of *Culture-Making*, articulates the modern Christian posture cogently when he purports that in the last 50 years Christianity has gone from condemning culture to critiquing culture to copying culture and now simply consuming culture. Most Christians would say that *ad hoc* consumption of anything that comes on TV is not good for the soul. Though certain cultural expressions may not explicitly command you to do this or that, it still teaches. Everything teaches.

No longer should Christians be satisfied to simply critique or consume culture; we should create a culture that is wise enough to not only make the case of Christ through explicit reason and logic but also to incorporate all of human expression in the articulation of the Gospel. The culture we create should teach the world the right source of life and the right Ruler of Life through a community that teaches not only by propositions but in beauty, love, and sacrifice.

As the burgeoning Christian renaissance takes place, understanding and utilizing the implicit will hold an increasingly significant role in articulating right Christian expression. It is time not only to know the implicit but to wield it in framing how we present the Gospel to the world. The explicit has an important role to fill, but in a culture increasingly hostile to overt Christian proclamation, the implicit plays a vital role in the transmission of the Good News. If Christians are to fulfill the cultural mandate by cultivating culture, they must do so through the power of the implicit.



Morning Dew
Stephanie McGinn

For Matthew Dunham

Val McGinnis

You are the crack of a bat
at a baseball game—
a warm and lazy passion.
I'd sit nine innings through.

You are a midnight bird
a freedom song that scoops me up
spins me like a dancing child

And you are raining—
not a worn drop or two,
but a frigid dusk that
shakes my skin and slices my barefeet.
I'll sit it out in a bone soaked cloak of confidence that

You are the neon green lamp
I read by when all sane people
sleep. And

You will be the lines of age
that dress my face
when we are little more than rusty songs
still sitting nine innings long
at baseball games.



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Rusthetics
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Freckles

Lizzie Yerke

dusted specks,
eyes of a storm—God
lets out
his vein-breaking
sneeze
while handling business in the womb.