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Creative Pages Foreword

ESBB Volume 9's Creative Pages continues to grow in new and exciting directions. Along with the media-infused poetry and spoken word in this edition, we showcase innovative prose by new and established writers from all corners of the world.

Matt Zytoskee's "The Power of Self-Disclosure," is a collection of soul-baring narratives that affirm the place of life-writing as a therapeutic process. Matt's stories record life in the first person, and they operate artistically within a genre that pushes narrative literature to newer places — perhaps, in part, due to a growing public willingness to place creative nonfiction (CNF) beside the more precisely defined and established creative genres. As his title suggests, there is great potential in composing witness testimony; it offers the possibility of translating notions of suffering, perseverance, change, love, and grief, into story-form, where the cathartic act of writing is a coming to terms with life.

Our CNF showcase includes Jasmina Najjar's "Walls Speak," which takes a terrible moment in history — the 2020 Port of Beirut Explosion — and finds a hero within it whose story deserves to be told. It's a story that can only be shared by a witness, by someone who experienced the tragedy first-hand and saw the greed of corporate scavengers as they sought land deals for condos amongst what was left of Beirut's old-world heritage.

Seema Jain's "God's Will" is our third CNF piece of this edition. She describes the awful impact of untimely loss and explores the sense of shock, grief, and the profound questions that arise from this type of trauma. Her passage also raises questions about the fairness of life and the role of fate or a higher power in such tragedies, ultimately leaving us to ponder the unpredictable and too-often cruel nature of existence.

Kartik Gandhi's "Forty Steps to God" is a stylistic flash fiction piece that conjures tactile, haunting descriptions of a tragic accident scene. The skillful use of imagery and detail bring a truly immersive experience. Gandhi captures the tension and urgency of the situation, and provides layered notions of fate, miracles, faith, and subtle sense of irony.

In "Stars-and-Moon-Lit Summer Palace," Shi Wenjie blends merry and melancholy tones to convey the atmosphere of a spring night at the lakeside of Beijing's Summer Palace. The poem's architectural elements — hilltop towers, temple houses, and waterfront pavilions — are bathed in silver moonlight and reflected in the shimmering lake water to create a visually enchanting scene. The full moon as a central element of the poem adds depth and symbolism by underlining the timeless connection between nature, art, and human emotion.

John W Gilbert's prose poem, "Watching the Train, Moving the Steel," is an exploration of the passage of time through the lens of an aging man's contemplation of the industrial works he has created. He stands on the asphalt path as the "hulking freight" of a passing train becomes onomatopoeic symbols of industry, adding a sense of rhythm and nostalgia: "[T]he light, the fire, the cascades of molten sparks, the blood," emphasizes a feeling of loss and the weight of time passing with the last train car.

Vijay Singh Thakur's poem, "The magic of rain," considers the interconnectedness of all lifeforms in nature through the metaphor of rain, soil, and seed. The cyclical nature of life, from seed to plant to fruit to seed again, highlights the intricate and inseparable bond that ties all beings to the earth and its elements, underscoring the importance of recognizing and appreciating the profound connection between all living things.

Natasha V. Broodie's "Called to Silence" expresses the struggles and resilience of a speaker who has been silenced for far too long. The anaphoric structure communicates the physical and emotional impact of this silence from the body's reactions to the gradual awakening and empowerment of the individual; the powerful effect of this device is clearly imbued in the accompanying spoken word performance. Make sure to listen while reading, for the [audio track](#) complements the theme of breaking free from the constraints of figurative and literal silence.

Bringing it back full-circle, ESBB's Creative Pages opens with Kenneth May and Michael Melson's multi-genre, multi-media showpiece "Little Eddie Speaks From the Great Beyond." Our ongoing development of multimedia integration is epitomized by this incredible collaboration linked to an animated performance produced by Mitchell Marinello. Once you arrive at "Little Eddie Speaks From the Grave," click on the text or on the graphic art and enjoy the [show](#). Thanks to all who shared their work, to all who have read this far, and to all the ESBB community.