



2021

## Abstraction

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### Recommended Citation

Fuller, Casey (2021) "Abstraction," *Floodwall Magazine*: Vol. 2: Iss. 7, Article 9.  
Available at: <https://commons.und.edu/floodwall-magazine/vol2/iss7/9>

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## Abstraction

Worse than invisible, it gathers around the objects. In people it accrues oddly, in vain delights, in sudden penchants, in unbreakable sentimentality for the wrong thing. It adheres in numbers, but not directly, obtusely, behind the blackboards, invisible almost, unattached to the digits they say it refers to. Each word, each of the words you're reading right now, are in fact lucky to find a way to say anything about it at all. In less than one second, each letter could disappear back into its formidable array, into its rows and rows of unspeakable splendor. You yourself have probably seen it puff an immediate mist around ideas like wonder, will, imagination—the easy, unstudied understanding suddenly surrounded by its green-gray vapor of non-particularity. Leaves fall through it during autumn, however; winter wind has zero problem, and summer can't hold it up in the sapphire sky forever, because, of course, it doesn't even seem to be there. Percy Shelley, back behind it wrestling with its structure, bloodied his fingers trying to peel it away. Then he thought he saw it in the taut thrum of a ship's white sail. Then he died. Kant only saw it after walking the same path at the same time for fifty years and only in the trees. And after two thousand pages in the worst German ever written, he reasoned the best one could do to orient a life in accordance with its infinite, intricate, structures was, yes, indeed, The Golden Rule. Keats coughed its mystery into his sleeve and wrote on. Most writers simply give in and rely on clunky metaphors trying to hint at a world where it belongs. And that's where the Americans walk right in.

Mending walls, convex mirrors, purple haze, women warriors,  
blue suede shoes—laugh if you want to, but behind all our  
feeble attempts, behind the pale blue sky thinning into  
forever, the oxygen gives, space emerges, and each star  
is so far away, so far, so far, the words can't say.

**Casey Fuller** is a PhD student at the University of North Dakota. He somehow finished his course work last fall!