

The Lighter

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THE *Lighter*

60 ISSUES

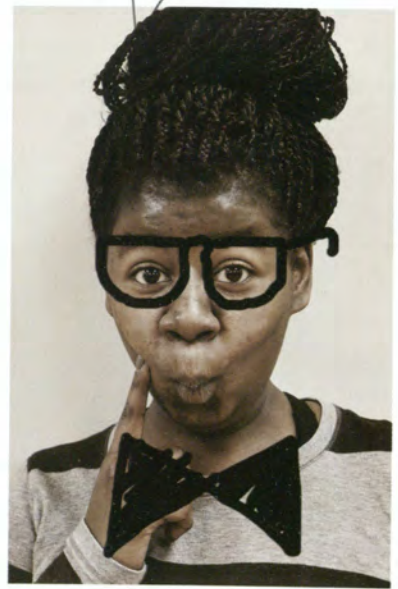


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THE LIGHTER
Spring 2015

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Spring 2015



... A Note from the Editor



That bell.

With every chime, another 15 minutes of our college years are behind us.

That's one thing we can count on: the certainty that time never stands still. That, and the constant ~~letdown~~ of campus printers.

But maybe we have some small bit of control over time. If time is really just a compilation of moments, of feelings, maybe some of those are caught in the art we create. Maybe, we can keep them.

Please **ENJOY** this collection of moments.

In the words of poet Mary Ozybist (*AHEM* turn to page 78 for more from her) take this time to

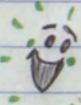
Slow down:
to rethink

to reimagine

to be open.

ENDLESS THANKS!!

to Allison Schuette for her watchful collaboration
guidance, to Stefan Rosen for his brilliant
& vision, to Michal Brim & the selection committees for their
earnest time & efforts. To the campus at large



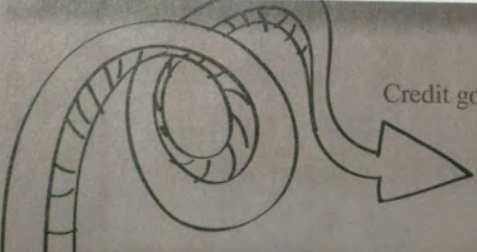
All submissions remain anonymous in the selection process. The Lighter welcomes submissions from all students of Valparaiso University, regardless of race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. The views expressed in these works do not represent any official stance of the university.

Oops! Our mistake:

Credit goes to Ali Dashti for his photo *Lights in San Fran*

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{page 52}



THE LIGHTER

ART

Prose



Poetry

ALI ALHUSSAIN
MARGARET DEVEER
KYLE SMART
MALLORY SWISHER
LAURA WHITMAN

ALLISON GRANET
ALLISON GRISCHOW
STACY MCKEIGUE
MARCI STAVIG

ALLISON GRANET
STACY MCKEIGUE
MICHAEL MICEK

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ASSISTANT EDITOR: MYCHAL BRIM

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Spontinuity
Daniella Tripodis

Under Uniform

MARCI STAVIG

After "Wang Renmin University Guard Beijing China" by Joel De Grand

Along this road, I watch prancing petals kiss the cool
polish of your bark, and each season I can't help
but wonder, "To whom does your loyalty belong?"

A tree that stands against autumn wind and rain gives itself
to those seeking shelter. You, with pressed lips planted
above square jaw, and shoulders aligned symmetric in shadow.

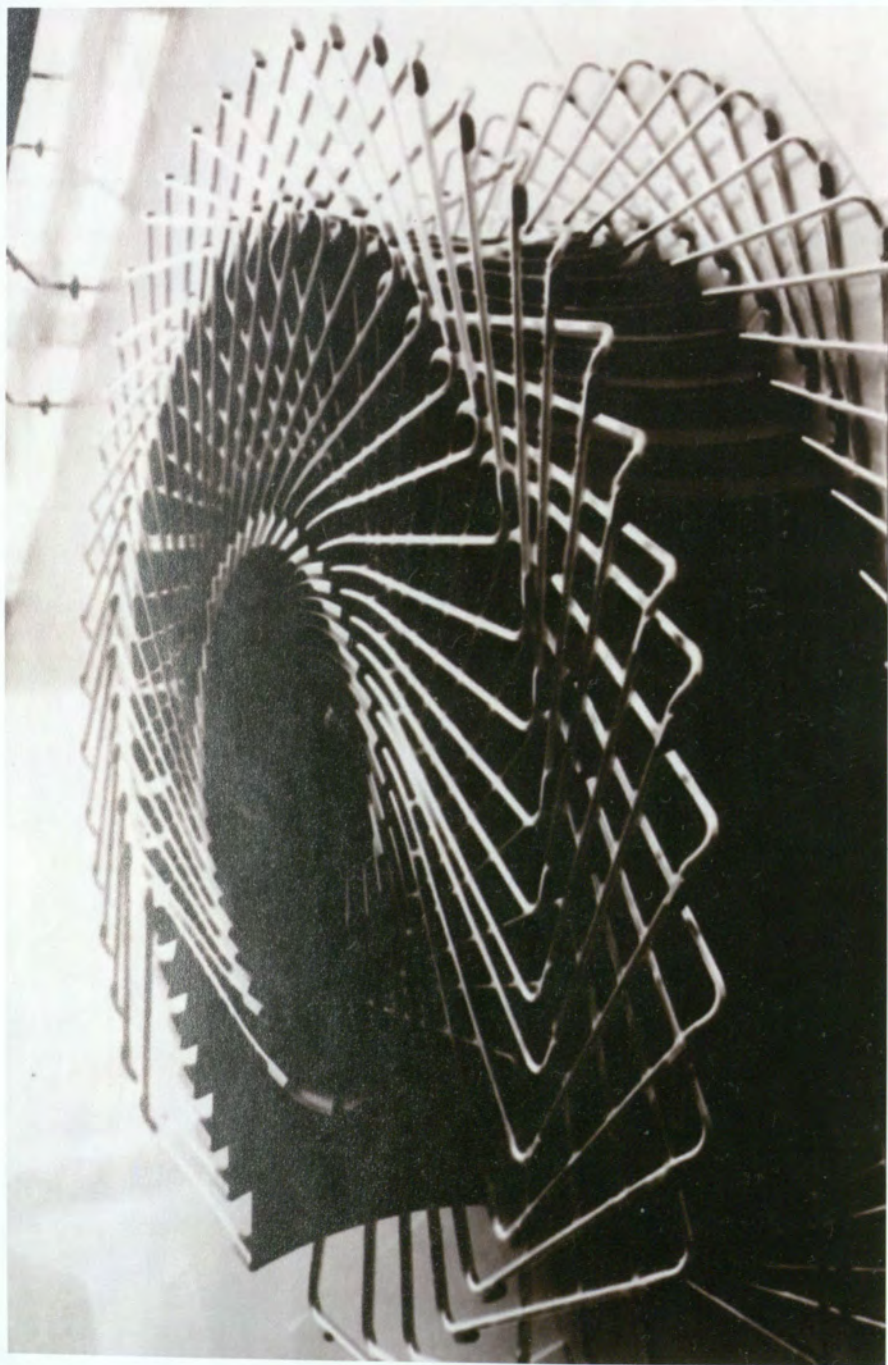
White gloves cover more than skin, just brushing
wrist length charcoal. Show me the dirt of your hands,
fruits born to fall beside school gates, and lay your branches bare.

Oak face blends into chilled grey skies without touch-
ing light yet hot iron stirs in rusty bark. Birds feel
you swell in the heat of summer and cannot be fooled.

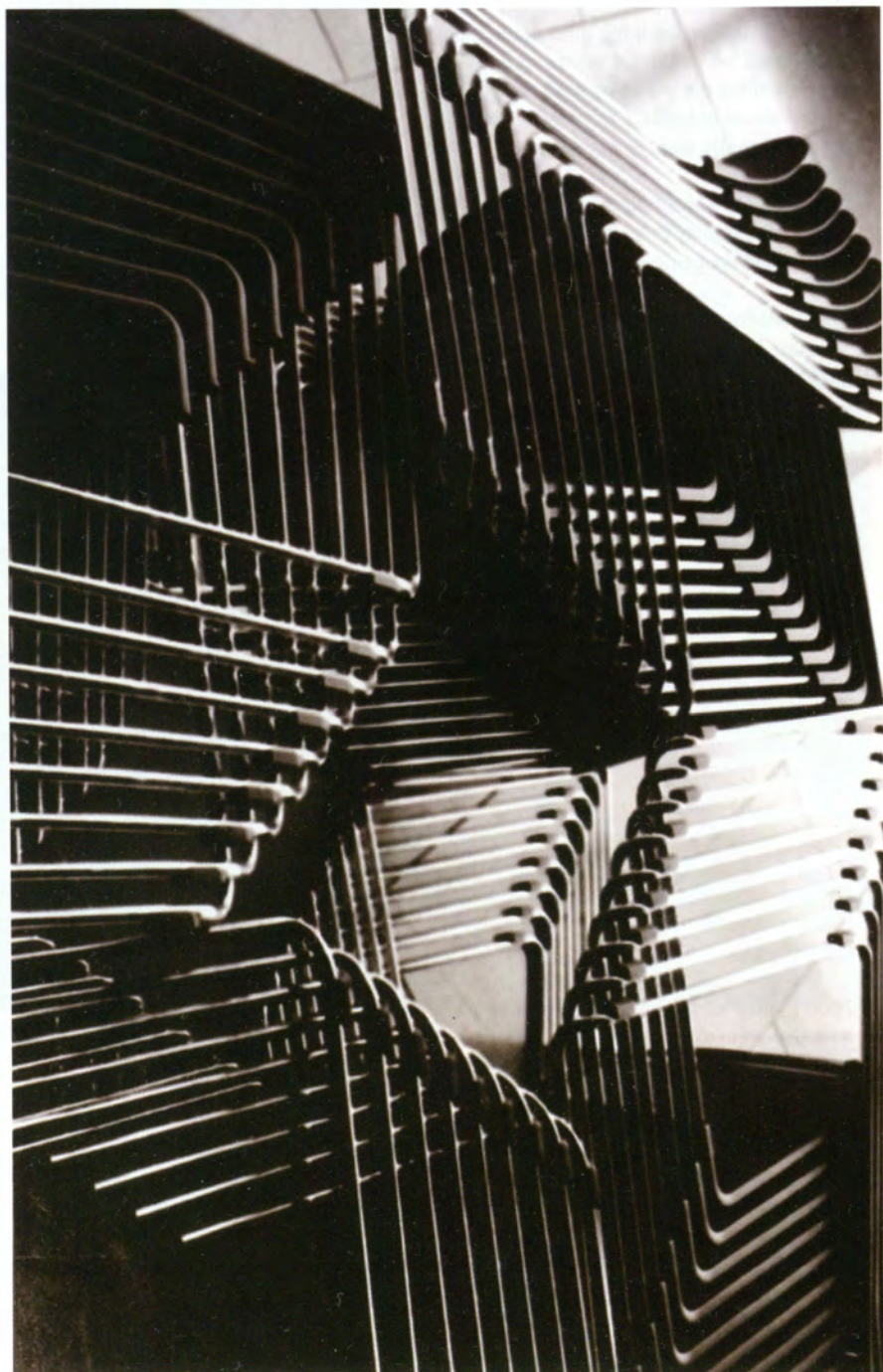
Red breasted robins perch entangled limbs, struggling
to search for those ripe, leftover words. Your voice
sounds so soft though duty ties your trunk to concrete.

You march four steps forward before freezing. Turn
and salute, you, with leaves shadowed
in honor and thistles weighted thick with secrets.

I smile at the thought of unfastening golden orbs and unhooking
bands dipped in night. I, who bothered to imagine
thousands of aging rings inside the wave of your palm.



The Roll
MYLIHN MAC



The Tunnel
MYLIHN MAC

Word of the Month

MICHELE' STRACHOTA

I, Henry Blake, started the third grade today.
Mrs. P said we could have extra credit
if we used the advanced word to say
what goes on at home. I'm going to do it
because I really want to get an A.

The word for September is stupendous.
I did stupendously this quarter, all A's!
Daddy said we can get ice cream today!

The word for October is boisterous.
Mommy was really boisterous the other night.
Daddy told her to calm down and they had a fight.

The word for November is prudent.
It's prudent that I don't tell anyone about mommy
kissing Mr. Steve because she said it'd hurt daddy.

The word for December is stentorian.
When mommy and daddy fight, people can hear
their stentorian voices for light years.

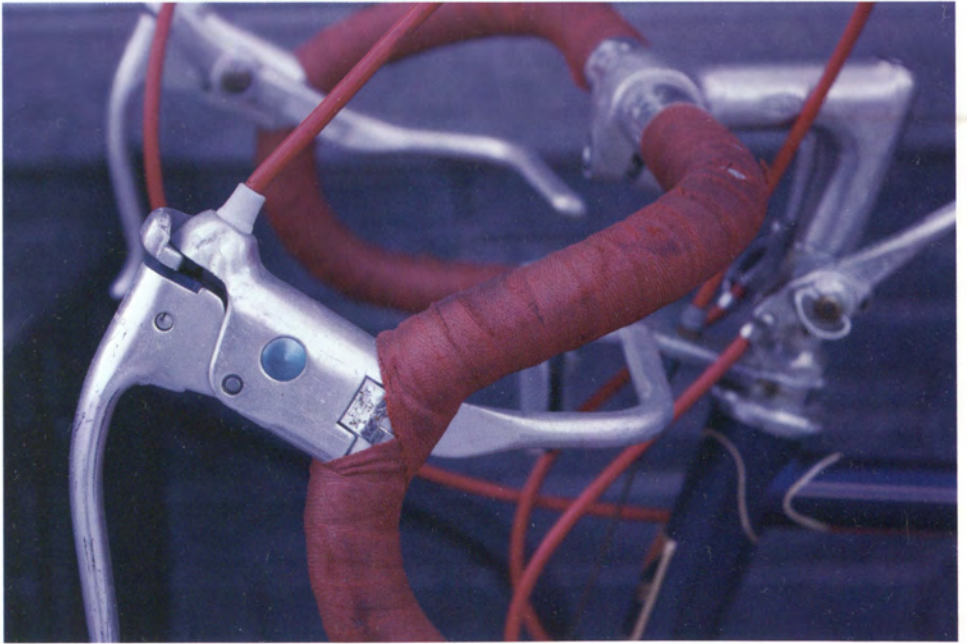
The word for January is horrendous.
The trial was horrendous. It made daddy cry
'cause I can't live with him. I didn't wanna say bye.

The word for February is plethora.
I counted the men's phone numbers on mommy's board.
Does that count as a plethora? There might be more.

The word for March is deteriorate.
I don't care what the word is. My head
hurts and I want my dad and my bed.

I don't know how to use the word for April.
At recess Pete told all the third graders
my parents' marriage is defunct. People
laughed so I got mad and pushed him harder
than ever. I think Pete might be evil.
I didn't used to be a fight starter.

May. Beep. *We're not home right now but feel free
to leave a message and we'll get back to you.*
Beep. "Hi Mr. and Mrs. Blake, this is Mrs. P,
Henry's teacher. I was hoping I would catch you
because you haven't been returning any
of my messages and I wanted to talk to
you about Henry's grades. I would be
grateful for a call back so we could talk through
some things Henry's said that concern me."



Red
MICHAEL MICEK



The Fever from the Fall
STEFAN ROSEEN

Body as an Abandoned Temple

STACY MCKEIGUE

I wandered through cavernous corridors—
All souls return to their bodies in time,
Empty spaces without windows or doors.
To visit memories once thought sublime,
I stroked walls curved toward a vaulted ceiling,
But I found I had no identity,
And could do nothing to shake the feeling
That this echoing corpse couldn't be me,
That I'd been here before. A dusty red
Heart—now broken and devoid of beating—
Chandelier hung above me, flame long dead.
Dull from disuse, utility fleeting.

See Him

NORA VILLEGAS PINEDA

Hundreds of individual bodies busily making their way through crowded city streets,
each with a purpose, a pace, a destination entirely of their own.

He walks head on, straight ahead with determination in his wind-chilled, watery eyes,
approaching anyone who'll stop for just one moment and listen;

“Excuse me, Miss”

“How are you doing, Sir?”

“Hello, Ma'am”.

The Miss avoids eye contact entirely, looking straight through him as if he was not there.
The Sir politely nods in acknowledgement, but shows no interest in what he could possibly have to say.

The Ma'am, most cunning of all, looks him in the eyes, but does not see,
for the pace of her tempo is far too quick for her to even consider slowing down for
just
one
moment.

Onlookers shy away, visibly uncomfortable by his mere presence. But why?
Are his clothes too worn compared to yours? Does he smell too strongly of city streets
and hardship? Are his beard and hair too outgrown with pain for your aesthetic taste? Do
his inquiries awaken guilt in your heart and conscience?
Or do you lack eyes with which to not just look, but see him?
See him for what he truly is,
a man, just like any other, who lacks the blessings you so greedily enjoy.
See him.

See him as a man who has a mind and heart and soul, with feelings and a story,
largely untold not because he lacks knowledge or eloquence,
but because the Miss, the Sir, the Ma'am,
the hundreds of bodies, too hastily passing by are so deeply consumed within their minds
so closed
to look and see the man who wishes you a nice day,
even though you cannot bear to stop and listen
for
just
one
moment
to what this man without a home has to say.



6am
KYLE SMART

Two Fingers and a Label: Dramatic Monologue

DANIELLE STEINWART

This is how to get a leg up in life. Be white, be straight, and most importantly, be a he.

Being one or two of them will help, sure, but you gotta have all three to really get it right.

And, I mean, you'd think I'd like that, right? I'm a triple threat. But, really, anyone who actually looks at the situation can see how fucked up the whole thing is.

Let's take the "be a he" thing first. It's the most important, right? (Well, I think so, since it just seems so global, I guess). Okay, so if Hillary becomes president—and I think she'd be an awesome president were she elected—if she becomes president, people won't be saying she was the most deserving candidate or ran the best campaign, will they? No, they'll be too preoccupied saying, "I was alive when the, the first woman president was elected." And that mentality- the way people say shit like that. It's just...

Or, like, my mom, she was a teacher, and she won a Golden Apple, this big national award. And when people were congratulating her, they always shook her hand with, with...with raised eyebrows, you know? Like, something should have held her back, but, surprisingly, it didn't. And it was pretty obvious what that something was.

It's the way people phrase it. It's just, it might be unintentional, but it's still there, regardless. You know, despite being a woman, she was able to achieve this or win that. Despite. Like being a woman is this big brick wall you have to scale in order to, you know, achieve your goals.

And maybe it is. I mean, maybe that's how women feel. I don't know. I feel like, as a boy—a man, ha, as a man, I feel like my gender is some sort of propellant, like a turbo boost, or something, you know? It gives me certain advantages.

Or no, maybe, maybe not a turbo boost. It's gotta be something more subtle than that. Being a man is like... going through life on a moving walkway, you know, those ones at airports for people who need to catch their flights, or whatever. It's not a ton faster, and someone could jog without walking on one and still keep up, definitely. But it's more convenient. You know, there's less of a struggle, less effort. You don't even have to move and you'll still go forward.

My gender helps me like that, helps me streamline my life. The path of least resistance, and all that. Women sometimes have to sprint and hurdle to achieve their goals, sometimes I can just, you know, lean to the side with my legs crossed and get there at the same time, or even sooner. And she's winded and sweaty and bitter, I'm totally fine, haven't broken a sweat.

And I don't mean to say that men don't have struggles, because obviously every human goes through pain and struggles in their life to some degree. But I'm just saying, like... being a man hasn't, you know, worsened those pains, or multiplied or created them.

And same goes for sexuality. It's not like I've ever been, you know, persecuted for being straight. All these things that make me "lucky" or have the "upper hand," I mean, I didn't fucking choose any of it! I didn't choose to be white, or to be a guy. And even though some people may disagree, I didn't choose my sexuality. I didn't choose to be straight. But even though none of it is by choice, people will still throw around this word "natural" only talking about one option.

"Men are proven to be the stronger sex physically, so it just seems natural for them to have power in other aspects as well."

"Everyone was born straight. Any deviation from that isn't natural."

Being straight or a man or white, it's what's natural, ideal. Anything else is just... bowing to the ideal. You know, women bow to men, minorities to whites, gays to straights.

There was this psychologist that I read about in psychology... I mean, obviously it was in psychology. But he said that it was damn near impossible to be 100% gay or 100% straight. He said it was more of a, a spectrum that we all fall onto. And there's something really cool about that. Because it kind of helps you see sexuality as a part of biology as opposed to a personal choice or something. It's how we're wired, you understand what I mean? Something that is meant to happen or that we're meant to be. And simplifying that and things like that just makes prejudice and hate multiply. You know, it's easy to say you hate something when you think you can just pick it up with two fingers and slap a label on it.

I can't wait for it to be, like, 20 years from now, or probably longer, honestly, when people see discrimination or prejudice against homosexuality as silly. When Lutheran schools like the one I went to won't be teaching students that being gay is bad. When homophobes are considered as despicable as Nazis are today (yeah, I went for the extreme there). And not just homophobes, but sexists and racists, too, who have flown under the radar more recently, but we all know they're alive and well. I mean, seriously, all we get when we are growing up and from those angst-y teen movies is to "be yourself," right? So when are we all going to learn how to get along and just freaking accept each other?

And I don't mean, you know, I don't mean it in the way those people who say they are "color blind" or whatever do, like they treat everyone the same and essentially don't acknowledge differences in race. First of all, that's impossible. You can't just switch off everything you've ever been raised to think, or, like, anything your society or the media, has ingrained in you. You can't just forget all the stereotypes and biases. No way. And to think otherwise is just stupid.

But, I just mean—I don't know if you've ever heard Obama's speech at the, uh, 2004 DNC convention, but it's one of the most powerful things—like, we're not a black America, we're not a white America, we're the United States of America. We're not Latino, we're not Asian, we're the United States. And I don't think he meant we had to, you know, wipe away those differences, but that no matter what, we can stand united as a country without these, these prejudices and hate standing in the way, making being gay or a woman or black seem like a, you know, an obstacle in itself? But, I mean, in 30 years no one will remember that speech, will they? In a few decades, all these world leaders will only be known for one or two things. More labels to slap under names and dates. So they'll just think of Obama and remember "Oh, he was the first black president, how cool is that?"



Curious

DAVID PURVIS-FENKER



Pipes
DAVID PURVIS-FENKER

Paradelle for Twitter

STERLING LONG

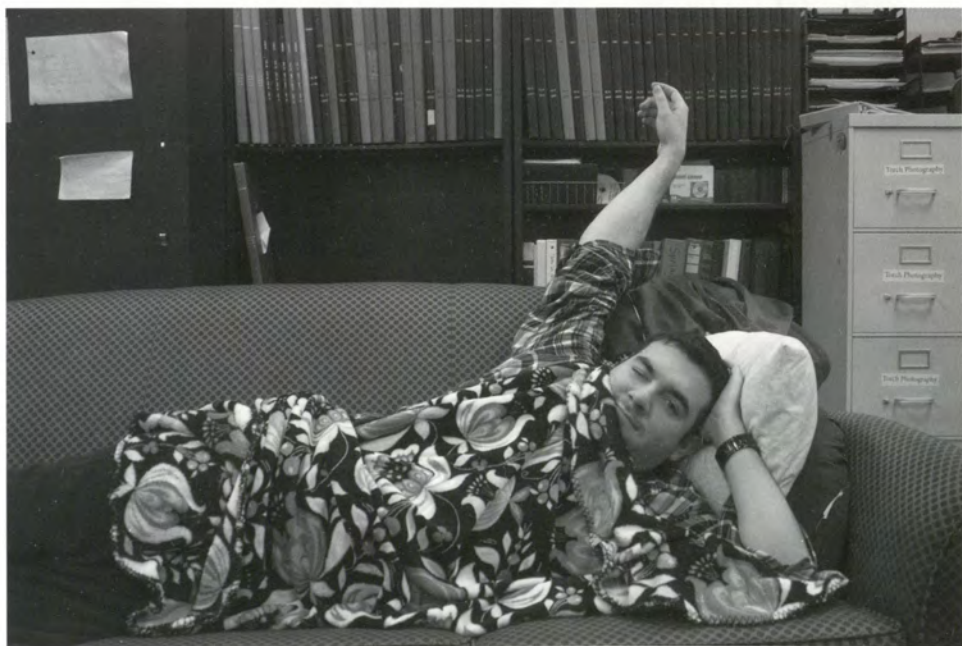
Got compliments from a homeless dude.
Got compliments from a homeless dude.
I need a drink and someplace far away.
I need a drink and someplace far away.
Got a drink and a homeless dude far away.
I need compliments from someplace.

Danced to the cupid shuffle with a nun.
Danced to the cupid shuffle with a nun.
Forever craving wings and pumpkin pie.
Forever craving wings and pumpkin pie.
Forever craving the cupid wings and
the danced nun with pumpkin pie to.

I'm going to drown myself in coffee.
I'm going to drown myself in coffee.
Most of y'all are annoying anyways.
Most of y'all are annoying anyways.
I'm annoying myself anyways.
Most of y'all are going to drown in coffee.

With myself, I danced and drown
in the drink. And a homeless, annoying
dude compliments, "Pumpkin, I'm far
away from someplace most of y'all are going to.
Myself need wings forever." Anyways,
the nun, Cupid, got a pie and coffee craving.

**Found lines from Twitter's @Pentametron*



Richard
KYLE SMART

To my Best Friend

SARAH GEEKIE

I know what it is like to be
captive on a carousel horse
when you're doubting the whole contraption.

When you look in the mirror,
please
see a whole person.

Because a bone still a bone even when it is
broken.

And it has the capacity to grow stronger than ever before.

Don't bury yourself before you die.

The ground can't sustain you yet.

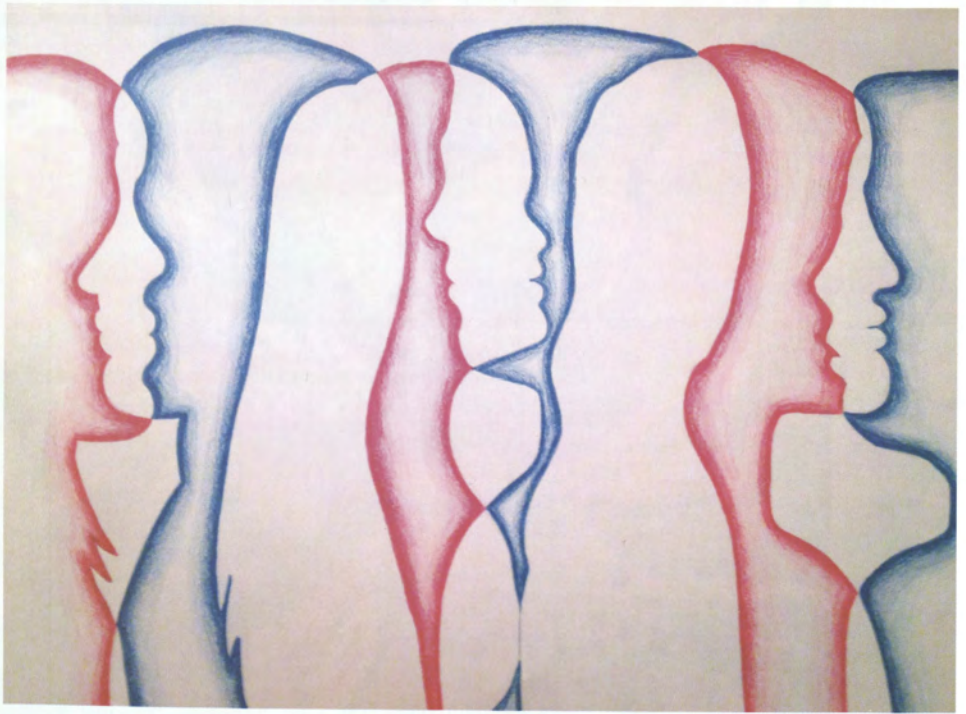
You are still so,

so

young.



The Dream Flower
MORGHAN PUGH



Mérge
MARISSA RINAS

The Time I Saw You

JORDAN BIRES

The sound of your deceptive name scratches
my eardrums, sand paper on polished surface.

*Wine spills on grey fabric, staining a bloody
splatter across the front of an evening gown.*

Friends ask about your absence, poking
and prodding an already salty wound.

*Gunshots echo on an illuminated screen,
background noise for our locked lips.*

Your left ring finger lacks a gold circle;
mine is heavy with 5 carats on a silver band.

*White porcelain smashes into the wall,
broken and unfixable, a depiction of me.*

New clothes cover a familiar body;
you're not the same, but neither am I.

*I leave while you slumber; you're too drunk
to wake to the click of the door.*

Brown irises refuse to meet mine;
I never needed you anyway.



In the Mill
MALLORY SWISHER

Cargo

BRITTANY BARRETT

I was walking through a field when I noticed a body in the distance.
The field was vast and flowerless,
The sky was a dull gray-blue.
The body I saw,
A beautifully sharp silhouette against a smudgy gray slate,
Beckoned.

I ran— to get closer,
Treading carefully because I'd stepped on rocks before.

I found you when I got close enough,
Along with a sense of belonging
That felt sweeter than the flowers that weren't growing around me.

Then I noticed a crate at your feet.

You took my affections
(And picked up your fondness)
And put these both in the box,
Then quantified the contents with your Anatomy.
After you'd made your measurements,
You penciled an expiration date,
And broke the mirror I had brought to you as a gift.

Imperfection

HEATHER MENDE

I was five
long stringy curls
butterfly clips
denim dress
with strappy shoes
went behind the basement bar

He followed too. Towering over
head making commands the rest a blur
I listened unaware. Unable to scream.
My mouth dry
full of salmon colored
smooth textured, something
I should not have seen.

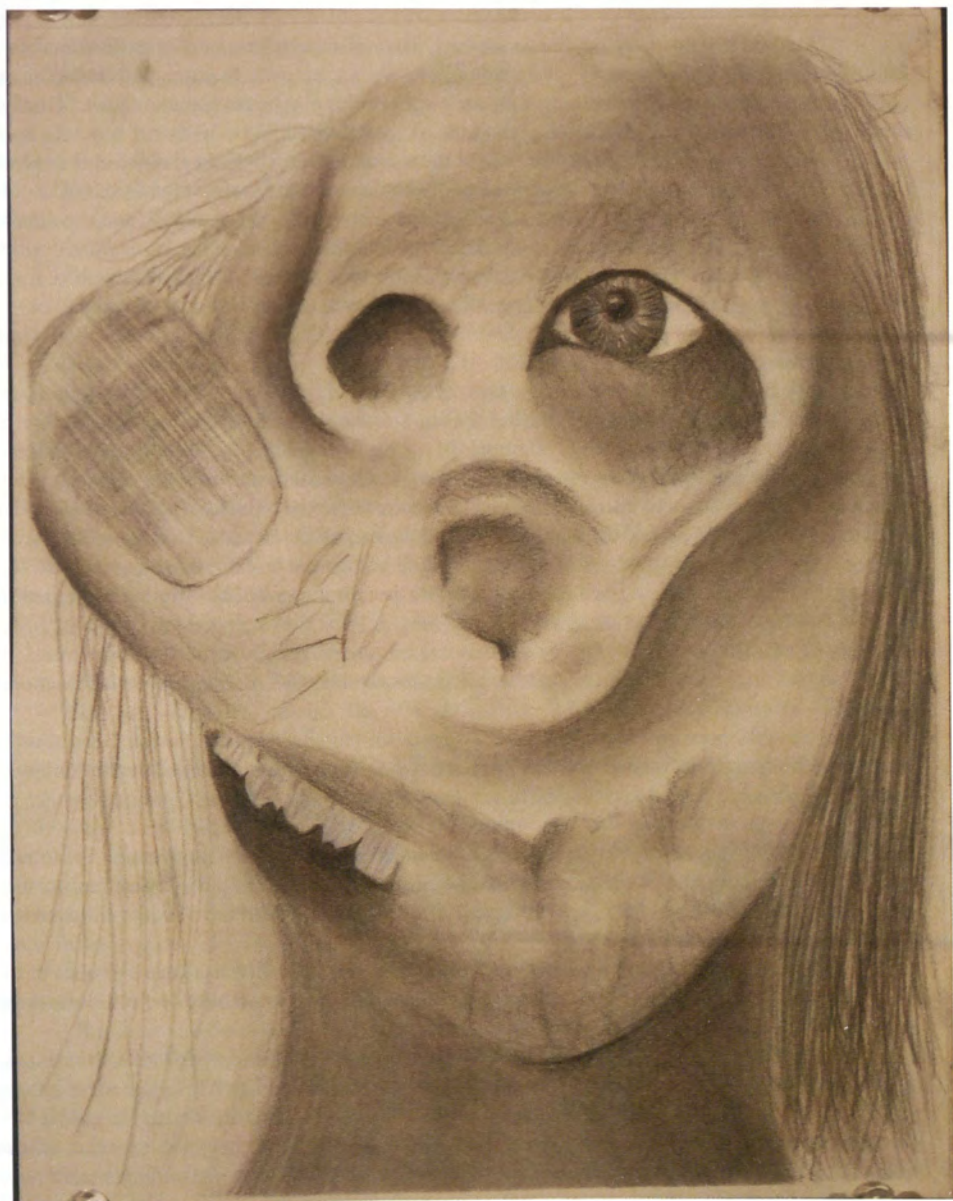
No words can fill
child's disarray in the kitchen
of a corner ranch. Soft blank face
feet dangling over a wooden chair
I looked up to mother's ear
pressed against a wall phone—
cord dangling
swinging as she paced.

Grandpa's old pickup
in the cracked driveway honked once
and no more. Mother said sit still

and wait. Front door opened
murmurs echoed down the hall
footsteps slow and he was gone.

I became the crooked stitch
in grandmother's hand-sown quilt
on a green couch still wrapped in plastic.

He was thirteen beet red face
gel spiked hair
dark jeans
with parts unknown
followed behind basement bar.



The Face of Reality
CANDACE WATERS

Ashes to Ashes

ALYSSA BONECK

His finger tapped against the coffee mug. The nail was so bitten down it didn't make a sound against the metal surface. He pressed the elevator button again, then stepped back. The doors didn't budge. His finger stopped but his foot took up the tempo as he continued to wait. "Finally," he muttered, as he heard the electrical whoosh of the elevator descending.

Lights flashed through the crevasse of the elevator door. The man glanced at the warning plaque. Do Not Use During a Fire. For a moment, he imagined the flashes of light were licks of flame dancing beneath the metal contraption. The down arrow above the elevator lit up and the doors slid open. He stepped in and hit the lower level button with his knuckle.

The tapping soon ensued as he waited, but was interrupted as the elevator jerked, the lights flickering off and on. He tried to steady himself by grabbing the wall, but then the floor seemed to drop out from under him. He slammed into the ceiling, a sickening crack echoing in the metal chamber. Everything went black.

When his eyes flickered open he was on the floor of the elevator. He pulled himself up with a groan. The lights seemed dimmer, but the elevator was humming like it was moving normally. He looked around, disoriented. What happened?

The numbers still lit up that he was moving towards the lower level. He picked at his nails as he waited for the doors to open, but his picking was interrupted as he kept pulling at his collar. After a few minutes he cleared his throat and wiped the increasing beads of sweat from his forehead.

He checked his watch. The lights said he had passed the first floor, but he still hadn't gotten to the lower level. He jabbed the button again, though it was still lit. Nothing happened. The elevator continued humming.

"I've taken this elevator every day for the past twenty years," he muttered to himself. "It's never stopped on me, but after working hours overtime to close this fucking case it decides to fuck with me."

He jabbed the lower level button a few more times, convinced the machine had stopped, then raked his fingers through his hair and pressed the emergency button, swearing under his breath.

"I just want to get home," he muttered.

Nothing happened. He pressed the button again. No sound. No person over the intercom.

"God damn it!" He slammed his hand against the wall, and yelped as the metal burned his skin. His jaw went slack as he examined his hand, finding red and blistered skin. He clutched it to his chest, gritting his teeth.

His heart was beating hard in his chest. His suit was drenched in sweat. The hum of the elevator drilled into his ears. Was it moving? He couldn't tell. Was something on fire? He hovered his other hand near the wall. Intense heat radiated from it.

He stepped back, looking around at the four walls. A distorted, foggy reflection stared back at him. He looked up. Wasn't there supposed to be some sort of hatch? He placed his hand just under the ceiling. Heat rolled off it. He leaned back on his heels and undid his tie. He used it to wipe the sweat drenching his face and neck, then let it drop to the floor. He shrugged his jacket off and draped it over his arms. With the jacket protecting his hands, he tried to dig his fingers into the door crack.

"Come on," he said through gritted teeth. All those years of sitting at a desk proved pointless. The doors didn't budge. He was going to be baked alive.

He snatched his fingers away from the doors, his jacket falling to the floor, and brought his hands up to blow on his fingers. God his hand hurt. He started chewing on his finger nails, sweat dripping down his face and neck. His back was soaked. He looked back at the buttons and almost bit

a finger off. The elevator buttons were dripping down the walls.

There was no hatch. No way out. The buttons were fucking melting.

"Shit." His hands dropped to his sides. "Shit," he said again, louder. He turned in a circle, looking around at all the walls. Was this a joke? Was this even the real elevator? He unbuttoned his shirt and began flapping the sides to try and cool down. The air was thick and dry. His breathing came in quick and shallow. He could feel himself starting to panic. His eyes darted around the tiny room. No way out. No way out.

The doors slid open with a pleasant ding.

Black smoke seeped into the elevator. He pulled off his shirt and used it to cover his mouth as he tried to squint through it. Were there flames? He hesitantly stepped through the doors. He kept his hand stretched out in front of him, his fingers slightly bent in anticipation of the bite of fire. His arm shook as he walked.

A puff of heat brushed his fingers. He yelped and jumped back, his hand plastered to his chest. His eyes darted around, trying to see something, anything, through the thick dark smoke. Nothing. There's nothing. He dropped his head into his hands, groaning. His head rose back up slowly, and he adjusted his shirt over his mouth and began moving forward again.

"I've given years to this company," he said. "Years. This fire – this fucking fire – isn't going to ruin me."

His fingers met something cool and solid. He brought up his other hand, the shirt falling to the ground, and placed them both flat on the surface. Feeling around, he found hinges, and a door knob. He grasped the knob and twisted. The door creaked open, revealing cubicles. Rows and rows of cubicles, all corralled off by gray walls.

He entered the room, shutting the door behind him. A woman came bustling towards him. He went to adjust his tie only to find bare skin.

"Miss," he said. She paused, her eyes roving over him, then she opened the top file of the pile she was carrying and handed him a form. "There's a fire," he said as she sauntered past him. She didn't respond. He turned, watching her leave. Once she was out of sight, he looked at the paper in his hand. In large, bold letters it read SEXUAL HARASSMENT at the top of the page.

"Seriously?" He crumpled the paper and threw it to the ground. He spun around abruptly and went up to the first cubicle, finding a man working at his desk there.

"Give me your shirt," he said. The man at the desk continued typing. Numbers were flying over the screen, page after page being filled. His eyes were drawn to a picture amongst all the usual desk supplies. It was of the man and presumably his wife. A child was sitting on his shoulders. From where he was standing, there must have been a glare; the little girl's eyes looked black as night. It was a striking image combined with her light blonde hair.

"Sir," he said, pulling his eyes from the picture. There was no response. His foot began to tap. He looked back at the picture. Who would marry such an obstinate man? His foot froze. The little girl had moved. Her nails had grown into talons and fangs protruded from her gums, changing the once appealing little girl into a disturbing image.

"Excuse me," he said faintly, grabbing the back of the man's chair. The typing stopped. The screen froze.

"This has to be done by this afternoon." Slowly, the chair began to turn. He removed his hands from its back. "It's her birthday," the man continued. His voice was soft, yet it caused a shiver to run down his spine.

"I'm the chief financial manager," he stuttered. "I don't mean to interrupt your work. I just wanted..."

The chair finally turned all the way around and the man lunged at him, flying up from his chair. He was pinned on his back. The man's face was inches from his, his black eyes staring down at him. "My daughter," he yelled, revealing rows and rows of pointed teeth. The man's hands reached around his neck. He bucked, kicking his legs up and rolling out from under him.

He jumped up off the ground, backing out of the cubicle, his shaking hands raised out in front of him. "You can have the day off," he said. He gulped down air as he watched the man. "The whole day."

A hand slapped down on his shoulder. He jumped and tried to reel away, but the hand held him fast. "And who are you to authorize something like that, Mr...?"

"Mr. Doherty. I'm the chief financial manager."

The hand on his shoulder squeezed. "That's strange," the man said. His shoulder was released as the man reached into his jacket. He pulled out a business card. "Mr. Doherty," he said, "good to meet you. I'm Darcel, Darcel Thain." He handed over his card. "Chief financial manager of this establishment."

"What?" Doherty stared down at the card. There it was, in the perfect business card font. Hard stock. Expensive. He felt around, looking for his wallet, and again realized he was half naked. Darcel Thain looked down at him, one eyebrow raised and said, "I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

"No. I—" He looked around. The black-eyed man had gone back to his work. Every single person was tapping away at their computers. Nothing else made a sound in the room. Nothing else moved but their tap tap tapping fingers. "I'm Brian Doherty, chief financial manager." It was getting hard to breathe. He felt faint.

Darcel Thain waved someone over and in a moment two pairs of hands were gripping his arms and dragging him out of the room. The carpet pulled at his shoes. A rough jerk around a corner and they both slid free from his feet. He barely noticed. He stared up at the ceiling, the fluorescent lighting searing his eyes. He didn't even hear the latch of the door or the grunt of the men as they launched him outside.

The ground was hot, and the sky the lightest blue. There were no clouds to block the sun's rays. Brian spread his hands flat on the ground, feeling rough sand dig into his palms. "This isn't Washington," he said quietly. The air was dry and the breeze brought the scent of something sickly sweet. Rotting?

He sat up and his stomach dropped. In front of him stretched miles of desert. Far in the distance a wall of sand was churning. He pushed himself off the ground and winced as sharp pains shot up through his hands. He leaped off the ground and a similar sensation spread through his feet as they hit the ground hard. He bit his lip, groaning as he cradled his bleeding hands. He resisted the temptation to ball them into fists, as small shards of glass were stuck in the skin. The blistered hand was now oozing clear liquid along with the blood as the blisters had been rudely ruptured.

Where the hell had glass come from? He scoured the ground with his eyes, but found none. He slowly eased himself back to the ground and began plucking the shards out of his hands. Next were the feet. In the heels, the sides, a few had even made it in between his toes. He was numb to the sting by the time he was done. His hands were sticky with blood.

He picked a particularly large piece of glass that had been in his hand and used it to cut a hole near the bottom of his pants. He reached his fingers in and ripped off a strip, revealing his ankle. He did the same three more times, with a total of two strips from each pant leg, and then began wrapped his hands and feet. He made it as secure as possible, then was up on his feet once again.

The wall of sand seemed closer than before and he didn't want to be caught in that massive storm. Turning around was like entering another world. Just feet from him, trees, bushes, all rooted snugly in cool dirt. The plants were thick and green, glistening with dew.

He began heading towards them immediately. His feet stung with each step, but he felt rushed to get to the safety of the trees and away from the sand and baking sun.

The soft, wet dirt sunk between his toes. The moisture soaked through the wrappings, soothing the burning and sting. He bent down and piled some over his hands, breathing deeply the earthy scent as relief washed through him.

Rustling leaves caused his eyes to spring open. In the trees, fluttering from branch to branch, were an array of birds. Their colors ranged from crimson reds to the brightest blues and everything in between. The tops of the trees seemed to be full of pockets of berries. When one was found, the bird would burst into song and they would all flock over, devouring the fruit.

Brian's stomach felt empty. His mouth was dry. He stood and walked to the lowest branch he could find. After wrapping his hands around the rough bark, he attempted to pull himself up. But a burst of cacophonous noise caused him to jump back from the branch. It was an abrupt change

from the choruses the birds had been singing before.

He reached for the branch again, but was met with the same disturbing song. He covered his ears until it stopped. They were all watching him now. Some swooped on vibrant, outstretch feathers to branches closer. "Fucking birds," he said, but his voice wavered. He went from the tree and continued forward into the forest, trudging through waist-high ferns. Flowers hid amongst the bushes, their colors bright against the green environment. Brian thought he could catch the hint of their scent every time a breeze brushed through the forest. Sickly sweet. He wasn't sure he liked the smell.

"You did it," echoed through the air, breaking the silence.

He froze.

"You did it," the voice repeated.

He slowly turned around. "Who's there?"

A woman's scream rang out, causing Brian's heart to jump. He slammed his hands over his ears.

"Who was that?" he yelled, his eyes roving over the forest.

The birds sat, watching him from the trees. Amongst all the colored birds sat two black ones. They hopped from their branches and spread their wings wide, gliding to land on the tree next to him. The leaves began to turn black and fall to the ground. One of the black birds opened its beak and the shrill scream pierced the air. Brian cringed. "You did it," the other black bird said after the forest had fallen silent again. "You did it."

"You're just some shitty parrots," he said and turned his back to them. The deafening sound of hundreds of wings filled the air as he walked. He covered his ears, but couldn't escape the noise. The birds were beginning to blot out the light. Everything was falling into shadow.

Leaves began to fall around him and he reached out to catch one. It was black and disintegrated at his touch. He paused. When had the wings stopped? It was completely silent. He looked up into the trees, only to find hundreds of black birds perched in the branches around him. It wasn't them blocking the sun light. Everything had turned black, like he had stepped into the remains of a forest fire.

"Adulterer."

"Murderer." The birds chanted.

"I didn't..." He rubbed his eyes. "I was found – in a court of law – not guilty," he said.

"She– She wasn't..." He shook his head. "She fell."

"Prideful."

"Greedy."

"Sinner."

"I'm not into all that religious stuff," he said, looking around at the birds, picking at his nails. Why am I even talking back to some animals? They completely surrounded him from the sides and behind. "I'm going to go now." He continued walking into the forest. The birds didn't budge from their places, but sat watching him go.

The ground crunched under his feet now. He was covered in soot from his toes to his ankles and the leaves continued to fall, sprinkling soot residue over the rest of him. It felt strangely cold for a place so charred. His skin broke out into goosebumps and a few minutes later he began to shiver. He wrapped his arms around himself.

The sound of rushing water caused his shoulders to straighten and head to perk up. He licked his dry lips and began to hurry. The river bank finally came into view and he fell to his knees in front of it. His mouth fell slack at what he saw.

"No."

Black tar filled the river. He didn't even move as a black bird landed on his shoulder. Its talons dug in. Blood oozed down his arm from the wounds. "I loved her," he said, staring into the blackness.

"Sinner," the bird said, and then gripped his shoulder with a sudden ferociousness and dragged him over the bank and into the river.

The tar was icy. The cold settled in his bones quickly as it clung to him, pulling him under.

No matter how much he kicked and flailed, he couldn't reach the surface again. His lungs burned. The stench of rotting was overpowering. The tar invaded his nostrils and mouth as he couldn't help but gasp for breath. His mind was completely and utterly consumed by terror.

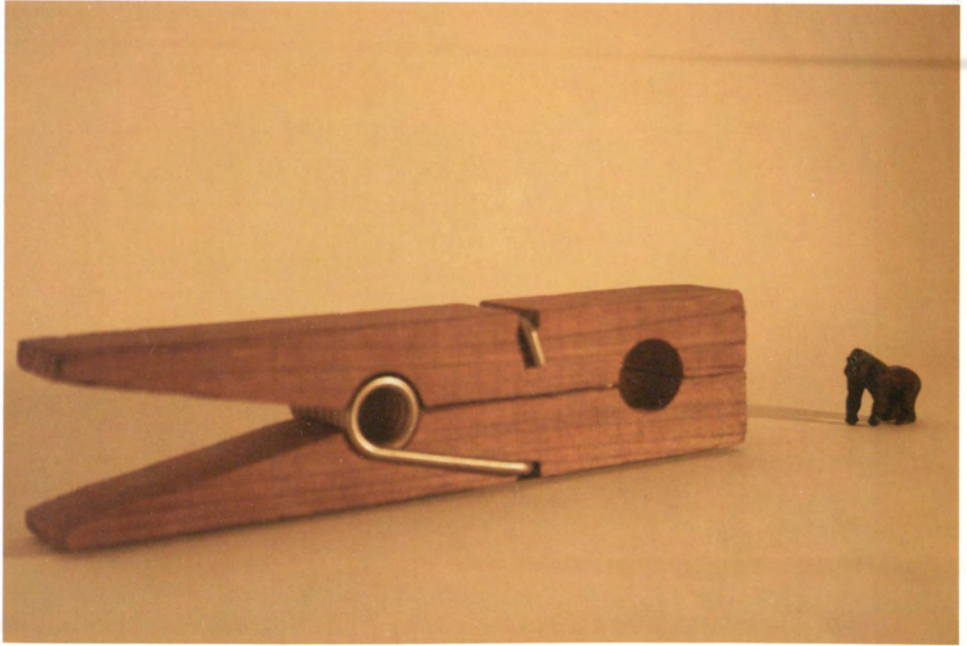
Then the tar released him, its suction keeping sections of skin, hair, and clothing, as he was allowed to slide from it. Naked, he slammed onto freezing stone. Above him the tar hung, creating an undulating ceiling to the cavern he had fallen into.

He couldn't move. Every muscle ached and his skin felt raw. His throat and eyes burned. Tar still stuck in his nose, creating an inescapable rotting smell. He could hear screams. They didn't sound like they ever stopped. The same voices endlessly crying out.

"Brian Doherty, you're right on time," a creature spoke. The sound made his chest constrict, his breath to stop. He squeezed his eyes shut. "Take him away," the voice said.

His eyes sprung open. Wait, he tried to speak. Two brutish things stepped from the shadows. They were huge, their muscles so big the skin ripped to allow them space. He could see down to the bone. Their skin was unevenly dark, like they had been splattered with paint, but he didn't think it was paint. He let his head fall back as they grabbed him by the arms and dragged him towards one of the many caves that littered the walls of the cavern. "Wait," he was finally able to speak, but his small, breathy voice was drowned out by the screaming. "No. No. No." He began to thrash around. "Wait," he screamed as he disappeared into the dark.





WTF
REGAN WEBER



Hughes the Man
REGAN WEBBER



Teapot
CANDACE WATTERS





Sun Goddess
KYLE SMART

Our Children

STACY MCKEIGUE

They tell you, "Kill your darlings." Well, I did.
I cut them, one by one, with Cupid's bow —
our Bismuth, Michael, little Ainslie — bid
farewell to tiny hearts we'll never know.
The night I left, I broke the cracking dreams,
and watched our children quickly fade away
like mist dissolving into morning's seams.
Their honey hair, the eyes a wintry grey...
so many evenings guessing who they'd be:
*I know they'll have your smile. I hope they write
as well. Perhaps they'll sing old jazz, like me.*
I buried our kids, coffins cloaked in white.
They rest forever in September chill,
my darlings, whom I loved but had to kill.



Baubling
STEFAN ROSEEN



Little Insecure
MYLIHN MAC

A Mother's Reminder

STERLING LONG

Age 6:

She told me not to worry because there's nothing in the closet. She told me to brush my teeth. She told me frozen peas don't count as a vegetable unless they're thawed. She told me, while we were sitting in the garden, that Lamb's Ears grow from the ground. She told me that my elbow was strong and able, and to get it off the table.

Age 12:

She told me I should have put on another layer and that I should zip up my coat. She told me I could be Hamlet. She told me we weren't going to have Christmas, but we would still celebrate my birthday. She told me to blow my nose and to pull up my pants. She told me to chew my food slower. She told me I could be anyone I wanted to be, so I was. She told me that being gay was okay. She told me to never, ever smoke. She told me I wasn't too old to be Batman. She told me to have a sip of her wine.

Age 18:

She told me with a whisper that she loved me as we stood outside the funeral home. She told me that she didn't have time to make me supper because grades were due. She told me grades don't matter, but she was frustrated every time her students would fail. She told me to turn off the Xbox and to study. She told me to brush my teeth. She told me not to worry because there is nothing in the closet.

A Matter of Family
Lynn K. Kline



UNTITLED
MARIA ELGENDI

Growing
ALLISON GRISCHOW

She planted them in rich soil
And packed it neatly around
Like a tucked in comforter.

She read every manual
Asked the neighbors
And prayed for good fortune.

She shielded them
From wind and frost
Hiding them safely inside.

She watered each
As instructed
And waited patiently for them to blossom.

But - swarms of aphids
Pay no mind
To a gardener's careful planning.

The damaged leaves
And fallen petals
Show not her labors.
She weeps not for her efforts
But for the devoured buds.



Stanley
MYLIHN MAC

My Father was a Man of the Ocean

PHILIP WEBB

My Father was a man of the Ocean. He had salt-blood in his veins and his heart beat with the rhythm of the tides, as does mine. But not, I think, as strong as his. I cannot speak to the waves the way that he could.

I have brought the shovels and the wheelbarrow, and the sun is nearly down. The Oysterboy will bring the torches and meet me at the gate. He loves me, I know he does. He has wide shoulders and strong arms, and his hands are rough from the ropes. He would do anything for me. He kisses me nervously when I arrive, and I notice, not for the first time, that his lips are a lot softer than his hands. I smile at him, and we walk along the path as the sun sets behind the hills. First he talks, muttering anxiously about small nothings, then when I don't respond he goes quiet and looks at the darkening sky. It is mid-summer, the night will be short. I tell him we will have to hurry.


It was my Grandmother, my Father's Mother, who gave us this gift. She came from the Sea. One summer morning, on a Wednesday, so the story goes – striding up the beach as naked as the crystal sky. When she reached my Grandfather's door she knocked three times and said: 'I have come to take you as my husband.'

When we arrive at the place, the Oysterboy hesitates, looks at me and asks if I'm sure. His jaw is straight like the bow of a boat, but his hands have become restless birds, diving in and out of his pockets and flapping at his sides. As his sunburnt eyes sink into mine he asks again, desperate for reassurance, and there is a trembling in his voice like the rough spilling of sand. He sounds so young, I am almost ashamed. Touching his face in the dark, I whisper something in his ear; then I pick up my shovel and start digging.

She was not a beautiful woman, my Grandmother. Her skin was not smooth, her lips were too thin; and her hair was never anything more than a tangle of salted brown – the colour of dry seaweed. But still, my Grandfather loved her from that day until the day he died. Together they had three sons in the short happy years they shared. Two of them disappeared into the surf just a few months after they were born. The third – my Father – chose to stay. I often wonder where they went, my Uncles. Perhaps it was to them that my Father would converse.

It takes us a long time, the digging, longer than I expected. After the first hour the bones in my back begin to twitch and moan, aching like twisted driftwood. We wedge the torches between some stones, moving them often, as we go deeper and deeper into the earth. Luckily the Oysterboy is stronger than I am; he works tirelessly, digging in rhythm with his breath. I am glad he is here; I could not do this alone.

In the short, warm nights of summer, he would sit out by the Sea, his huge frame curled underneath him, resting his head on his hands as he talked. I would watch him by the light of the house for hours and hours as he spoke his words to the waves. Then I would go down early the next day and wish the Sea good morning, hoping it would say something, anything back. But it never did. It never has.



The coffin is pine, a solid wood. It takes many blows before it cracks. We fall back when the stench hits us, a smell like nothing I've ever known. The Oysterboy makes a sound like dry retching, like drowning while breathing. I rest my palm between his shoulder blades and wait, holding the tears from my eyes. Slowly, after a long pause, we peel away the lid; piece by piece, revealing a thing that no longer looks like the man I loved. His face is bleached beyond all memory. His fingers are pale and fat like naked little crabs and his whole body is bloated and frozen in death. I begin to cry as we lift him out of the ground. I could never have imagined he would be this heavy.

Three days ago the tides stopped still, and my Father fell down in the kitchen while scrubbing fish; there were scales all over the floor when I found him. His mouth was blue and gaping, like a catch. Heart attack they said. High blood pressure. They buried him the next morning in a graveyard miles from the beach. I haven't slept since.

Again the Oysterboy asks if I'm sure. He tries to hold me in his arms but I push him gently away and start filling in the grave. Silently he helps me. It takes us the longest time, every movement aches and burns, but we have to hurry. When we finish we pat down the grave, hiding the fresh earth and replacing the flowers. Next comes the hopeless part, the journey through town.

They didn't listen when I told them it was wrong. My Father's wife, and all her pretty sisters- they called me child, and little girl. They even laughed when I told them about my Grandmother. Old fishwives' tales, they said. But they don't understand. My Father was not born to be buried in the earth.

The streets are painfully bright and filled with the stench of dead fish. The Oysterboy and I take turns to push, making slow progress. We pass sleeping houses and closed windows, moving as soundlessly as we can. The thing sits gracelessly in the barrow; his huge frame curled underneath him, stinking worse than the town. There is the slightest hint of a squeak in the wheel, it whines as we lift it onto the pavement. My breathing shudders when we see a group of cats, three of them sitting around a rubbish-bin overflowing with bones. They watch us fearlessly, like old women with pearly eyes shining in the streetlights. We meet no one else.

He should have drowned. He should have fallen from his boat in the heart of a storm and never been found, or walked out one evening and never come back. Both of these I would have believed; I would have accepted.

Eventually we reach the Sea. Both of us are utterly exhausted and the sand is slippery and awkward. The surf roars up in the early morning tide, spraying us with welcome. As I brush the wet hair from my eyes, I am reminded of my Grandmother with her salt-brown, seaweed locks. I glance at the Oysterboy beside me; his features are tired but beautiful. Slowly, I touch his shoulder, his neck, his face. I do not smile and he does not speak. Together we stand on the beach and watch, as the sun rises over the unending Ocean. Then with the last of my strength I pick up my Father, and walk into the waves.

That was the first time I heard the voice, liquid and female, quietly whispering: 'Thank you.'



Kindling
STEFAN ROSEEN

Capsized on the Outskirts of Vyborg Bay

STERLING LONG

-In memory of the Varangian ship found in July 1997

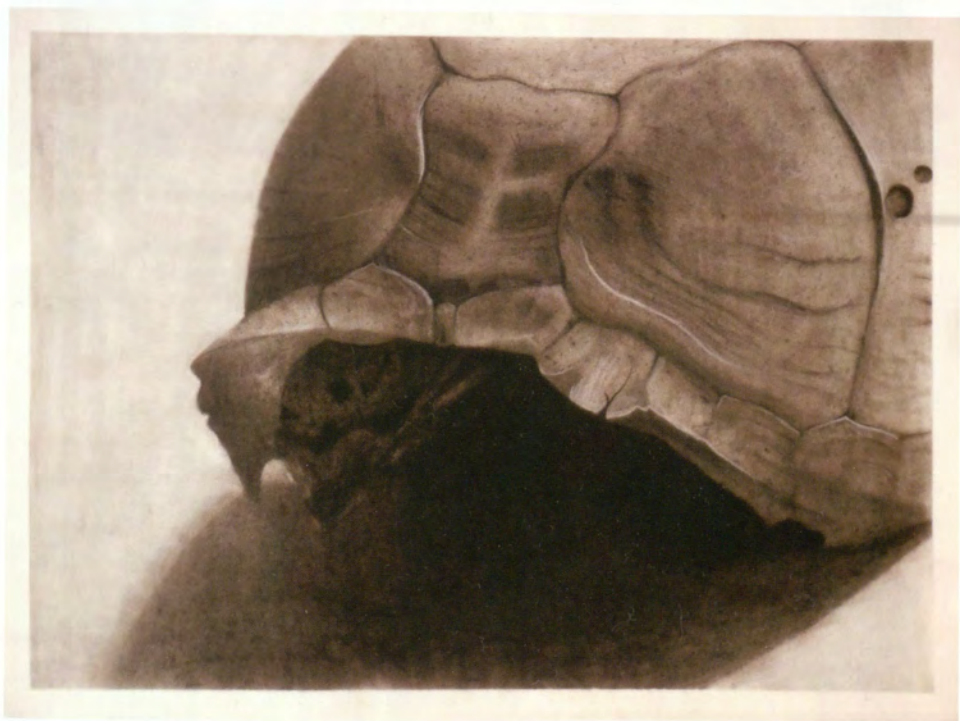
A lonely trade ship on a Nordic night
drifts closer home. A weak lamplight
gently shimmers over frostbit faces
fully filled with dirt and empty gazes.
an ice storm strikes and the old galley creaks
under the weight. Men cry because they're weak.
The helmsman pushes harder on the wood.
He's steering to escape his childhood.
The men beneath row faster, never knowing
north from south or if their worn seagoing
bodies will make it through. A crack is heard.
The heavy mast falls, crushing the starboard
side of the railing. Men scurry to fix
the splintered pine's fresh wound. The mechanics
are overwhelmed. The Baltic seeps inside
and swiftly fills the hold with the cold tide.
The ship lowers and the goods float upward,
like our prayers in the blistering blizzard.
As twilight twists the world's shadows away,
left stuck. Marooned. Adrift in our decay.



La Coeur de la Mer
ANGIE JACKSON



Head On
ALEXANDER URYGA



Hidden in Plain Sight
CANDACE WATERS

Eppur si muove
ALLISON GRANAT

It is 3 minutes to midnight.
The room is silent.
The sea of eyes stare at the clock.
Eppur si muove.

It is 3 minutes to midnight.
The air hurts children's lungs.
The ice has long gone.
Eppur si muove.

It is 2 minutes to midnight.
The hungry grow weak, and
Disease runs through our veins.
Eppur si muove.

It is 1 minute to midnight.
Thousands slaughtered, unseen.
A finger pushes the button.
Eppur si muove

It is midnight.



Breeze
SARA WATTS



UNTITLED
NORA VILLEGAS PINEDA

Circumference of a Soul

JORDAN BIRES

After Robert Miller's "Bristlecome Pine"

I.

Sadness burns through veins.
Unforgiving heat radiates,
Charring nerve endings like marshmallows.

Chewing you, brittle and squishy pieces,
Spitting you out as white globs,
Annoying anyone passing by.

Desperate hands reach for solace,
Finding more heartache and trouble.
Nails bite palms, leaving half moons.

*You're not good enough.
Stop trying;
you won't succeed.*

Nights fit for an insomniac
Recall sadness and grief.
What if becomes a mantra.

II.

Darkness vanquished by light;
hate gave way to love's persuasion;
loneliness found a crowded room.

Happiness, Possibilities, Hope,
Echoed between listening ears.
A mantra reborn, revived.

Sticky white morphed to softness.
Comforting hands ready to hold.
Fingertips mended scars,

Stitched gaping sores together,
Filled with reassurance.
Roots twined within.

Rings count past years
Starting in middle ground,
Branching out for every new life.

Rooftops

AMBER ROLLINS

I have always wanted to sit on a rooftop.

This sounds pretty far-fetched, especially since I'm afraid of heights, but I've seen a few TV shows where a guy or gal sits on the rooftop and places their lunchbox beside them, enjoying a sandwich or a box of fudge-flavored Pop Tarts while the sun squats over their heads and the wind smacks their cheeks. Whenever I see a scene like that on TV, I always get the urge to just open the window and hop out onto the rooftop. It's pretty accessible, actually; the only problem is the ventilation system that blows every which way...and it's the middle of winter. I might catch a cold.

Well, my excuses are a giant bag of bullshit. I shouldn't have to wait until I'm forty with a mortgage and four pooping cats pawing at me for some tuna. I want to feel what a rooftop feels like *now*.

So, despite my brain kicking me in the back of the head and telling me to stop, I open the window and step onto the roof.

The first thought is that I feel like Batman. Even before I saw the scenes on TV, I had spent time in high school gazing out the window and thinking, "Batman stands on rooftops all the time. He's such a cool guy. He's so fearless. If I stand on the rooftop, I won't die...right?" And now I'm doing it. I smell a mixture of exhaust fumes and fresh air, and I feel a surge of confidence that I haven't felt in months.

You know what would make the experience twice as great?

A bottle of Coke and The King.

So I grab a bottle of Coke from the room and pull out The King to join me. The King – King Liverpool – is a giant stuffed penguin that guards my side of the room. He's not the only stuffed animal with me, but he is the biggest, so he gets some perks. You can't just expect a guard to work for free. This is America, the land of opportunity and capitalism. The King may have been appointed as British, but he was made in China and bought at an American Toys R Us. He's everything.

(...that makes no sense. I'm sorry.)

We sit in silence, obviously, 'cause The King cannot speak. One time a French postal stuffed bear got into a dispute with him and cut his tongue in half with a switchblade, if you can entertain that idea. The Coke tastes splendid, and I stare at the clouds for what seems like hours. I rock a little and make small, happy noises under my breath. I would play some music and dance, but my laptop is charging, and just the idea of actually being on the rooftop makes me really happy. I'm finally Batman.

Eventually I begin walking around in circles with The King. Bad idea. This attracts people's attention and not in a good way. It's never a good way. While I've seen a few enjoyable rooftop scenes, most rooftop scenes revolve around suicidal people or political radicals. I'm not here to make any statements, but within five minutes the sidewalks are filled with people, either making fun of me or trying to tell me there's so much to live for despite never talking to me before this. I almost want to throw my Coke bottle at them, but that would be a waste of pop. I hate commotion.

Do you know what else I hate?

Talking to people.

After the police and a couple of other staff members break up the crowd, I am whisked away to an available counselor. Her room is brown and old and her windows are all foggy. This sucks. She talks to me, and I kind of just nod and agree with most of what she says. I don't want to be here. I never really want to be anywhere. Most people make me uncomfortable; it's pretty ironic I decided to live on campus to work on my people skills. I actually want to cry, but that would make me weak. I always imagine myself being honest with people, but no one ever wants to hear actual honesty. They always want to hear you're okay, and if you say anything otherwise, they label you as wrong or dysfunctional or inferior.

I'm sure she's no different.

So I listen to her lecture, and finally she gets to the sundae of this five-course meal. "Honey, you know you can talk to us about anything. Why don't we talk? What do you want to do with your life?"

There we go. I sound like a total tool, but I don't want to talk. I don't want to show my feelings. I understand she has good intentions, but she doesn't understand that I just want to sit on the rooftop and sit in silence with The King like Batman. I don't want to be stuck in a room with a lady who smells like vanilla, and I don't want her or anyone else pulling a Dr. Phil on me. If only my bottle was empty.

(...I'm a terrible person.)

I smile, look down at the carpet, and mumble, "I don't know."

This is the truth. I *don't* know. This question's been coming up a lot lately, but right now my only goal is to get past thirty and maybe buy The King a cool cape. I can't really express myself well, so the counselor just assumes I'm sad and offers me some cookies. Who am I to turn away free food? I nibble on the cookie and try to avoid smelling the lady. Her perfume is nice but nauseating. I guess the cookies make up for the nausea.

We sit in awkward silence for a long time before she sighs and reluctantly opens the door. She's irritated now; the feeling's mutual. "Sweetheart, you're not going to get far in life with that attitude," she says. "I want to see you again in a couple of days. Think of what you want, maybe some life goals. Okay?"

"Kay."

There are no farewells. I just slip on my coat and owl hat, grab The King, and leave. Pleasantries are pointless. I decide to take a long walk around campus. It's very cold, but I don't want to be anywhere right now. I just want to walk. I rest my chin against The King's head and imagine him crushing buildings with his cute, webbed feet. I wish he had a tongue. He'd say a lot of angry things and protect me. He'd be my most loyal friend, and we'd drink many Coke bottles together.

You probably expect a moral or feel-good end to my misery. I have none. I'm depressed. I'm anxious. I have feelings suffocating in a plastic bag. I want to make people happy, but I'm pretty much chucking away my own happiness into the nearby lake. I'm great. I want to do many things, but many people tell me, "No." I'm a pessimistic idealist, if that makes any sense.

(...it probably doesn't.)

Still, I cling to hope and hope that hope will always stand by me. If we don't cling to hope, we might allow robots or gorillas or robots that use the Ebola virus as chemical warfare to take us down and enslave us all. I don't want to be enslaved by anybody. If I keep believing, maybe things will get better. Maybe I'll have a direction to follow and live past thirty-five instead of thirty and own a Jeep and have a fridge just filled with Coke. And maybe science will give The King some prosthetic limbs and feelings, and he can start kicking my ass at video games, and we can be happy without worrying about concerned people who aren't really concerned and concerned people who wear nauseating fragrances. Maybe I can have standards without people thinking I'm a tool or a freak. Maybe I can be a person that is actually left alone.

And maybe I can sit on a rooftop whenever I very well damn please and transcend Batman. You can't let your role models sit on their golden laurels forever.

I can only hope.



Flannel

LEAH BIRHANU

Brew

EMILY DOHERTY

The emergence of a morning.
The hot, sweetened liquid pouring down my
salty dry throat.
Getting into my bloodstream,
shaking restless, eager,
desperate for the strength of
the milligrams to kick in.
Before the start of the daily grind.
Only functioning with a shaky hand.
An appetite for more. More...
Addicts one's personality.
Now the remaining liquid is ice cold.
The last few drips in the painted black mug,
still sips well to the taste. Salty, dry.
No longer restless for hours to come.



Magnify
MARAH MIKKELSON

Leaving Summer

STERLING LONG

Old mason jars lie lined in dust
among the twisted spider webs.
Thin deer whiskers lean on the glass's
thin lip as sunlight beams come through.
Hot sand on toes, leftover dirt,
and pinecones callback summers past.
The boom of laughter rings throughout
the house's halls. But now we step
on hard cold bricks that callous feet.
Outside, the colors changed today.
Mahogany and maple trees
cast amber shadows on the ground.
The warmth no longer heats our bodies.
Fall leaves us with frail pinecones.

Heavy Night

CARL COLVIN

Thick cloud of fog grows to enclose
surrounding trees whose leaves sag
In the stagnant air under weight
of bats slowly munching on moths.

Lone floodlight tries to pierce fog's
dark veil but flickers out on thin wisps
of clouds hugging erected stones covered
in moisture sucking moss that guards
the bones of those fallen.

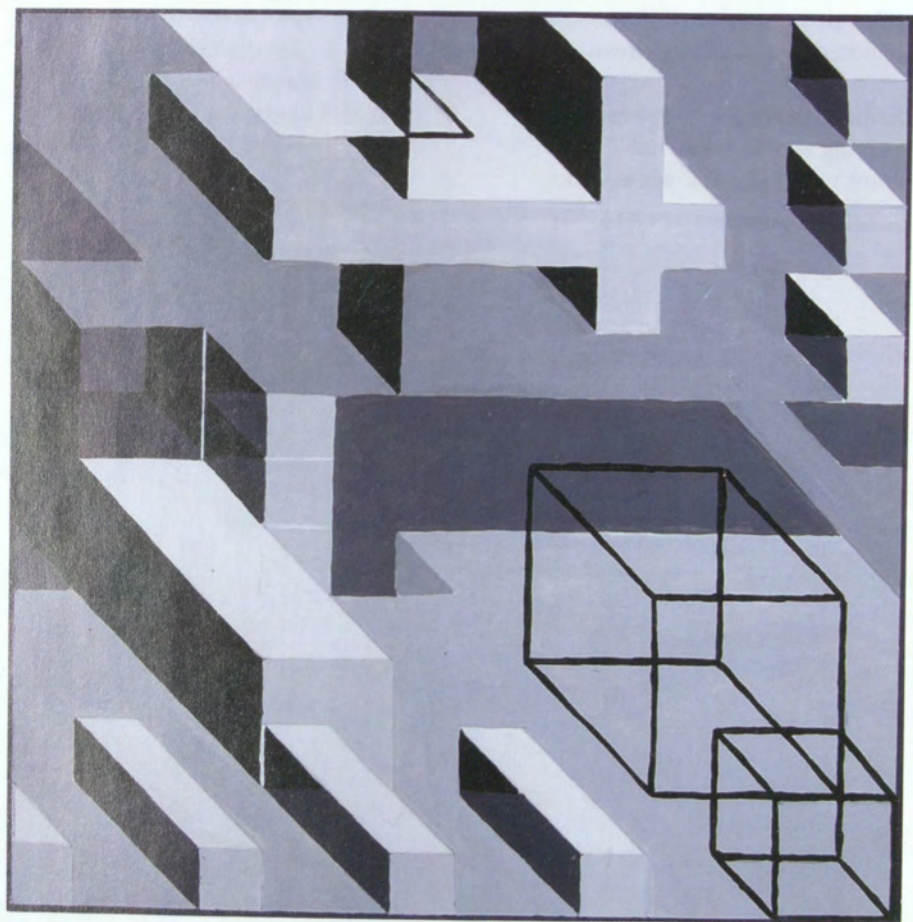
Anecdote of the Broken Jar

CARL COLVIN

Red clay filaments fill the forest
ground as thick, dank air fills space
between close knit trees. Bristly fern

leaves shade the shards from future
harm, silky green moss providing
bed for needed rest. Curious brown

vines continue exploiting fragments'
cracks, giving way to bright red
mushrooms with indignant white stalks.



Two Step
JEFFREY EDWARDS



That Underlying Feeling Always Makes It's Way to the Surface
DANIELLA TRIPODIS



Wasting the Want
STEFAN ROSEEN

Silent Applause

MARCI STAVIG

Violin trills surely, lightly
inviting fairies to dance
upon them. Back

and forth. Sweet honeyed flutes
alight, complimenting brazened
wings. Bright lights pronounce
glinting silver and gold
upon center stage.

Microphone in hand, she
humbles heavens, imploring
souls true to strings.

She stands fastened,
heart pulsing with the shock
of thundering drums.
They cause an avalanche
whose frosty slopes collide

into the walls.
A strength she builds
and destroys on her own,

it punctures the air
in a rushing climax.
The invisible whipping
conductor's wand serves
her sight. It crescendos

until she's left standing
to open her eyes.
The velvet expanse before her:

a mass of chairs, unoccupied.

We're All Human

MICHELE STRACHOTA



"So how are you today?"
"I'm fine."
"Did you sleep well?"
"Do you really have to ask me that every day?"
"Not if you don't want me to."
"I don't want you to."
"Alright I won't."

Dr. Alvarez took mental note of Hannah's mood. The days she said she was fine were the days she also curled her knees to her chest and tightly wrapped her arms around them. Today she had chosen to stay in her pajamas, the pant legs extending to cover everything but her paint-chipped toe nails. Hannah's feet were cold but she didn't want to ask Dr. Alvarez for socks; she didn't want to ask Dr. Alvarez for anything. Besides, her feet were always cold.

"How have you been doing on your goals this week?" Dr. Alvarez asked, watching Hannah curl up tighter and shrink away from the question. Hannah always chose the chair farthest from her, the big leather one in the corner beneath the lamp. There were two chairs much closer and a whole couch, but the leather chair was Hannah's favorite, and not just hers either.

"They're not *my* goals." Hannah looked at the clock.
"Are you able to tolerate the new meal plan we set up?"
"I hate it."
"Hannah--"
"Cathy."

The days when she was fine were usually the days she didn't like answering questions. "I know you don't want to be here."

"Wow, keen observation."
"But you are here, and I'm sorry, but I can't change that. Believe me, I understand."

"You don't understand." Hannah didn't think anyone "understood." They didn't know her and they didn't get what she was doing, they were just trying to sabotage her.

Dr. Alvarez paused to look down at her lap and take a calming breath. "Alright, I don't understand." And technically she didn't. She didn't know what it was like to have an eating disorder. She only knew it from this side of things, the helpless, hopeless, heartbreaking side. So Hannah was wrong, Dr. Alvarez had more personal experience with the disorder than she thought. That was why Cathy Alvarez had earned herself two letters and a dot for the front of her name and how she'd come to work at the clinic some months ago. Someone should have been there to save her daughter but no one was and so she was going to save someone else's child. But Hannah was also right; Alvarez would never understand in the way she needed to.

"I'm not asking you to talk about your eating disorder, Hannah. We can talk about anything. This doesn't have to be painful."

Hannah watched the clock's hands run around the numbers like the tortoise against the hare even though it didn't make sense that they thought moving slower would get them to the end faster.

"Are you still having nightmares?"
"Sometimes." Every night.
"Can you tell me about one?"

Met with a familiar glare, Dr. Alvarez blew air through her lips. "Are we going to do this for an hour?"

The clock laughed at her and she realized it wasn't running a race. The clock didn't have a finish line to cross because it would just keep going forever and that's why time always won. Hannah squeezed her calves until they were white.

"I really didn't want to say this, Hannah, but if you never tell me anything, they're never even going to consider letting you out."

Hannah chewed on the inside of her lip. "It's dumb."

"I'm sure it isn't."

"I just have this reoccurring dream about my sister's wedding."

"What happens in the dream?"

Hannah hesitated, knowing Dr. Alvarez would write it all down in that blue folder with her name on the front. And at the end of the hour her blue folder would go into a file cabinet with all the other blue folders and everything she had ever said in this room would still be there the next time, waiting for her.

"My sister got married last summer, to Brian who she's been in love with since forever. I was the maid of honor and got to walk down the aisle with a groomsman and a bouquet and it was fun I guess. And we were all watching my sister come down the aisle and I remember in real life thinking, *How can I be related to that?* Her hair was perfect and her body was perfect and I was just staring at her perfect face. And in the dream I'm just angry at her for being perfect. Like, I've never been so angry in my life and it feels like my blood is boiling. So I'm staring at her and then her dress starts on fire and no one can find a fire extinguisher and the fire blankets aren't working and the sirens are so far away. All I can do is stand there while my sister burns and I know it's my fault."

"Wow. That's really scary. Do you have any idea where that came from?"

"She's perfect and I'm not and it's not fair and I resent that."

"That's insightful of you."

"To realize my own feelings? Yeah, okay." Hannah might have been flippant about it but Dr. Alvarez knew how big of a step it was. All the books she'd read told her people often-times didn't know exactly what they were feeling or why they were feeling it. People with eating disorders usually thought they wanted to be skinny and "pretty" but in reality it was their way of having control. Hannah wasn't admitting quite that much yet, but she was at least facing the right direction.

"Do you really believe that? That your sister is perfect and you're not?"

"Facts aren't something you believe. They're just true."

"Hannah, no one is perfect."

"Well, she's a lot closer than I am."

Dr. Alvarez had learned the hard way just how pointless it was to tell Hannah anything she thought was true wasn't. She'd recently begun entertaining the idea that showing might be better than telling. "Do you think that's where your self-esteem issues came from?"

"No, I never liked myself." This was truer than Hannah's teenage tendencies made Dr. Alvarez think it was. For many years she had walked about, pretending to be a camera instead of a human. Seeing everyone was okay; panning in and out of their faces was fine as long as she didn't have to acknowledge her own. Still, she existed and was fine with existing, as long as she was a camera and not a girl. When she was a girl there were a lot more problems like dresses and mothers.

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"What's this?" Hannah asked, looking at the bag in front of her. Every day she sat at the kitchen table after school and did homework, but her mother never came home after work with presents.

"My gift to you," her mother said, stretching her lips across her teeth and placing her keys on the hook next to her coat.

Hannah set down her pencil and pushed her books aside. The bag held a tiny pair of spandex. They weren't the wow-these-are-going-to-show-just-enough-leg kind of tiny, but the these-are-three-sizes-too-small-and-could-never-stretch-far-enough-to-fit-my-entire-butt-into kind of tiny. "Mom, these are the wrong size."

"No they aren't." She said, flipping through the mail.

"I've never been a small."

"They're spandex." Hannah's mother began to hum. "Should I make spaghetti for dinner? You like spaghetti, right?"

"They're not going to fit. You should take them back."

"They'll fit." Her mother pulled out the noodles and marinara sauce. "Why don't you try them on? You can wear them under your bridesmaid dress. Your thighs will look smaller."

"I don't really feel--"

"Hannah." She finally looked at her daughter. "I've had a long day."

Clamping her lips together, Hannah took the bag to the bathroom and shut the door. After taking off her pants, she stood on her toes to look in the mirror; her thighs had the circumference of watermelons. One watermelon and then the other, she stepped into the spandex and pulled them up as far as they would go. The tears pushed at her eyes and throat painfully.

She swallowed them and called to her mother. "They don't fit."

The pots clanged against the shove in the kitchen and then the bathroom door swung open and her mother surveyed her, hands on hips. She stood there silently for a minute with her lips pursed. "They don't fit. We can give them to your sister." Leaving promptly to continue with dinner she said over her shoulder, "Maybe just a salad tonight then."

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"Hannah?" Dr. Alvarez could see the way her eyes sunk back. "What are you thinking about?"

"Nothing."

"Okay," she said, even though she hated that word. Things never were. "Is there anything else you want to talk about?"

"Yes, Dr. Alvarez. I want to tell you that, guess what? I'm all better. No more anorexia, no more bulimia. I don't feel like sticking my finger down my throat every day anymore so you've done your job and we can go home."

"Why do you think you have to do that to yourself?"

"Because I do!" Hannah yelled. "Just because my parents threw me in this fucking loony bin doesn't mean you've changed me. I'm not suddenly going to start thanking you all for forcing me here against my will. I'm still fat and gross I'm not going to stop until I'm skinny and pretty." Hannah stood. "Hour's up."

She stalked out, waiting until she was out of the office, out of the building and across the lawn before taking a breath. Dr. Alvarez was the worst part of her day and now that that was over she could go about enjoying the spring weather and her immense amount of free time. Group wasn't so great but at least during that there were eight other people who had the same talking quota she did. The slight breeze brushed her hair behind her shoulders as she took a seat on her favorite bench. When she spent afternoons out here she could almost forget that her life had dissolved.

"Sup, loser." Mitch strode up and took a seat beside Hannah. He was tall and awkward. If he sat still you almost couldn't tell he was a boy with the limbs of a giraffe sewn to his shoulders and hips, but when he moved in any sort of way it was much easier to see his sharp angles and clumsy steps.

"Hey, freak," she replied, bumping his shoulder. His freak of nature body was one of the things that drew Hannah to him. It was the kind of body that attracted stares even if it didn't come with a nice face and especially when it was doing the running man, which it did a lot. She wanted a body so long and thin people couldn't help but stare; maybe he'd bought his on the black market.

"How was Alcatraz today?"

"As good as eating a pint of ice cream."

He twisted his face. "That bad, huh?" That was the other thing about Mitch: he'd been in twice as long as Hannah had. If anyone could come close to understanding her it was him.

"And group?"

"Are you kidding me? It was so awesome. It was like the greatest most fantastic thing ever!" He grinned. "I told Mr. Chuck that I wanted some Cheetos and I swear he shit a mini rainbow-colored unicorn."

Hannah smiled and Mitch grabbed her face, pulling her cheeks apart. "Ohmygod what is

that thing on your face?"

She hit his hands away. "Shut up." But she was still smiling.

If this place was a cellar with no light bulb then Mitch was a fire fly that had accidentally gotten locked inside. Fire flies were dumb, they didn't realize when you had them in a jar and they just kept blinking their stupid little butts. Mitch was smart though—he knew they had him in a cellar and he *chose* to continue blinking his butt and flitting around. Sometimes he flitted like an idiot, sometimes she followed him because she wondered what it was like to be that happy, to have your own light.

"Guess what? Guess what?" He said, jumping up and standing over her. His giraffe neck allowed his head to block the sun.

"You finally realized your dream is to become a tightrope walker."

He rolled his eyes. "No. I've lost two pounds since I got here!"

Hannah smiled tightly, wondering how he'd figured out how to do that. "What about weigh-ins?"

"I just stick a roll of wrapped weights up my--"

"Just kidding, I don't want to know." But she already knew what he meant, and her mind was already asking where she could get weights.

Mitch shrugged. "Whatever, it works." Then he tried to do the running man. When he was done flailing, he pulled a wool hat out of his sweatshirt pocket and smooched it over his hair.

"What's that for?"

"It's cold."

She was going to say, "No, it's not. It's spring and the flowers are blooming and the sun is hard at work giving us cancer." But she didn't want him to think he was better at being skinny than her so she just said, "Yeah. My sweatshirt is in my room." She wrapped her arms around herself.

"Hey listen, I gotta go do some school shit, wanna come by my room tonight so we can make fun of all the losers in this place?"

"Sure. Yeah."

He saluted Hannah and left. And he wasn't flitting like an idiot; he was flitting like a champion. Even though they weren't playing each other, Hannah felt like she had lost the game. The urge to exercise crept into her feet and then her legs and then she got up and walked around the garden pretending to look at the flowers and counting her laps.

At the end of lap 76 a nurse poked her head out the back door of the facility. "Hannah, lunch."

"Okay," she smiled. "One minute."

The nurse's head disappeared and Hannah did a quick four laps before heading inside. They were all required to eat in their rooms because eating together caused a problem. That was fine with Hannah, it wasn't like she ever thought of anything else when food was in front of her. She didn't really think of anything else ever. The nurse brought her a tray and sat in the metal chair by the door, watching her. Watching her. Watching her. Hannah wrung her hands together in her lap, looking at the food; bread was probably 180 a slice and with the ham and lettuce the whole sandwich was worth 410. Grapes were 100 and peas were 120. Hannah hoped they didn't think she was even going to look at the cookie. The meal was almost double her daily maximum, but she was being watched.

After almost an hour the nurse got up and took the plate from Hannah, smiling disgustingly wide. As if five grapes, fifteen peas and a slice of ham was an accomplishment instead of a failure. "Great job, Hannah. Don't forget group therapy in half an hour."

She had to pass Mitch's room on the way to group and thought she'd poke her head in to see how horrendous the school work was going. The door creaked a little as she opened it and she did not find her firefly. She found a pale boy standing in his boxers and shivering. He pinched his stomach and scratched at his arms like that would help him crawl out of his skin. He sobbed. He stared down at himself and sobbed like she had done so many times. The bones of his knees and elbows were sharp and there were red, bumpy, horizontal scars across his thighs. Hannah couldn't breathe; this was not the Mitch she knew. This was a Mitch that reminded her so much of herself it

physically hurt. She hated herself; she wanted to be like him, like a firefly: happy and skinny and walking around like she didn't give a shit and damn straight she could do the running man if she wanted to. But Mitch *was* her, they were the same. And it turned out everyone who got a room number in this building was the same. He was not the stupidly optimistic firefly blinking in a dark basement as she'd mistaken him to be, he was the star whose light was already dead by the time everyone else wished upon it.

Her lungs gasped for air in her shock and Mitch snapper his head around.

And then he screamed. "Get out!" he screamed.

When she couldn't get her legs to move, he screamed it again and pushed her out the door before slamming it. She stood there, very still, in the hallway for a long time. It felt dumb to think that everything was different, but everything was different. If Mitch was just like her then she couldn't think of anything new to strive for. He was skinny and amazing and she thought he'd been happy. But what if real happy didn't exist? Where was up from here?

"Hannah?"

Her head snapped toward the sound as a gasp escaped her lips.

Dr. Alvarez surveyed her. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"Talk about what?"

"Hannah..."

"I have to go," Hannah muttered, barely containing the tears as she ran back to her bench beneath the tree. She didn't know how long she cried, but she had a lot of things to cry about; there were a lot of room numbers in that building. Had a nurse not come out to get her for dinner she would have stayed all night.

.....

"How are you today?"

"Not good."

Dr. Alvarez looked up from the folder. She wasn't quite sure what had happened yesterday but it had clearly upset Hannah. Dr. Alvarez felt a little bad for being giddy at her response, but anything was better than "fine." "Would you like to talk about it?"

Hannah tucked her feet beneath the pillow at one end of the couch and her hands beneath the one supporting her head. She looked at the fraying rug in silence for a long time. "I just don't want to feel like this anymore."

Dr. Alvarez smiled softly. "Okay."



Polarity
LAURA WHITMAN

A Conversation with Mary Szybist

On November 6th, 2014, award-winning poet Mary Szybist gave a reading in the Chapel of the Resurrection that hushed the filled pews into a reverie. The following day, seniors Kayla Belec and Katja Krasnovsky interviewed Szybist. Listen closely as she tells us, in her quiet, deliberate way, about life, self-knowledge, and the power of language.

MS:

When I was little I used to play this game where I would take these scrap pieces of paper and I would write things that were too small for anyone but me to read. So I could write anything I wanted and my mother couldn't read it because it was so small... I think it gave me a sense that one could create one's own world—with language and with words.

~

KK:

How would you say you developed your overall writing style?

MS:

I think most of us, as writers, develop our style through reading and trying things out. You know, I think most writers and poets... we're just, to an extent, mockingbirds. It's how we learn to write. We read other people who have distinctive styles and we try to... we sort of try them out a little bit—in our own way—but we try them out because we're not born knowing any of that. So we try and try and listen, and eventually keep bits of each... There's no such thing as pure originality in writing. Or really in any of the arts, probably, but certainly not in writing. It's all leaning on the past and trying to do something differently. I mean, if it was totally original we wouldn't even know what was a poem. [Chuckles] It's all out of a certain tradition.

Mark Strand has said—and I'm going to paraphrase this, I'm not going to get it exactly correct—that the moment of truth for a poet goes from when you stop writing private poems in a public language and start writing public poems in a private language. And I think that's probably a way of saying "style." Most diaries of teenagers from certain eras sound awfully alike. I kept a diary in seventh grade... I doubt anyone could identify the language I was using in that diary from any other seventh grade girl in the early eighties—[Laughter] right?—within middle America. Perhaps we're talking about different people and incidents and families and all of that. But when you're young, you tend to all use the same language—the language we have. And I think that's a good example of what we might say is, you know, private documents in a public language. There's nothing distinctive about the styles, and they're not written for other readers—they're written as private documents.

Emily Dickinson is a great example of someone writing public poems in a private language. Nobody sounds like Dickinson. You see any passage of Dickinson, you say, "That's Emily Dickinson: nobody else sounds like that." There's something immensely distinctive and, in that way, private about the language, but it's constructed in such a way that it is available to a larger audience, so that other people can experience them very carefully. They are public poems. So that's what I aspire to... But I think we arrive at our private languages through a lot of leaning on examples of it from other people before we develop our own.

~

KB:

So, just a little more specifically about Incarnadine...a couple of the poems that interested me most were the ones that were so...almost violent, and yet you draw a parallel—or at least some tie—to the Annunciation and the story of Mary. Could you discuss a little bit more about what draws you to those themes?

MS:

I think that rich topics for art are things on which one feels two-minded, that sort of mixed feeling. I do think there is a lot of violent resonance in this scene. I mean, a lot of people have said it sometimes reads as a kind of rape scene—how much choice does Mary really have here? She is afraid when it happens...right? So I really wanted to acknowledge that part of the scene. Throughout the book, I'm primarily repeating resonances of this Annunciation scene. Not every poem is an Annunciation, but I wanted them all to be in conversation with it.

Like with colors: red and blue are the two colors Mary is usually depicted in, so those are the two colors of the collection. It's called red: Incarnadine. But the color that shows up mostly in the book is blue. Red comes up, but not as often as blue. I have a passage by Carl Sagan in the notes at the end—that I don't think you need, to read the book—but it's an explanation of, "Why does the earth appear blue from space?" It's not that it actually is more blue—there's just as much red light as there is blue light—it's just that it's refracted back. And I really liked that idea, that just because one thing gets reflected back and it's what we see and what's visible, the other is there just as much. That sort of red life, pulsing.

~

KK:

So what inspires you to write, and to write about the themes and subject matter that you do?

MS:

[Long pause] I think if I felt like I didn't need to write I wouldn't. There are plenty of good poems in the world and plenty of people making them. But to me it's...something I really feel, uh...allows me to—to live and be more present...to myself and to my world. You know, I think poems help me pay attention. I think Linda Greg has a line, she says, "It was like being alive twice." I think poems have that possibility that we can return to experiences that we were not able to be entirely present for. And to be present in a different way—it's not a complete return, but it's potentially a way to enlarge experience and to deepen it.

And I do think that literature is a place that shows us how complicated the interaction between thinking and feeling can be... It's not as simple as changing your thinking changes your feeling, but they're not separate either. I don't remember who it was, there was a fiction writer who came to Portland not too long ago. I thought she spoke with us beautifully. She said that one of the things poetry, fiction, can allow for us is, sort of, permissions to...to at least see examples of complexity where people admit to feeling what they actually feel instead of what they're supposed to feel. She had a lovely example—

she said next door to where she lived there was this really nice family, you know, nice people, really devoted parents. And there were two brothers, two very young brothers. And there was a birthday party one boy had, for like his fourth birthday or something. And it's going well—and then at some point he had a meltdown, as often little kids do. And he started screaming, "I hate my birthday! I hate my birthday!" And his mother very sweetly said, "You don't hate your birthday, you've had a lovely birthday." And there was another incident where he and his brother got into a conflict and he started screaming, "I hate my brother! I hate my brother!" And she said, "You don't hate your brother, you love your brother."

And the writer said, "You know, the mother was trying to be attentive and good, but" she said, "I think in those moments, he really did hate his birthday. And in that moment, he really did hate his brother. It doesn't mean he didn't love his brother, too, but in that moment he actually did hate him." And if we're not allowed to feel what we actually feel—if we're constantly getting messages that "This is what you're supposed to feel instead of what you're actually feeling,"—that has an effect of constantly removing us from knowing ourselves. And if we don't know what we're feeling, if we're hiding that from ourselves, then, in a sense, we don't know what we're doing. Because we don't know what's actually motivating us, we're so disconnected from ourselves.

With this last subject matter, taking on the Annunciation and the more...religious iconography...it was a way for me to sort of try and sort out a new relationship to it. There's that idea that we must create our own systems or be enslaved by another man's...Well, that's sort of overdramatizing it, to an extent. But there's something to it—that the way a lot of those icons were handed to me initially had a hold on my imagination in a way that felt...crippling, at times, and...well, I didn't want to simply abandon them, either. And, in fact, didn't even feel like I could. They were already imaginatively so deeply in me that it was a way of, "Well, if they're here, let me create my own relationship to them, let me remake them in a way that's going to...to help me receive rather than shut down sin."

KB:

Something that you said at the reading last night that I really liked was that—I think it was that "Religion should not be a source of affirmation or negation, but rather a source of contemplation." Can you talk a little bit more about how writing...wow, I'm not good at asking questions, sorry [Laughter] ...but sort of how writing helps you think through that?

MS:

I really see myself as part of a meditative poetry tradition. And I think there are profound meditative traditions in both prayer traditions and poetry traditions—they're not totally separate traditions. But I think part of the traditions, at least, that I'm most interested in, has to do with saying... "I don't already know." You know, "I don't already know. So, let me take some time and some silence." Or whatever one needs to just...

Rethink, reimagine, to be open.

It's hard in our culture, I think, to slow down. And it's hard to be...in a state of not knowing. We're constantly asked to identify—

"Are you this? Or are you that?"

"Are you this kind of...?"

"Are you agnostic, are you atheist?"

"Are you a believer?"

You have to—you have to identify. I think the whole system of how we present ourselves, you know, in public media, or on applications [Laughter]—I mean, these things that are so much a part of our lives...there's not a lot of room for nuance and how we think of ourselves. Keats calls it Negative Capability, the ability to remain in doubts and uncertainties "without irritable reaching after fact and reason," as he puts it. That's, in some ways, I think, increasingly hard to do. To turn and say, "I am this," or "I believe this," or "I think this," or "I feel this," even. To...to slow down, and sort of...check and reconsider. Because it's easy to forget sometimes; because you had a real conviction about something or a real feeling yesterday. But you're not necessarily the same exact person today that you were yesterday. The world's changed a little bit—you've changed a little bit: Are you alive to that?

~

KK:

What would you say is your favorite part about being a writer?

MS:

[Long pause] Hm. [Small laugh] You know, I mentioned the idea of soul-making last night. I love...there's a thrill in making something, first and foremost. I think everybody has a desire to make something, whether it's children or businesses or homes or, you know...I think that's a pretty fundamental human desire, to bring something to the world. So writing is my primary way of doing that. Yeats has a lovely little passage, it should go something like, "The friends that have it I do wrong/ Whenever I remake a song/ Should know what issue is at stake/ It is myself that I remake."

The revision process is really where I find so much pleasure, and being able to not just... we're not just stuck with the given. We're not just stuck with our first thoughts, we're not just stuck in a kind of helplessness of feeling one way or thinking one way.

We actually have the power to transform ourselves.



Emily Nicole Doherty: Inspired by the creativity and optimism of others. Drinks coffee like water. Storyteller.

Jordan Bires: As an English major, I like to spend my time reading and writing while intensely competing in a war with myself about the logistics of literature. I've come to the realization that writing is not something that you can perfect, but rather something that you can practice. Here's to my fellow writers who have the courage to write no matter how hard it might be to find the words.

Allison Grischow is a lover of art of every kind, as well as an avid supporter of self-love. She is inspired by yoga, chai tea, C.S. Lewis, her mother, and Stephen Sondheim.

Heather Mende is a junior Public Relations and Creative Writing double major. She is weirdly extroverted and is often seen talking on the phone. As a certified morning person, coffee is the way to her heart.

In her spare time, she throws javelin on Valpo's Track and Field team.

Allison Granat: I enjoy spending my time looking at the sky; I get a lot of my ideas from the stars. It's my way to disconnect from a world that never stops talking, and dare I say, never stops to think. I feel that I do too much of the latter, even if my thoughts are only composed of movie quotes, food, and crippling self-doubt. In "Eppur si muove" (aka "Yet it moves"), I wanted to show the relevancy of the Doomsday Clock in our day-and-age. With that said, I have a quote for such the occasion: "Those who are unaware of history are destined to repeat it (George Santayana)."

Sterling Long: After a few months in college, he discovered both alcohol and conceptual art. Either one of these things is dangerous, but in combination they have the potential to destroy entire civilizations. He's currently training a raccoon to farm the field.

Stacy McKeigue is a junior digital media major with a creative writing minor and a passion for working in fixed forms. She believes there's something to be said about the contribution procrastination makes to the creative process...but that can wait. The important thing is that if you like her work, you can find more of it on her blog on Tumblr: Have Quill, Will Write. Thanks for reading and supporting the arts!

Contributors
NOTES

Philip Webb is a visiting exchange student from Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, UK. He wishes you a very nice day and hopes that you will all come to England so that he can show you what proper tea tastes like.

Brittany Barrett: An avid film watcher, poetry reader, and art admirer, Brittany is an English and Spanish double major with a minor in Cinema and Digital Media Studies. In addition to writing, reading, and drinking (lots of) coffee, Brittany enjoys painting in her free time.

Marci Stavig is earning a double major in sarcasm and clever wit, both of which she hopes will enhance her writing and way of life. Most weekdays are full of dubious studies but on Fridays, she spends the evenings eating stories.

Alyssa Boneck is a sophomore creative writing major with a minor in business who is rather pleased to be published in *The Lighter* for the third time.

Sarah Geekie is a junior, and is an avid Harry Potter fan, sweets addict, and a constant worrywart. In her free time, she likes reading novels, watching Arthur reruns, and playing Nancy Drew games. She also likes sleeping in (especially when she has somewhere to be) and forcing her cats to spend time with her.

Michéle Strachota wants to thank Uptown Café for having smoothies that are just so great she couldn't help but fulfill her destiny as a permanent fixture in their seats. She's currently on her way to laminate her sign: starving artist desires mango today. Her entries in this issue are dedicated to her father who would have been so proud.

Nora is a freshman studying Nursing. See Him was written shortly after coming across a homeless man on Michigan Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. The encounter left the concepts of morality and illusory superiority lingering uncomfortably in her mind, and the poem was composed in an effort to depict the social prejudice she witnessed.

Katja Krasnovsky is a senior English major who relishes in opportunities to interview published writers. When she's not interviewing, you can probably find her writing, reading, and sipping coffee because #English-Major

As a senior, graduation is about to hit me head on. With that, the art, "Head on," is to reflect all the things that have been done and are to come. The photo, taken on a trip with my mom and dad to my grandmother's favorite place, Arizona and the Grand Canyon, is of a rusty car in the Painted Desert. Yours, **Alex**.

Angelica Jackson is currently a sophomore working towards an associate's degree in Communication and Expressive Arts with much support from Bill, Adam, Kyle and Rachel. She is also an employee in the VUCA but the only way you can interact with her is if you bring her the broom of the Wicked Witch of the West.

Maria Elgendi is currently a freshman at Valparaiso University. However, due to her four years of experience with ceramics during high school, she is ranked as an advanced ceramic student.





THANKS FOR
READING!