

ONION RIVER REVIEW

2009

river run by

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In memory of Professor John Reiss (1935-2008)

What he imagined lives.

Circling Round Darkness

John Reiss

I sleep well, though by morning I wonder.
Something is not right. I feel my place—
The day and sky seem distant—
My wife beside me, parents apart,
Our children sleep in other rooms.
The brain circulates, recalls parents, wife,
And children. Nature waits.

Reiss dies. Not yet.
And where he does, earth lies.
Farewell to room and sky,
Good-by to distances between us.
Alive, I say “I love
You Jesus”—say it mornings over
And over. A way of feeling close.

This circling round darkness comes
True. What I imagine lives.

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Editors' Note

There were portents hinting at the *Onion River Review's* future as early as last spring. It was then, when this year's editors, new and old, sat down together for the first time, that we might've gotten an inkling of the growth the Review would undergo over the next two semesters. At that very meeting, we discovered that we had more editors than in any preceding year. We're a group with no absolute traditions or regulations, a group that tends to metamorphose from year to year, so we embraced our numbers and went forward towards the cusp of a truly remarkable year.

As always, the review that we proudly publish this year required the efforts and support of many. We would like to thank the Student Association, which, in token of our thirty-six years at Saint Michael's, formally recognized us this autumn. This year's edition required the largest-yet financial investment, and we'd like to thank our many patrons: the English Department, the Marc and Dana vanderHeyden Endowment, the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the local businesses who extended their support. Also, we would be remiss if we did not extend thanks to Becky Danaher from Printing Services, to whose work we owe the high graphic quality of this year's edition.

Finally, we owe tremendous thanks to our many talented, passionate, and varied submitters. It is a matter of course that the number of submissions we receive fluctuates each year, but this year's pool of submissions was the largest—and arguably the strongest—we have ever reviewed. The process we use to review the submissions is one we have relied upon for a number of years: all of the literary and art submissions first pass through the hands of our faculty advisor, Will Marquess, who removes the contributor's name from each piece before handing it over to the editors for reading or viewing. As we review each piece with

delicate attention, we make detailed comments in the margins. We include notes about strong sections of the text, the weaker lines in a poem, stunning imagery or literary devices, or our personal connections. This allows us to compare and contrast the support for the submissions, which helps to facilitate our lengthy but diligently focused meetings.

On a Saturday in the middle of February, we meet with our auxiliary editors, to whom we extend our utmost gratitude for providing us with fresh insight on each piece. We then engage in debates about each piece and what qualities it could bring to the review. The multiplicity of our team is provoked in these moments. This painstaking vetting would have been impossible without our auxiliary editors: Saint Michael's students who are just as diverse and passionate as our artists. Without Chris Barrett, Alexa Chrisos, Javan DeHaven, Lauren Fish, Casey Hurlburt, Jillian Leclerc, Margaret Mahan, Kate Neely, and Philip Noonan, the review would be impossible. We likewise owe a debt of gratitude to Will Marquess, our indomitable advisor, for continuing his stewardship over the review with nurture, neutrality, and bagels.

This year, we dedicate the review to the memory of Professor John Reiss. The decision was swift and unanimous, even though no one on the staff ever studied under Dr. Reiss. Yet a college such as ours has a long memory, and he was known to us even without our meeting. Our present professors used their classes to describe his passion for both his scholarship and teaching. We heard tales of his style, firmly rooted in the old school: the professor without email, without voicemail, but with a wide-open door. Our teachers, both in the English Department and without, would describe his courses as if through repeated reference he would reappear for an encore.

But these anecdotes were not mere flowering eulogies: we heard these incredible stories from his respectful peers even before his sudden passing on September 23. His zeal was genuine and continues to permeate our lives; we doubt that any student's education at Saint Michael's has gone untouched by his influence. In his memory, we have included recollections from his peers, family, and even his own words. There is, perhaps, some element of art which is indivisible from the past and "the way it was." In that spirit, along with our continued sympathies to the Reiss family, we are proud to present the 2009 edition of the *Onion River Review*.

– Eireann Aspell, Jamie Gorton, Heidi Lynch, and Matt Serron

Core Editors 2009

ONION RIVER REVIEW
2009

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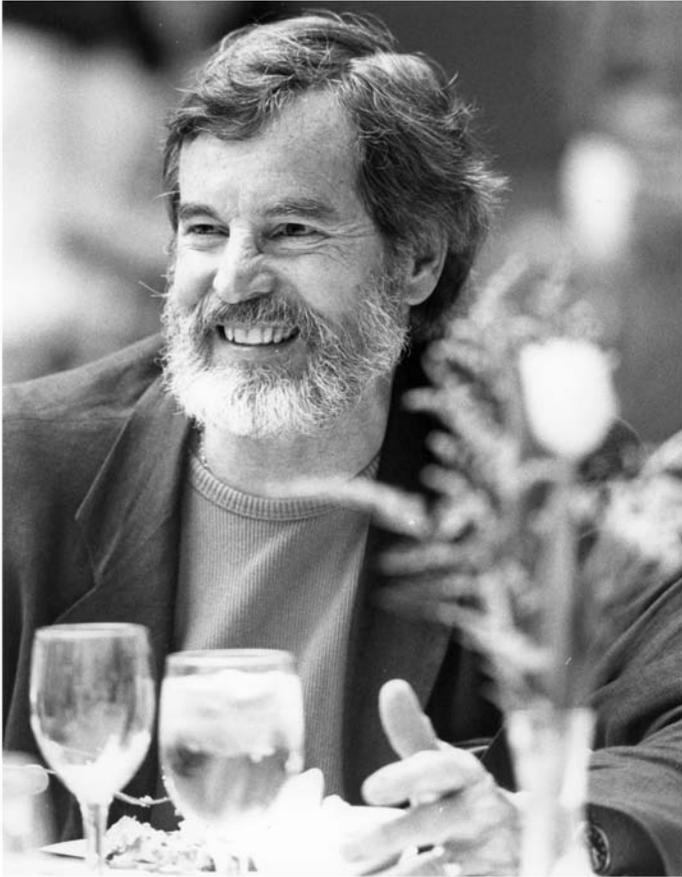
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*We work in the dark—we do what we can—we give what we have.
Our doubt is our passion, and our passion is our task.
The rest is the madness of art.*

~ HENRY JAMES

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Color, Place, and Time

John Reiss

There was a room, a study, now
No longer mine nor my late father's:
Book cases glassed, two windows low,
A fireplace, built-in desk, and chairs.
Upon a table checker board
There were metallic-colored marbles—
Red, blue, and green. Such red and blue
Would ever be, and yet I would
Soon not see color the way I did
Then—the way a child sees red,
Green, blue. Dust particles suspended.
I see it now: it's afternoon.

Intimations of Mortality: John Reiss's "Color, Place and Time"

William Marquess

John Reiss was not primarily a poet. In his essential modesty he would have laughed at such an idea, and quickly deferred to *il miglior fabbro* across the hall, his great friend John Engels. But Reiss always tried to follow the advice he admired from Conrad's *Lord Jim*: "In the destructive element immerse." And so, having loved writing of all kinds, he tried his hand at it all—scholarly articles, fiction both short and long, personal essays, and also poetry. One of his poems, the haunting *memento mori* "Circling Round Darkness," accompanies the dedication of this issue. Another, "Color, Place, and Time," is a particularly strong evocation of themes always on his mind—loss, the remembrance of things past, and the power of language to recover them, at least in part.

"There was a room," the poem begins, calling up the past with an echo of a much larger poem, William Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality":

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

Wordsworth follows his invocation of that lost time with a handful of monosyllables that drag us into the present: "It is not now as it has been of yore." John Reiss's vision in "Color, Place, and Time" is certainly less grand, but its impulse is the same. The poem gazes into the past, recognizes its ineluctable pastness, and implicitly raises the question, what are we to do about it?

The opening line of Reiss's poem contains the whole subject—past versus present. The moment of recognition—now—gets special emphasis from its ultimate position in the line, and enjambment drives

us on to the essential fact:

There was a room, a study, now
No longer mine nor my late father's.

That the room once belonged to the speaker's father may seem incidental, but it suggests a failure in succession: this was his place, then mine; and now? Something has taken it from the family. The adjective "late," describing a fact with such simple economy, hovers over the whole poem. People as well as things pass from our possession. As John's teacher Harold Bloom would say, we are always latecomers. Is it too late, now, to find recompense for such loss?

First, the poem suggests, pay attention to what was. In a sense, this poem about a study is a study, a kind of spiritual exercise. Religious thinkers like Saint Ignatius of Loyola suggested methods for composing the mind in prayer, and often the exercise began with a contemplation of the seeker's surroundings. Knowing where you are, or where you've been, can be a path to knowing who you are. So "Color, Place, and Time" moves in from the opening generalization to set the scene: book cases, windows, fireplace, desk, and chairs. Slant rhymes ("now" and "low," "father's" and "chairs") hold these first four lines together, almost too neatly—but the neatness is appropriate: this is a classic study, quiet and unremarkable, a place for meditation.

And then the focus tightens further, as if a camera were zooming in:

Upon a table checker board
There were metallic-colored marbles—

Here the poem breaks, with a dash, exactly halfway through. Until now the scene has been entirely monochromatic, as befits a study, where we contemplate black marks on white pages. But here, like Dorothy arriving in Oz, it plunges into color, a moment emphasized by the opening spondee, the first clear break from the predominant iambic: "Red, blue,

and green.” It is typical Reiss not to dress these marbles up in designer colors. In part, this is a matter of temperament: John saw the world Sheboyganly. (Once, responding to a story draft of mine that described a grieving woman as “keening in the forenoon,” he wrote a quick marginal note: “Too literary.” He was right; that woman was just sobbing before lunch.) But the simplicity of the palette is also part of the point in “Color, Place, and Time”: it calls attention to something elemental, as basic as a color wheel.

And now the meditation pauses with a full stop, a caesura that lingers on that splash of color. Until this point, everything about the room has seemed adult—the association with the father, the glassed book cases, the desk and chairs; even the checker board, mounted on a table, seems more a piece of furniture than a field of play. And yet it’s still a game—and not the serious intellectual endeavor of chess but the simpler game of checkers. Apparently the occupants of this study, like many grown-up males, carried with them something of the child who was father to the man.

Most notably, the colorful playing pieces on which the camera comes to rest are not “men” or some other descriptor like “disks,” but marbles, with all that word suggests of childish play. And here a logical question intrudes: how do marbles stay put on a board? In our reading we may stumble: he can’t mean marbles as I know them; there’s some mystery here; I’ll just read them as flat checkers. But all the while they’re rolling off the checker board in my mind. Perhaps Professor Reiss, consulted now, would laugh and say this was just a slip—but if so, it’s a slip that works, calling attention to an essential incongruity: childhood lives on, but it won’t stand still.

And so the poem moves toward its clear-eyed conclusion.

Such red and blue
Would ever be, and yet I would
Soon not see color the way I did
Then.

“Soon” and “Then” receive emphasis from their initial placement, again disrupting the iambic, as the speaker’s childish vision of color was disrupted by the passage of time. In his essay “What Time of Day Do You Like Best and Why?” John offers his own answer to the title question: for him the best moment was the hour before dawn, when all is quiet potential. Analogously, he reminds us several times in the essays that childhood is the Kingdom of God. But it is not now as it has been of yore. Golden lads and girls all must, as chimney-sweepers, come to dust. The adult fades into the light of common day, and the poem returns to the present for this final acknowledgment. “I see it now: it’s afternoon.”

Is there compensation for this dimming of the day? In the *Intimations Ode*, Wordsworth claims that he will grieve not (much less keen), “rather find / Strength in what remains behind”: in sympathy, in suffering, in “the faith that looks through death.” “Color, Place, and Time” makes no such large claim about the healing power of the philosophic mind; it is a post-Romantic poem, and its author was far more modest than William Wordsworth. But the poem itself remains as a kind of recompense, an acknowledgment of earthly reality and an exercise in the art of paying attention. This double gesture of seeing things clearly and saying them well may not redeem us—but it can console.

It’s afternoon. No one I’ve ever known was as prepared for death as John Reiss was. In his essay “On Aging,” he observes, “Now I have reached old age—boo hoo. What did I expect?” And in the final essay of his collection, “Being Brave,” he says, “There have been countless people far more worthy than I who have already died, including Jesus, Michelangelo, and Shakespeare. Who am I to quarrel with death?” Of course, he should not have died as he did; we were the ones who were not ready. But he had been preparing himself for many years—through prayer, laughter, love, and honest contemplation of the tears in things. He had the faith that looked through death. We can only try to see things so sharply. Not to do so, as Walter Pater says, would be to sleep before evening.

Questions and Answers in the Mountains

Patrick Standen

—after Li Bai

They ask me why I live in the green mountains.
I have no reply. My mind's at rest among
Spring blossoming lilacs, green growing fields,
Crimson-colored leaves floating down spring-fed streams,
And the silence, the arctic silence of winter nights.

Raking Leaves

David Patterson

The rake broke just above the teeth
and I damned each oak and maple
towering above us. You looked
away as the theatrics of anger overtook
me: using swear words that no
longer make you blush and waving
the broken rake towards a silent god.

You went on raking as if it were
as easy as sipping lemonade, as if the wet
fall hadn't made the removal of these
leaves nearly impossible.

Before we married

I might have launched the broken rake
into the woods and disappeared in protest
to fuddle on my guitar or pout like a child
at the world's utter unfairness.

I've grown

(though admittedly not by much) since we married.
Instead of leaving I watched as you moved
heavy piles of leaves onto a tarp with the grace
of Yo-Yo Ma pulling a horsehair bow across
his cello or a Somalian refugee brushing
dirt from her daughter's forehead.

I've

miles to go before I learn how to worship
your grace, but if in death we visit
our most beautiful moments for eternity,
then in watching you move a rake in front
of a greyscape of fall I grazed immortality.

Old Man in Alentejo

Mary-Alice Ruggiero



digital photograph

The Salt And The Dead

Tom Cadrin

Can we move away together or
would that not be all right? Don't you think that
wet streets will bring jealousy and the
road's side snow harbors a kind of
love that washes away when
life shoots up
through the salt and the dead?

I have this feeling that if
in the middle of the night I crept inside
to where both our heads would lie—
in our own rooms, with our own sheets with
our own sharpening and relaxing light that
takes our minds to dream and from
off and on and between the walls—
with another breath to breathe with mine,
you'd forget this understanding, this
unspoken thing, this pact
we've got to go on, resolutely living
below the salt and the dead.

Yeux Verts

Billy Collins

That French teacher
had a funny house
and two black daughters.
She painted herself purple
in Jamaica Plain
and salvaged
a hidden Mesopotamian paradise
as a backyard.
I grilled burgers and all the
pretty young girls spoke
mulled French
and laughed.

In that cramped, coy
kitchen where we helped
chop onions
you kept smiling at me
even while Madame rapped
about music, French food
and her daughter's
new boyfriend.

The patio slouched beneath
a honeysuckle trestle
and a neighbor explained
how to pick the bud
and suck sweet petalled nectar
from the red star flower.

Wasn't it something
when Mungo Jerry came on the radio
and those big sunglasses
covered your face?

Madame knows I can't
speak French but
she let it slide, she told
me on the first day of school
that she loves a boy
with green eyes.

Drift

Neil Attfield



digital photograph

Lift Me Like an Olive Branch

P. T. Smith

Waves crashing against a wall. The crest bursting apart, mist, and drops within mist, reaching over, wetting my shoes, the cuffs of my jeans, and occasionally, my shirt. Specks hitting my glasses, my cheeks, I want to dive in, but turn away. I wake up.

C. watched the ocean through the long, wide window that opened to the deck. Her hands wrapped around the cool mug, she listened for the sound of milk speeding towards warmth inside the kettle my hand held close against the stovetop. Outside, the sea was calm. Cold rain colored the deck. Wind ripped a small branch through our view. The ocean responded, the next wave higher than the one before. I poured the milk into the mug, the chocolate powder inside muddied. C. smiled at me while I stirred. The smile growing as her hands warmed. I sat with her, a hand around my own mug—a hand on her leg beneath her blanket—and watched the first wave scrape over the wall, mix with the rain already pooled in cracks between the stones. Further inland, the rain was likely snow.

I push myself off the mattress, not before wrapping the sheets and blankets around myself and lifting them with me. Dragging them on the dusty floor behind me, I lean against the bedroom window. The first lines of snow rise and fall on the sill, on the outlines of the pane. Flakes fall into the sea and disappear. The stone whitens out the gray deck. I wrap the blankets tighter and slowly look around the room as if I could memorize it anew—place it over the room as it rested in memory—and feel marked every change that had broken, shifted, grown. It had been dark when I returned. I walked through the house, around tables and shelves no longer there, through dust and leaves, up the stairs to our bedroom. A flashlight watched me inflate an air mattress, cover it with sheets and thick blankets. I shifted the bed, half a foot, the corners don't line up with the circles of lost bedposts, but they are closer. Near the ceiling the crack we never fixed has twisted and forked halfway to the floor. It sweats freshly melted snow.

We followed her into the empty house. For a moment, C. was calm, then she saw the windows. She pulled me after her, let go when I didn't follow. The realtor laughed. Behind C. I wrapped my arms around her waist; she pulled one palm from the glass and forced it between my own. Sun reflected off crests and troughs, off sails riding these glimmers of the water, and kites finding their own in the air. C.'s fingers rolled the white fabric of her shirt between my hands and her stomach. The realtor called to us from the bottom of the stairs and we followed her up, walking on the stiff, heavily vacuumed rug, the slickly cleaned floors, glaringly fresh painted walls, to the empty bedrooms. Later, when it was our home, this path would be the skeleton of our lives, with the flesh and organs of swimming, rooms filled with books, friends' paintings, and food—our bed brought this skeleton, flesh and organs, to life.

The water chokes out of the faucet brown, thick, then settles into a straining stream of lighter brown. I leave it running and let the showerhead join. Down the hall, in the doorway of Theodore's room—a room he had left behind while young enough to let us fill it with both sorrow and pride—I realized for the first time how quiet a house is, how badly sound tries to fill the space that people and possessions have abandoned. The faucet and showerhead run, water hits the porcelain like it was next to me. In Theodore's bathroom I turn on his faucet, the same yellow flows out. At the end of the hall, the window is dirtier than the others, covered in dust that lonely air swept here. I rub it with my blanket, it hardly clears but I can see the snow and the branches of the tree whose life has dirtied the other side of the glass. Water drips somewhere above me, slow taps that, if it weren't for a barely perceptible, unpredictable variation, would sound mechanically out of place. The string dangling from the attic door crumbles in my hand like it had been waiting years for someone to bring it to relief.

C. slept in the attic, on the mattress she insisted on carrying herself, pushed into the far corner, a scarf wrapped around her bald head for warmth. The headaches were ignored for a while. She ignored pains, coughs, any sign that her body might be sick, or deteriorating, as if this

refusal was some sort of ballast, necessary for her heart and mind to stay aloft and steady, as if she could keep her body tied tightly by forging on as if it were. Most times I harried C. like a nagging memory of something sweet that can't quite be resurrected, until she took medicine, or rested. The time it mattered, maybe the only time, when the cancer could have possibly been caught, I thought I was too busy. I found her sitting on the floor, water boiling, endlessly, her body abandoning itself inside her clothes, shrunken, her eyes covered away from me, but her outline, her scent, in the form of tears. Later in the week C. heard from the doctor. Chemo started soon after, with hardly a hope. She told me she was going through it only for Theodore; the visible, painful effort neither of us would demand she make, but the child—no longer a child and not even living at home—needed. Pain in C.'s toes, sudden shivers between periods of sweating, coughs that come with enough force to shake our bed, kept her awake; kept me awake, watching her, waiting for her to need someone to hold her. When I passed out, it was hesitatingly and I would soon find myself awoken by her, a moan or a cough. After she moved to the attic, I waited for silence above me, for her to travel across an interstitial patch of sleep. I'd take the comforter from our bed and go up the stairs. Knowing the boards that held sound beneath, I walked across in quiet. Covering her with another layer, I wrapped my arms around her thinning waist, she nudged against me without waking. We never spoke during those nights, except once, and in the morning, before she was ready to leave the attic, I would be back in our bed. There, with the fading dawn, she would soon lie with me. Once, with a clear moon in the high window, as if still dreaming, she remembered with me the games of hide and seek Theodore led, always ending here, in the attic, and the nights later in his life, when he would come here to sleep, as if he had found his own house, or world.

I place a pot, surprised to find that I had left any behind, beneath the water that drips through the wood, ballooning at the edge of the beam, then falling. Other drops are caught by other pots, pans, bowls. They hit in cycles, echoes around me sitting on the floor. The echoes shift, from taps against steel or ceramic, to drops into shallow water, plops into

deeper water. They sound towards silence but never reach. Outside the window, snow falls. Some lands on the roof even as the flakes before melt and fill our old bowls. I stand and my joints scrape bones against each other, muscles strain as a younger me never believed they would. The window at the end of the attic, high above heads, is cracked, tight lines overlapping themselves in the center, stretching outwards only to find their sudden end at the edge of the pane. Bones of a bird lie decaying somewhere beneath. In our bedroom, I let the blankets off me and shiver. I open bags, trying to remember what I packed, where. Before I find pants, in underwear and a thin shirt, I cough. My hand wipes blood from my mouth and I open the window to the snow, spit the rest of the hot redness into the snowy ground below, then close the window and finish dressing. I can't find my medicine and don't bother to find a recent memory of intention. When it gets worse, when I fall asleep without meaning to and awake minutes later, blood in my mouth, coughing, or when my legs hardly let me walk, when there can't be enough sweaters, I will carry the mattress into the attic, find the same old corner, and wait.

It was not yet dark. The sun tried to preserve its light, the food in front of us, the last unmasticated bits, broken from their original, more appealing, served form; no longer separate. Fish sticky with drying, hardening white rice, carrots that had been carried from our friend's garden and chopped with patient, self-indulgent grace by C., were, like the light around us, changing color—dimming towards each other, as if the plate were shrinking, or falling away. My fingertips already laced with the beginnings of numbness, I drank the last swallow of grapefruit juice from my glass, tart and strong with rum. Jacob laughed and pushed his own empty glass towards me, asked when dessert would come. Brigid slapped the back of her hand into his chest, but I answered, After dark. The others at the table proffered their own offering, baked together. We let this mean they had passed through the liminal days of pre-couplehood. If she were near me, C. would have squeezed my still not wholly numbed fingertips. I watched her balance on the thin stones edging the deck, her brown, loose dress catching wind, twirling its threads of mossy green,

her right hand—half-full wine glass—balanced up over the sea. It was almost to her lips before she fell. My eyes—or only one of them it seemed—rested on the empty wine bottle by where her feet had been. My own feet hit stone twice, first in shoes, then in socks. Between us, the last land before water, violets pass beneath my toes. Red hair floated with brown cotton, skin suddenly bone-white across legs and hands floundered in the midst, all, like sky and food, darkening. In the waves my tie floated to her wrist first, then my hands. They began to sing, Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin, Dance me through the panic 'til I'm gathered safely in. We held each other, and like lovers should, dressed to the nines and at a dinner party, we danced, beneath a rising moon, our last swim before snow came.

The snow stops, sometime between windows. The sky and the air between trees, above the water, is clear again, a cold blue thawing as the clouds thin and fade; the sun stretches again, not yet abandoning its task for the day, or hibernating for the winter. Showers and sinks still running, the water dripping through cracks quickening, pools vertical against the wall swelling and falling. I watch the snow outside melt. The messy shapes of stones that mold together to make our deck show gray again, a wet gray, through the melting white. Autumn reclaims itself from winter's brief, now whimpering, first foray. The waves calm but still playfully brush against the wall, as if they too want to keep winter at bay. Leaves have turned, but fall only reluctantly. Beside the wide windows, in the swallowing chair C. brought me—insisting if I sat there a book must be nearby—under the one last blanket I could be sure was hers alone, I am, for the first time since coming home, warm. Upstairs, I roll up a sleeve and find the water behind the curtain hot, the mirror's edges creeping with steam. One by one, I shut the faucets and showerheads off. My walk back to the window is marked by clothing—half the clothing these walks once had—my underwear kicked aside as I slid open the door. Lacking the grace to dive, I abandon my body's control as I lunge off the edge, over the growth of weeds, of unknown flowers that have not yet choked away the violets, tightening my stomach, legs, arms, chest, to prepare for the shock of cold. I surface when my muscles

relax, when my lungs need, and are able, to breathe. For a while, I will dance—then find that warm shower, wrap myself in my blanket and then hers, and wait until the bed needs to be moved to our attic's corner.

Untitled

Lisa Jabaut



18 x 24"
Charcoal, watercolor, and construction paper on paper

Afternoons

J. K. Durick

There's nothing memorable about them
Lining up the way they do—day after day,
Like the ticks of a wind-up clock, or the ticks
On an old dog's belly, the ones we'd tweeze
Off and squeeze the life from and feel as if
Our time had been well spent. We could sleep
Walk our way through most of them, beating
The hum-drum drum of 'em, like thumbing
Our way across the Midwest, acres and acres
Flattened out as far as we're willing to see,
As flat as our spare tire, or, for that matter, our
Life line. They can be numbing and strumming,
Like the tunes old appliances play all day, or
Those songs that get trapped in our heads, like
Stormy weather, whether or not we're together
Or alone waiting, waiting for the telephone to
Ring, and then we begin to sing the one line we
Recall of that childhood song about the livelong
Day, as if we could get children prepared for
This, this afternoon of our discontent, this
Last nail in the coffin of usefulness. It's like
Waiting in a crowded waiting room and never
Being next, or standing in a line that never
Moves up an inch, or mowing an endless lawn
With a faulty mower that skips and skips but
Will never turn off. Afternoons are like those
Meetings about the by-laws, like a lecture on
Life insurance or retirement benefits. They're
The excuse we use between the mornings and
The evenings, the uphill climb of our work time,
The part of the day we while away, the only
Time we spend wishing it would end.

Tonal Shift

Tyler Machado



8 x 10"
silver gelatin lith print

**He Played Until the Moon Fell from the Sky
and the World Ended**

Alicia Pacelli



black and white photograph

Just This
Justin Evans

When I think back to November
which only ended last week, I cannot
for the life of me remember where
I put the checkbook after buying you
a birthday present. But if I go back,
all the way to 1974, the year you were born,
I can remember starting school. I can see
the leaves turn yellow, still feel the year's
first chill. I can see myself sitting atop
my father's shoulders for the last time.

And This

Each eulogy spoken is a flower,
four o'clocks blooming in a perpetual dusk,
a calyx on death's yellow poem
where loved ones and strangers alike
turn gently along a river, cutting the hips
of ancient, sloping mountains.

The New Era of Romance

Matt Serron

There is a fan
that whirls like a drunkard
upon the dresser in my tiny room.

It sends gusts waltzing
off the yellowing newspaper walls
and spurs my paltry posters to dance,
chained though they are to that aging plaster.
Their pictures appear as if in a wriggling stream,
fluttering below the glassy surface,
while I watch their movements transfixed
like a bachelor in a ballroom.

But the stunted expanse
of my apartment box does not accommodate
masquerades
of any kind. So it's just as well that you appear
in my doorway, apologetic
for having misplaced your dancing shoes.

Jasiu's Web

Jasiu Leja



12 x 12"
woodblock print

The Teaching Log, or a Reader's Writing

Joan Reiss Wry

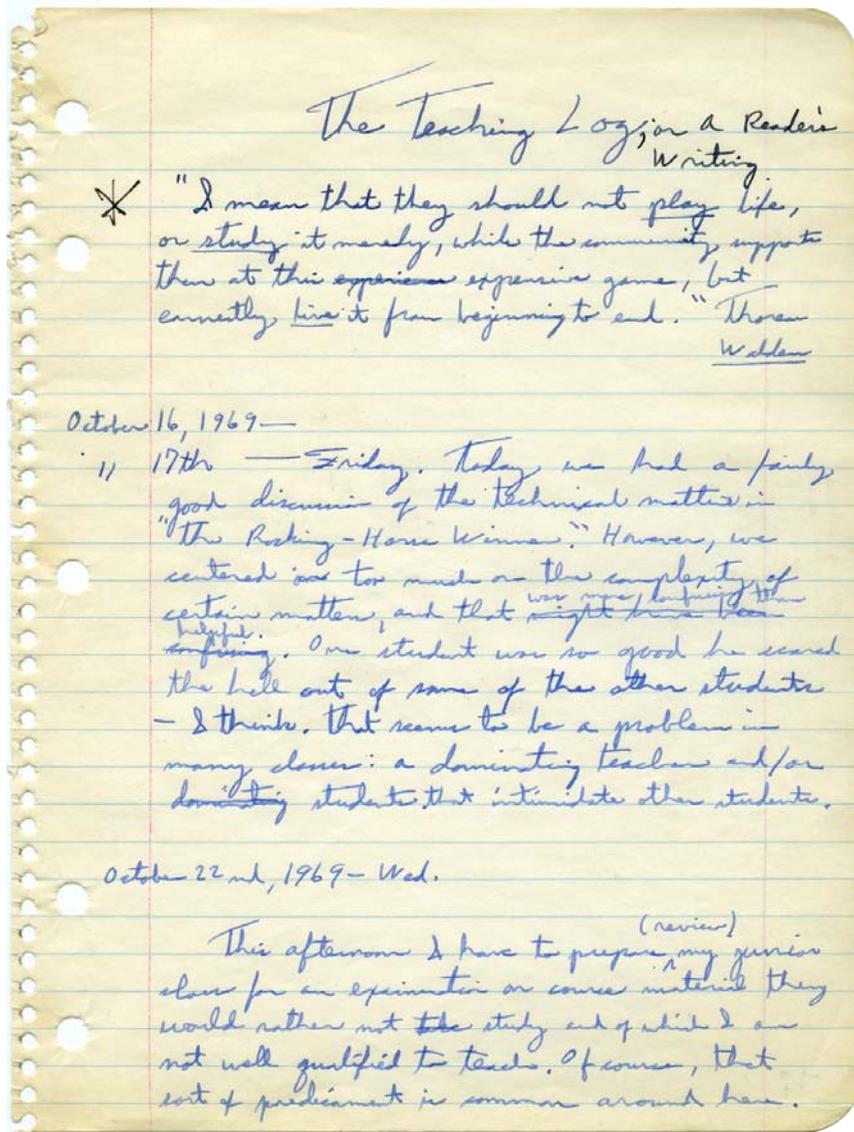
In an effort to improve his ability to serve students, Professor John Reiss kept a journal about himself and his classes in a series of spiral notebooks during most of the thirty-four years he taught at Saint Michael's College. The first volume, marked "1968 and before," is really more of a Commonplace Book than a log of teaching activity, but beginning in the fall of 1969, he began to make close, critical observations about his efforts to teach better and pay more attention to his students and his craft. He believed strongly that teaching literature was important because literature teaches us about life, and "to know something well is in part to be the master of it." John Reiss wanted to master his teaching in ways that would help him to better serve his students, and he believed that knowledge of himself and of his students was tied to the conscious act of paying attention. The opening page in the 1969 notebook includes the title *The Teaching Log, or a Reader's Writing*, and it begins with an epigraph from Thoreau's *Walden*:

"I mean that they should not *play* life, or *study* it merely, while the community supports them at this expensive game, but earnestly *live* it from beginning to end."

The following excerpts from the stack of spiral notebooks show John Reiss' earnest efforts to teach better, so that his students would be inspired to live their lives in the essential way that Thoreau advises.

November 5, 1969:

"Today is dreary and wet, though there is some strange comforting thing about today. Is it reading *The Return of the Native*? Vermont has just had its brilliant fall season and will soon have its long but beautiful winter, but now is in the oppressive time of sunless and gray days that no guide



The first page of John Reiss' *Teaching Log*, 1969

book will admit. Use this bleak time to watch more closely, and really *listen* to what the students are saying.”

February 26, 1970:

“I feel beaten down. My work in class should be better. There are no classes for tomorrow, so I might as well get to work and do a good job on the drama essays. I’ll try to load up for Monday’s classes over the weekend.”

October 31, 1970:

“I am going to avoid, if possible, asking my classes the question: ‘Are there any questions or comments.’ Instead, I’ll ask a specific question, and then another. Right now I am reading student papers on ‘I Heard a Fly Buzz when I Died.’ I can practically imagine my own death scene. It is as if I have been there before, and it is like my Grandmother Wheeler’s death. Yet my actual death may be very sudden, with no conscious scene on my own part.”

July 1, 1971:

“Today was the third day of the summer session. . . . I am getting fairly good discussion in both classes, but there should be more and even better discussions. . . . The American Lit. classes are improving, but the freshman composition classes need more improving. I have to keep at it more and more.”

September 14, 1973:

“Today’s discussion of some very important matters in *Moby Dick* was not clear, not well ordered. Go over some of it again on Monday . . . go slower, admit to going fast, invite questions. What do I need to do to improve? I need to proceed more slowly and be less concerned with getting everything done in each class. . . . By diverse means we arrive at the same end: a teacher may be tough or easygoing and either way, if he or she is good, can teach very well.”

August 15, 1978:

“The success of courses depends on at least two things: careful planning before the semester begins, and careful planning each day before and after classes. It is important to consider and encourage the students’ individual talents in reading and in writing, in thinking. Get them to take pride in their thinking—this is important.”

March 26, 1981:

“Look at people, look at their eyes—we don’t do enough of this. Although I am seldom sad, many students are often sad, and I should pay attention to their being sad.”

September 7, 1987:

“This day is the start of the school year . . . and I have prepared to advise the freshmen assigned to me, prepared better than ever before. . . . What I most need to do this year is to pay close attention to students and sub-

ject matter, and to get the students to pay close attention to the subject matter.”

September 24, 1987:

“So far this journal lacks punch—it is a bust. I need to take more time to think about each course and the students in each course. Yesterday I went running for the first time in about a week. When we move out to Old Stage Road I think I will walk for miles in the colder weather, and I will use the time to think about teaching and writing.”

October 15, 1988:

“Writing should help you to see better and to hear better. Do we really look at one another, and do we really listen to one another? I need to tell my students and myself that writing can help us notice more and pay more attention to others . . . and seeing more and hearing better can help us to write better.”

September 4, 1990:

“In my eight o’clock College Writing class I did a poor job of learning names and I was awkward and I suspect rather tedious in this first class of the fall semester. I must try harder in tomorrow’s classes. I don’t know when I’ve been more nervous at the start of the semester. I want to do well. Look at each student and listen.”

December 13, 1994:

“Beware of reading student tests and papers when you are very tired, or if you are down from some academic setback such as a rejected article

turned down in a nasty way. But be careful, too, that you do not put down a student test or essay in a haughty or rude way. We are all in danger of being careless, and I need always to be mindful of that.”

February 6, 1997:

“I had better write more in this journal, and if I am to shun the new technology, I had better concentrate ever more on reading poems, plays, stories, and novels, and I’d better concentrate more on improving the writing of students—getting them to *want* to do that.”

September 3, 1998:

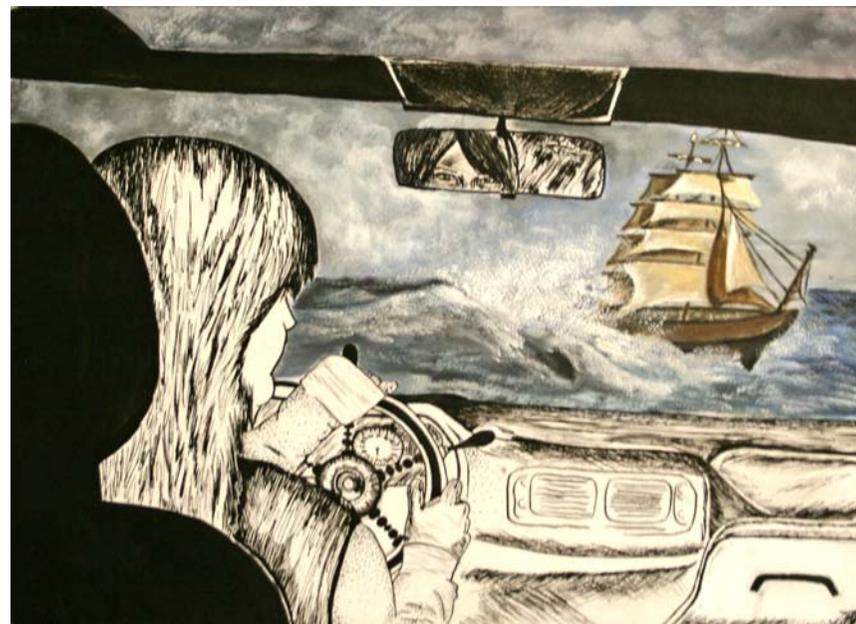
“The start of school. One of the most beautiful things about being a teacher in the United States is how when the calendar year begins to wind down, a new school year starts. This makes the fall as fresh as spring, and the occupation of teaching seems to conquer time. How much longer should I teach college full time? If I teach for another four years, I want to use this time to try to teach better than I ever have before.”

The September 1998 entry is the last one John Reiss included in *The Teaching Log*, but we do know from an account in one of his essays that he came up with a conscious plan for the final four years of his teaching. Will Marquess’ eulogy for John Reiss explains the approach in simple and poignant ways: “He decided he would approach that period as if he were a first-year student, starting fresh, and do everything he could to be a better teacher before graduating. And it worked: by his own account—he was a deeply modest man, so you could trust his account—he became more attentive to students, more dedicated to his preparation, more thorough and also more lighthearted in his responses.”

No account of the four-year experiment is included in the stack of spiral notebooks I found in John Reiss' orderly study—perhaps he decided to be more lighthearted in his response to this final “fresh start,” or perhaps he turned more to essay writing for self-examination. In most of the journal entries that date back to his first years as a professor, however, John Reiss rarely records his teaching successes, although we know from the many former students who have written and called since his death that there were lots of good classes, far more than these earnest and self-admonishing notebooks would suggest. Still, the aspiring stance even in the most critical entries is unmistakable, and it's what made John Reiss so remarkable. It was always possible to try harder, prepare more carefully, and listen better.

Lost

Jenna McCarthy



8.5 x 12”

pen and ink, acrylic paint on board

Radish Myth

Diane LeBlanc

Rubezahl, soul of the radish,
steals a woman and shuts her in a castle.

I am lonely, she begs.

He brings her a bowl of radishes and
one by one makes them human
with his touch.

They are dear friends
but only so long as a radish
keep its leaves.

I am lonely, she begs.

This time he turns a radish into a pigeon,
thinking it will coo for his love,
but instead she ties a note to its leg
and tosses it toward home.

Another radish becomes a cricket.
She ties the same note to its wing
and flicks it in the same direction.

For years she sends words from the castle
with creatures who were once radishes,
but word never returns.

Count the radishes you have given me, she begs.

When Rubezahl bends to count,
she steals his wand
and changes a radish into a horse.

But she never expected to be torn:
to gallop back toward home
or to send out in one big saddlebag
all of her remaining words.

PBR # 2
Jordan Douglas



11 X 12"
silver gelatin lith print

Silhouette
Kelly Boudreau



digital photograph

I heard he likes jazz (Driving with Miles)

Tom Chandonnet

Set low—
Light, sight and swerve a blind-curve toe.
So move—slow, movin'
slow.
Scotch n' rocks, tappin'
slow, low.
You ain't too old—
Too young, t' be young,
to know—
slow n' low
on a blind-curve toe.
Swervin', stylin', jivin'

Flow like—flow right
Tight n' loose, burst a two toot
n' crash—
dim, damp, drips a night—
be tight, Be tight.
Sinkin' low, set drip-drivin'
-jivin'.
Cool cats clashin'
Bashin',
bash and BASH—
Back, low
on a blind-curve toe.
Swervin', stylin', jivin'

Let's walk—
They talk—
smooth
Talk n' walk,

smooth
loose n' tight
Light—light n' tight
Mutterin' thunder, soft tips a rain—
Then refrain—
Come agin'—
refrain

Misquamicut Shore

Lisa Jabaut



16 x 20"
oil on canvas

Shark Week

Billy Collins

Get yer
eyes wider
you oblong domed
scythe.
Cut down that coral, slice
fat water you
flat facer,
you no snout nosed
clean double crosser.

Don't prey, dummy
it's no good.
In fact,
no bite outta me
is a good one.
I'm all stiff
and bony,
salt washed
and pruny.

Instead, slim,
sink like nails
into the ocean sediment.
I'm no chum
of yours
hammerhead.

They're Coming from the Woods!

Michael Fecher

I could see it in the sky. Feel it from the earth. Hear it through the trees and breathe it in the air. They're coming from the woods.

The screen door whined as it struggled against my push. I walked a body's length to where Pa was standing, my calloused feet crunching over the dehydrated grass, imprinting the shadow of a human foot. I stood half parallel, half behind him, and attempted to stare at the same point on the horizon as he did.

Clouds, reluctantly blending their ghostly bodies with the flood of reds from the sun, had picked their lull up into a scamper. And behind that stampede of murky silhouettes, the sun's face emerged just as quickly as it expired, permitting its rays only gasps for air.

Looking up at Pa's face burdened by dirt and sweat, I sighed to let him know I was there. "They must be using horses," he said looking down at me, then straight back into the sunset. I didn't think so. Their interests concerned destination rather than time. Or at least that's what I thought. But I kept my mouth closed. There was no need to worry him, and anyways, he knew more than we did. "Supper," I murmured. He continued his stare briefly until, finally, he looked down at me, smiled and pivoted towards the front door.

I listened to the screen door open once again, its whimper rippling through the silence of the forest. But before I retreated inside, I gazed towards the woods that surrounded our cabin. Ancient pines entangled in a mess of birch trees revolved around our home and littered my view. The trees were infinite and eerie. Walking to the edge of the grass, I halted at the line that divided our home from the woods. The more intensely I stared, the deeper and darker the woods became.

Pa told us that we had about a week. Yesterday he said we had about a month. The fear that tomorrow will bring tomorrow tip-toes behind us.

Ma had kept fairly silent through all of this. Pa was the head of the house, and therefore, the law. Recently, my brother and I had seen them arguing. We would try to read their lips, blocking out the caws of the crows and the whistling of leaves on the ground, only to be left disappointed and empty.

My brother and I often attempted to approach them cautiously, melting our feet into the ground as we stalked our prey. But just as we got close enough to hear, whether or not we thought we'd made a sound, they would turn their heads toward us and end their discussion right on the spot. Pa would give Ma a final look and then walk away. Meanwhile, she would turn, ask if we were "done with our chores," and march towards the cabin.

I shared my responsibilities with Ma while Pa and brother went hunting. Usually, when the sun was low in the morning, we would search for berries and pail water from the stream. That way, as we gardened during the day, we had nutrition at our disposal.

I used to beg Pa to bring me hunting with him. I did not think it was fair that my brother always got to go and I didn't. Finally, a couple years back, when my brother got sick, I asked Pa if I could come and he said yes.

We marched deep into the woods to places I had not yet traveled. The leaves on the birch trees had already begun to change color. Now an assortment of reds and yellows, no two leaves, like snowflakes, were the same. The sun glittered above us, the trees acting as barriers to the light.

Every so often Pa would stop walking and motion for me to slow down. He would hold up his Winchester rifle, butt against his chest, and eye straight as the barrel. I'd wait in anticipation, imagining some sort of frightening creature popping out from behind a tree. Most of the time it'd be a false alarm.

*

When the sun had hit its peak, Pa told me it was just about time to turn around and head home. And that's when we saw it. A massive elk, antlers held high as if it were king of the woods, standing right beside the undergrowth. It had not noticed us yet. I held my breath. Pa pulled up his rifle to his chest like he had before, eye as straight as the barrel.

I swear to this day that when Pa clicked that trigger, the elk's pitch black eyes stared straight into mine. Infinite and eerie, having neither beginning nor an end, but contained and concentrated by the confines of anatomy, I wondered how something so small could hold that much. That was the last time I ever begged Pa to take me with him.

Every passing day became more tense and uneasy. I would always catch Pa pacing back and forth in front of the screen door. And Ma, keeping the corner of her eye out the window, above the sink, as she washed the dishes. They would not allow us to venture far from the house without one of them, let alone step out at night.

Ma, who had always been confident and caring, became timid and cold. She camouflaged her insecurities by being overzealous and by busying herself with senseless tasks such as sweeping swept floors. Pa, on the other hand, abandoning his role as father and husband, had become more like a watch dog. Deep bags of blue pulled under his eyes, but his stare remained firm and alert. I wasn't sure if he had slept in days.

And last night I could not sleep either. Ma had made a stunning and appetizing dinner, like a feast for Thanksgiving or Christmas. Pa had shot an enormous turkey, and they had saved it for this occasion. Ma picked out the best vegetables from our garden: luscious tomatoes, savory carrots and voluptuous potatoes. She even concocted her rare rabbit stew, which she usually would only make for visitors.

My brother told them he was not hungry, but they insisted that he eat. We sat in silence, as the flames from the candles danced on the table, shifting the shadows against our cabin walls. I ate myself full, although I was not hungry at all. We went to bed right after.

I lay awake all night. My brother's bed rested near mine, and I sensed that he did not sleep as well. My eyes concentrated on the oak ceiling above me. The light eventually inched its way across the ceiling and up and down the walls. When the glow hit our door, we sat up, got dressed and walked into the main room. Our parents were already awake.

They did not talk about it. We did not ask. There was no warning. No alarm. No signal. But we knew it was today.

I stepped outside the door, and stood near my father. He stared into the sky. I did as well. Many shades of red, oranges, pinks and purples clashed on the sky. The few clouds that remained above were stagnant and appeared to be waiting.

When Pa thought it was about time, we pulled the rug up off the main floor. We pushed it aside, and against the wall. My brother, Ma, and I stood calmly against the cabin wall, as Pa walked to the middle of the room, reached down and opened the trap door. My brother went first.

They shook hands as Pa told my brother he was proud of him. "I will see you soon," Pa promised as my brother stepped down the stairs.

Ma went next, tears on the verge of bursting from her eyes, but she held them back. She grasped Pa and they shared a kiss as if it was going to be their last. "Don't worry" was all he said to her, and she sank beneath the floorboards.

I was last and I hugged Pa with all my might. He wiped the loose hair off my forehead and gave me a look that stated that everything was going to be all right. I gave the same stare back. I stepped through the trap door, down the stairs.

We had two guns. Pa had his rifle, usually used for hunting. And Ma held a Colt, which we had only for emergencies. My brother, Ma, and I sat crouched beneath our cabin. Rays of light squeezed through the cracks of the floor. My father paced in the main room.

Every step shook the boards so that little pieces of wood fell off, floating down to the dirt floor like dandelion seeds. We sensed they were near.

My brother and I squirmed closer to Ma. She squeezed the Colt in her hand. Her finger pressing softly on that cold trigger. I imagined Pa, standing outside of the closed cabin door, rifle in hand. Watching them as they emerged one by one, out of the woods. The wind at a whisper, the air heavy, the sun beaming an unnatural glow.

When we were younger, Pa used to bring us to a field near Bear River. We would walk together underneath the old pines that cover the sky. And if you were to walk far enough and knew the way, you would reach an oasis in the form of a wheat field. I thought, when I was younger, it was a lot bigger than it actually is. I remember the golden brown color of the wheat and tall grass, matching the sun's glow. Blue skies and welcoming clouds greeted us every time we visited. Pa would stand in the depths of the woods and count, as my brother and I ran in. Sometimes there would be a breeze, and the tall grass would slink to its side, all in unison. The trick was to lie low and lie quiet. My brother and I would never lie together, but close enough that we knew where the other one was. We would hold our breath, so that the inhalation of our bodies would not ruffle the grass that lay under us. I could never keep from smiling, biting my lip from trying not to laugh. I never knew when Pa was coming. I could never hear a rustle of the grass. I could never see his shadow looming towards us. I could never smell the mud on his boots. But somehow, he always found us.

Untitled
Craig Ledoux



approximately 3' x 5'
spray paint on wall

Ice Storm

Marie Lane Shaw

My child's cries interrupt
my deep slumber.
Her whimpers echo in a silence
both unfamiliar and eerie.
Her body shakes with fear.
A nightmare?

No whirr of the fan,
or hum of the furnace
to restore my sleep.
An explosion outside.
A gunshot? Armageddon?
Another blast—then swoosh. Another child wails.
Again and again, the limbs acquiesce, sever
and crash to the ground, carnage strewn and
exiled into craggy, crooked piles,
or dangle overhead in menace,
the pines and oaks now maimed, some beheaded.

Morning finally breaks.
Outside, the smell of splintered wood permeates,
like a carpenter's shop. The sun's rising irradiates
the ice-cloaked trees, their raw open wounds
reminding us of the night's terrifying battle.

Broken and bent, the defiant trees stand glorious
and shimmer in the morning light, shedding the ice
just as a soldier brushes off a battle's dust.
The diamonds litter the ground like confetti.
Stalwart, glowing, they stand in unison
with their sparkling arms held high in victory,
their fists clenched with joy,
the splendor of their brilliant radiance unparalleled.

Equinox

Diane LeBlanc

How long the two of us tried
to make what wouldn't make:
bracelets of bird song
strawberry seed mattress
a grammar of thunder
cedar dust pine tar salve
delphiniums safe in wind
a geranium museum
the map of our bodies' rivers
one equinox not yet spoken for
to mark our trying and then not trying.

Repose

Garry Smith

The week of all my days feels seven short,
Dull and dusted with toil and
Punished with redundancy.
The ragged edge of a threadbare day,
Worn thin but neatly folded at
The twelves, hangs from the dim lamplight.
A bruised and black-eyed sky begins
To groan and lick its wounds and a
Haggard muscle cramps around the chest.
A cup of comfort, a sagging chair and a
Humble hearth beckon a battered
Man inside, away from the weather rising.
I long for a summer sun to warm my nest,
To fold with feathered radiance around
The room and shield against the storm,
To bundle all the sighs and sorrows
With a string and, for the little that I do,
Bless me with a dreamless sleep.
So faithfully I sit, while wind blows round
This spinning sphere and another week of
Endless days becomes another year.

Sudan

Adrie Kusserow

What to do with the giant moth
caught in our tent on the last night, dive bombing our headlamps.
I tell my daughter not to touch it,
why, she says, you'll change them, I say,
trying to explain how our fingers are sponges
for their blue and gold powders,
but we have no choice she says
as we pull down the tent and begin our journey home
watching them fly into the night
only to flock to the bright light of the generator
whose haggard lungs we pump each night,
a throng of cell phones and computers
plugged into its one beleaguered but outstretched vein,
this global vein, neon river, with its flock of converts,
baptized in its current, this body electric
that is just now beginning to twist like the Nile
through the sweet green fields
of the post-war south.

Afternoon

Kasey Carroll

Wintry sun weaves leg through leg
during bedroom floor sitting.
You spin book-read words,
and fish moons and craters out of my eyes.
This tripped space
holds our liquid movements
twisting in a satellite.

A finger-traced stream
pours down green and gray pants,
then loops up
to curve around our mouths.

I mail you a fat wink
in a stamp licked envelope,

Laughs and teeth bury in my hair
when I lean forward to kiss
your eyes, your ears, your neck
your lips dropping breaths and whispers in
the sun pod thoughts of this afternoon.

Jesse

Megan Macdonald



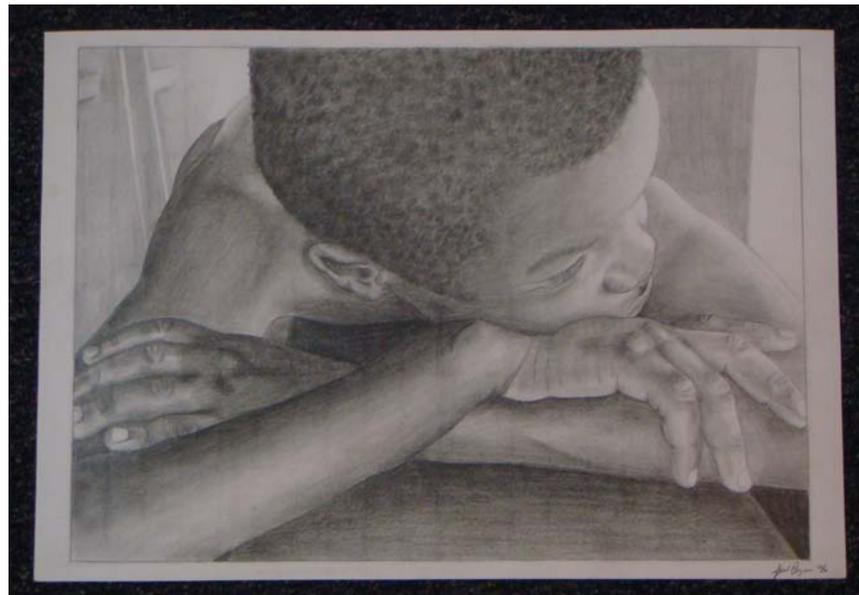
11 x 14"
acrylic on canvas

Untitled
Samantha Merrill



black and white photograph

My Derrick
Teal Bryan



14 X 20"
ebony pencil on paper

The Catastrophe Gene

Buff Lindau

Face to face with a bear in Alaska—
I wonder just how close
my son came to catastrophe
when his boss spit out the words,
'Get in the truck.'

Unscathed but uncorrected
by that singular encounter,
how could he not walk headlong
into the family hegemony,

the paternal bent, not to say lament
towards danger, radiating out
now for generations of
sublimations and inclinations.

One night his dad mis-stepped off
a Himalayan cliff edge in Assam
to land on a ledge where he lodged
till shouts drew a monk's rescue.

His encounter with a power tool
turned from catastrophe to romance,
marriage, and this very son,
bequeathed with the family predisposition.

Further back the son's father's father
started it with a mystery hospital bout
steeped in burdens and ambitions,
coursing along an immigrant's route.

No wonder we had to rock
this one up and down the street
through the hard colic of babyhood,
sing him out of wakeful nights,

watch him race his heart out
on ski slopes across the Green Mountains,
where he trained for the joyous misery
of a split-second missed slalom gate.

Now his gene-linked midnight calls
strike us wide-eyed again
absorbing the scenario—bears, cliffs, hospitals—
this time a missed train:

a continent and ocean distant—
they de-coupled the baggage car
where he napped while his friends rumbled on
to Oktoberfest.

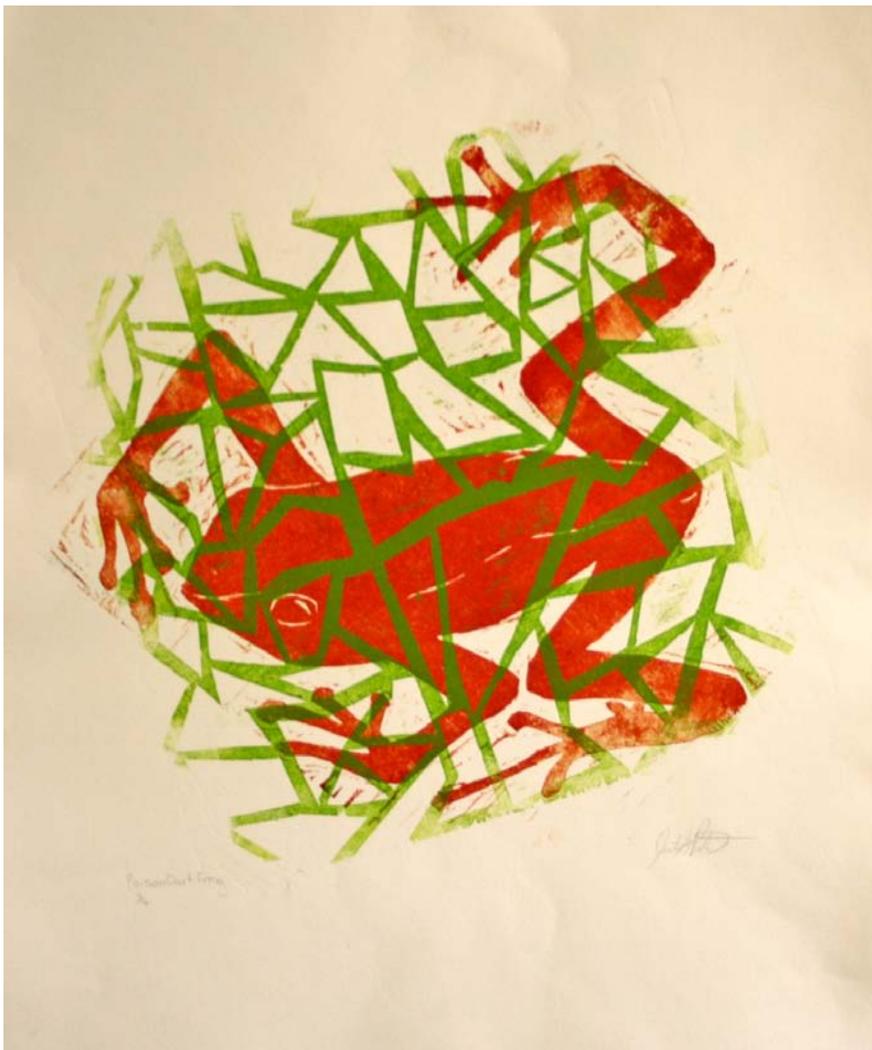
Lead player, center stage,
rarely missing from a scene
in the episodes that stoke our drama.

His latest misadventure
a skiing fling, quick turns,
fast carves, slalom gates,
the inevitable crashing end.

The right hand of a would-be chef broken.
Now it's casted, along with the die
and him out West on his own.

The family heritage, the litany of the risky gene—
albatross for a son drawn to locales of danger,
yet, a lynx, quick beautiful intent, moving on,
and us lying wide awake, watching.

Tree Frog
Julia Porter



12 x 12"
woodblock print

A New Day
Anna Florent

Today plus today plus today makes the dawn
and I yawn only once but it's soaked in sun.
Refreshing, like heaven, the light lies down.
Clean-shaven, the Creator, "We've all day long."
Mmm! Such a stretch, this . . . this . . . this . . . is
the last. Reach nadir, hit zenith, relax the chest.
Hup! Swing aright. That yellow disk is glow-less, undressed.
Bid the horizon au revoir until today, too, is done.

Zachary

Eireann Aspell

The scrawny boy with bony elbows
Proudly speckled in mosquito induced scabs
Deviously glares up
At me from under his mousy eyebrows

I had informed him with a cautious cringe,
“Crabapples are edible,”
Wondering what fool decided this
As his expressions dispute my claim.

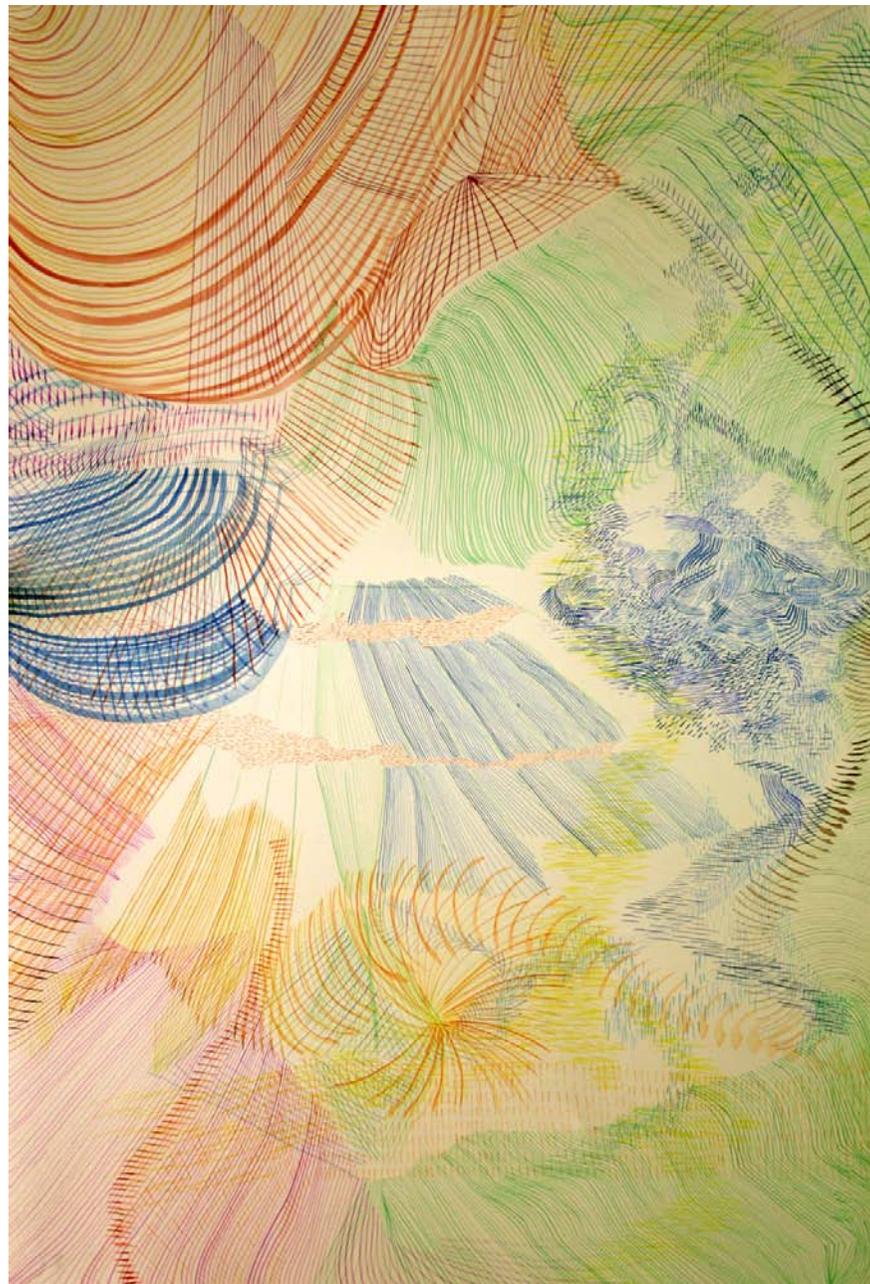
With ferocious determination
He chucks the fruit across the back yard
With wrinkly soil-stained hands and
Darkly caked fingernails

“I told you it was sour,”
Providing my disclaimer.
Which he punctuates for me by spitting
Several times into the grass.

But his words reverberate with laughter
Looking sheepish, but amused
By his seven year old antics
“I know, but I wanted to try it.”

Storm Front

Heidi Lynch



30 x 44”
watercolor on paper

Mountain Breath

Margaret Mahan

Mountains are breathing this morning
lying along the lake, blowing great bubbles
of pink gum to max capacity until
they pop on pine trees and collapse,
beneath the orange star.

Mellow pink sticks to the white ridges
then bubbles up in white foam
that freezes over the sun,
conceals the candy dome in soft sugar.

If only it were sweet and if only I could taste it!

Snow lazily drops off the roof tops
and turns into smoke, spinning and misting
through naked limbs,
guiding bow-tie blackbirds
along waves of air until they rise up
and glide over the tide.

Seamstress

Ralph Culver

Belief in the thread consoles, redeems. The warm
Ease of your ceaseless hands draws down
The twill-flecked light. Beyond the windowpane,
Stars shred themselves and drift across silk, seams for
Your later eyes to follow. Now,

Deft in work, the blue irises feed through
Each pass of the needle, riddle the
Carcass of the cotton-flower. There is
Always work, and always another hour. Your
Spare form, clothed in a loose blouse and
The sweating air: stale and harried, yet
Rising, constellated with the remnant sparks. You,
Only sewing. Something else is joined together.

Learning Curve

Angie King



digital photograph

The Jazz Man

Colin Tierney

I can tell you that she is not homeless. She does not look homeless. She looks like she lives in a house for two families. Two families separated by paper-thin walls through which loud arguments are heard. The two families living in that house make less money combined than my father alone makes. The paint on that house is peeling, the roof leaks, and I'd be willing to bet that dust collects in the corners of every room.

She is not beautiful. Her hair is blond. Not Hollywood starlet blond. Dry, brittle, hay blond. Her clothes are neon bright, a style of the early 1990s. My father would say that she buys her clothing at Uncle Sal's. In my family Uncle Sal's is slang for the Salvation Army. She is dirt poor. Her mother is dirt poor. Her father is dirt poor, but he's probably in jail so he doesn't have to worry about money, or meals. Speaking of jail, I saw a black Volkswagen Jetta today and on the back of it in purple paint were the words:

126 out of every 1000 Americans are in jail. Where is the justice in our so called justice system?

That just pissed me right off. Anyways, she buys her clothes used. Well, her fat mom buys her clothes used. The clothes don't really bother me, I swear. It makes me a little uncomfortable to think that some other kid was wearing that very same green and pink jacket nearly two decades ago, but whatever. It's cold out. I'm trying not to be cynical, but deep down I am cynical.

This little girl's smile is intoxicating. Not intoxicating like you have had a few drinks, feel great, and don't have a care in the world. Intoxicating like you drank a bottle of something cheap and now have your head inside your toilet bowl. Her teeth are chalky. Not like white chalk, like yellow chalk. I imagine that the insides of her mouth are slathered with white scum when she wakes up in the morning but in-

stead of brushing her damn teeth she runs downstairs and has two cold generic pop tarts. I'm trying not to be cynical, I swear.

The most interesting thing about this girl comes in the form of her eyeglasses. One of the lenses is clear and reveals a baby blue eye, maybe the most beautifully sad eye I have ever seen. The problem is that the other is filled in with a ball of flesh-colored something. Like she doesn't have an eye and she can't wear an eye patch because she is a little girl and little girls that wear eye patches get made fun of. So some genius eye doctor just jams the lens up with skin colored goo, waits until it hardens and plops the glasses on the girl's head. Now she won't be made fun of. Yeah, right. I'm thinking her father popped her a little too hard one night and the eye just died inside her head, stopped working, shut down. My mom says she thinks it's some genetic deformity. She isn't so cynical.

Before I get this thing going, I just feel like you should know, she is wearing those shoes where the heels are supposed to light up with every step you take. I think they are called L.A. Gears. Her heels don't light up when she walks.

She says: "Mommy, what are all these hay guys doing on the street?"

"Virginia, it's the Hayman festival, remember we came last year and you liked the one that looked like a ballerina?"

"Yeah, yeah, she was the pretty one with the skinny legs."

This Hayman Festival happens every year in October. A bunch of random people assemble in the public high school's gymnasium, you know, the type of place where the air is so dry that it hurts the back of your throat and the incessantly buzzing lights make you want to put gorilla glue in your ears. They make these "haymen" out of old clothes, wire and hay. After all the haymen are constructed, volunteers fill the beds of their American made trucks with the hay bodies and bring them down to the main drag in town. They plop one every twenty feet or so, putting them in front of stores and restaurants. Hell, there is even one

in front of the Laundromat. They have to tie the haymen up against signposts and trees and stuff so that all the homeless people who sleep downtown don't actually steal them. A homeless person would have no problem destroying someone's piece of art for a little warmth. Take an old bomber jacket off the pilot hayman; take the snow pants off of the skier hayman and so on. The haymen always get vandalized, they take whatever they can get; gloves, hats, you name it, if it is loose they take it. They'll rip the damn book out of the librarian hayman's hands and instead of reading the thing you know what they do? They burn it, not because they are against learning, but because they are a little bit chilly. This is actually the reason my mother and I are in the city. We don't live in the city, we live on the outskirts. Well, she made one of the haymen with a couple of her girlfriends and we came down to check it out, check out her piece of art. This little girl and her fat momma are next to my mother's hayman. I don't like this. I want to look at my mother's hayman alone. I want to say something, but can't.

"This one doesn't look very real," the fat lady says. "I think he is supposed to be holding some sort of container or something. I don't get it."

Are you kidding me? He is obviously a jazz musician. My mother didn't put six hours of her Saturday to make something ambiguous like "a guy holding a container." What the hell. His nametag says "Miles Haynes" for God's sakes. That "container" is a trumpet. It's made out of moss. Moss that my mother collected in the woods out behind our house. I can't help myself.

"Excuse me, it's actually a trumpet. He is supposed to be Miles Davis, one of the most famous jazz trumpeters of all time. The three-piece suit he is wearing is representative of the 1950s. Do you know anything about jazz?" I try to bite my tongue, but miss. "Do you know anything about culture?"

Blank stare, that's all I get. I just stare back. My mother intervenes, "I'm sorry, ma'am, sometimes she gets riled up." I was ushered away by my less-than-happy mother.

We spent the next hour walking around looking at the other haymen. Some were great, most were shit. I know not everyone is artistic but if some of these haymen were actually real people you would swear that they have severe bone deformities. I mean how hard is it to get proportion. A huge head on a tiny body. Toothpick legs holding up an obese “construction worker.” Ah, at least they got the Wolverine boots right.

“It’s a little chilly, Case. Do you want to get something from Dottie’s?”

The coffee shop on the corner of North and Lincoln is filled with college kids hooked up to wires. They look like they are part of some psychology experiment. I study one girl closely. White wires go into her ears, a black wire wraps around her leg connecting a laptop computer to an outlet in the wall, a gray wire keeps her Samsung cell phone charged and ready for the next pointless text message. I want to just unplug everything and throw a book into her lap but I don’t. I am afraid she won’t know what to do with it. The old people read newspapers, I like that. My mom gets hot chamomile tea; I get a bottle of Aquafina from the refrigerator. Back outside the wind is stirring up the leaves, little storms of leaves march up and down the sidewalk.

We head back towards our Audi. My mother wants to run into Whole Foods before we leave. I am frustrated with the trip. I guess I am a bit of a perfectionist. I don’t like contemporary art unless it makes me think. Most of the haymen do not make me think. They make me feel sick. I can’t help imagining how ugly they would be if they were real people. They make me think of that skinny little girl and her fat mommy. I want to see my mother’s hayman one more time. “Mom, I’ll meet up with you in the parking garage, I just want to go see something.”

One police car has its blue lights flaring. Five or so people are gathered around the spot where the jazz player once stood. *Shit, someone vandalized it*, I think to myself. My stroll turns into a jog. *I bet they stole the fucking trumpet*. Upon reaching the scene my stomach lurches. Hay and moss litter the road. *They completely destroyed the thing. That fat bitch.*

Miles Haynes and the skinny little girl wearing the green and pink jacket lie together in the road. She died instantly. The BMW hopped the median and smashed into the back of the poor little girl’s legs. Her head cracked right on that blue and white logo. She lies there hugging the curb, it looks so damn natural, it looks beautiful. Contemporary art is supposed to make you think. All I can think at this very moment in time is: *I bet her fat mom let her drink soda at dinner time.*

Autumnal Farm
Tyler Machado



8 x 10"
silver gelatin lith print

Melbatoesed
Conley Eagan



12 x 16"
watercolor on canvas

Sunflowers

Ann Giard Chase

In the bedlam of bloom,
in the furnace of scent,
wild with weeds, they stood

like golden-haired explosions,
like a doll's plush curls. I wanted
to reach in with my arms

to the blush of their flare,
to the glaze of their blossom
and fill my lungs

with their sweet tinctures
and savory balms. So I entered
like a school girl—a lonely wallflower

amidst the bustle and twitter
of prom queens.
I crouched there, motionless

in their sun-drenched ballroom
while their petals flounced
like crinolines, while they bobbed

their gilded heads, whispered
their fragrant secrets.
The air was perfumed

and dense as a fever.
Oh! How I wanted to belong!
How I wanted to take root

among them and rise
from the earth's damp pocket,
piercing the shapeless air, opening

like a million yellow parasols
beneath the sun's
blazing streams of fire

Me in Sky

Margaret Mahan

The wood is curling above our heads,
hurling spiny ribbons and papers from yesterday
night dew drops freckle cheekbones, echo on shoulders
and the sunlight has left leaves in the icy mud.
We're leaving too, but hey they're leaving us,
and I'm leaving you here this evening.
My eyes lost the hydrangea reflections
now they are chafing on a salt dry sky
smooth, overcasting the brown path
filled up with feather snow,
a tan line from your bracelet cutting through
a leather landscape in October.
My eyes lost the hydrangea reflections
when I stopped watching and started seeing
the fading day above me
and the blue sky drained from those petals
when my blood trickled into the estuary, into the bay, into the sunset
cotton ball clouds sopped up the mess, got caught on
splinters, leaving behind white clots in the red sky.
Leaving behind bits of me for you to watch
between the curling wood.

Waterfront

Kasey Carroll

The rain disappears on my wet jeans as
my legs whirl around on bike pedals
that propel me through puddles.
All my intent is bent on the thought
of changing into warm clothes.
All of a sudden I remember
standing with you at the waterfront.
It was cold and raining
and you weren't happy.
I was happy wherever you were.
The raindrops landed all over the lake.
Their dots reminded me of the Salinger story
when the little boy throws his orange peels into the ocean.
He watches them sink into the foaming waves
and thinks: "I'm glad I saw that.
No one else did
And no one else ever will."
I explain that these raindrops
disappearing into their small ringed ripples
will be like that boy's orange.
You don't respond
because you're worried about wet hair
and thinking about being naked with me undercovers.
I saw the not-listening in your face
and wrongly assumed it was
a situational affliction.
So we went back to your car
and talked monotonously.
But I couldn't concentrate
with all those drops falling on the windshield.

Leaving

Kate Neely

thunder is only a rush of air,
like breath between two mouths.
so we barely woke, and were not afraid
as the groaning sky, veiled and wet,
pulsed though the squares of screen.

the walls outside were dissolving, the bed frame melting,
as you twisted and covered my ears with your hands.

I fell into your voice,
notes in serpentine bends,
my fingers splintering,
holding the knots of your spine.

the pull of your lungs moved with the rain.
you inhaled and my eyes cleared,
no longer haunted by the venom of trees,
their arms bone-dry in my mouth.

it was too dark for you to move from the folds of fabric,
but I could hear the city bus coming, a deep mechanical grind.
I looked again at your hidden eyes,
to the skeins of cold tangling your skin.

I left carrying my shoes,
imagining your eyes blooming indigo as water climbed up my legs.

La luna baila (The Moon Dances)

Daniel Sandberg



digital photograph

Automaton

Philip Noonan

Dawn's deep cerulean chill creeps past my window
and freezes inspiration out of my body, sending it
scurrying into the warm sanctum of my bedside heater.

Inspiration waits, ribbed off by metal vents like a heart—
without its warming touch, my body turns to steel
and I am a motionless Automaton.

Frost buds flower on my massive joints;
my steel arms sit, pen in hand, immobilized
under vast sheets of ice.

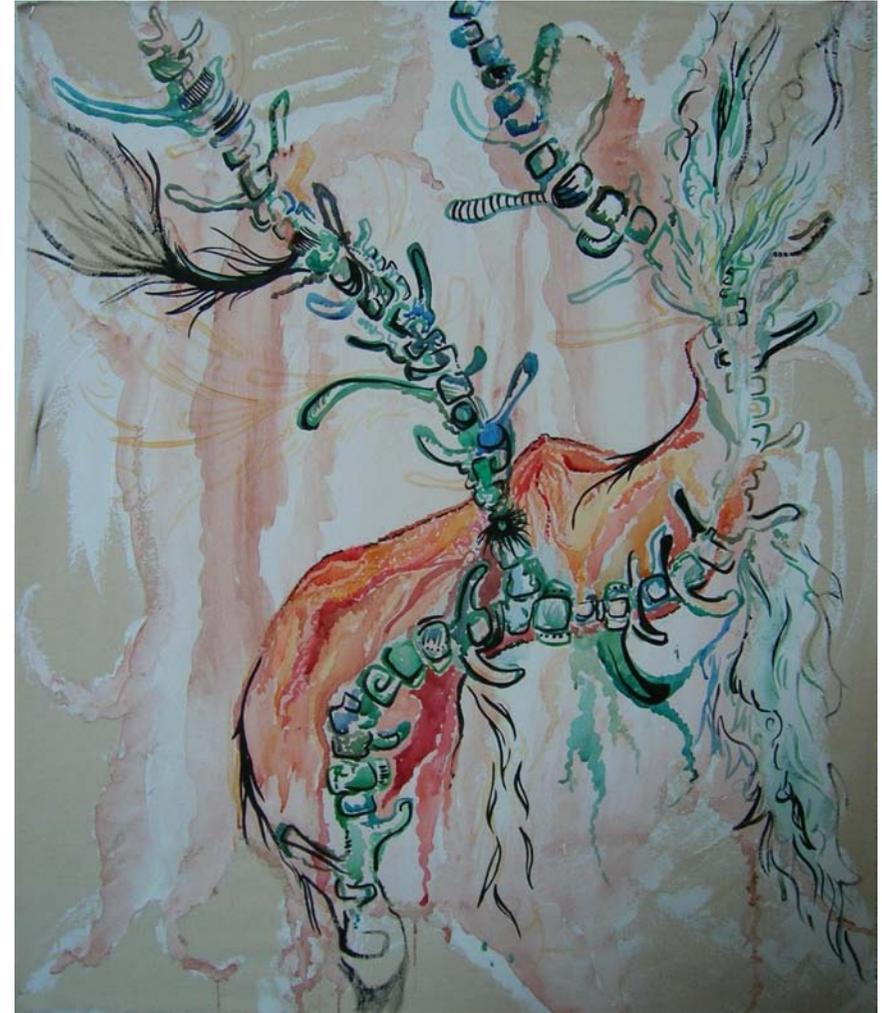
Inspiration beats—my surrogate heart—
waves of pulsating heat into my metal frame.

My heart beats,
My gears grind snowflakes,
My pen etches ice circles,

And I automate on.

Junk Trees Part II

Kate Neely



24 x 36"
gouache and tea on canvas

Vestigios

Gabriela Gómez Espinoza

En cada manos sostienes las llaves,
la puerta esta próxima a tus pies
y el umbral del ritmo
al borde de tu camisa.

Retumban en mis oídos
los retoques de tu euforia
y desde tu isla
pautas el comienzo de mi idilio.

El tono de mis pensamientos
desafia mi voz,
mientras tus hebras lacias
desafían la gravedad,
los deseos se revelan ante el deber.

Desprendo el pudor de la cordura
y confieso mis anhelos,
casi correspondidos, pausados
por el compromiso.

Entre timidez e indiferencia
contactos esquivos desencadenan
mas que instinto
vestigios de sentimientos
que presagian mi tiempo en ti.

Vestiges

Gabriela Gómez Espinoza

In each hand you hold the keys
the door is next to your feet
and the rhythm's threshold
is on the edge of your shirt.

It resounds in my ears
the touch of your euphoria
and from your island
you rule the beginning of my idyll.

The tone of my thoughts
make my voice out of tune,
while your straight thread
defies gravity,
desires are revealed
before the duty.

I detach the modesty of the sanity
and I confess my longings
almost corresponded,
interrupted by commitments.

Between timidity and indifference
shy contacts unleash
more than instinct,
vestiges of feelings
that presage my time in you.



John Reiss as a senior in college, sailing on Lake Michigan, 1957

Fishing on Lake Sheila

John Reiss IV

When a man names a pond after his partner in life, that says much, especially when the rainbow trout that the pond is annually stocked with are fed and cared for like the man's children. Fly fishing on this pond, "Lake Sheila," with my father, John P. Reiss III, is a treasured memory for me.

Unlike my father, I cast like a woodchopper. With a violent motion, my right arm tomahawks through the air multiple times until the motion feels almost fluid. I am a talkative person and fly fishing is a quiet practice, so my father would often remind me, "You'll scare the fish . . . be quiet." Or, "You will never catch anything . . . you talk too much." Fishing was an art form to my Dad. That wasn't true for me—I was just lucky a couple of times. But my favorite day of fishing with my father yielded no catch for either of us.

That afternoon, I was casting off the short pier, and my father was across the pond from me. The water was clear enough for me to see the fish following my lure. Fishing, particularly fly fishing, can be lots of repeated casting with few results. But the situation is quite different at Lake Sheila: I knew that my father stocked the pond each year and fed his "fish children" well. I wasn't surprised that day by the size of the rainbow following the lure on the line of my fly rod as I slowly reeled in the slack.

As I peered into the water, the trout worked its way within inches of the wooly worm. It must have been at least twenty inches and well-fed, judging by its girth. I was nervous as my line jerked sharply with my clumsy reeling. My father, realizing I had some action on my line, began to make his way around the pond, fish net in hand.

But before my father could reach my side with the already extended net, I had jerked the lure out of the rainbow's mouth, and it vanished. Unfortunately, my father missed seeing my almost-catch.

We were both silent after that, and made our way back up the path to the house.

I haven't fished in that pond since his untimely death. But every time I look out at it from my parents' house, I recall that quiet afternoon, my father next to me, and of course, the trophy rainbow that wasn't landed.

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Contributors' Notes

Eireann Aspell is an English major in her junior year. She spent last semester abroad in Galway, Ireland and has finally learned to appreciate rain. Although she knows that many people have had their own share of crabapples, she promises that she does not usually go around encouraging crabapple-eating.

Neil Attfield is a beach bum. “Drift” was taken in Paradise with a camera.

Kelly Boudreau is a senior Anthropology/Sociology major and a Global Studies minor from South Portland, Maine. Her picture was taken in the Copeland hot springs after a seven-hour hike on the Copeland Track in New Zealand.

Mallory Breiner '07 is an artist who uses her work as a means to articulate the world.

Teal Bryan is a first-year student from Portland, Maine. She spent the spring of 2008 volunteering at an orphanage in Ghana. This drawing is based on a photograph she took of an orphan named Sefa Derrick.

Tom Cadrin enjoys creating music, words, sentences, scenes, sentiments, moods, glimpses, and snippets; he revels in the knowledge that all of the aforementioned things may—indeed, sometimes are even intended to—mean something different to each set of eyes, each beating heart.

Kasey Carroll trepidly grew fingernails this year and is happy with the results. She likes shade scents that whisper in bottles on windowsills. The fact that the universe is expanding does not distress her, but she finds herself nostalgically longing for the days when night skies gave dinosaurs tans.

Tom Chandonnet is a junior English major from Burlington, Massachusetts. He believes that every good breakfast should start with steak and eggs, and then be accompanied by a cold glass of whiskey.

Ann Giard Chase received her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Administration degrees from SMC. She grew up among the sunflowers on her parents' dairy farm in Addison County, Vermont.

Billy Collins is a junior English major from Sudbury, Massachusetts. He would like to thank Mme. L, Mungo Jerry, and M, for the inspiration.

Ralph Culver lives in Burlington. He has been a grantee in poetry of the Vermont Arts Council, and his work has appeared in numerous publications. “Seamstress,” an acrostic, is dedicated to the poem's subject, whose name is spelled out by the initial letter of each line.

Jordan Douglas teaches the Fine Arts black-and-white photography classes at St. Mike's and oversees the Photo Club. He is still rooted in the darkroom and loves to reinterpret the overlooked. “PBR #2” is part of a series of images based on found pieces of trash. The crushed can was photographed against a light table with a medium format Hasselblad camera, and lith printed in the darkroom—an idiosyncratic process that often engenders a dramatic graininess and tonal shift.

J. K. Durick is an SMC grad ('69) who has spent his life reading, writing, and teaching poetry in the Burlington area. At present, he teaches at the Community College of Vermont and works as an online writing tutor.

Conley Eagan, a senior Economics major, is from Essex, Vermont. "Melbatosed" was created with heavy coats of watercolor on canvas, making the piece susceptible to extremes in humidity and moisture. His inspiration for this piece sprang from discovering an imbalance in his life and using what was available to realize a bright new perspective.

Justin Evans lives with his wife and three sons in rural Nevada, where he teaches History and Creative Writing. His latest chapbook, *Working in the Bird House*, was released in 2008 by Foothills Publishing.

Sophomore **Michael Fecher** says, "My thigh bone's connected to my knee bone, and my knee bone's connected to my hardy-har-har."

Anna Florent, more commonly known as Tula, is a senior Religious Studies major and hopes to begin a career in Environmental Education upon graduation in May. She would like to thank the good Lord for all the blessings in her life, including a love for language.

Gabriela Gómez is an undergraduate from Nicaragua pursuing a B. S. in veterinary medicine. As a member of her university band, she enjoys expressing through the music different kinds of feeling, bringing every musical note to life and to her poems. She was part of the Spring 2009 Intensive English Program at Saint Michael's.

Lisa Jabaut is a senior Psychology major and Fine Art minor from Plattsburgh, New York.

Angie King is a 2003 graduate of Saint Michael's who spends her days as a teacher at an independent school and her nights selling books. She has come to realize this is a bizarre and somewhat chaotic way to combine her greatest loves but does it anyway. She has little time for writing poetry anymore, so she travels with a Nikon D70 camera and prays she will catch something worth sharing.

Adrie Kusserow is a cultural anthropologist and poet. She and her family and some students from St. Michael's and UVM went to Sudan last May to celebrate the opening of the New Sudan Education Initiative's (www.nesei.org) first Health Sciences school for girls in Yei, South Sudan.

Diane LeBlanc '86 is the author of two poetry chapbooks: *Dancer with Good Sow* (Finishing Line Press, 2008) and *Hope in Zone Four* (Talent House Press, 1998). A former *Onion River Review* editor, Diane directs the writing program at St. Olaf College, where she teaches writing, women's studies, and book arts.

Craig Ledoux is an Art and English double major from New Hampshire or Ohio, depending on how you look at it. He's glad to have another piece in the *Onion River Review* and isn't bitter at all that none of his writing was chosen despite its obvious quality. Ooh, and he also likes cats.

Jasiu Leja is a senior art major and theatre minor from Shelburne, VT. After graduation, he is looking to continue to study art history, as well as make art and participate in singing and theatre.

Buff Lindau, PR director at the college for many years, brings a parent's take to the otherwise mostly youthful world of Onion River, as her poem shows. She is really happy to have an ongoing connection with Saint Michael's and its students.

Heidi Lynch is an Art major and Global Studies minor. She finds the act of mark making to be the art of mark making.

Megan Macdonald is a Biology and Art double major from Kennebunkport, Maine.

Tyler Machado is a junior Journalism major/Art minor from Dartmouth, Massachusetts. He thinks film photography is way more fun than digital.

Margaret Mahan is a morning person majoring in English. In her writing, she attempts to fill blank space with those flashes of emotion that consume her in random moments.

Instructor of English **William Marquess** is fortunate to have been a friend of John Reiss for twenty-five years.

Jenna McCarthy is an Art major from Norfolk, Massachusetts.

Samantha Merrill is a first-year Journalism major.

Kate Neely is a body full of rainwater and believes skin to be the best canvas. Walk with her. Find your staircase spine.

Philip Noonan is a sophomore/junior English/Spanish major from Missouri who aspires to have an even more drastically dichotomous life. He would dream of one day becoming a banjo-playing/Olympic sprinter, but he is terrible at the banjo. He really likes the word "automaton" and thought it should be included in a poem. "Automaton" completes a set of three hundred poems devoted to the robots that will eventually take over the world called "Poets Sure Do Love Robots."

Alicia Pacelli is a sophomore major in Art and Anthropology. Her favorite mediums are oil paint, darkroom photography, and ceramics. Although she is not a talented musician herself, she can bust out a mean "Jingle Bells" and is always willing to do a duet of "Heart and Soul" if you give her the chance. In case you were wondering, the mysterious man in the photograph is Josh Lanney, a very talented musician.

David Patterson '02 lives in Maine with his wife Anna '05. He is a recent graduate of the Bread Loaf School of English. He teaches high school English and is working on a novel about redemption and the music of the Sex Pistols.

Julia Porter is a senior Psychology major with an Art minor from Concord, NH.

John Reiss taught English and American literature at Saint Michael's for thirty-four years. Before that, he was a newspaper reporter, a high school teacher, a free-lance writer, a prize-winning pugilist, and the father of seven splendid children. He published essays on Dickinson, Melville, Hawthorne, Stevens, and Frost, and he introduced generations of Saint Michael's students to authors as disparate as John Ruskin, Virginia Woolf, Joan Didion, and V.S. Naipaul.

John Reiss IV lives in Burlington and enjoys running, fly-fishing, and creative writing.

Mary-Alice Ruggiero '04, a former Onionhead, will graduate as a registered nurse in May. She took "Old Man in Alentejo" while on horseback in Portugal.

Dan Sandberg is a senior Global Studies major and studied abroad in Bolivia this past fall. This photo attempts to capture the beauty and grace of the dancers of Cochabamba (Bolivia). In festivals there, everyone wears dresses or suits that emphasize their indigenous heritage; a woman who wears jeans and a cut-off T-shirt during the day becomes very proud of her Quechua roots when she dances.

Matt Serron is a junior English major who has two left feet, too few words, and a pair of salt-encrusted sneakers. Equal parts vacillator and writer, he eagerly anticipates the day he scornfully discards the notion that writing should be deferred until one has time for it.

Marie Lane Shaw is a 1989 SMC graduate who resides in West Boylston, MA with her husband and three children ages 11, 9, and 7. Her poem was inspired by the recent devastating ice storm in central Massachusetts.

Garry Smith is a custodian at Saint Michael's.

P. T. Smith '08 is a former *Onion River* editor, and continues to submit mainly from a guilty feeling of obligation, like calling an old girlfriend because you promised to stay friends.

Patrick Standen is Instructor of Philosophy at Saint Michael's and teaches healthcare ethics at the University of Vermont. His favorite poets are Robert Frost, Robinson Jeffers, and Dylan Thomas.

Colin Tierney is a senior Psychology major and English minor from Pittsfield, Mass. He is just about ready to give Route 7 a rest.

Joan Reiss Wry is the Assistant Dean of the College at Saint Michael's, where she teaches an occasional American Literature survey course or First-Year Seminar whenever possible.

The *Onion River Review* would like to thank:

Will Marquess for his encouragement, assistance, patience, and panache.

Becky Danaher and George Goldsworthy of Printing Services.

The English Department for its creative and fiscal support.

The Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

The Aspell family for their considerate contribution.

Chris Barrett, Alexa Chrisos, Javan DeHaven, Lauren Fish, Casey Hurlburt, Jillian Leclerc, Margaret Mahan, Kate Neely, and Philip Noonan for their input and enthusiasm.

The students, faculty, staff, alumni and members of the community who submitted this year; you are what makes the Onion.

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A business card for Post Decadent Architecture. The card is divided into two vertical sections. The left section is solid black with white text. The right section features a black and white photograph of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water, with the sun low on the horizon and its light reflecting on the water's surface. The text on the card is as follows:

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