

ONION RIVER REVIEW

2014

*river run by*

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## Editors' Note

“Nothing of me is original. I am the combined effort of everyone I've ever known.”

~Chuck Palahniuk, *Invisible Monsters*

In the midst of creating this year's *Onion River Review*, we sought (once again) to achieve greatness; we sought to create another review that would be worthy of all those who aid its creation, as well as those who submit. In the process, we encountered new sex jokes (who knew that household appliances could experience sexual arousal? what would constitute a Tale of Two Titties?), learned of subaltern creatures (Gorlock-o Gorlockian!), and, most importantly, we managed to recapture the Harold that resides in each of us; we embraced the little monsters within us all. We told household appliances to fornicate; we decided to believe in Gorlocks, the creatures that reside among flakes of dust; we drew on our walls with purple crayons. And here, in the pages before you, is the result: it is our masterpiece, our Tale of Two Titties.

In embracing our little monsters, however, we discovered something else: that we could not have done so on our own. Without the help of others, we would be like Harold without a crayon: we'd merely be staring at blank walls. In light of this, we have decided to dedicate this year's *Onion River Review* to a woman who aided us (and hundreds of other students) in numerous ways: Carey Kaplan, who is retiring this year. For years, she has taught us how to read impossible authors such as Henry James; she has taught us words such as merkin (a pubic wig), tappan (the non-existent rectal plug of a hibernating bear), callipygous (having shapely buttocks), hypermammiferous (having big titties), and ithyphallic (having an erection). But, most importantly, she has encouraged us to be the little monsters that we are, and has most certainly urged us to scribble all over our walls with purple crayons. For this reason, she is truly unforgettable;

for this reason, this year's review is dedicated to her. We will miss you terribly, Carey, and words could never explain how much you have done for so many of us.

So how did we create this Tale of Two Titties? The process starts with our core editors—which, this year, regained its former members (having forced Alex to rejoin civilization and put on some “real” clothes, saved Mickey from the Samoan tribe, and pulled Amy out of the vat of Turkish tea), and thus included the following individuals: Alex Dugas, Sarah Fraser, Bryan Hickey, Nick Lemon, Diana Marchessault, Mickey O'Neill, and Amy Wilson. When Bryan left us in December (how dare he graduate early and deprive us of his hairless chest?), we took on a new member to inherit our legacy (as the rest of us shall all be graduating, as well): Briana Brady, a pocket-sized monster who came equipped with her own purple crayon before we could even tell her that she needed one.

As always, however, we core editors cannot make this thing on our own (what do you think we are, Gorlocks?)—for we have a crew of auxiliary editors who are indispensable to the review's creation. These auxiliary editors include: McKenna Earl, Kelsey Bode, Lily Gardner, Joshua Kranz, Allie Brown, Catherine Dunn, Russell Hammond, Carley Nolan, Shawna Norton, Jenelle Roberge, Mary Margaret Miller, Cory Warren, Lexi Goyette, Shannon McQueen, Sarah Doughty, Megan Durocher, and Joanna Aliano. They met with us for hours on end, participated in dramatic readings, and helped us pick which pieces should be included in the review—and we certainly could not have done it without them.

We also could not have made the review without Summer Drexel and George Goldsworthy of Printing Services, for they turned our visions into a reality. In addition, we would like to thank the Student Association and the English Department, for they also make this entire process possible. And to our readers and submitters, an immense thanks is due: they are the reason the *Onion River Review* is made, the ones who truly make it worthwhile.

Finally, one last big thanks (one worthy of its own paragraph!) is needed: to Will Marquess, our inspiration. He is the one who bestows upon us our purple crayons; he is the one who guides this entire process. Without him, we would no longer be little monsters; we would merely be monstrous (as would the Onion). Even when we falter, he rejuvenates us with huzzahs, bagels, and silly pseudonyms. For this and more, we are eternally grateful.

As for those of us who are graduating? We proudly bestow our purple crayons upon Briana and the next generation of Onionists, knowing they will do swimmingly. We entrust the Onion to their hands, and look forward to seeing it in future years. But remember: embrace the little monsters in yourselves, and never stop scribbling on your walls.

And so, dear readers: stay callipygous, hypermammiferous, and ithyphallic. And, most important, read on.

~ Alex Dugas, Sarah Fraser, Bryan Hickey, Nick Lemon, Diana Marchessault, Mickey O'Neill, Amy Wilson, and Briana Brady

*Core Editors 2014*





ONION RIVER REVIEW

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2014

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Cover: Megan Durocher, *Embrace*. Fine line pen and ProMarker on paper, 9 x 12"

Jenelle Roberge, *Delicate* / 13

Megan Durocher, *Valentine* / 16

William Marquess, *Harold Goes to School* / 17

Sam Burns, *My Gemini Complex* / 18

Joanna Aliano, *The Road to Alicante* / 19

Ann Giard-Chase, *Albatross* / 20

Molly McGillicuddy, *Hints to Beginners* / 22

Dillon Reno, *Lemon* / 24

Brian Tan, *#flawless* / 25

Bryan Hickey, *Anacoluthon* / 26

Annemarie Kennedy, *Premature Breakfast* / 28

Connor Steckel, *Captain Flagon* / 30

Evian Davies, *Dali Moose* / 31

Dylan Ward, *Wild* / 32

Nathaniel Lewis, *To Find Myself in a Gorlock Village* / 34

Ian Conway, *Origin* / 35

William Marquess, *Harold at the Zoo* / 38

Megan Durocher, *Bloo* / 38

Casey Emilia Lendway, *Holy Relics* / 39

- Ann Giard-Chase, *Wild Poppies* / 40  
Nathaniel Lewis, *Tom Tom Stays in Surrey* / 42  
Rachel Jones, *The Flight* / 43  
Dave Patterson, *Anniversary Poem* / 44  
Timothy J. Fitzmaurice, *Gaps* / 46  
Katie Chang, *Old and Blue* / 48  
Shannon Conroy, *Vulpecula* / 49  
Stephanie Burke Lewis, *North by Northwest* / 50  
Jenelle Roberge, *A Poem for Bio Majors* / 52  
Lisa Ritter, *Piper* / 54  
Jen Signet, *Beauty Mantis* / 55  
William Marquess, *Harold Goes Hip-Hop* / 56  
Megan Durocher, *Spike* / 56  
Charlotte Ferdinand, *Trini Tuh De Bone* / 57  
Emma Gilfix, *Pensive* / 58  
Mickey O'Neill, *To Toe'e* / 59  
Amy Wilson, *Tazelik (Freshness)* / 62  
Emily Houle, *Making Tracks* / 63  
Shannon Conroy, *In Nature's Backyard* / 64  
A. M. Nicolai, *Here's a future I don't mind* / 65  
Amy Wilson, *The Color Between Us* / 68  
Amy Wilson, *City with Many Names* / 69  
Carley Nolan, *Lone* / 70  
Timothy J. Fitzmaurice, *Granddad's Dog* / 72  
Alex Dugas, *Art Lit* / 73

Briana Brady, <i>Christmas Spirits</i> / 74
Mary Margaret Miller, <i>The Scream</i> / 76
William Marquess, <i>Harold Does Not Go Gentle</i> / 77
Megan Durocher, <i>Stitches</i> / 77
Chris Magyar, <i>Weekend in Dublin</i> / 78
Alex Dugas, <i>Death, Inc. or Prelude to a Tree</i> / 79
Megan Durocher, <i>Aimee</i> / 85
Carley Nolan, <i>Abandoning Terra</i> / 86
Jen Signet, <i>Fingamantis</i> / 87
Amy Wilson, <i>Salve for a Sting</i> / 88
Megan Durocher, <i>Bee's Knees</i> / 89
Mary Margaret Miller, "cleanse me of my—" / 90
Javan DeHaven, <i>Afterlife</i> / 91
Ann Giard-Chase, <i>Son</i> / 92
Sabrina Li, <i>Yellow Skin</i> / 94
Derick Logan, <i>Canal Treasures</i> / 95
Devin Wilder, <i>Garbage Bags</i> / 96
Jen Signet, <i>Be</i> / 100
Alex Dugas, <i>fatale</i> / 101
Dillon Reno, <i>Brook Trout</i> / 102
Contributors' Notes / 104
Acknowledgments / 109

Back Cover: Jenelle Roberge, *A Daily Prayer*



## Valentine

Not a red rose or a satin heart.

I give you an onion.  
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.  
It promises light  
like the careful undressing of love.

Here.  
It will blind you with tears  
like a lover.  
It will make your reflection  
a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.

I give you an onion.  
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,  
possessive and faithful  
as we are,  
for as long as we are.

Take it.  
Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding-ring,  
if you like.

Lethal.  
Its scent will cling to your fingers,  
cling to your knife.

~ Carol Ann Duffy



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## **Delicate**

*Jenelle Roberge*

for Carey Kaplan

You made up your mind,  
you would not leave us  
to die at the crossroads.  
Instead you gave us life.

Judith Shakespeare's death at  
seventeen shocked you into action.  
Never given the chance  
to scribe our own histories,  
we walked this earth like ghosts  
longing for a life of our own,  
for enigmatic closure that was  
never ours because our pages  
were never blank to begin with.

Before you,  
I wondered why  
loneliness tore at me like a page  
in a treasured book ripped  
straight down the middle.  
Heaven forbid the line  
be anything but straight.

Every time we meet,  
you invite more guests  
to our round table.  
We speak freely, with dignity,  
and we absorb the rich depth of  
silences that are anything but silent.

Our family meals are bountiful,

we feast on the memory of our  
hunger, the starving pain that  
still awakens us in the middle of the night  
or catches us off-guard mid-day,  
shaking us into thought,  
stirring our fear that nothing has changed.  
Are we stuck like the green tomato  
unable to ripen in the light of day?

You, mother, are a brazen  
lesbian goddess of language  
who knows so much yet  
claims to know not a single truth.

The voices of women  
are alive inside of you;  
you share them selflessly  
so that we may be free.  
I now have a home,  
a family of women writers  
who were bold enough  
to be.

We honor you for releasing  
the dark beauty from the bag  
they thought they well  
hid and sealed shut.  
They didn't give me  
the chance to name things,  
including myself.  
They snapped the neck of the canary,  
a companion to my peer, Minnie.  
They brought my deepest horror home  
and made the imagined slither tangible.  
They didn't give me time

or space to intimately scrutinize  
my thoughts and feelings, fragmented  
by their pointed fingers of blame and shame.  
To them I say just this:  
Do you hear our beautiful laughter?

All these years, I have heard  
the bluesy tune, not knowing its origin.  
All these years, I have feared  
the light and the dark because  
I thought I was alone.  
Now, I know that my aloneness  
was an illusion  
created by them too.

For the first time, I have  
a room that is all mine  
and I realize its hugeness.  
I invite the voices in,  
though they have  
been there all along.



## **Harold Goes to School**

*William Marquess*

They have no purple.  
Beige, brown, cream, quince,  
kiwi soda, eiderdown,  
everything but purple.  
He wants to be amenable;  
he tries to draw with brown.  
But what wants to be brown?  
Not even number two.  
You know it would be fuchsia  
if it could.

He draws Miss Gray  
into debate. She says  
purple is too volatile,  
purple leads to loose stools,  
purple is for trids.  
He draws a breath and then  
a door and then  
a perfect knob.

## **My Gemini Complex**

*Sam Burns*

for my sister

Ever since you left I've seen  
the back of (y)our head in the library and  
your jacket in the cafeteria worn by someone  
who looks like you but isn't me  
and I've heard you  
in a joke I know you'd love,  
because I laughed too,  
and at times when I look in the mirror  
if I tilt my head a certain way  
I've found that I can see your face  
more clearly than I see m(in)e.  
And ever since you left  
my identity has shift  
ed to see that  
“us” is actually +; you and I do not equal one.

Yesterday I saw mouse tracks in the snow, two by two,  
and it feels wrong to realize that I did not think of you.

## The Road to Alicante

*Joanna Aliano*



digital collage

## **Albatross**

*Ann Giard-Chase*

Great mariner, old wanderer,  
how I dream of you, a bright omen  
on a sapphire sea; dream of you  
steering your sleek hull  
through the stinging squalls  
and gales, wings  
locked tight as switchblades,  
feathers dipped in crosswinds, heart  
like an engine set afire.

When the moon rises from the swells  
and sets sail over cobalt waters,  
I see you gliding  
over Southern Oceans  
and know as well as Coleridge  
you never plucked  
the watery souls of sailors  
dripping from the salty brine,  
or dreamt of Antarctica,  
or feared cross-bows in the fog  
and mist, not unless  
it was in the burning of planks  
or in the flames of whale oil spreading  
across the waves, or in the curses  
of sailors becalmed. At the center  
of my every dream, I slant and swirl  
and know your happiness—  
a luminous ballet, an adagio of wing  
until finally, I jolt awake and my bones,  
heavy as beams, call to me like a voice  
and I know I will never  
break from the tether of continents  
or soar with giant wings; always,

the spirit races toward desire  
while the body tosses its full and shaggy  
mane and trots home  
over the warm and fragrant fields.

## Hints to Beginners

Molly McGillicuddy

1. Gym class will feel like a battle-zone. If you cannot exhibit strength and agility, just keep moving. As much as it will seem like a good idea to recede into the corner by the mats, avoid this tactic. Inactivity will get you noticed and thus, ridiculed. So much depends on what your hands and feet can do with a ball or stick, so if they can't do much, just keep moving until the forty-minute period has ended.

*\*\*note: Most girls will not notice you in gym class because they are busy feeling ugly in their mesh shorts.*

2. When presenting your fake ID that says you are a twenty-four-year-old male named Brad, hailing from Beulah, Michigan, and you're 6'1" and an organ donor, when in actuality you are a sixteen-year-old kid named Rob, born and raised in Kenesaw, Nebraska, 5'9", with no idea who or what Jim Beam is—don't fidget. Do not think of your mother's glass-blue eyes, the peach pie she makes at Thanksgiving, and the way she could rip a Band-Aid from your knee so you didn't even feel it. And do not fidget.
3. Sex between two virgins is very awkward. There is no escaping this.
4. There will always be four or five guys on the floor of any freshmen dorm who will find getting laid easy and can get a handle of Jack without a problem. If you are not one of these four or five man-boys, do what you can. The night you hang out in room 723 and they pass you a bottle of Bacardi 151, weigh your options. You should be aware that these peers of yours are assholes, but for the time being, this doesn't matter as they are also your key to getting laid and getting alcohol without an ID. After your moral compass has faltered, and you've taken eight shots of 151, throw up in your own room. Do not throw up in the bed of the girl whose bra you are fumbling to get off. This is especially important unless you forever want to be known as the guy who puked on Sheryl Scuderi.

5. When throwing up, it is normal for the room to spin, the cafeteria food to come up undigested, and for it to feel like you are vomiting out all of the contents of your stomach. And also that your kidneys, liver, small intestine, and dignity are on their way up and into the toilet. This will produce a painful burning sensation.
6. If she doesn't respond to your text it is for one of two reasons: 1) she doesn't like you. 2) she likes you a great deal. Good luck discerning the difference.
7. First-time sex between two non-virgins can be just as awkward. There is no escaping this.
8. There are a number of ways you can leave a woman's bedroom before 6:43 on a Saturday morning. You can slink away without leaving a note. This method is preferable and will come as a relief to the woman if the reason you are in her bedroom in the first place is only due to tequila. If you would like to see her again but simply can't handle being awake with her in the white light of morning staring into each other's bloodshot eyes, slink away, but leave a quick note on a post-it. You might choose to bend close to her neck and kiss her before you walk out into the morning. Do not select this technique unless you love this woman; you never know when she is awake and will take this as a clear sign. If you are leaving a woman you loved once, but don't anymore, close the door quietly. If you don't know how to say goodbye, it is best to leave with the smallest possible trace.
9. The woman you love first and most might not love you back. You will sit and look at her sitting at the edge of the dock with her jeans rolled up past her calves, drinking coffee on a New Hampshire morning when the air smells sharp with pine, and think she is perfect. She will look at you and see a kind man whose hands are steady when he peels potatoes but tremble with eagerness and loving when they unbutton her blouse. She will understand your earnestness, but will be afraid to love you back nearly as hard as you love her. You should know she is sorry for this.
10. You'll be okay.

**Lemon**  
*Dillon Reno*

Here it  
be, me lemon. Life  
did give it to me. Do  
what with it? I don't know.  
I poke, stroke, squeeze. Drink  
do I your seedy nectar? But a  
waste it seems . . . Tom Collins,  
you do agree? Oh lemon of me,  
how do I appease? Times like  
these, confusing to me.  
Do tell, please,  
you citrus  
tease.

#flawless

Brian Tan



pencil and marker on paper

8 x 11.5"

## Anacoluthon

Bryan Hickey

I wouldn't give a spank rag about enjambment  
and I don't give a fuck about meter,  
or rhymes or stanzas  
and definitely, no definitely not form

'cause I pretend to have form  
but who can keep up with the incessant hounds of  
whiskey,  
gin,  
and soul-crush tonic,  
on a Friday night,  
and not be unformed?

I've seen more poetry on the  
froth of a micro brew  
that Cassidy  
gave me  
a ride up to the Forms  
on Phaedrus' chariot.

I told her of Bacchus Frenzy—  
you should've seen the sympathy pour.  
The Divine Madness on tap plus  
tip  
the wings of a crashing Black horse.

I know I met her somewhere,  
she said no,  
but I did  
in a thousand different forms  
where she'd never been before.  
She smiled a long Vermont generation,  
bid to see my presence again.  
I said, "I broke Plato's great circuit—  
I said, "I hope to never see you again."

'Cause form in poetry is giving sunlight to a lamp,  
giving wings to a goddamn red bull.  
Form is being clever when no one is looking  
or knowing that serenity is not the storm.

I said I'd never again write a love poem or a sad poem and here I  
am again doing both.

Here I am  
telling you that last Friday night  
I broke out of my form.  
But fuck it, what would you know?  
How many necks have you twisted to find the bottom of a non-  
returnable?

How is it that . . .

I've seen more poetry on pornhub than in the Norton Anthology,  
more poetry in a candy nose,  
more poetry in a meth-head's  
knife to my throat  
as I was elevated on adrenaline thinking about  
goddamn graves of guilt.  
More poetry in Brandon, Kelsey, and Kevin? There is more poetry  
on their tombs, tales about car accidents, suicide, and heroin  
overdoses.

I informed my lover of my formless manner  
against the tree she  
literally  
pulled me from.

Form in a line and tell me in formation  
every ounce on my cross.  
Form in a line and tell me that next time . . .

. . . never mind, what's the point?

## Premature Breakfast

Annemarie Kennedy

The sleepy human stumbles around the kitchen blearily, his pajama bottoms dragging behind his dirty bare feet. With the press of a button, a green LED light comes to light on the Mrs. Coffee. With the resounding click of a gun magazine, he manages to hold down the button on the toaster until it stays, then stumbles back upstairs where the shower awaits.

“Mmm,” Mrs. Coffee bubbles. “Ooh, that warmth feels so good.”

“Yeah,” says Toaster sleepily. “Mine too.” Truth be told, his heat coils haven’t yet warmed up. He isn’t that fast. But he knows something good is happening in there. Patience.

“Oh,” moans Mrs. Coffee. “I’m already beginning to steam.”

Toaster perks up at this. “Oh, baby,” he says. “Steam, baby, steam.”

“I am,” Mrs. Coffee bubbles. “I’m steaming all over the place.”

“Oh, me too, kitten,” he says, and it’s true. He can feel the heat of his coils, now orange, beginning to brown the doughy white bread inside him. “Aah,” he gasps. “Hot, hot, hot.” It burns, but it feels good, like that workout guy TV used to display when TV lived in the kitchen with them, before he got moved to the other room near Exercise Bike instead. Truth be told, Toaster was glad TV had moved. Now Mrs. Coffee was all his. Blender and Processor were stuck in their cabinets, brought out only for special occasions, while he and Mrs. Coffee had a daily date, side by side, right out in the open. Some days their morning routine got a little old, but most of the time, well, he could get used to this.

“Ooh,” she moaned. Like now, Toaster thought, his insides sizzling, the toast hardening inside of him. “Ooh, I can feel it beginning to bubble.” She giggled in that sweet yet sexy way that seemed to make his red button glow even brighter. “It tickles!”

"Mmmm," Toaster moaned back, fully engulfed now, insides aflame. "I can smell you now. You smell delicious." Her perfume envelopes him, wafts its way through the kitchen and down the hall. He burns brighter, hotter than the sun, surrounded by his own acrid sting of ozone, the faint hum and sizzle of gases running through his coils and tubes, an imperceptible little spark jumping between his cord and the power outlet. "Oh, baby, you're really steaming over there."

"I am!" she shrieked, consumed by the caffeine bubbling in her round glass cave. "Oh, I'm steaming! I'm bubbling! I'm boiling! I'm—"

POW! The bang of his handle popping up and the now-brown toast exploding up from his nether regions startled them both. He could immediately feel the heat draining from his coils, no longer pumping through his pulsating insides. He turned a sheepish look toward Mrs. Coffee, who was still steaming and burbling, but she had fallen silent. Once again, the moment was lost.

## Captain Flagon

Connor Steckel



ceramic

## Dali Moose

*Evian Davies*



graphite pencil on paper

8.5 x 11"

# **Wild**

*Dylan Ward*

I hear the chorus of clucks from the great geese migration  
I see a bear lumber out of a long hibernation  
I watch squirrels plant seeds for the next generation  
I see stars in the skies and the small yellow eyes of a rodent in the dark I  
    don't recognize  
and say "Man, that's wild."

I see a grapefruit moon in a black bear sky  
I hear a mockingbird's trill and whippoorwill's cry  
I see old pines a mile high  
crows in a patch of rye  
a deer run like it's about to fly  
and say "Man, that's wild."

I see bowmen shooting at TV sets  
home-bums making houses out of fighter jets  
lakefront property soaking wet  
I see cats hunting rats in railroad lots  
I see rabbit meat cooking in old metal pots  
I see spears thrown, bows drawn, slingshots shot  
and say "Man, that's wild."

I hear wolves in the white man's land again  
I see restaurants ransacked by pelicans  
I watch cows grazing in the ruins of towns  
the dams of the great North West come down  
streets torn up, windows smashed  
piles and piles of burning cash  
I see a land that's free at last  
and say "Man, that's wild."

I see Abenakis hunting in abandoned ski mountains  
Iroquois bathing in municipal fountains  
church bells broken but the shamans shoutin'  
in the ransacked offices of Manhattan accountants  
I see deserts comin' back to life  
a smashed car window become a hunting knife  
I see lawns replaced by soaring trees  
a human population that can meet its needs  
I hear swarms and swarms and swarms of bees  
I see mother nature get off her knees  
and say "Man, that's wild."

## To Find Myself in a Gorlock Village

Nathaniel Lewis



acrylic on wax paper

## **Origin**

*Ian Conway*

**Pretext:** The following poem is the introductory piece which begins *Gorlocks Come Alive*, a musical about sacrifice and beauty set in a small mystical Gorlock village. The world of Gorlocks is a strange and unforgiving land, and so I deemed a short, non-musical introductory poem to be necessary to our understanding of the play, Gorlock culture, and ourselves.

**Post-Pre-Text:** Gorlocks are small, very magical creatures who live on the flakes of dust in the corners of bookshelves. The world they see is one of lush forestry and wonder. They are peaceful beings who walk with rigid limbs and open hearts. The more you discover about Gorlocks, the more you may find that you or I are not too different from Gorlocks at all.

How blessed are you  
To be able to see  
The triumph of Gorlocks  
And their resulting tragedy

Look with your eyes  
But follow your heart  
As this story unfolds  
Right here from the start

Gorlock-o Gorlockian  
Was the first of his kind,  
The first of many,  
Created!  
From an image, divine!

He came down from the sky  
And from the sky he did breathe  
Finding joy in all things  
He was sweet and naïve

He rejoiced and played  
And saw the world through music  
Life was given unto him  
And it was his choice how to use it

“How happy am I  
To see this world  
Where my life does flow.  
All day I sing and dance  
And cry only when I stub my toe”

Great Gorlock-o was so delighted and fat  
That the only one who did not love him was  
A grey and black striped tabby cat

While the Gorlock was kind and wore only a smile  
The evil creature:  
The cat  
Wore shoes of malice and guile

So sneakily and wry  
That huge pussy plotted  
To end this Gorlock’s life  
In a way that only he could have thought of

While Gorlock-o bent at the river taking some sweet sip  
He was disemboweled by the cat’s fang like ’twas an ice pick!

His eviscerated corpse, which had lain in a heap  
Polluted the air with the stench of raw meat

Little did that cat know,  
Gorlocks are not like the other creatures  
of the land and sea  
You see with Gorlocks,  
Things happen a little more mysteriously

For alas the great Gorlock-o's remains  
Grew new life the very next time it rained!

From each of his ten thousand bones  
Grew a new Gorlock in search of a home

Through friendship and spirit they built themselves a town,  
elected a leader, and bestowed him a crown

“All Gorlocks are free to do as they please  
Because our spirits are  
As unbending as our knees”

Well, the Gorlocks lived happily for many, many years  
But this story continues, so pay attention!  
If you have the time and the ears.

## **Harold at the Zoo**

*William Marquess*

Not satisfied with porcupine  
or moose that will not fetch,  
he makes the sign say Z-O-O,  
and purples in the lawn  
with gryphon and ouroboros,  
murgatroyd and dodo,  
titmouse, pandybat, mcrib.  
Beyond a stand of tumtum trees  
he scribbles the invisibles:  
thimblewatts and mairzydotes,  
marchessaults and yawps.  
He makes a beeline for the bees  
and hangs the keeper's coat thereon.  
Cages: none.  
He feeds his peeps on whisky seed,  
and lo, they leave no scat.



## Holy Relics

*Casey Emilia Lendway*

Beer bottles, like holy relics, litter our shelves,  
but my spine is not worn like that of my mother's bible,  
and as my palms press together, I speak to the moon,  
am chained to the points of her stars  
crushing petals beneath the heels of abandoned youth.

Curtains drawn and we are snorting the ammunition of this chemical  
warfare,  
we are stealing days in cold blood,  
muscles clenched around colors and feelings  
but we are not gods.

Our lips crack and bleed,  
bruises flutter,  
left by the boys throwing rocks at our windows,  
we are not holy virgins.

We are warriors leaving maps of where we've been carved in flesh  
carved in bone,  
worn away by Ceto's wrath  
and the waves beating against our rib cages;  
we are the stones in Virginia Woolf's pockets.

## **Wild Poppies**

*Ann Giard-Chase*

You are the flowers of joy, the red rags  
of shame.

You rise  
still in the night  
to drink in the breath of the Pyrenees  
and serenade the stars  
with your scent.

You linger  
by the ancient trails  
while women of the hill tribes like gentle  
nurses nick  
your wobbly skulls  
and scrape ooze,  
black as tar  
from your lips.

You are  
the fuel of refineries  
and rickety labs, milk sap  
slopped into buckets,  
drenched in acids, and dried.  
How the addicts love you, Morpheus,  
god of dreams.  
They eat.  
They smoke.  
They stagger down  
to paradise.

What flame,  
what glow,  
what ecstasy dripped  
from your alkaloid veins,  
trafficked Silk Roads from Peshawar  
to Bangkok,  
knocked on my door—  
red poppies  
veiled in unholy white  
and led my child away?

**Tom Tom Stays in Surrey**

*Nathaniel Lewis*



oil pastel on cardboard  
14 x 29"

# The Flight

Rachel Jones



*Rachel Jones*

watercolor on paper

11 x 13"

## **Anniversary Poem**

*Dave Patterson*

Tonight I took a cigarette  
from Flora's pack on the dining  
room table and stood behind  
my truck in the dark  
and took long drags.

The filter snug between  
my fingers, I got that  
contemplative feeling  
I used to get when I snuck  
Parliaments on my parents'  
back porch in Vermont.

Everyone is crumbling  
around us like Greek ruins,  
but here we are, our love going  
strong despite the odds, despite  
the fact that we should be clawing  
at each other's cheek bones.

In the darkness, the cigarette's  
cherry sparked and the nicotine  
sizzled against my lungs and I said  
to the swaying maples in our front  
yard, "I love this neighborhood,  
and this truck, and I love that woman  
I'm about to lie with."

I washed my hands, hoping  
you wouldn't have to smell  
the smoke on my wrists or  
in the crook of my neck.

Thank God I'm not a poet  
or I'd smoke cigarettes down  
to the filter until my fingers  
became brown from tar.

But I adore the meditation  
of a cigarette, and how, like  
all contemplative acts, they lead  
me directly to you in a desperate  
sprint towards truth.

In minutes, I'm going  
to brush my teeth to clear the carcinogens  
and crawl into bed next to you.  
You'll moan in that way I love, and I'll  
burrow into your collarbone—  
my own renewal of our vows.

## Gaps

*Timothy J. Fitzmaurice*

When we were very young,  
we asked our mother  
why the river and the train  
moved side by side through town.  
She told us that they fell in love  
a long time ago, but that that  
was a long time ago.

There once was a would-be boomtown  
clinging to the banks of a marsh rut.  
But then the water came and the river grew  
into her curves and the train came up  
steel straight right next to her.  
These kinds of things, small towns  
gobble up whole weeks to celebrate them.

We know now that rivers flow in cycles  
and that irrigation and a thousand  
other uses strangled our river out.  
We know the laws of economics  
that chased off the rail line soon after.  
But as children, what could we do  
but make the river our mother,  
imperfect and weepy, and the train  
our loud, hard father?

So, when the river sheds its banks  
until she's nothing but a damp wound  
of mud and tall grass and the train  
blusters out one night and forgets  
to come home, what's left?

Sometimes, alone  
and drinking at night,  
we allow ourselves a foolishness:  
some rendering of their last alien words:

I've thought of you  
often, he says, running here  
next to me always.

That's a lie, she says.  
You're right.

And with that  
she slid away,  
though in truth,  
most of her left  
years before.  
The thinker,  
he rattled off  
toward the mountains,  
leaving nothing behind  
but two long,  
steel fingers  
on the quiet pulse  
of our town.

# Old and Blue

Katie Chang



digital photograph

## Vulpecula

Shannon Conroy



watercolor, pen and ink, and embroidery thread on watercolor paper  
7.5 x 11"

## **North by Northwest**

*Stephanie Burke Lewis*

It was high noon on that perfect lazy Saturday. We lay on our backs, heads close together and legs stretching out in a type of human flower in the expansive field that touched Fort Ethan Allen to Route 15. Despite the blazing sun ball in the sky and the softness of the breeze that swirled, we were the only ones around. The dull passing of vehicles cruising the distant road provided a background tempo for the irregular pings of the swaying Stars and Stripes as it knocked against its tall, rusty flagpole. The metal pole stood watch over the peeling white gazebo we used to stargaze from our freshman year. The hexagonal structure was surrounded by boxwood bushes, and after that, only my self, my friends, and the field. The boxwood emitted a pungent, piney smell that competed with the notes of moist soil and dry grasses that wafted from beneath our horizontal bodies. That piney smell was one I remembered from attending countless fall festivals as a child, making my way through the hedge maze and shrieking to my laughing parents as I dashed past. I can't smell boxwood without smiling. The sunlight smelled like summer, like pavement slowly melting, like bodies glistening with the last sweat before autumn strips the trees and forces everyone to find a sweater. The sunlight smelled of change; it tasted of transition, it felt like the last dog day of summer.

Above us, the sky laughed as pearly clouds shifted, multiplied, and disappeared to other horizons. We laughed back. I rolled over to my stomach to examine the stiff stems of grass that stood like totems amongst the smooth, lush clover. My eyes scanned for a four-leaved mutant. I never find them. Somewhere, a dog barked, sending a jolting reminder that we weren't the only creatures on the planet. Ben's lighter made a sharp click and his Camel cigarette sent a curling strand of smoke to join the dancing breeze. A smoke signal telling Mama Nature to keep doing exactly what she was doing. The ground beneath me began to swell: we were surfing the grassy field. When we reached the crest of the land wave, I waved to the line of red brick houses that bordered the far edge of the grassy space. Beneath the haze-inducing sun, the bricks looked solid and safe. Drew said something to Trevor that I didn't catch. Their voices cartwheeled

away from our place in the field, tumbling to examine other patches of clover, other stalks of grass, other dusty mounds of dirt. Ben stubbed out his cigarette, sending one last cloud of smoke as an offering to the sky. My mouth tasted of words I would remember to say later.

## A Poem for Bio Majors

*Jenelle Roberge*

The woman I live with  
spends her mornings,  
and some afternoons too,  
with corpses.

She comes home and tells me  
that she needs to rub Old Spice  
under her nose to counteract the odor  
of rotting flesh.

She comes home and tells me  
how she feels seeing babies being handled  
with care, their delicate bodies  
do not belong on the autopsy table.

She comes home and tells me  
of the homicides, suicides, and  
mysterious cases that leave her curious,  
searching for answers in ghosts.

She comes home and tells me  
about the conversations she hears among  
medical examiners in the fluorescent lights  
of the examination room,  
talking about what's for dinner  
as they slice and chop  
like they work in a deli.

She comes home and tells me  
she does not like poetry because  
she does not understand it.

She is a biology major;  
she needs something more  
straightforward, to the point.  
Earlier today, she held  
a human heart in her hands.  
She journals the experience,

takes a deep breath,  
lies down in bed,  
puts her hands on her chest  
and feels her own heart  
beat. She presses harder.  
She moves her fingertips  
along her ribs,  
feels her wrist's pulse,  
now back to her chest, to her heart.  
I tell her that she understands  
poetry better than she thinks.

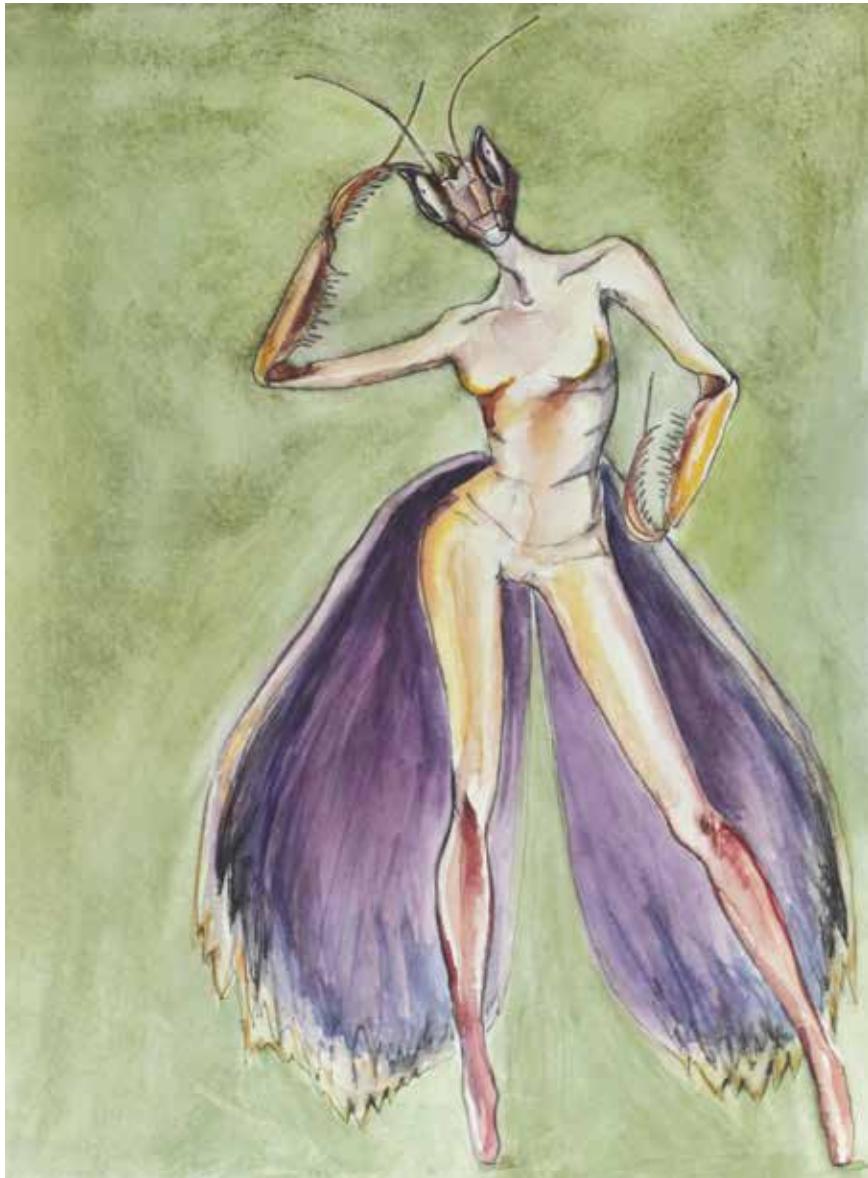
**Piper**  
*Lisa Ritter*



35mm film photograph  
8 x 10"

**Beauty Mantis**

Jen Signet



pen and watercolor on watercolor paper

9 x 12"

## **Harold Goes Hip-Hop**

*William Marquess*

He's in the house  
he is in the house  
he is in the in the in the house  
little beanhead is in the house

He's on his toes  
in his footy peejays  
and can he shake it  
oh yes he can oh he can can  
oh he can shake his can

Is it time for bed?  
Not yet! Not yet!  
Nicht wahr and nyet!  
Not bed! Not yet!

He's the onliest loneliest onliest man  
with the purple cran  
in his gummy hand  
and he's here to shake it shake his can  
don't draw no curtains yet.



## **Trini Tuh De Bone<sup>1</sup>**

*Charlotte Ferdinand*

Forsaken oil drums<sup>2</sup> in junkyard slums.

BP, Esso, Shell.

Tempered fire sets the cave.

Beat, tap, listen

to find the groove that makes the tune.

Drum sticks with rubber tips.

Beat, tap, caress

the silver crater filled pan.

Whimsical melodies played in memory  
of a time when the bongo was banned.

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<sup>1</sup> “Trini tuh de bone” is a saying used by Trinidadians to express their deep pride for their country and culture.

<sup>2</sup> African slaves invented steel band pans, using oil drums, in Trinidad after the white Europeans banned all cultural instruments in the 1880s. Today the steel band pan is the national instrument of Trinidad and recognized as the most beautiful instrument in the world.

**Pensive**  
*Emma Gilfix*



acrylic on canvas  
12 x 15"

**To Toe'e**  
Mickey O'Neill

A winding concrete road threads itself through Lotofaga, the seam around which the village sprouts—houses without walls built around the strength of breadfruit trunks, deep blues and brilliant yellows miraculously unmuted by the constant onslaught of the salty sea spray. The sun is too strong in its reign to allow any dull color here, any color that does not scream its praise.

Down the road that stretches eternally, I hear a conch being blown. I pause, my fingers full of taro in coconut cream raised halfway to my mouth, waiting for the succession—the next conch is blown. The deep boom ripples out with seismic force as every designated nephew, cousin, uncle, brother, father, and son take up their ocean's instruments and blow their message down the road. The village falls silent with the alert—even in the yard, the pigs stop rooting through the garbage with their thick snouts, the thin horse straightens its head, and the mutts stop nipping at one another's war-torn ears. Everyone respects the evening *sa*.

I know what I must do—I lick my fingers clean, quickly, no time to linger over the syrupy sweetness of the coconut cream now, and I bow my head as my *tin'a*, Toe'e, has taught me. I watch Toe'e across from me, opening her eyes slightly to check that my head is bowed properly, that my shoulders are turned downward, that my hands are clasped firmly enough in my lap that my knuckles burn white from the effort. Her eyes measure my *lavalava*, ensuring that it modestly covers my crossed legs and that no pale thigh peeks out from the cloth, that my spine is straighter than sugarcane—that I am being a respectable girl.

She smiles as her eyes slide closed again, shutting like the windows that Samoa has no need for. The whisper begins, so many vowels that it sounds like a song more than a prayer, and my gaze is pulled into the dark gaps of pink gum left between her sparse teeth—it makes her smile wider. I should be focusing on the prayer, but there is so much to study—her earth-colored skin, the wiry forest of her white hair. Too coarse to be contained by a rubber band, it spills over from the confines of the low bun and reaches out, upwards at odd angles—always towards the sun.

I travel down past her broad shoulders to the leather toughness of hands made strong by the work she teaches me; I try to count the cracks that splinter their way through her knuckles, clasped firmly in her lap. I wonder how many mats she has woven from dried palm fronds to make her children's low beds, how many fresh-from-womb babies her palms have caught, marking their first human touch. She is the village midwife, and since she was a young girl she says, "Every baby in this village has been mine." Her hands, earth worn dry and cracked from too much sun, deliver life along the winding road of Lotofaga.

Her prayer winds its way around our bodies, through the house and out into the yard. Toe'e's low voice commands my spine straighter, taller, prouder. I try to be a respectable *teine*, to make her and her magic palms proud. But I won't throw rocks at the dogs like she tells me to, and I can't laugh with her while she does. My fingers fumble when I try to light the banana leaves in the umu, to make fire to cook the taro I have helped her peel, leaving blisters across my hands left weak by a softer life than Toe'e's. My eyes sting from the smoke and it makes me cry; I turn away because a respectable girl never sheds tears, but there's no escaping Toe'e's eyes. And I blush too much when the naughty boys whistle at me, when I should chastely ignore them—she yells that I am redder than my hair.

But she laughs, her head tipped back in exultation to the sun, when I stumble over the unfamiliar pathways of her language with her, the shapes of the words that feel foreign and bulky against my tongue. She grunts approvingly when I keep chopping the grass with the machete despite the sweat that soaks through my shirt, when I chase the chickens away from the fale. She clucked with her friends when they talked about the other daughters that came home late, pointing her breadfruit trunk index finger at me, "Never Sami, she is never late. Lo'u Sami is good with the chores." Lo'u—my. Lo'u Sami—I am her Sami, her sea.

Toe'e is still whispering the prayers that I am supposed to follow as the first signs of pink sunset melt into the ocean. She will not say that she loves her children, but she shows me in the practiced way her life-delivering fingers softly wash my hair that is not so unlike her daughters',

the way she pauses to take a deep breath before she talks about Marieka and Sara, because otherwise the longing will balloon to bursting in her lungs. She does not know her age, but none of us are trees—if you cut us open there are no rings in our bellies. She will not tell me that she is proud of me, but she ushers me in to rest from the high noon sun while she directs Ene to climb the fifteen-foot tree in a few liquid jumps. At the top, he grabs the machete tucked into his *lavalava* and hacks off a young coconut. When it hits the ground, Toe'e picks it up, gouging a rough hole in the center, tipping it towards my mouth to drink from it. When I smile over the sacrament, she smiles, too. Soon enough the *sa* will be over. The spell will break. I will leave. But Toe'e's head is bowed low with prayer, so I bow my head, too.

## Tazelik (Freshness)

Amy Wilson



digital photograph

## **Making Tracks**

*Emily Houle*

We left our fear in the field,  
underneath the splitting leather  
of an idling tractor seat.

We left our fear on the kitchen counter  
by the cutting board,  
beef-blood stained.

We left our fear inside our rifles,  
slotted beside the bullets,  
scored into the barrels.

We left our fear in the barn, beside the milk-cow  
even though her great ribs still rise  
with steady breath.

We left our fear behind at home  
inside the rough splintering beams, under  
old aching stairs.

We walked forward with our curiosity,  
smooth and sour as pennies on our tongues  
clicking behind our teeth.

## In Nature's Backyard

Shannon Conroy



pen on paper  
5 x 7"

## **Here's a future I don't mind**

A. M. Nicolai

I wouldn't mind feeling poor with you  
living in an apartment that we can't afford  
while I'm in school for the hundredth year  
and you're working on becoming something

Sometimes you'd get home first  
and make us bowls of cereal  
with cut-up bananas

I'd cut my own hair in the kitchen  
with bad scissors  
so we could still get *Time* magazine every month

Our clothes would get a little too big  
but we'd put on belts  
and still look so good  
together

We'd take cold showers to keep the bills down  
only watch old dvds on the laptops  
our parents bought us  
only turn on the lights when it was pitch dark out  
only turn on the heat when we could see our breath

You'd skip lunch and buy me flowers  
I'd put cardboard in the bottom of my shoes  
and buy you lunch

But we'd still invite our friends over  
and turn on all the lights  
and turn up the heat  
and let them drink our wine

and gin  
and rum  
until we were all laughing and spilling out the door

Some nights  
I'd fall asleep at the slanted kitchen table  
hand black with ink  
and you'd come and wake me up  
and tell me to go to bed  
while you made neat piles  
out of my work

Some mornings  
you'd wake up at four-thirty  
to be the first one in the office  
and I'd get up while you were showering  
and make you eggs and coffee

And you'd always hand me my tea  
handle out  
just like I handed you yours  
and we'd both have burnt palms  
from trying to protect each other's  
fingers

Thanksgiving with your family  
Christmas with mine  
hoping they'd insist we take the leftovers  
asking for practical things  
like toothbrushes  
and sweaters

And when my sister called  
and asked how we were doing

as I looked through the rust on the mirror  
and only saw dark circles and ragged hair  
turned around  
and only saw old furniture  
rescued from the sidewalk  
and then saw you  
reading *Time* magazine  
in the sweater my mother gave you

I'd tell her we were perfect  
we were perfect just this way.

## The Color Between Us

Amy Wilson



acrylic on canvas  
8 x 10"

## **City With Many Names**

Amy Wilson

It draws me like a call to prayer,  
more compelling than faith—  
the gravity of memory,  
the sound of ground falling away  
to a city split east and west  
down her bright blue spine.

I stand at the fortress Rumeli Hisar,  
traverse Pera by land in the Ottoman ships  
and cross the Golden Horn, where  
Hagia Sophia cries out at my coming.  
Istanbul turns to face me  
and I am the one captured.

Somewhere in that citadel of stone  
my *I love you*, my *seni seviyorum*,  
is still steeping in a tea pot,  
hanging in a breath of *nargile* smoke  
tangled in the fur of some stray dog—

I can see the last days so clearly  
the view from Eyüp, through the thick air  
to colorful tenements and the grey-green peak of Galata Tower.  
The skyline rises like the roof of an ancient forest  
whose floor has been worn down  
by a hundred million slippersed heels  
stomped and whirled over those stones;

but this city has always dictated the dance,  
and she is not a woman to be kept.

## **Lone**

*Carley Nolan*

I remember  
a desert  
and the breath of the Joshua.

Wild horses' hooves scar the earth,  
then a fleeting wind diminishes the curves  
and ruts,  
reminding me  
of someone's footsteps.

The beating jackal heart  
tender and spiraling  
like emerald vines,  
contorting around a ravine.

They will hunger and thirst for something  
less empty than a silent  
and aphotic  
ocean  
floor.

It's a skeletal shell  
of a fractured mind.  
Bones and tumbleweed  
barren of thought,  
but ragged with memory.

In the oasis  
beneath the cliffs,  
water pools like azure ink  
painted across copper bodies,  
extinct from thousands of  
red moons before.

Harmoniously pulsing under the skin,  
wild flowers fringe the corners of quarry.  
Hummingbirds caught in tugging zephyrs  
cannot catch their breath—  
and a psalm that drums in  
the hollow bodies of a cactus

reminds me  
of someone.

## **Granddad's Dog**

*Timothy J. Fitzmaurice*

Part-time driver for John Ray  
had him delivering ice in the sticks  
where he chose a three-legged shit pile  
from a litter of Labradors. He brought it home,  
built it a wooden cart, and fed it bits  
of hamburger from a tablespoon.

And God save anyone  
who even looked cross at that dog.  
His brother, Matthew, got thrown out of the house  
for kicking it. Uncle Roy got the belt  
for a curse where Granddad could hear.  
Grandma tried to poison it once.  
She got the worst.

If all he'd done for all his life  
was send out his ten-year-old each Sabbath  
for his firehouse pay, Kings, and Old Crow,  
we'd have known what he was:  
A drunk. A bent nail  
who once broke his daughter's jaw  
with her own supper plate.

He could've been mean and hard  
and that's all, but that dog  
that the Devil himself spat out, pissed on,  
and gave for the bitch to eat, got treated  
like goddamn Jesus Christ come home.

It was us  
he hated.

It was his choice  
to burn us all down.

**Art Lit**  
*Alex Dugas*



pen on cardboard  
22 x 27"

## **Christmas Spirits**

*Briana Brady*

Leah was sitting at her grandmother's kitchen table, fiddling with the hem of the itchy black dress she had bought specifically for the funeral. It felt like being wrapped in carpet samples, suffocated by prickly fibers. She sat looking around at her family members laughing and talking, and tried to figure out what she could say that would hide the fact that the room was spinning around her, that she was unquestionably and unequivocally drunk. Over the past couple of hours, whenever no one was looking, she had been furtively pouring herself gin and tonics—her grandfather's favorite drink—from the pitcher one of her cousins had mixed. The room was moving. The cat was sitting silently on the linoleum floor, its tail swishing back and forth, staring at her. Leah bunched up the black fabric in her hand and moved her tongue around in her mouth as if she could find the right words inscribed on the inside of her cheeks. Her spit tasted like Christmas.

"I love pine trees," she said quietly.

"What did you say?" Her Uncle Frank, who was sitting next to her, looked at her with his eyebrows raised.

"Just, you know, that I really love pine trees." Leah took a deep breath in and the words tumbled from her lips, "I mean, they're so green all the time—evergreen. And the little needles are just like hooks for Christmas lights. Can you imagine if we had to use a ficus for a Christmas tree? That would be ridiculous. Where would we hang the ornaments?" She held up her hands and mimed carefully placing something on a tree, "They're just like little tiny hooks." She knew almost immediately that these were not the subtle words she had been hoping they were. She could tell from the way that Frank was laughing at her, the way his eyes were moving back and forth between her face and the empty glass in front of her, the way the cat was still peering up at her with its large yellow eyes. Shit. She felt the heat rising in her cheeks, and she stood up from her chair, wobbling as she walked away, still listening to the sound of her uncle's laughter.

The walk from the kitchen to the living room was a short one, but Leah staggered, reaching her hands out to the wall of the hallway for support, inching her way towards the soft yellow light of the living room's lamps. There was no one else in the room to see her fall into her grandfather's chair. It was one of those huge recliners, big enough for Leah to curl her body up on the seat, wrap her arms around her shins, and pull her knees up into her chest, ignoring the fact that she was wearing a dress.

Leah had always loved his chair. She rubbed her hand along the worn down corduroy of the arm rest and stared at the television silently playing the Channel 61 News. She watched the anchor's mustache move as he talked. The subtitles swimming at the bottom of the screen told her that there had been a small fire on Newbury Street. The cause was unknown. No one was injured. The close-up on the anchor's face quickly switched to an advertisement for Raisin Bran. A smiling man poured milk over his cereal from a glass bottle. Leah studied the way the milk splashed over the mountains of flakes. She wondered if her grandmother would want to keep the chair.

# The Scream

Mary Margaret Miller

for Edvard Munch



oil, pastel, sharpie

16 x 23"

## **Harold Does Not Go Gentle**

*William Marquess*

His steps are always haunted by the moon;  
It warns him as it walks across the sky:  
It says his bedtime's coming all too soon.

He draws upon the page a purple rune,  
But cannot riddle out a reason why  
His steps are always haunted by the moon.

He once was gladdened by the sun at noon;  
He watched the shadows gather, fade, and fly.  
They say his bedtime's coming all too soon.

He sketches on the sand a mighty dune  
And desert birds that make a mournful cry;  
They know his steps are haunted by the moon.

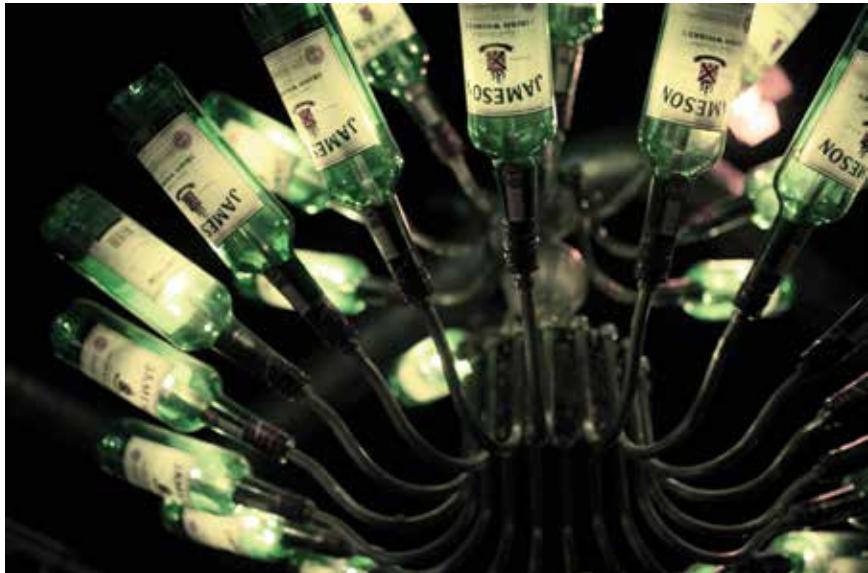
He whistles as he walks a little tune  
As if a cemetery's passing by.  
It says his bedtime's coming all too soon.

He feels as flimsy as an old cartoon.  
He hates to hear the simple word goodbye.  
His steps are haunted always by the moon.  
It says his bedtime's coming all too soon.



## Weekend in Dublin

Chris Magyar



35mm film photograph

# **Death, Inc.**

*or*

## **Prelude to a Tree**

*Alex Dugas*

*"Ain't no grave can hold my body down."*

~Old Negro Spiritual

*"Every path leads homeward, every step is birth, every step is death, every grave  
is mother."*

~Herman Hesse, *Wandering*

My mother's mother told me once how only very, very special people could become trees. Two half-drunk cups of coffee sat between us. She knew a lot about those sorts of things.

It was a summer afternoon like a folksong—the time between the day and night when the breeze is light, and the light is low, and you look out the open window the way you'd peer into an aquarium and watch the maple tree moving in time with a hundred different currents in the air. To me, Nan's eyes always looked ready to cry at sights like this, but all those wrinkles around them hinted at a smile nonetheless—a happiness that went far beyond bone-deep, which I later realized was called being grateful. In this way, she lived her later years in a state of quiet ecstasy, just as the tree does.

She knew a lot about these very, very special people 'cause she'd lived a lot. She knew a lot about trees 'cause she'd died a lot. And somewhere in that liminal space between tree and human, between death and birth, she managed to hang onto some remnants of a lifetime's wisdom clean through to the other side. What I mean to say is that I'd bet my soul you'd be hard pressed to find someone who remembered being born so clearly as she did. It was a lot to take in; this ancient woman transfixed on the tree, the ancient tree transfixed on her. The pleasure to bear witness to this quietest of exchanges was a rare one. It still is.

That's when I began, again, to wonder where she'd wake up next; where she'd be when this chapter was up. I looked outside as she did, and

rested my eyes on that massive trunk, and it seemed perfect. Most people would be scared, I thought, but she wasn't.

We begin and end with the ground, and no one—*no* one, I decided—deserves to stand between us.

\*

There are a hell of a lot of people on this earth today; a few more in it tomorrow. We're seven billion customers strong, and we've gotta eat, sleep, and die before we're done. Supply and demand. Just throw fear into the stew and suddenly every day is Christmas for the entrepreneurially macabre. So, if life is time, and time is money, then what would you pay to pretend that this life will go on forever? But that's not the real question. What I'm really wondering is what it is we *sell* in order to purchase our immortality.

Americans, alone, spend an estimated seventeen million dollars a year on death; from funerals to flowers, caskets to cremations, we feed our grief to the golden bull daily. And any funeral home director, coffin-builder, or cemetery operator will tell you, with a sly smile, that it's only getting better.

It's a sunny Midwest afternoon as you stroll into the sixteenth annual "Senior Lifestyle Expo" where, just to your right, the "Cremation Society of Illinois" has set up shop. "It's a light setting for a heavy question," you might say—"where to spend eternity?"<sup>1</sup> With cremation rates nearly doubling in the United States between 1995 and 2011, the cremation and burial industries have become fierce competitors. And with the establishment between the two of the old one-up capitalist mentality, anything from a pearl-inlaid Mickey Mouse casket to a silver shotgun shell packed with Uncle Abner's ashes has become a possibility—if you're ready to pay up, that is. "What is called the traditional funeral," we come to learn, "is, in fact, a commercially created tradition . . . the idea that the more we spend, the more we're showing our love for the dead."<sup>2</sup>

So, supply follows close on the scent of demand. When that six-foot-deep void calls to be filled, the droves of businessmen and businesswomen come running hot on the trail and dressed in black;

there is an Eldorado of money to be made. But although this particularly marketable answer—this faux-tradition—is a new one, the question that it responds to is almost as ancient as death itself. Almost.

At the expo, you bump into a woman named Naïma Sadia. The next thing you know, she's explaining to you exactly why she is not interested in being laid to rest in the “historic” section of the graveyard in her hometown. She explains, “it’s gloomy over there, and I didn’t want to feel depressed.”<sup>3</sup> She laughs, and so do you. But five thousand miles and just as many years away, we humans are effectively discussing the same thing. “It is clear that a physical body was considered essential for the deceased’s continued existence,”<sup>4</sup> writes author and curator John H. Taylor. “Proper disposal of the dead body was a matter of concern to the Egyptians from prehistoric times.”

In *balsamum*: the Latin words meaning “to preserve through the agency of balm”; to us, *embalming*. As early as the year 4000 B.C. this practice was catching on along the lower Nile River as more than a simple custom, but as a full-fledged ritual in the form of mummification—that is, if one could afford it. The corpses of the wealthy and powerful would undergo a meticulous process involving washing, brain removal, evisceration, dehydration, stuffing, beautification, wrapping, and finally masking—each step as important as the next in the deceased’s pursuit of *akh*, or “transfigured being.” Taylor writes, “The deceased, by becoming *akh*, acquired ‘effectiveness’ as well as some of the qualities of gods . . . endowed with a creative energy akin to that employed in the creation of the world.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Death: It's a Living." Weitzner, Mitch. *CNBC Originals*. CNBC. 31 January 2013.

<sup>2</sup> "Death: It's a Living."

<sup>3</sup> "Death: It's a Living."

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, John H. *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, 32

When corporeal preservation has, today, transcended consumer trend to become literal state law, one might say that the ancient Egyptians handed us the tablets. But times have changed—they've changed a lot, and *akh* for our culture has gone the way of the institution, perhaps nullifying both the “creativity” and the “energy” that was once so celebrated and sought after. Moreover, the nemeses of the ecologically rebellious are now double: the diamond-studded casket and the several sanctions that impose it. One such objector was environmental activist, writer, and true anarchist Edward Abbey.

A friend of Abbey's recalls: “he wanted to be buried as soon as possible, and he wanted no undertakers, no coffin, and no embalming . . . [he] also requested that his family and friends disregard all state laws concerning burial.”<sup>6</sup> Abbey wrote in a note, “I want my body to help fertilize the growth of a cactus, or cliff rose, or sagebrush, or tree . . . If my decomposing carcass helps nourish the roots of a juniper tree or the wings of a vulture—that is immortality enough for me. And as much as anyone deserves.”

Abbey left, for his friends, a clear and concise set of directions: “No embalming, for Godsake! No coffin. Just an old sleeping bag . . . disregard all state laws concerning burial.” In a short article written for *Outdoor Magazine*, entitled “Forever Wild,” writer Jason Daley begins his look at Abbey’s death with a quote from the deceased’s close friend Doug Peacock: “The last time Ed smiled was when I told him where he was going to be buried,”<sup>7</sup> he reminisced. “Abbey’s grave, a closely guarded secret for 13 years,” he goes on to write, “has become a legend.” Though this immense secrecy and mythology that Abbey’s grave has come to connote gestures largely toward the heroism of his life, they stand, all the same, as a testament to the “transgressions” of his disposal. “His friends broke several laws by transporting Abbey’s corpse without a permit, interring him illegally on federal land, and forging a death certificate,” writes Daley. Abbey now rests, unencumbered by wood, and metal, and fancy fluids, somewhere *in*—truly *in*—Arizona’s Cabeza Prieta Desert. To put it lightly, “Ed would have been proud.”

Though laws and regulations surrounding bodies and burial vary on a state-to-state basis, the core limitations—to the merriment of

undertakers, embalmers, and cemetery directors nationwide—remain consistent. In my own home state of New Hampshire, one can find his or her post-mortem rulebook under Title XXVI. Section 289:1 specifies that “Burial ground” means a private family or religious institution’s cemetery, mausoleum, or columbarium on private property and not available for use by the public<sup>6</sup>; in other words, not a random sand patch in a national wildlife refuge. Section 290:1 states that “Whenever a person shall die, the physician . . . attending at the last sickness shall complete and deliver to the funeral director . . . a death record,” rather than the deceased’s buddy scratching a name and epitaph into a nearby rock and calling it a day. Lastly, Section 290:11 reads: “No dead body of a human being may be released or transferred from any residence, hospital, or other facility to any person other than a funeral director . . . or to the next-of-kin . . . or designated agent,” especially not in an old sleeping bag packed with dry ice. “Any person who shall violate any of the [aforementioned] shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.” Much to the chagrin of both lawmakers *and* money-takers, however, there remain more than a few of us who would rather pass on this one; who prefer mud to mausoleums; boulders to headstones; and dirty, old sleeping bags to caskets worth more than our goddamn cars.

You might say that immortality is subjective. Contrary to what we’re bred to believe in this particular chapter of our species, maybe decomposition is not about us. Even when it is our own flesh going to the ground—our organs, our eyes, and every other tool we’re given in life—maybe it is not about us. After all, to rot is not to disappear; it is only to change.

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<sup>6</sup> Mongillo, John F., and Bibi Booth. *Environmental Activists*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Daley, Jason. "Forever Wild." *Outside Magazine* 1 October 2003. Web. 2013. 1.

<sup>8</sup> “The New Hampshire Cemetery Association.” *The New Hampshire Cemetery Association*. Web. 28 October 2013. [www.nhcemetery.org](http://www.nhcemetery.org).

Through the process of corporeally breaking down with the aid of numerous flies, larvae, beetles, birds, and other scavenging vertebrates, we outlaws in death may opt to experience the most ancient burial ritual there is. Scientist Edward B. Mondor and his colleagues write, “The decomposition of vertebrate carrion, directly and indirectly, affects soil and benthic chemistry, as well as the local flora and fauna.”<sup>9</sup> From the first stages of our not-so-“traditional” burial, our ability to act and to influence comes unbound from our sentience. “Nutrients diffuse from the carrion into the soil resulting in changes in pH, conductivity, and nutrient concentrations . . . [which] are incorporated into the surrounding habitat leading to changes in the plant and arthropod communities.” Thus our venture into the art of physical dissemination begins. Bit by bit, we give our bodies away; selflessly, we give the gift of birth.

Sometimes I like to think that somewhere along the line, in the midst of all the ecological shape-shifting, we’ll find sentience once again. And, other times, I like to *know* it. I like to know that when you look hard—hard enough to see through it all—the laws, the customs, the money, guilt, and intense fear of it all—that you’re looking farther than the end—so far that you see clean through to the other side, and, just like that, you’re born—born one of those very, very special people—the kind of people who become trees—

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<sup>9</sup> Mondor, E. B., Tremblay, M. N., Tomberlin, J. K., Benbow, E. M., Tarone, A. M. & Crippen, T. L. (2012) *The Ecology of Carrion Decomposition*. Nature Education Knowledge 3(10): 21.

**Aimee**

*Megan Durocher*



pen and ink on paper  
14 x 20"

## **Abandoning Terrae**

*Carley Nolan*

I look a thousand light years to the left,  
where she once pirouetted into galactic sense.  
Serpents of sorrow curl as I carry her  
ashes lying in what the children call an urn.  
She was theirs.

They aged from innocent wanderers  
to rebels lacking life.

Beauty marks curving across her torso,  
down her calves lie our children's sandcastles.  
But wheels churned broken neck ridges,  
weight hollowed her bones.  
Black plumes plummeting  
down her throat, smothering her breath,  
replacing her hands that bore peaches  
and her legs that birthed potatoes.

Oil pumping veins pouring from the wounds  
of all her enemies.

A lackadaisical youth—  
decay deprives her tears  
lungs rot in a ragged heat  
gluttony grazing in her skeletal frame  
her vessel's core ebbing  
into the abyss.

Death and Time bring me tea  
and tell me tales of how some  
still steadily breathe.  
I remember what humans could be,  
and how our children were too needy.

**Fingamantis**

Jen Signet



water-soluble oil on canvas board  
16 x 20"

## **Salve for a Sting**

Amy Wilson

for David

'Round the back yard, a bee  
lands on sister's skinny arm—  
she cries out fear.

Little brother comes running,  
swipes away yellow stripes  
in his cupped hands—  
sting swells pink  
with reaction.

My boy hero,  
I wish I could hold this hurt  
for you now, tall,  
tall man you are,  
but it's got us both  
by the wings  
and the stings are too deep  
to brush away.

So let the swell come in  
our same skin.  
When there is no comfort,  
cry out love—  
little brother be  
still.

## Bee's Knees

*Megan Durocher*



digital photograph

**“cleanse me of my—”**

*Mary Margaret Miller*



digital photograph

## **Afterlife**

*Javan DeHaven*

Theory is lost beneath speculation,  
like a body slipping  
under a wave. The yellow trees  
cast doubts over the yard, growing long  
as afternoons in mid-July.

For the porch, there is a man who sits  
in a lawn-chair studying the rush of floating silence  
after the wind,  
like jumping head-first into a pool. Pressure  
has nothing to do with it. Clouds  
move in as if the sky were filed into a drawer.

At night, your body shifts like a tide,  
slowly out and into yourself.  
In a dream you find a lake  
and a specular reflection beginning  
at its edge. You stay for a while, the sun  
moves along beneath you. You think of bodies  
bloated and blue washing ashore,  
coughing and gasping,  
'no, you have it all wrong.'

Son

November 8, 1990-December 23, 2012

Ann Giard-Chase

All night,  
the wind clattered and banged  
like wooden spoons  
against the cottage walls  
and all day, the snow geese came angling in,  
settling down in the cold and shallow  
waters of November.

They squabbled and squawked  
as I closed my eyes  
and remembered how you too came winging in  
on a wild and windy day like this  
after the doors of summer had closed,  
after an early frost had swept across the fields  
turning blossoms of asters and mums  
into a universe of ice and lace.

In the midst of all of this,  
your decision was made  
and gently, gently  
you untangled your life from my life  
and came blinking out of that slippery darkness  
into the blaze of light called day.

And that is how you were born  
and that is how I first came to know you,  
something like the rise of a thousand wings into sky  
but more than that really, more like  
something volcanic, eruptive,  
and beautiful, all music, light, and heat  
that cried out and, in time,  
exploded into the luminous white fire  
that was you. A mother hears  
a distant call and feels her way through all the years

until there is only the remembering  
how in the hush of morning, quick  
as an exhale, your life came undone from my life  
and you soared  
up through the quiver of dawn  
into the wilderness of stars.

**Yellow Skin**  
*Sabrina Li*



acrylic on canvas  
12 x 16"

## **Canal Treasures**

*Derick Logan*



digital photograph

## **Garbage Bags**

*Devin Wilder*

When I was eight—

My mother told me that the only thing that "obese people" could wear  
were garbage bags.

Think: Hefty Ultra Flex.

Pulled around their bulging bodies with clothes pins and knots,  
tied by fingers too big for wedding bands.

I grew up learning that

at ten—

unless I changed things for myself,  
my prom dress would have to be custom-made out of bed sheets.  
Stitched together by my own poor handiwork,  
that I learned so I could add extra inches to my waistbands—  
because I couldn't tell my mother what size I actually wore.

Because I was already "too difficult to shop for."

And I was afraid—

that if she knew about the climbing sizes of my jeans,  
my already small meals of salads and sometimes chicken  
would shrink faster than the numbers on the scale in my room  
when I stepped on it each night.

This is a poem for every kid who ever grew up believing  
that they should grow out their hair to hide their lack of collarbones.  
Who learned how to convince themselves they were full  
because they were taught to never finish all the food on their plate.  
For the eleven-year-olds who look down at their own body—  
and blame themselves.

Because they do not believe they are beautiful.

Because they weren't gifted with a quick metabolism,  
or some sort of athleticism,  
or even, just some basic fucking coordination.  
Who, when thinking about their own creation

came to the conclusion that something somewhere  
must have just stuck a pair of flat feet on a potato, given it a brain, and said,  
“figure it out.”

So at thirteen  
each time they take off their clothes,  
they wish that three inches of flesh would come off with them.

This is a poem for every desperate teenager—  
who at sixteen  
thought they might not make it to seventeen,  
because last week they went up from a size six to a size seven.  
And they still remember that time when they were eleven.  
And they still blame themselves.

This is not a poem about self-image,  
This is a poem about self-respect.

Quick History Lesson.  
Gender Studies 101.  
In 1963 Marylyn Monroe was a size 14  
which is equivalent to today's size 8.  
Today she wouldn't even qualify to be a plus-size model,  
because they max out around a size 6.  
Congratulations America.  
For one of the wealthiest countries,  
we now have one of the highest populations  
of people suffering from self-inflicted starvation.

Today, kids are growing up in a culture that teaches them math  
by teaching them how to count calories.  
A culture  
That teaches us we can suppress those pesky three o'clock pangs of hunger  
with green tea,

a handful of almonds,  
and big gusts of wind.

That on Wednesdays we get to splurge with one whole rewarding square of dark chocolate.

What we're supposed to do with the rest of the bar I'm not quite sure, but I am certain, we are definitely not supposed to eat it.

A culture that tells us, finally,  
front page, *Cosmo* 2013—  
there IS an exercise we can do while sitting down and drinking our  
morning coffee.

Because do not forget bikini season is only four months away.

And of course  
all of this is just them trying to help us  
“to be the best you that you can be this November.”

Now I know I am not the first person to call *Cosmo* out on their bullshit, but I also know that this is the first time I can admit that it took me twenty years to learn that “obese” is a term used by bullies. And that everyone should eat whatever the fuck they want—so long as they are happy.

That being fit does not equal being healthy.  
That being healthy does not equal being thin.  
And that there is more to being healthy than being able to fit into a number.  
And most days I wake up wondering—  
what is there to be so proud of about reducing ourselves?

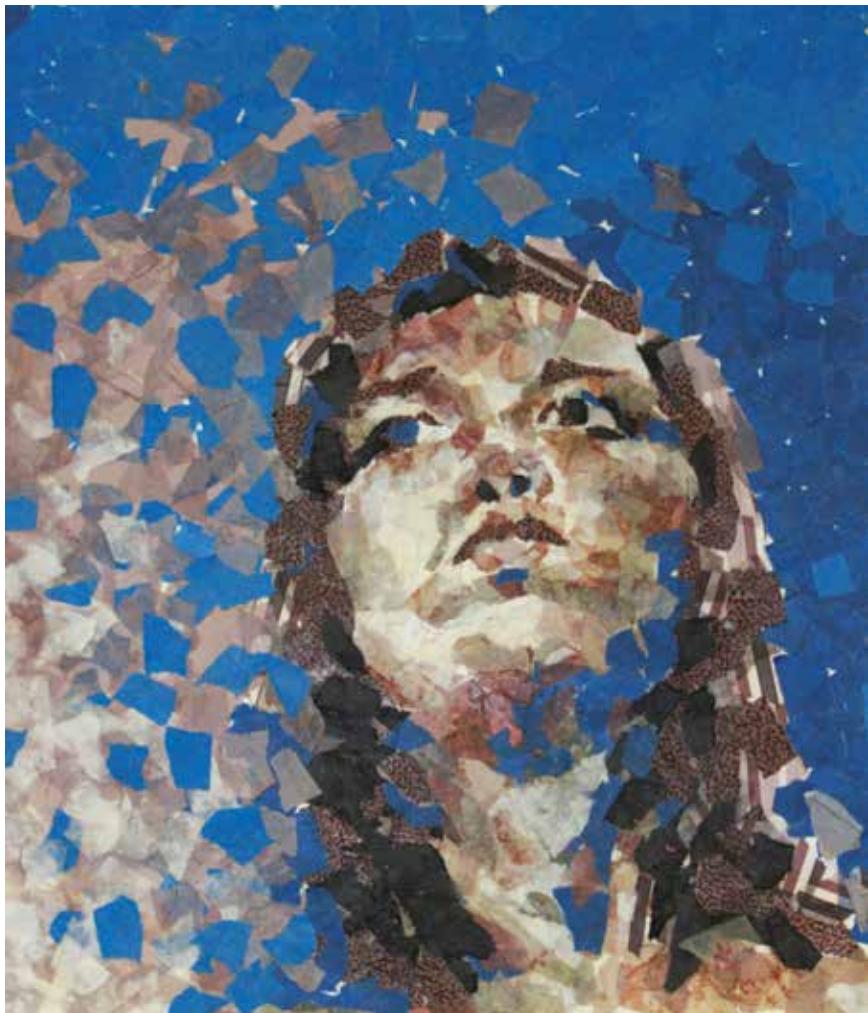
This is not a poem about self-image.  
This is a disclaimer.  
Saying that—

knowing this information does not mean that you're a feminist.  
It just means that you are paying attention.  
And that yes, you should be very angry.

Because if we don't do something drastic soon,  
there are going to be eight-year-olds who suffocate  
trying to fit themselves into trash bags.

Because they believe  
that because of their body,  
that is the only place they will ever belong.

Be  
*Jen Signet*



tissue paper and glue on poster board  
11 x 13"

**fatale**

*Alex Dugas*

when mermaids moved my ocean tide  
I rain-danced for a drought.  
when gardens grew my succubi  
I spat the nectar out.

but now I know of ebb and flow,  
the strife of ice and fire,  
a giant man slain by a stone,  
the death march of desire.

so show me, gorgon, to your eyes.  
I've been too long on the run.  
just navigate me through your thighs  
and drown me when you're done.

## **Brook Trout**

*Dillon Reno*



oil on canvas

16 x 20"



## Contributors' Notes

**Joanna Aliano** is a Media Studies, Journalism and Digital Arts major from Brazil. Most of the photos included in the digital collage, "Road to Alicante," were taken during a road trip across the Spanish desert to the beautiful city of Alicante. She would like to add that if you get the chance, go there and ask for a paella and a caña.

**Briana Brady** is a sophomore English major who walks too slow and talks too fast, but has no plans of either speeding up or slowing down.

**Sam Burns** was once a rickshaw driver for one day but is mostly an English major from North Creek, New York.

**Katie Chang** took this photograph while cross-country skiing in Bartlett, New Hampshire. One day, she will own a macro lens for photographing insects. She is a staff member of the Center for Workforce Development and Diversity. Camera used: Sony NEX-5.

**Shannon Conroy** is pursuing a Chemistry and Physics double major, epic powder days, and sleeping more than six hours a night. While upset that one of her favorite napping spots on campus has turned into an office, she continues to find new napping spots, and frequently celebrates Public Sleeping Day.

**Ian Conway** is a Gorlock.

**Javan DeHaven '10** currently lives in Ohio, where he attempts, among other things, to write poems.

**Alex Dugas** is still a dog from New Hampshire—one part bark and one part bite. Bye, now.

**Megan Durocher** received her BA from Saint Michael's College, and is still hanging around until May when she completes the Clinical Psychology

graduate program. Someday she hopes to have a little business selling her clay creations, and aspires to write and illustrate children's books. To see more artwork, visit <http://mldurocher.wordpress.com>.

**Charlotte Ferdinand** is an English major from Boston, Massachusetts.

**Timothy J. Fitzmaurice** graduated from Saint Michael's in 2003 and received his Masters in literature from the University of New Hampshire in 2007. He currently teaches high school English at the Albany Academies in New York's buzzing capital. He likes the melodies of church hymns and the clang of inappropriate jokes.

**Ann Giard-Chase** grew up on a large dairy farm in Vermont; earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees from SMC, and raised four wonderful children in South Burlington, Vermont. She is an HR Director for a city in upstate New York and escapes into the world of poetry whenever time allows.

**Emma Gilfix** is a first-year Anthropology major driven by an inexorable curiosity who finds most of her inspiration for painting in the late hours of the night.

In his formative years, **Bryan Hickey** received much adulation as the Swamp Water Guzzlin' champion of '94. Though, like any humble swamp-dweller, he abated his success by marrying a muskrat. *East Hampton Times* called the shotgun wedding "a moonshine festivity lit by the radiance of fireflies and camp-side punch-drunk tomfoolery."

**Emily Houle** is a Secondary Education and English major from Irasburg, Vermont. She draws on her childhood in a rural dairy farm for inspiration and guidance for her writing. She also thinks poetry is like knitting; the result keeps folks warm.

**Rachel Jones** is a first-year History major from Winnetka, Illinois. She has a love for anything artistic, and especially enjoys painting watercolors in her spare time. "The Flight" represents the freeing of the spirit, shown in the embodiment of nature.

**Annemarie Kennedy '99** lives in Providence, Rhode Island and tends to leave her kitchen appliances unplugged for good measure.

**Casey Emilia Lendway** is an exploratory first-year student from Nantucket Island.

**Nathaniel Lewis** knows who he is.

**Stephanie Burke Lewis** enjoys red wine and a deliberate arrangement of words, preferably in that order. She is inspired by good company, great food, soft animals, and world-wandering. Lately, it occurs to her what a long, strange trip it's been.

**Sabrina Li** is an Art major from Shanghai, China.

**Derick Logan** is a senior Media Studies, Journalism and Digital Arts major from Cape May Court House, New Jersey. He photographed "Canal Treasures" on a particularly brisk morning with a Canon RebelT3 while studying abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark. Photography helps him combat his recurring spells of dry humor and sarcasm, for which there is currently no cure.

**Chris Magyar** is a senior Media Studies and Digital Arts major who is very thankful for all the things he's learned from his friends, his family, his professors, and his travels.

**William Marquess**, Instructor of English, wants to thank David Crull, in whose suburban Cincinnati house, in 1963, he first encountered Harold. He also thanks Onionists everywhere. Now somebody draw him a bath.

**Molly McGillicuddy '06** lives, writes, and plays in Somerville, Massachusetts. She teaches writing at Emerson College and Wheaton College, and when she is not busy commenting on the fresh, new ideas in her students' essays, she likes to write about small things, flashes of memory, and pinpricks of emotion. And she loves onions—in a stew, on a pizza, as the writers and publishers of a terrific lit mag.

**Mary Margaret Miller** was named after a candy binge. All of it—every last bit—blossoms for Will Marquess, whose advice replenishes even the most withered uncertainty.

**A. M. Nicolai** is currently a junior at St. Michael's College majoring in Religious Studies, because she wants to and she can. She enjoys cracking frozen puddles, collecting change, and watching people in their cars. The poem "Here's a future I don't mind" was written in a rare fit of sentimentality, but that doesn't mean it isn't true.

**Mickey O'Neill** is a reluctantly graduating English major from Cranford, New Jersey. Last year she went to Samoa, learning that a conglomeration of many freckles can look deceptively like a tan from afar and that life is best sipped slowly.

**Dave Patterson '02** is a writer, teacher, and musician from Cape Elizabeth, Maine. He composed the raw bones of "Anniversary Poem" sitting on the bumper of his truck, while his wife slept in their bed and the universe continued to expand into the great beyond.

**Dillon Reno** is a Business major from Portland, Maine with minors in Creative Writing and Studio Art. He is the president of the fly fishing club and never breaks character on Halloween. He has been painting since September of 2013.

**Jenelle Roberge** appreciates the simple things in life: chocolate croissants, houghmagandy, film photography, Turkish pearls, colorful gardens, stories, vino, dancing, swimming in the Mediterranean, suspenders, sunny days, and being read to in bed. If you want to find her in this life, then go to Sicilia—not to be confused with Simon and Garfunkel's Cecilia, though she's dynamite too.

**Lisa Ritter** is a photographer/filmmaker from Westford, Massachusetts.

**Connor Steckel** is a sophomore from Winchester, Massachusetts majoring in Political Science. When he's not at the ceramics studio, he spends his days brewing and tasting beer, philosophizing with friends, and enjoying the mountains and rivers of Vermont as an avid skier and fly-fishing enthusiast.

**Brian Tan** says, "Much love to all the fam, friends, and friends I haven't made yet on this spaceship called Earth . . . ain't no passengers here, we all crew!!! "I LOVE YOUR LIFE AND I LOVE YOU BEING ALIVE." -Lil B

**Dylan Patrick Ward** is an Anthropology major from Bellows Falls, Vermont (The Dirty South). He writes primarily about the insanity of civilization and the beauty of the world we're cementing over to live in it. He also likes to sing, cause mischief, wax philosophical, garden, learn indigenous skills, cook, and play guitar in his underwear. When he graduates, his plan is to not find a job with his major and move back in with Mom and Dad.

**Devin Wilder** is a twenty-year-old self-taught storm-chaser and amateur spoken word poet from Boston. Molding her life around the pursuit of elbow pads and alliteration, she can often be found perfecting the art of naming inanimate objects and continuing the search for the perfect cup of pumpkin spice coffee.

**Amy Wilson** is a senior with plans for post-graduate studies in joy.

**The Onion River Review would like to thank:**

Will Marquess for bagels and general Gorlockitude.

Summer Drexel and George Goldsworthy of Printing Services for generous, expert help.

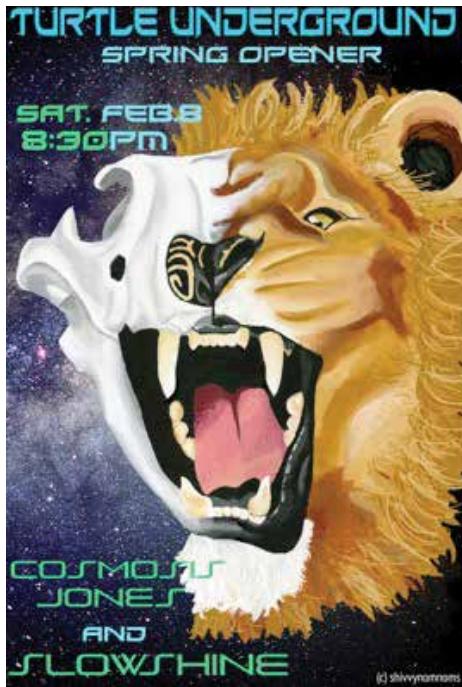
The English Department for creative and fiscal support.

The Student Association.

Joanna Aliano, Kelsey Bode, Allie Brown, Sarah Doughty, Catherine Dunn, McKenna Earl, Lily Gardner, Lexi Goyette, Russell Hammond, Joshua Kranz, Shannon McQueen, Mary Miller, Carley Nolan, Shawna Norton, Jenelle Roberge, and Cory Warren for their brilliant auxistence.

The students, faculty, staff, alumni and members of the community who contributed to the Onion this year; it is because of you that the Review exists.





**TURTLE UNDERGROUND** is Saint Michael's College's premiere on-campus music venue. Showcasing musicians of any genre, sound, and level of professionalism, Turtle Underground provides students with a place to unwind and rock out. Students can enjoy free food while getting down to music from on-campus musicians as well as acts from across the northeast.

Shows are on Friday and Saturday nights in the basement of Purtill Hall from 8pm to 11pm.

For booking/contact information, please contact: [drice@mail.smcvt.edu](mailto:drice@mail.smcvt.edu)

Featured Above: A Turtle Underground Poster designed by Shavon Kenney '14

This year, Turtle Underground has decided to contribute to the Onion River Review in the form of a **downloadable compilation CD!** The CD features original and cover songs performed by members of the St. Michael's community. The CD is free to download, and can be found at the following link:

**<http://turtleunderground.bandcamp.com/music>**

Among those featured are:

Emily Higgins '17, Derek Rice '14, Alex Greene '11, Ted Kenney '12, Devin Atcherly '12, Chris Hardy '14, Liam Connors '14, Nate Lewis '14, Nick Kennedy '14, D.J. Tetreault '15, Jack Loomis '16, Sean Morrissey '16, Alex Gallant '14, Dan Ushkow '16, Sam Blakely '15, Evan Guerra '17, Patty '17, Tyler Manley '17, Jon Linger '14, Nicole D'Elisa '13, Dan Bishop '13, Alex (Scoots) Furdon '12, William Ellis, Professor of Music, and more!

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A stylized graphic of a farm landscape featuring a blue sky, white clouds, a green field, and a brown barn outline. To the right of the graphic, the word "Farm." is written in a large, white, sans-serif font.

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