



ONION RIVER REVIEW

2016

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river run by

Briana Brady
Agi Chretien
Lily Gardner
Victoria Sullivan
Cory Warren
Cody Wasuta

Editors' Note

As we put together this year's *Onion River Review*, we tried our very best to produce another weird little book of which we could be proud. Every year, the *Onion* takes a new shape, filled with the imaginations of its submitters and pieced together by a changing group of editors whose only common denominator is that they're as fantastic (read: bizarre) as it gets. This year, as we sifted through submissions, we found work that made us think stuff, feel stuff, move stuff, pick stuff up and put it back down. We loved stuff, fought for stuff, ate way too many Double Stufs, and, in the end, managed to stuff this book with some pretty great stuff.

So what is all this stuff? In the process of compiling the pieces that make up this year's issue, we dove into some of the Big Questions: art, politics, relatability, perspective, lighting, birds, vegetables, and, most usefully, how to correctly identify and eradicate the plague of our time, lizard people. From the serious to the we're-pretty-sure-this-is-satire, we came away sometimes unsettled and sometimes nostalgic for that oddly sexy moment of biting into a peach. As we YouTubed audio of Etheridge Knight reading aloud (we highly recommend you do this), considered the sound of homonyms, and quietly sharpened our knives, we slowly came to agree on the glittering stuff you hold in your hands.

Of course, it needs mentioning that we would never have been able to recognize the heroic work of a morning cup of joe without the guidance of great professors. This year, we want to take a moment to recognize Nicholas Clary as he prepares to (really, this time) retire. In our time at Saint Michael's we have known Nick as the Honors Program Director, an advisor, a professor, as a Shakespearean extraordinaire, and as someone who has continually pushed us to look for different readings, to twist and turn a play on all its sides, and to work our fingers to the bone. Many of us literature nerds would not be the students we are if he hadn't expected us to become them.

If you're wondering who these mysterious students are, who these Onionists with all the right stuff seem to be, our core editors are (in alphabetical order because that seems fair) Briana Brady, Agi Chretien, Lily Gardner, Victoria Sullivan, Cory Warren, and Cody Wasuta. Although we experienced the crushing loss of Agi second semester as she left us to dance and sing her way through the hills of Austria, we carried on, and in the hallowed spaces of St. Ed's 332 and the Cashman great room we met with the auxiliary editors as February came to a close.

We cannot forget to acknowledge these "auxes" for all of the work they have put in. We could not make any decisions without their input. They keep us sane, give us perspective, notice things that we've overlooked, and even after hours of discussion join us when we absolutely need to read out loud. Thank you to Abby Adams, Sophie Adams, Judson Browning, Anna Cook, Lexi Goyette, Gabriela Heermans, Mikayla Hoppe, Natalie Jackson, Jade Jarvis, Emily Joyce, Shannon McQueen, Jonathan Norton, Maddie Schneider, and Sammy Sidorakis. You guys are serious stuff.

Additionally, you, dear reader, would not be holding this odd little collection without the help of Summer Drexel and George Goldsworthy in Printing Services: only they know how to turn our lists and notes into the beautiful book before you. Likewise the life of this review is supported by the English Department and the Student Association. And to our always-flawless intern, Jackson Morgan, thank you for knowing about Excel, for keeping us in order, and for being the only person in the room to correctly identify "belvedere."

Lastly, the force behind everything: Will Marquess. Thank you for the Tootsie Pops and the bagels. The emails and the freshest phrases to ever grace this earth. You teach us rhythm without ever letting us know we're learning it, and we couldn't ask for a better Switzerland. Thank you forever and ever for showing us how stuff gets done.

So this is where we leave you: with some really wonderful stuff to read. We hope you enjoy it as much as we loved collecting it.

~ (in reverse alphabetical order because that seems fair)

Cody Wasuta, Cory Warren, Victoria Sullivan, Lily Gardner,
Agi Chretien, and Briana Brady

Core Editors 2016

ONION RIVER REVIEW
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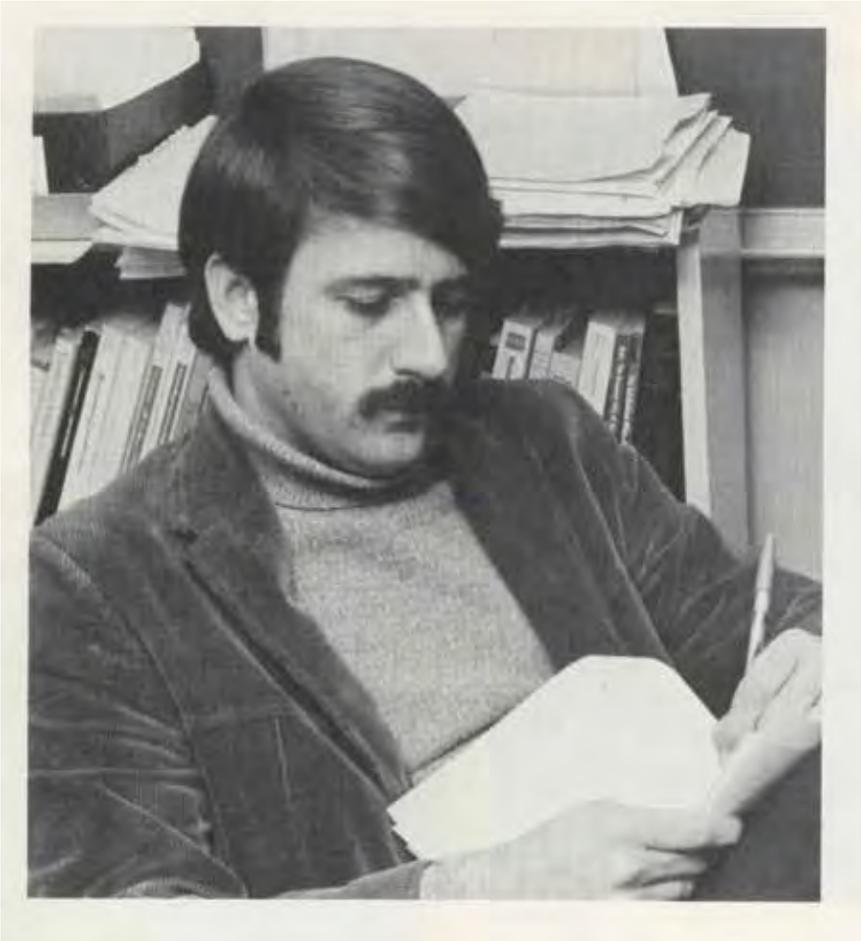
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Back cover: Casey Lendway, *Completely*

Their relationship consisted
in discussing if it existed.

~ Thom Gunn



Professor Nick Clary in 1976.

Lines for a Laughing Dane

Cory Warren

to Nick Clary

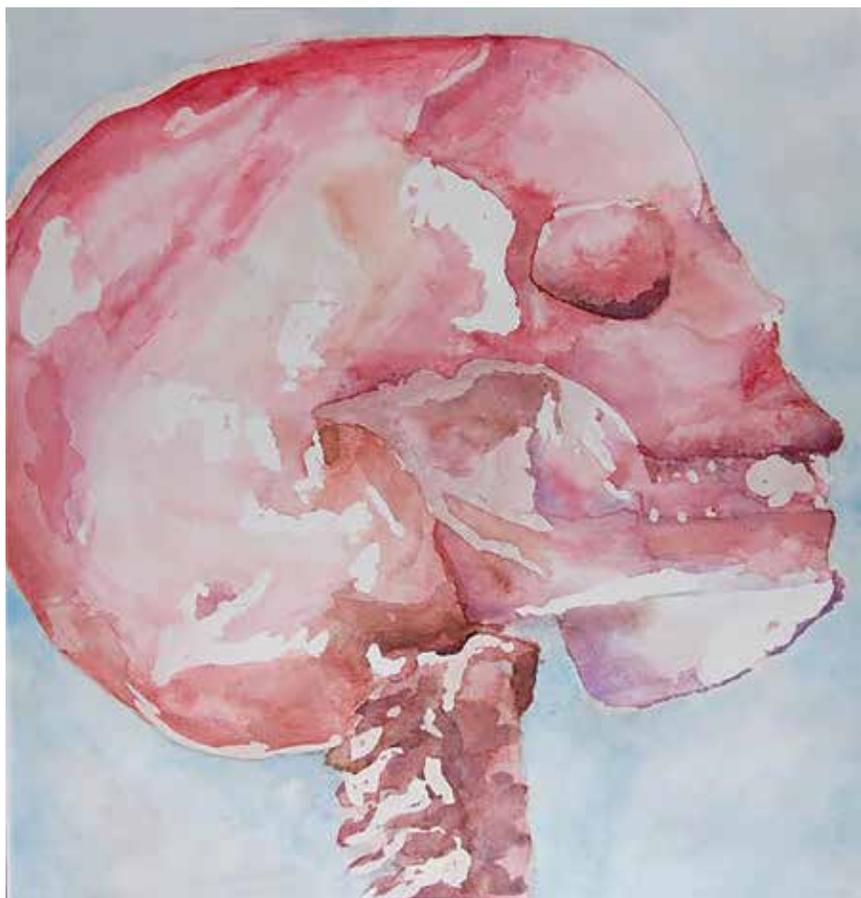
“The time is out of joint,” we heard and saw you point to the mangled clock. It seemed, at that moment, a minor detail. But watching the stars, they appear to have lost their fire, and all matters of time suddenly seem magnified.

“Words, words, words,” the chime tolled through the hours, across the basin of a table shaped in the likeness of a wooden O. The echo trembled through our ears’ porches. But finding wit’s soul extended, all matters of words suddenly seem condensed.

“Remember my name,” we are inclined to obey, but know that adieuing is not thy undoing. A parting reveals an opening, as vast as any extraordinary thought that might have passed our minds in your company.

“This above all,” you begin, knowing we already recall the rest. Hardly a silence heard, the skull smiles in your hands. For you we return the call: “To thine own self be true.”

Rosie 2.0
Emily Joyce



watercolor

Stains

Shawna Norton

Summer afternoons
we painted people onto popsicle sticks.
Color bled
into the lines on our fingertips
like the blackberries
Grampy
launched at us over bushes—
blotches of blue on my
Watermelon shirt.

Mom bleached those,
a Clorox tie-dye
to cover the sundry stains
from when we
were up to no good.

Taste

Buff Lindau

there was a page
in a picture book
that Ben always licked—
every time we sat
sidled up close for reading
it was just too delicious to resist

over and over and over
its coming was no surprise—
still, excitement mounted
he got ready, eyes wide, breath held
as it crept closer page by page

there it was again
and he had to taste it
no fuss, just his tongue on the page
of the pinky purpley sea anemone
floating in Swimmy's underwater world
back when Ben was small
and I was certain

now he's swimming in his own world
afloat in scopes and scales and fancy things—
might as well be under water—
discovering the microbes in cells

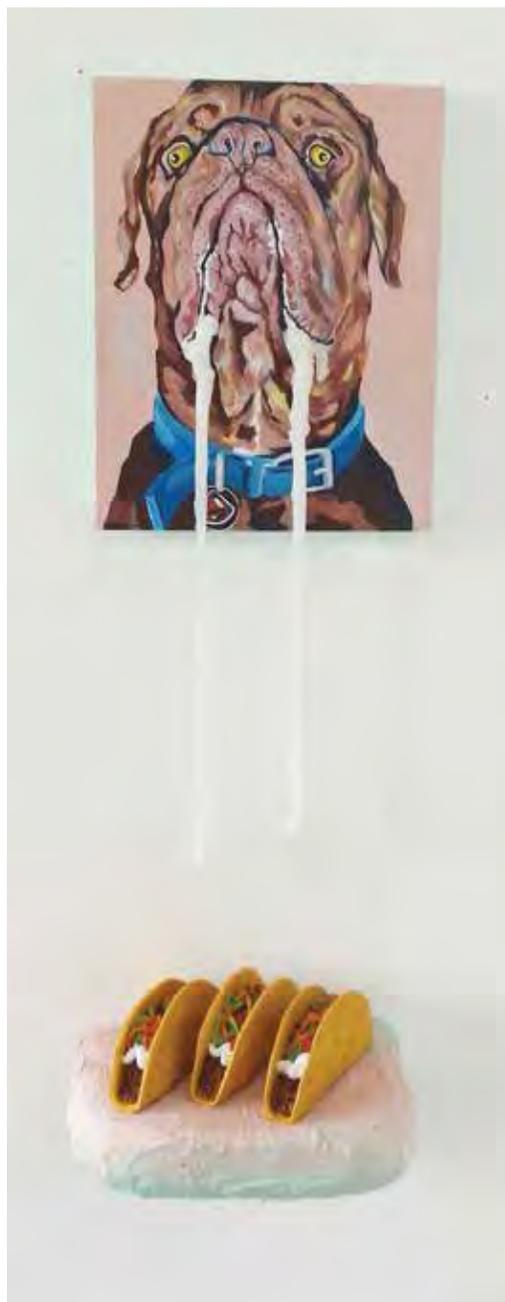
the crinkly page in the much-licked Swimmy
calls forth five-year-old Ben
along with grown-up Ben
now miles away
still wide-eyed
exploring
tasting the taste of worlds
forever unknown to me

Overcomers

Colleen Knowles

- I. Frida paints flowers in city-sweat
condensing on the bus window,
the Route 2 to Burlington.
 We pass men in hardhats, men in coveralls,
 in bar windows, green taxis,
 downtown doorway cigarette breaks.
She says, “I admire the artists. Always good for an affair.”
- II. Musicians on Church,
men with violins, guitars, un-musicians with cardboarded
anything helps.
Frida gives a dollar, a grin,
 whispers to me, “I love every poor bastard
 but cry only for Guillermo.”
- III. She likens them to elephants,
stamping their feet, swinging their dripping trunks in every city;
and to woolly mammoths, long outdated.
They trumpet, trumpet,
drown us out with trumpeting.
- IV. A cemetery off Main rises above us on the hill,
a wall of names above and before us on the hill—
 Monet, Warhol, Hemingway, Strindberg,
 El Greco, Virgil, Orwell, Pollock.
 Damned Diego.
We don’t hold our breath when we pass by;
the dead here disrespected us first.

Pavlov's Tacos
Mallory Cain Breiner



acrylic on panel, silicone caulk, ceramic, and foam
11 x 25", 11 x 8 x 5"

Morning

Edward F. Griffin

Now wake and feel th' Aesclepian hands of rest
That stir Athena 'nd hasten Hæmian breast,
While Hestia invites Apollo from his shift,
No less at breakfast than a humble gift
Of Dawn, the lass upon whom eyes
Of men and wom'n are turned to see her rise
Arrayed in pastel colours that imbue
Her cherry blossom gown that faintly drew
The likeness of her supple body and brought
The brightness of her face in fairness wrought.
Is there but one devoid of gaiety
Or pleas're in seeing her fair virginity?
Yet none, indeed, and while her pulchritude
Is splint'ring through the window shades t' exude
A soft and yellow-red warm glow to break
The darkness, there, you hardly feel awake,
Within the den and sitting in a chair
And breathing in the empty cool still air,
A blanket 'round your shoulders that demands
The coffee mug stay hot between your hands
And with a quiet sip you feel repose,
Contented thus your eyes begin to close,
To seize the transient free tranquility
And hold this moment for eternity.

Epilogue

Atë found her
Mischief object
And the plan she
Made was perfect:

First achieved by
Calling Vulcan
Secondly was
Lord Poseidon.

“Vulcan, haste! Now
Don your armor
Shak’r of Earth will
Tear asunder

Both your chamber
And your smithy
In his power
Ire and pithy.

Why? I know not
Still—assemble!
Surely he would
See you tremble.”

Thus she ended
Forthwith fleeing
Pleased to see the
Smith retreating.

Calling to the
Barren ocean
Thus expressed her
Impish notion:

“Summon Cronus,
Call Aeolus:
Vulcan has a
Plot against us!

See his workshop:
Smoke arises!
What are his foul
Enterprises?

Rise to rend his
Impious temple—
All thy might will
Keep it simple.”

Having spake, then
Swelled Olympus;
Thus began the
Odious tempest.

Zeus unleashed his
Clam'rous horses—
Thousands carrying
Armèd forces—

Dark and hazy
Clouds roll under
Every hoofstomp
Clashing thunder.

Wroth Poseidon
With Apollo
And Aeolus
Torrents bellow.

BUM bar RUM the
War drums pounded
Battle horns and
War-cries sounded.

Pale and prostrate
Vulcan suffered,
While Poseidon's
Tumult ushered

All the Earth to
Quake and tremble,
Breaking stone
And bending metal,

Feeding Vulcan's
Magma smithy,
What to fire is
Kindling withy,

Pressure grew and
Nothing buffered
Vulcan's lava
Bursting outward,

Making such a
Din so boisterous,
And unholy
Brimstone noxious.

Thus begets the
Toil so poignant
Of the morning
On the toilet.

Slow Bloat and Fading Deflation

Mark Joyce

A pocket's forgotten pencil stabs his rib,
ouches him back upright as he bends
to photograph the orchid.
A pointed reminder to put the camera away.
To admit it cannot adequately capture
this Pink Lady Slipper's intimate details:
Tiny yellow-eyed pollinia.
The heart-shaped dorsal sepal's speckles.
Certainly not this ethereal pink labellum,
rivered in red veins,
the only sun-like colors in sight,
blushing inside these gray leafless trees,
this snow-browned underbrush,
this early spring, not yet sprung.
A pointed reminder to pluck the pencil free.
And that a proper portrait deserves more
than a quick snapshot in time.
And that essence is earned through prolonged
examination and meticulous extraction
and has a better shot at blooming,
as blooming has a better shot at essence,
when its testimony painstakingly unspools.

Shibboleth

Jonathan Sherrill

A tinny jangling stirred
the warm afternoon's gentle
stillness. At first Max thought
it was the tintinnabulation of
the not-so-distant leaves blowing
in a new breeze. But this was
not so. Perhaps, he thought again,
a flock of late-arriving
birds were streaming their way
north. Silence. Not birds, Max
whispered to himself. And then
he stood up to peer through the
screen on his porch. In the
distance beyond the
fence but before the woods, the
origin of the sound revealed itself.
Well, he thought,
now I know.

Shadow Inheritance

Olivia Marr



acrylic and recycled materials

When I eddied with the currents of life

Cody Wasuta

for Peter

God hit me for the first time in a memory, squatting in the hollowed husk of a redwood tree at Samuel P Taylor State Park—the mother to a ring of spindling offspring shooting out of the ground. Its shell wracked in black soot and dust, strands of bark crawling quietly around my body, clinging to my boyishly thin arms and gray t-shirt, my eyes peeking over the rim of the five-foot wide stump, scanning the campground from within the body of a giant. I had no idea what a memory could do for me—remembering my first moment in God. My family cooking s'mores in a whorish fire pit, the road one hundred yards away, flush toilets, a gated ranger station. Wilderness it was not. But I got wild, fingers layered with the carnage of jet puffs, chocolate blood melted onto my grubby nails and smattered across my ghostly face, bright in the firelight. I wore a satisfied grin, wide and brown, and sugary sweet. Mother, brother and me asleep on the ground: red, green, and blue sleeping bags, lined in flannel under the California September starlight, barely tinkling past hundred foot redwoods. Their needles glazing themselves in dew as they drank the mist and slowly walked up the ridgeline, racing for priority in the canopy. Their roots tangling deep down below around the belly of their mother—her body empty, mind erased, silently hiding my silly little body. Then God walked away, but I didn't forget. His great palette and brush still wet, tucked beneath his arm, painting the back of his kimono all the colors of a Northern California night fog.

Now, jump forward with me, let God pull you through the weeks and stars. Splash through the river, experience death, float across the continents, drop off cascading falls, feel ripped apart and whole, empty of emotion and full of life. Embrace your water, baby, with every mouthful you inhale. Be happy to be fluid. Now, feel it again as we open our eyes. Finally, in the middle of the river, on a forgotten island with no name, in

a creaky rocking chair, reading a crushed and duct-taped copy of *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. It's a bloody rock and the Southwestern heat is dry and cool in our hands. Humidity weighs heavy on everything else. Smile. Give in to the heat. Let sweat fill the water. Notice the signs on the page. Listen to the river speak. Enjoy pineapple for how much it cuts our tongue. Love fruit for fruit's sake. We're almost only water.

Quitting Time

Kenny Giangregorio

(It's quitting time
on the farm.
The last light groans
behind the hills,
in tune with the wail
of a jet plane.)

Cicadas
sing the praises
of the day laborers—
The milked cows moo
and the bullfrogs ribbit
and ripple the surface of their pond.

The tractor coughs and sputters,
the farmer stomps and mutters,
and I hit the asphalt,
bare feet *slap-slap-slap*-ing
all the way
home.

In Saginaw

William Marquess

In Saginaw, in Saginaw,
We did the two-step hoof and paw,
We smote the board, we hopped the ha,
When all the world was young.

In Finisterre, in Finisterre,
We did the schist, we did it bare,
We drank more schnapps than you did there,
When all the world was young.

In Camden Town, in Camden Town,
We sparked the finest hooch around,
And dervished till the stars went down,
When all the world was young.

In sum, in short, in Beetlebrow,
We do the dance we can do now.
We pause, and we remember how
We pranked along the Liebesfrau
When all our care was I and thou,
And every day was now now now,
And all the world was young.

Festival of Fools, Burlington, Vermont

Jordan Douglas



silver gelatin Holga photograph
7 x 7"

What Should I Do, Etheridge Knight?

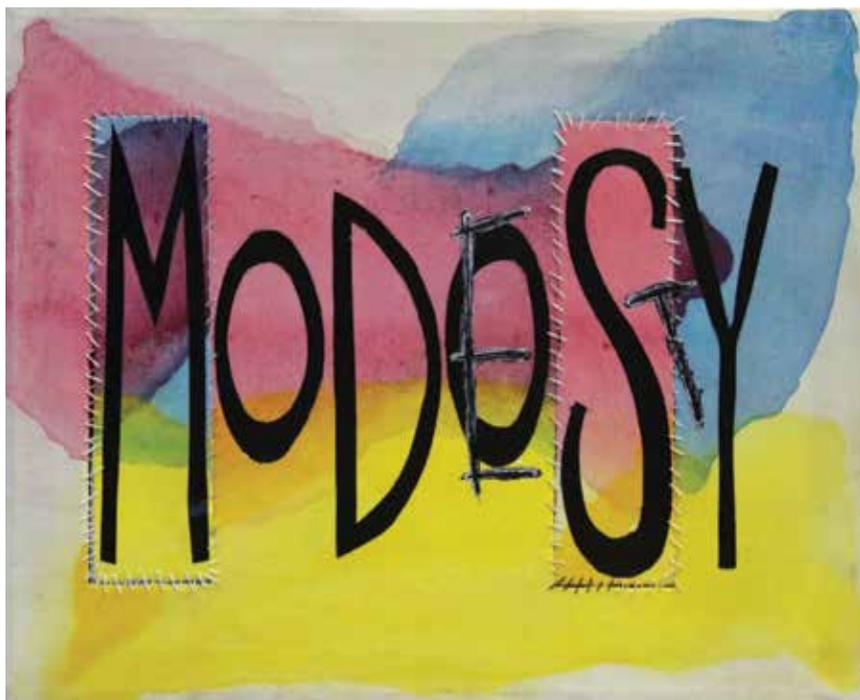
Jefferson Ash

Inspired by "Feeling Fucked Up" by Etheridge Knight

Sonnets are sometimes about a girl.
I grabbed some paper and thought about when
I kissed Rosalie at the tilt-o-whirl.
I remember her, but forgot my pen
so I went back to my desk to grab some ink.
First kisses and funnel cakes don't come free,
and all of this rummaging makes me think:
What has become of my sweet Rosalie?
After the ride, I stared at my shoes.
As courage was gained to shake hands with lips,
I listened to her hum some Coltrane blues.
I leaned in, and laid my hands on her hips.

*One night last May, soft as a baby's breath,
my wife Rosalie had succumbed to death.*

Sodomy
Judson Browning



acrylic paint, needle and thread on canvas
16 x 20"

3 Down

Briana Brady

The women in my family
do their crosswords in ink
because they know how easy it is
to turn an e into an a,
an x into an
I don't give a fuck.
We don't need erasers.
I learned what across and down meant
at the breakfast table,
learned that mistakes don't always
require apologies,
was handed a pen by my mother
as she asked,
"Do you have any idea about 12 down?"
We scratch out
scribble
run our pens through the newspaper
like swords
knowing that battle is messy
that you don't come away unscarred.
The women in my family
walk around all day with blue ink
covering our finger tips.
We touch the world with the puzzles we've solved
wrapped around our hands.

Rosie
Emily Joyce



cut paper

Ode to Tiles and Tribulations

Nick Lemon

for Eli

Sometimes, when you meet a boy,
the two of you might get to talking.

Inevitably, if you were both educated
—formally, that is—
the subject of your studies will arise,
and you might think it wise
to share the ins and outs of your theses.

My dear sweet English majors:
proceed with caution.
You may fancy your journey
into the realm of existentialism
(discussed in relation to a certain young adult novel)
undeniably avant-garde,
but when trading with an archaeologist,
prepare to feel sufficiently inadequate.

At seventeen pages—and containing many
an enlarged punctuation mark—
your heart-first inquiry into the Absurdity of suicide
will feel ridiculous once you read ninety-one pages
on the archaeometric characterization of roof tiles
from a unique region on the coast of the Adriatic.

It simply will.

From thorough discussions on characterization techniques,
to petrography and X-ray fluorescence,
and a qualitative analysis of statistical methods,
your cute little quarter-life crisis research

will shrink out of significance, to be replaced
by hypotheses on ceramic provenance in Italy.

But you will feel distinctly honored:
to have made it here, to have survived
long enough that you could become absorbed
in the study of a field completely unlike your own.

Perhaps it will help that the boy is quite handsome,
and you've always had a thing for big words.

Once

Jonathan Sherrill

Once, when Max was younger,
he ate a peach
on a summer afternoon
in the quiet of his bedroom.
The sound made Max blush.
The peach also blushed.
The sound carried down
the hallway. Someone
must have heard
or suspected.
Now,
Max eats sliced peaches
in his kitchen with
the lights on.

Goldfish
Rachel Jones



watercolor on paper
8.5 x 12"

Homonym

Annemarie Kennedy

Pear: the edible fruit, typically rounded but elongated and growing smaller toward the stem, of a tree, *Pyrus communis*, of the rose family.

Ripe.

Juicy.

Succulent.

Textured.

Sweet.

Gritty.

Rough before ripe, so soft when nearly rotting.

Plucked afresh from the vine, runneth over with wet.

Her tastebuds are tickled as she swallows bubbly pear cider, sugary and strong, from a tall thin glass.

Jazz swirls in the air, coloring the molecules with bright bursts of reds, yellows, greens, pinks, blinding bliss.

Sugar on tongue as he laughs; she responds in kind.

She sees her own eyes reflected in his; both their pupils are dilated, rounded as bottoms of pears.

The pulse, the magic of sweet fruit on this night, kicking off many to come.

Richness abides. Attraction beckons. Mutually tasting of pears, the world is theirs.

They take a bite.

Pair: a set of two things used together or regarded as a unit.

Friends.

Companions.

Buddies.

Compadres.

Allies.

Cohorts.

Teammates, playmates, just plain mates.

Partners in and out of bed, where songs are duets.

They are not one but two, comfortable as shoes.
They are exchanges of emails and texts, giggles from jokes and photos.
They are bodies sinking into smooth brown leather, breathing in the
smoky richness of wood,
warmed by stoves and friendship.
Solid, they share good days and bad, lifting when needed, bending gently
when necessary.
They are bookends, holding pieces from sliding off shelves, safely
enveloped in soothing orange.
Coupled seats enjoy the view, a snuggle instead of a sit, doubled in pair.
They are two.

Pare: trim (something) by cutting away its outer edges; reduce (something)
in size, extent, quantity, or number, usually in a number of small
successive stages.

Reduce.

Curtail.

Diminish.

Taper.

Truncate.

Recede.

Deflate.

When two gradually becomes one, the life leaves the party.

The other ghosts away, a whisper at a time, until cobweb flaps.

One chair remains, overlooking scenes turned gray.

Drab. Dreary. Dismal. Lackluster.

Where is that pear? Where is that pair?

The taste and smell and feel of each dissipate in the wind as memories
cool to blue.

A wobbly chair tips on unsteady legs in the breeze.

Uneven, unbalanced, lowered to one—a prime number.

Divisible only by itself.

Just a chair, beset on the bank, waiting

Alone

Missing that savor of pear and pair

That whispers away from the tongue and the heart.

Guilty Pleasure
Judson Browning



sharpie and prismacolor marker on paper
5.5 x 8.5"

Strictly Platonic

Colleen Daugherty-Costa

We sweep dirt
into cereal boxes
because the dustpan
is lost.

The ground is lava
and our toes burn—
molten ash footprints
everywhere.

We burn matches
to smell the sulfur.
We write poetry
and drink too much wine.

Sitting across from you,
my feet in your hands,
your chin juts out,
a gesture toward the bed.

I blame the trifecta
of drugs in your bloodstream,
knowing it means nothing,
and my feet find the floor.

But you still have
a red rubber band
with a lock of my hair
in your desk drawer.

Blue Herons and Bardo

Jessica Engels

Editor's note: John Engels was a widely acclaimed poet who taught English at Saint Michael's for 45 years, until his death in 2007. His daughter Jessica wrote this reminiscence.

My father lost his faith when his mother, my dear grandmother, lost her life to throat cancer at the age of 62. This came at the same time as the death of my baby brother, Philip. Dad never recovered from these events, and wrote some of his best poetry about his losses. He became morose, and stayed that way for many, many years. When we reconnected as adults, and I learned to love and appreciate him as a man as well as a dad, we often talked about these losses and their influence upon his writing. Here are two excerpts that epitomize his feelings of loss, which I also feel in my loss of him.

*The day my mother died,
I must
have looked over the green swell
of Lake Michigan sheeting
high on the beaches,
at the last turn of the surf
pine cones rolling over and over,
the river rolled back
at the breakers, clouds foaming in.
I must have faced
into the long shudder of wind,
trusting my eyes to the sting of sand.
But the next day:
utter calm.
I might have believed
the planet had stopped in its turns.*

As for Philip, Dad wrote a dozen or more poems, among them this:

*It is the final grief, how colors echo on the eye
in distance and its cold perspectives.
I see a child in a red hat and jacket walking down
the lines of the severe fences
through a snowy field and spare bristles of weeds
till his brave color dances random on the retina and blots.*

I have always respected my father's writing, although I never read it carefully until after his death, when I scoured the lines for meaning in his life, his genius, and my loss.

Ten years or so ago, I started attending the First Parish Church of Groton, a UU church which has been around since 1655. During these past years, I learned how to cry. It has opened doors for me to let spirit in and become renewed and refreshed. For me, tears are a conduit to deep spirit, and the music, poems, rituals, and sermons opened doors that were closed to me in my previous life. It allowed me to grieve properly for my dad when he died.

Dad was a consummate fisherman and fly-tier. There was one animal that remained elusive throughout his life—this was the great blue heron. They are common on our lake, and one of my great pleasures was to tease him over the phone, eliciting sighs of envy.

“Dad! We just kayaked in the Boxboro rookery, and there are 12 pair of nesting great blues. Maybe if I shake a tree one will drop a feather in my boat!”

(Huge sigh) “Oh, what I could do with some crest feathers from a great blue heron!”

Finding a great blue heron feather became a particular quest of his through the years.

The symbol of the heron, featured in three of Dad's poems, was a recurring theme in his life. The heron is an icon of stillness and watchfulness; it has the patience of a master fisherman and a tendency towards dabbling. In recognizing these traits, I find them in myself as well—the imprint of my father's subtle education. Dabbling implies a lightness of commitment, a half-filled basket of tried and discarded skills, a life in which creativity flares brightly for a while, then fizzles until lit by a new engagement.

I believe this quality of dabbling allows a flexible person to learn from each unique and interesting situation that comes along, diving in deeply for a spell, and then moving on when the needed experience has been extracted. This describes my father and me quite well. He would be utterly absorbed and deeply creative, in areas spanning from poetry and teaching through music and photography. Everything was interesting to him. He tried to find patterns in nature and words, and make a big gorgeous mishmash of the otherwise unrelated beauties of the world.

In June of 2007, my father spent a long day of taking and emailing photos of the gaudy poppies in his backyard. "This is the first time in years they have flourished," he told me. He photographed them from a chair, or at a distance from the deck, since his back was too painful to allow him to stand for longer than a few minutes.

Time and a rapidly crumbling spine were starting to wear at his spirit. The pain medication made him sluggish and fearful about his teaching and mental capacity. He needed an operation that would fuse five vertebrae together in order for him to stay mobile. It meant refraining from his essential blood-thinning medication for two weeks, as there was potential for heavy bleeding in this major surgical effort. His doctor advised against it. His cardiologist advised against it. He agonized for nearly a year before choosing to take the risk to live in relative comfort, rather than debilitating pain. He signed a waiver.

And so, one week after the poppies bloomed, my father lay in a room filled with flowers and photos, a stuffed cardinal, his family and

friends, overlooking the Green Mountains of Vermont. He'd suffered a heart attack, a coronary, a "catastrophic event." We waited all day, all night, all day. He slept, he woke, we waited and we hoped. At about 9:00 pm, a nurse called my brother and me into Dad's room. He was conscious and attempting to talk. Our visit was short; I regret that we didn't stay with him until he slept. Our last words were "I love you," shared with certainty that we'd repeat ourselves in the morning when he had rested.

But it happened again during the night—another "catastrophic even." The second time, so many brain cells died that he remained unconscious for three days, during which we read and talked to him, believing that if his ears could hear us, his brain could absorb some of what we said. His friends read Annie Dillard, Walt Whitman, Robert Frost; we told stories, mainly the "foibles of Dad." We told bad jokes, held his hand, and did what anyone might do while saying goodbye.

Near the end, his wife and I lay on either side of his bed, holding him. The ending was so quiet, so peaceful, and so inevitable that I went into a trance. I felt that my father, with his amazing capacity for intellect, love, and childlike silliness, still carried all that powerful life force, and as long as his heart beat and he breathed, it would remain intact.

I believe that spirit does not simply dissipate into air like a gas, to disperse, never to recollect. I envisioned that his life force would find a new repository in the body of someone who would be cared for and loved and brought up to make good use of the profound gifts he'd been blessed with. I pictured a little boy with black hair walking down a dusty dirt road, and the image of an Indian village crossed my mind. At the moment of Dad's death, a baby started to cry in the next room. We did so in our room. The memory of that vision still burns within me.

The next day I emailed my Buddhist friend, Heidi, and told her the story. She said, "It is important to have a good death; a correct state of mind will aid the spirit's search for a favorable rebirth." She promised to have her Buddhist community recite the "King of Prayers" for the following 49 days of Bardo. I asked her what that word meant. In the

Buddhist tradition, Bardo is the transition period between death and rebirth, during which the soul moves away from recent life towards the upcoming incarnation. The first three weeks is a time when the earth connection is still strong, and the spirit is clairvoyant and communicates with loved ones.

Soon after this, I traveled to Zion in Utah with my husband. As we drove along the dusty highway, temperature 109 F., we passed through a small canyon in which there stretched a 50-foot-long slimy swamp. Standing tall in the middle was a grand, still, solitary blue heron. I have always kept a sharp eye out for herons, but this creature was ludicrously out of place. This occurred on Day 7 of Bardo.

In early July, we swam every day and saw the heron in various spots. We decided one day to take a kayak ride out to the islands. There in the middle of the road was a blue heron's primary flight feather. What a feeling came over me! This was day 21 of Bardo, the final day of connectedness to the earth, and the end of the clairvoyant period.

This was a powerful message from Dad, telling me that he was all right, and would always be all right. I didn't need to worry about him. I was eager to believe that he transformed into the essence of the great blue heron. I will always remember in him the consummate fisherman, a dedicated dabbler, and an exquisite crafter of words.

*May the spaces we've occupied
beneath these unmoving skies
bear witness.*

I am grateful for the power of the voice left behind.

Great Blue Heron at Dawn

Jonathan Sherrill



digital photograph

Gubala Terrace

Colleen Daugherty-Costa

My sisters
toss their manes,
gappy braced teeth
bray.
Mouths so wide
they hurt.

We nest
like Russian dolls.
A gradient of
“beautiful girls”
we’re told now.

I find that I
am no longer I
but us and we.
A trio drunk-dancing
with our reflections
in the bay window,
trapezing through our
suburban jungle
for horse chestnuts.
Spying deer
on misty dewy mornings.

But Bridget was crying
in the passenger seat
when Aubrey flew—
her head hit the stereo,
she walked home from there.
Claw marks on my neck.

This is our water,
our blood,
our backbone,
iron-enforced
over the fractures.

We know it is dangerous
to love this much.

I Was Told

Kenny Giangregorio

I was told
to stay away from the hutch
in the dining room;
the polished wood
and panes of glass
protect family artifacts.

Just once I inched close to it,
careful not to drip a drop
from my runny nose,
or fog the glass with my breath.

Fisherman | Fish or Man

Emma Gilfix



acrylic on cardboard
22 x 31"

Among Us: The Lizard People

Jonathan Norton

Did you know that three out of seven people are actually lizard people? Statistically speaking, there's a fairly high chance that at least one of your grandparents is a shape-shifting reptilian creature hell-bent on the total subjection of mankind. Grandma Gertrude may seem to be a sweet, senile old woman, but beneath her synthetic human skin could lie a set of scales and sharp talons. While her driver's license may say that she's 87 years old, most lizard people have been around for thousands of years, dating back to biblical times. In fact, it's wholly probable that your grandmother met Jesus Christ himself, and may have even played a part in his crucifixion.

So how can you tell if a seemingly human person such as your grandmother is actually a lizard person? For starters, you have to be vigilant, for lizard people are crafty creatures capable of morphing into any human form at will. While they are startlingly skilled at imitating human speech and emotions, there are some dead giveaways that reveal their true reptilian nature. The most prominent ones are as follows:

- They blink using their horizontal eyelids
- They are a member of the Screen Actors Guild
- They voted for Al Gore in the 2000 presidential election
- They wear or have ever worn Crocs
- They casually remark that your flesh looks succulent

Now that you know how to spot a lizard person, it's important you know how to destroy them. Killing a lizard person is no easy task, as their hardened skin makes them invulnerable to most mortal weapons. Luckily, I will share with you the secrets to exploiting a lizard person's weaknesses, passed down from the greatest lizard person hunter of them all, Steve Irwin.

Step 1: Acquire five pounds of pure, crushed potassium and an 1864 Heinrich Grand Piano. I can't even begin to stress how absolutely imperative it is that you have this exact piano, an 1865 Heinrich Grand Piano simply will NOT work.

Step 2: Lure your lizard person out into the open. If you're having difficulty with this step, try offering to take them to the DMV, as lizard people can't resist the smell of human misery.

Step 3: Once your lizard person is distracted, pour all five pounds of the crushed potassium on its head, making sure to get some in its eyes. If you did this right, your lizard person should be writhing on the ground in pain, weakened by the power of potassium.

Step 4: Drop the 1864 Heinrich Grand Piano right on top of that reptilian bastard. I'm assuming, of course, that you've already tied the piano to the rafters in preparation.

Step 5: Examine the aftermath. If the lizard person explodes into a mess of green goo and lizard entrails, then congratulations on your first successful lizard person execution! If there's any other kind of mess, well then I suggest you leave the country. Hey, to err is human, right?

We know the lizard people have already orchestrated major world events for their own nefarious purposes, such as the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and the cancellation of *Firefly*, and we fear they will soon strike again. I have reason to believe that all the current presidential candidates are lizard people, and that Hillary Clinton is their queen. What they're planning I cannot say, but it does not bode well for the future of mankind. Trust no one.

How Ferdinand came to sell love at the Farmer's Market

Cody Wasuta

He shipped it off in his purple carrots and heart-shaped beets,
cabbage that smelled like lavender, and the peppers only coming in pairs.
“Buy two, a child comes free,” he would say,
and add a Jalapeño to the basket.

It was these couples that Fred worked for.

Their budding romances got him out of bed in the morning,
before the sunrise tipped the tree tops in warm light,
he would be out in his garden, which was now a field,
working with the squash: watering, pruning, checking for infection,
Writing his own poetry on their leaves and hoping a woman would walk by
his stand that day and only notice.

He wrote it in the morning because he woke up with it on his breath,
body lonely from the big farmer's bed.

He wrote in the morning before the birds woke up because his heartbeat
echoed

on the wire that held up the cherry tomatoes he effortlessly tried to grow.
By the time the sun rose the joggers were out in pairs
and the birds flew by in flocks, the geese honking in unison,
calling down to him with their wing tips touching,
asking him where his love was going.

Where was it coming back from?

Complementary
Megan Durocher



ProMarker, fine line pen
9 x 12"

Pink Sweater

Haylee Tower

Last night, a pink sweater was charged
responsibility for the sexual assault
of a middle-aged man's reputation.

The man, a husband and father of three young children,
a respected community member,
reported Pink Sweater to be responsible for the sexual assault.

How selfish of Pink Sweater,
pushing the man to endanger his perfect reputation.
(He never would have been tempted otherwise.)

Thankfully, Sweater has accepted all charges
and will be incarcerated for thenextseveralyears;
the innocent man accused will walk free.

It's a good thing, too.
That stupid bitch almost ruined his life.

Nose to Pit (after Nauman)

Mallory Cain Breiner



graphite and watercolor on paper
8 x 10"

Borscht

Buff Lindau

That magenta happens only in a white bowl
of grated beets quickly boiled,
set before you—a wonderment of color
topped by a dollop of thick white sour cream
garnished by bright green sparkles of chives—
your own startling dish of colors
and taste, redolent of earth.

A bulbous root that never saw the sun
pulled full grown by its leafy airborne top
from perpetual dark below ground
where its crinkled seed burst,
grew to seedling with slim filament of root and
two-pronged dicotyledon of emerging leaves,
swelled into full blown beet,
its stalks of red-veined frilly greens
reaching for the sun.

How else could it taste but earthy,
its brief life housed entirely in soil.
The hearty peasant food that fed families through the years—

Eastern Europe had a deep down heritage of borscht,
with cabbage and without, a meaty shin bone sometimes,
onions, carrots, parsnips, turnips, potatoes—
root crops stored to fill their soups through all seasons.

Those magenta bulbs: redolent of more than earth,
of families past, worlds gone, crowded rooms full of prayer
unspeakable hardships escaped, good fortune claimed.
A birthright to pull out of the earth and make into soup.

Magnificent Mile

Rachel Jones



watercolor on paper
8.5 x 12"

The Day the Roof Fell In
(Remembering the Ghosts from EN 123, 1990)

Nick Clary

The quake was quick—all down in one great rage—
No warning, no escape, no fond farewells,
No pause to formulate a last regret,
Not even time to turn a final page.

A sullen look or else a child-like grin,
There were no in-betweens between her ears,
The hope of something after this, her dream—
Impatience knocked but then the roof caved in.

A few things struck him right between the eyes,
So much else he could take or leave with ease;
He planned for wealth but thought of holy things—
At last he knows, and gone are all the lies.

Her ready smile could chase away a doubt
And few took disappointment near as well,
She turned attention outward to her friends
And when it came, her hand was reaching out.

More hunger in his eyes than others saw,
He often wore a melancholy stare,
But when he spoke, he told the truth he knew
And wished to live unfettered by rude law.

She rarely made a sound, but listened hard,
Her own work sometimes less than she could love,
The day her earth stood still she laughed inside,
Her head flung back just as the walls were jarred.

Good humored but a cynic near the bone,
He picked stray causes littered in his way,
And yet a kind ideal was in his heart
That stilled all anger, if the truth be known.

Her wide-eyed smile a mask for deep concern,
This child of protest, gentle in her look,
Struck by a movement at the circle's edge,
Fired up to teach, she settled in to learn.

He rarely liked the papers that he did,
And wondered how the others wrote so well,
His hands raised up in huge apology,
The gift he had will lie forever hid.

She sat in quiet, eyes turned far within,
And once or twice each class she seemed to smile,
As though a thought or two had tickled her,
The sound we heard—a bird's sigh, very thin.

A driven soul with music in his ear,
Intent upon the politics of change,
Transfixed in poise, a poem under pen,
Caught in the act that Plato held in fear.

Just when it happened, drifting in a doze,
The time of day, as always, not her best,
The moment fixed her while she wandered off—
A painter might have placed her in this pose.

The grin still there, still hiding deeper doubt,
His chin yet perched upon his doubled fist,
He heard a sound and knew it summoned him,
His eyes relaxed, his left hand pointed out.

Caught glancing furtive to her right, once more,
Her temple pressed against her opened book,
An unasked question furrowed in her brow,
She wondered why and seemed to see a light.

He loved to talk and have his story told,
He listened some and often would agree—
The very moment that the walls crashed down
His heart back when he was just six years old.

She'd heard it all before and knew quite well
That motivation was her falsest friend—
The day this happened was her very worst
And no one who was there could even tell.

He dreamed of somewhere else and outdoor thrills,
A lover of the earth, of trails and woods,
He'd often image mountains in his mind,
His look still distant now to distant hills.

In formal garb she came to class that day
Gray cast severe, a look of cool disdain,
For tragic thoughts were marching through her head,
Of prince and king and ghost, more than a play.

He talked of baseball and his dad at Shea
Had said it was much more than just a game,
His voice in warm nostalgia, full of gold,
His dream, a rainbow arced on opening day.

Some days a playful mood was in her look,
An airy sprite distracted, not alert,
But this day earnest and alive to talk—
The sudden stop—her gaze upon a book.

She dared to risk the censure of her friends
And wore a beating heart upon her sleeve,
More busy understanding than they knew,
And never justified her means by ends.

Without a home, his heart stopped at the door,
His gratefulness, a modest touch of grace,
The sound he sensed was calling him to stay
But leaving was his way—then nothing more.

That very morning she was touched by grace:
A dream came true and everything went bright;
She stopped to think about her stroke of luck,
When time stood still, a blush lit up her face.

The oldest face looked up and heard the sound
His ears astonished at the splitting noise;
He knew the time had come to bid good-byes
And swept his heart, just once, the circle round.

They drifted all through nightmares full of dreads
And wondered who would miss them if they died;
They wished themselves a day to set things right,
Then woke, at last, with sunshine on their heads.

Beyond the Finite World

Emma Gilfix



acrylic on scrap wood
24 x 32"

Spiritual Advisors

Cody Wasuta

In the rain on the weeks when the weather never takes a night off, I find myself sitting with it. In the moss that is always moist overrun by the drainage flowing down the walls. The basalt canyon's black sheen is broken by it—years of effort at life, eating rocks for breakfast, lunch, and dinner—beginning a forest. God is there. In the color of the water it waits, beneath the fallen Douglas Fir and Western Hemlock that simply sit there, waiting for the next big rain. It is in the spray of the falls catching sunlight, ringed in a rainbow of spray. Quietly waiting in the belly of a American rainforest. What we feel is our conversation with God. I found it on the creek's shelves where erosion licks away for centuries. Smooth bowls meant for sitting and watching. Moonlight, like daylight in silence, like being underwater, like a reflection of life; it lands silently on the ground, melting to blackness. Without a plunk or a splash it lights up the water. The moss, stuck onto the rock just below the rippling surface, creating life and love. And the Devil's Punchbowl is waiting for us at the bottom, near the end. Rocks that split from Eden. This Church of Basalt blasted from God's ass in an eruption, this unholy river made of magma and hellfire; where I float in the snowmelt and lick rain from my lips. You tell me man, is that booty sweat, or holy water? Could it be both?

Soil Contamination

Judson Browning



cigarette butts and mud

Trust Me

Alex Dugas

“Don’t get in the car with someone you don’t know,” said your mother. She said it fifteen years ago, and she said it again last week. “Don’t get in the car with a stranger.” Actually, your father said it too. And so did your sister. Your brother doesn’t really care, but your aunt does. Even your dentist warned you at your last appointment while you mumbled details about your trip through a mouthful of fluoride. All of these voices come back to you in one severe chorus each morning as you throw the pack down to the tarmac and the thumb up to the sun, and smile—always smile.

I

As a two-day stint as farmhands draws to a close, you and Chris shake off the eight AM sleepiness by the side of Route 7. In the waxing light of Northwestern Connecticut, the two of you look like a couple of hoboes who just ransacked an outdoor store. This is likely the reason why the cars pulling out of the gas station just up ahead are giving you dirty looks instead of rides. They can probably tell with just a glance that your moldy-hay musk wouldn’t play well with their leather interior. But that’s just fine. You don’t even like the smell of new leather. You like *real* smells; *dirt* smells; *I’ve been sleeping in a barn loft for two nights* smells. Big *smile* smells.

The golden sky continues to part the mist until you’re squinting to tell the oncoming cars apart from those little black flies that seem to love you. You’re a sweet and sticky titan of a playground, and it’s not even noon yet. The hat goes on, and you can see again. Telephone poles, a ribbon of concrete. It’s all so familiar; this might as well be your living room. It kind of is, really. See, you and Chris had no idea that you’d be so comfortable just six days into this last-ditch effort to milk an adventure out of the summer. School will start up again in a month, and you’ll have all the time in the world to sit still. Right now, you’ve got a thousand miles to Asheville and one long bus ride back. Ready, set, thumb.

The first rule of thumb is *proud* thumb. Be ecstatic about sticking up that digit. Hands are for communicating, and you need to get your grammar down. The second rule involves the fingers as well, but it's more aesthetic than functional. From time to time, throw up a greeting to one of these less-charitable drivers—the dirtier the look you get, the more enthusiastically you wave. Chris likes to press his hands together at head-height in a sort of prayer. He learned it from a shaman. It passes the time. Big smile.

The road, heading southward, forks just up ahead, and most oncoming cars veer to the right of the old Mobil station, leaving you and Chris on the left with very limited options. Aside from the infrequency of Wednesday morning traffic, this spot is close to ideal. It's a straightaway with high visibility, a reasonably wide shoulder, and a speed limit of forty or so. This means: A) drivers will see you for long enough to ascertain how bloodthirsty you look, B) there is a place to safely and comfortably pull over for you without causing a pileup, and C) they are going just slow enough that they will still consider stopping possible. Every time you two put your thumbs up, a series of questions proceeds through the solicited driver's mind: 'Do I have time to play chauffeur? Do they look friendly? What if they rob me?'

It's an offer that you prepare and set on the table, and then visually sell yourself while it cools. Cars go by. Cars go by. Just keep smiling. And don't get angry when they keep driving or it'll be a *long* month that you're commencing.

You decide to try something different. You and Chris spread out a bit. About fifteen feet is good. Make sure you're both visible—this means you first, since you're shorter. Keep your bag in sight of the driver, and put your mandolin around your neck—anything to portray yourself as something besides a carnivorous transient. No slouching, spitting, or smoking. Keep your hands in sight, your eyes on the cars, and your thumb as high as your shoulder—*proud* thumb. And smile, damn it.

After half an hour of this, you get one on the line—a sedan gliding to a smooth stop beside you. “We’ve got a bite,” you say to Chris excitedly as you approach the passenger-side window.

II

There is a glare on the pane from the sunrise over your shoulder, but you can vaguely make out the man at the wheel as he motions for you to open the door. You and Chris nearly bump heads as you both reach for it, but you reach the handle first. This is the part that’s like biting into one of Forest Gump’s chocolates or playing roulette. It’s all up in the air.

You’re relieved to find a friendly looking middle-aged man with a German shepherd riding shotgun. As this guy’s choice to stop for you is, at this point, a standing offer, you, as the solicitor, retain the verbal right-of-way—it is now your ride to refuse, and you speak first.

“Where ya headed?” you ask in a casual tone.

“Down toward Waterbury,” he answers—friendly, but with a hint of suspicion. You don’t know where Waterbury is; you didn’t expect to know. The initial question is, foremost, a means of testing the waters. Is the tone only friendly? Turn it down. Only suspicious? Turn it down. A healthy, human mix of the two is optimal—he should, at this moment, feel the same way that you and Chris feel all the time. So, you know where he’s going, now—or, at least, where he *says* he’s going. At this point, his cards are visible, whereas yours are not; you may refuse or accept, and this guy seems all right.

“Cool,” you say. “Is that down Route 7? We’re following Route 7 down to New York.”

The man’s expression lapses into something that says you *won’t*, actually, be getting a ride. He looks over the dog’s furry head and into the distance behind you. His silence blooms into a laugh as he clarifies that

you two are actually on Route 63. “*That’s 7,*” he chuckles, extending a finger toward the fork in the road where all the rest of the cars have been going for the past half hour. You turn to Chris with dramatic slowness, eyebrows sky-high, to meet the same expression on his face. After a laugh and a *thank you*, sedan-man’s hitting the gas again and cruising off to Waterbury. Or maybe he isn’t; maybe he’s following it to Hartford, or Patterson. Maybe he breaks down. Maybe he and the dog stole that car. Maybe you’ll never find out, and maybe you’ll like it that way.

Always check your map twice. And smile.

III

Several minutes and a few hundred paces later, you’re setting up shop again on Route 7—for real this time. This spot is a little different, the straightaway is of a similar length, but the speed limit is a bit higher. Chris scouts ahead for a better spot in a goofy jaunt, paralleling the faded white stripe. When no new prospects arise you decide to stay put, as there’s a short guardrail here to sit on in between thumbing. Try not to thumb while sitting down; you have to show you care—this is your job now, and you need three to six promotions a day for the next three weeks. You shed your flannel into a limp pile on the asphalt like a green snakeskin, as Chris whistles a folk tune and flicks open his knife. The sun grows hotter with every minute.

“It’s probably a bad idea to be cleaning my fingernails while we’re trying to catch a ride, huh?” Chris asks.

“Yeah, I’d say so.” You laugh as he folds up the knife and slips it back into his pocket. Knives are almost as good for protection as for cleaning fingernails, but only in the right situations. Chris takes a grateful bite from a granola bar and you notice that the wrapper matches his shirt—yellow. Yellow is good. So is white—less intimidating. Avoid the ninja look; black bad.

The two of you are wearing identical bright yellow shirts that you received a few days earlier from volunteering at a solar energy festival. You look like a grungier take on Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum. If only your hats matched too. Apparently someone is amused by it; a clunky grey pickup truck comes to an abrupt halt where the guardrail ends. You run up to the window, taking note of the two rusty shovels in the bed. Somewhere in your head, your dentist is explaining the embalming process to you in between jabs at your molars, but you forget as soon as you put a face to the car. It's about humanizing—all of this. This box on wheels has a face and a name and a life inside of it—complete with fears and apprehensions. You're pretty similar already.

You peek through the open window and fall back on the usual: “Where ya headed?”

“Just a ways down the road.” Even through a cloud of cigarette smoke and thrashing punk music, you can tell that this girl is both spooky and beautiful. “I can take you about four miles.” Your sight moves from her dark irises to her silver eyebrow ring, and back again—still watching you. Eye contact is very important; if both you and your driver hold it, it is a sort of handshake. *I trust you.* You hop in beside her; Chris climbs into the back with your packs. Always say thank you. Twice. Big smile.

She says that her name is Renée. Renée shifts the giant metal box into gear and the wind dives in one window and out the other. Renée has black tattoos and lipstick, and you love it. You almost wouldn't mind getting killed by her. You smile to yourself and enjoy the warm breeze, almost feeling like you're all in this together for a minute—the three of you. You can feel Chris grinning, too.

Renée tells you that she's headed down the road to dig some holes. *For bodies?* “I work in a garden,” she tells you. *No, not for bodies.* Renée asks if you mind the cigarette smoke. You don't. She goes on smoking, and you glance, briefly, over at her every so often with the same self-conscious fascination as a kid regarding road kill. You feel alive and, facing away, smile.

Getting a ride is like stepping into someone's living room. You're in the same place that many guests and passengers have been before, but it's somehow more intimate. Your greetings, acquainting, discussions, and goodbyes will all be finalized right here in this tiny space. You will never know Renée on her feet; you will never know her on a Thursday; you will never know her not smoking a Camel Light and fiddling with the cracked rearview mirror. And she will never know the two of you as college students, or grocery bag-boys, or someone's sons; she will never know you not dragging fifty-pound packs down the east coast in the summertime. You and Renée are in the same car, so to speak.

She drops you off by a hiking trail and speeds off to who-knows-where. Her name may not have even been Renée, and you love it.

You and Chris will fall asleep tonight in a suburb in Mahopac, New York. You'll turn down three rides and accept six. You'll ride with a minister, a grandmother, a potato chip vendor, a roofer, a woman who may or may not be clinically insane, and a cop who just wants you the hell out of his patrol area. And nearly everyone will tell you the same exact thing. They'll tell you that they don't usually pick up hitchhikers. And you'll say that it's okay; you don't usually get in the car with strangers. Big smile.

Montana Snapshot

Kirsten Higgins



watercolor and ink on paper

Mountaineering

Shawna Norton

Cotton clinging few curves
I climbed out of the lake.

You looked at me
and
I ignored you.

But I could not ignore
your hand on my leg
(days unshaven)
tracing fault lines
between the dark hairs.

Goosebumps rise,
mountains at your feather touch.

After Breakfast

Lexi Goyette

He stood, stepped out of the kitchen
and turned the shower faucet on.
She sat, staring into her empty coffee mug,
and turned the sink faucet on.

He had never asked her to wash the dishes,
but she couldn't refuse
the suds between her fingers,
the sponge flimsy against her palm.

This charade of house between
a non-husband and non-wife
to validate the actions from last night.
Maybe he will notice, she thought,
but the soap and sponge alone allowed her
to feel, for once, like she was his.

Interstice

Brian MacDonald



digital photograph

Plane Trail in a Dream

Cory Warren

Daylight comet, you are
scar of the sky, sore and
soundless referent racing far
and high, or slight and nigh.

You pass and leave a trace
behind for us embodied to
behold and wonder where
your try, at last, will end.

Twilit spook of blushing haze,
you blaze by the hushing day,
before we open our gaze to a long
lighted way through shades of night.

You say, dazed, fractured
and frayed, parting unlearned,
'I am not ready to return—
I am not yet ready to return.'

Alhamdulillah
Gabriela Heermans



black and white photograph
4 x 6"

Simile Syndrome

Cory Warren

There was	like
a time when	like
you did not	like
need to relate	like
each thought	
to nothing,	
a time when	like
your words	like
stood alone,	
and I cannot	like
pretend I do not	like
long to hear you	
again, pure	
and true.	
But,	like
I still	like
like you.	

An Honest Cover Letter

Briana Brady

Recent Graduate
860.555.1493
rgraduate@liberalartseducation.edu

The Boss
Large Corporation
Concrete Building
New York, NY

February 2, 2016

RE: Office Bitch, New York, NY

Dear Potential Employer,

Let me start by saying that I very much appreciated your photo on the company website. I have often admired the way that the soft gray watercolor background has reached such a level of universal acceptance that it monopolizes the market all the way from my own preschool photograph to the professional portraits of Very Important Grown Men like yourself. Your ability to mimic the pose immortalized in the Mona Lisa while maintaining the composure and masculinity of a Very Important Grown Man is wildly impressive.

As you are aware from the heading of this letter, I am writing you to apply for the position of Office Bitch that was posted on Indeed.com. While the posting indicates that you are requesting someone with 15-30 years of experience in doing bitch-work, I still feel that you should consider my application. After having skimmed the job description and opened up the company's mission statement on a separate tab of Google Chrome, I honestly feel that I would be a perfect fit for the job. Not only do I have a lifetime's experience in doing what other people tell me to do, I am enthusiastic and passionate about carrying out the commands of those in supervising positions. I am well-versed in never saying no and creatively

trying to interpret the underlying instructions in seemingly simple directives. In addition, I am well prepared to ignore the value I've been taught to see in my four-year bachelor's degree and fully dedicate myself to the needs of your office and those of the other Very Important Grown Men with whom you run the company. This is a line of work that I truly see turning into a career and would love nothing more than to spend 40+ hours a week devoting my abilities to a position as your Office Bitch.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize the secretary who is actually moving her eyes across this letter and express my appreciation and understanding for the regretful rejection you are going to send me as soon as you have finished. The posting did request much more experience than I have to offer and we both know that the "Proficiency in Microsoft Office" I claim to have in the skills section of my resume really only means that I know how to modify the margin size in a Word document—no small feat, I might add. Most likely, you are also currently questioning my ability in "conversational Spanish," and how applicable that may be to a rigorous position as an Office Bitch. I wish I could assure you about the four years of Spanish I took in high school, but you have most likely already recycled this letter and are currently adding my email to the list of young graduates unqualified for this position.

If you are still reading and would like to contact me for an interview please email me at the address listed at the top of this letter. Despite the fact that I have included the number so as to appear professional, I would request that you please refrain from calling my cell phone as I cannot figure out how to change the voicemail message I set two years ago and am mortified at the thought of a Potential Employer listening to me sing an improvisation to the tune of "Call Me Maybe" until the sound of the beep. I would be thrilled at the opportunity to interview for this position and look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for taking the time to review my application.

Sincerely,
Recent Graduate

Who Framed Eve?

Judson Browning



sharpie and prismacolor marker on paper
7.5 x 9.5"

Papa Was a Train Robber

Alex Dugas

Papa was a train robber.
Held them up in Amarillo.
Died in Oklahoma like a dog.

Years later Mama's only Sunday dress
still sleeps in the bureau
holding on to the last of her skin.
And two drawers down
Papa's best revolver dozes
with two lead bullets in the belly,
and four chambers gorged
on the ghosts of dead conductors.

And sometimes, when the sun goes down,
and my head's a holster full of bourbon,
I hold the barrel to my ear,
and I can hear some poor brakeman
whistling "Oh Susanna" for the last time,
just like it was meant to be.

Vacation Day

Lexi Goyette

Ms. Mosher was called out to the hall
while the boys in class taught
us to draw breasts on the whiteboard,
a double-U and double-dot.

But Ms. Mosher came back in tears,
sent us on our way.
Mom said tears can be happy so
I went on with my day.

The wheels on the bus went round and round.
I was thrilled for this free
vacation day, but I heard some speak
of troubled tragedy.

One tower, then two, were brought to earth.
I felt sad because
I wouldn't like if someone broke my
Lego buildings. It was

not until I saw the TV screen.
Flames licked grey steel,
ant-sized people plummeting.
It was then that I started to feel

the pain, the velocity
for the thousands of dead.
Next day, Wednesday, we prayed our pledge of
'legiance with fear instead.

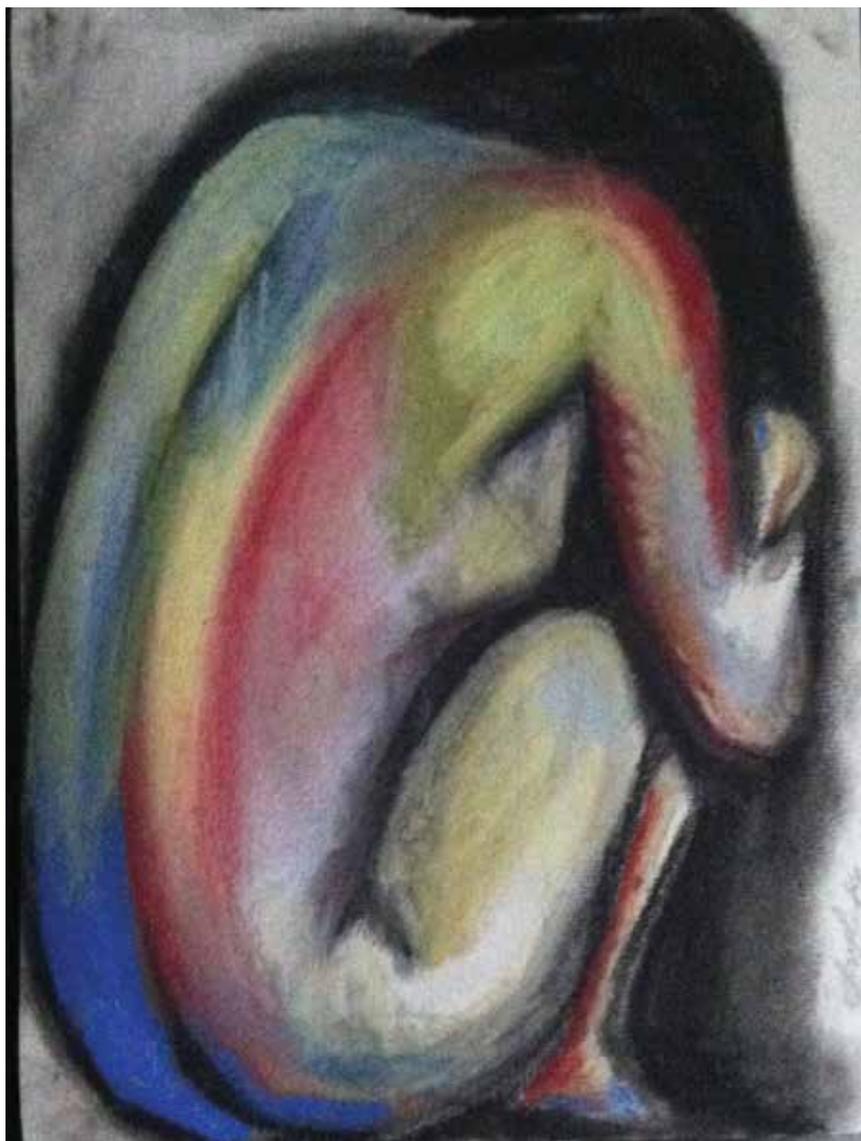
Late In the Day

Jonathan Sherrill

He was disturbed by
the presence of his
uninvited guest. Is it true
that he had waited at the door
a long time? To this, Max
was indifferent. To have intruded
was a serious breach of trust.
This can undermine relationships.
This can bring down grain
elevators. Max was not humoured.
The cat released a subdued
laughter-like hiss. A remote rhythmic
rumble reverberated as a train passed
by. The clock ticked. He heard
a semi whine in the distance.
The silence left the guest with
no choice. Max just
could not find
the words. The quiet lifted
with the closing of the door.

Pastel Nude

Ivy Luke



pastel chalk on paper
9 x 12"

Central Havana, 2015

Jordan Douglas



silver gelatin lith photograph
6 x 8"

Inhale, Exhale.

Lily Gardner

Before I knew you took drags on cigarettes,
you had formulated in your head that I wanted you to stop.
“I know I should stop,
and I know you don’t like it,” you said.
Your presumptions weren’t wrong,
but they were presumptions.

You wanted me to care,
enough to dream up that I did,
but also wanted to give me a reason not to care,
before I eventually did.

Before I knew your last name,
I knew the taste of smoke on your lips.
Before I could worry that the smoke filling your lungs
would slowly deteriorate them
and turn them the color of the pupils of your eyes,

I rested my hand along your ribs,
each one safeguarding that lung
that was so eagerly fighting to just
do

its

job.

That lung, like my hand, was just trying to keep you alive—
if only for our own sakes.

Bonsai

Alex Dugas

finally,
I have bonsaied the last
of my ambition

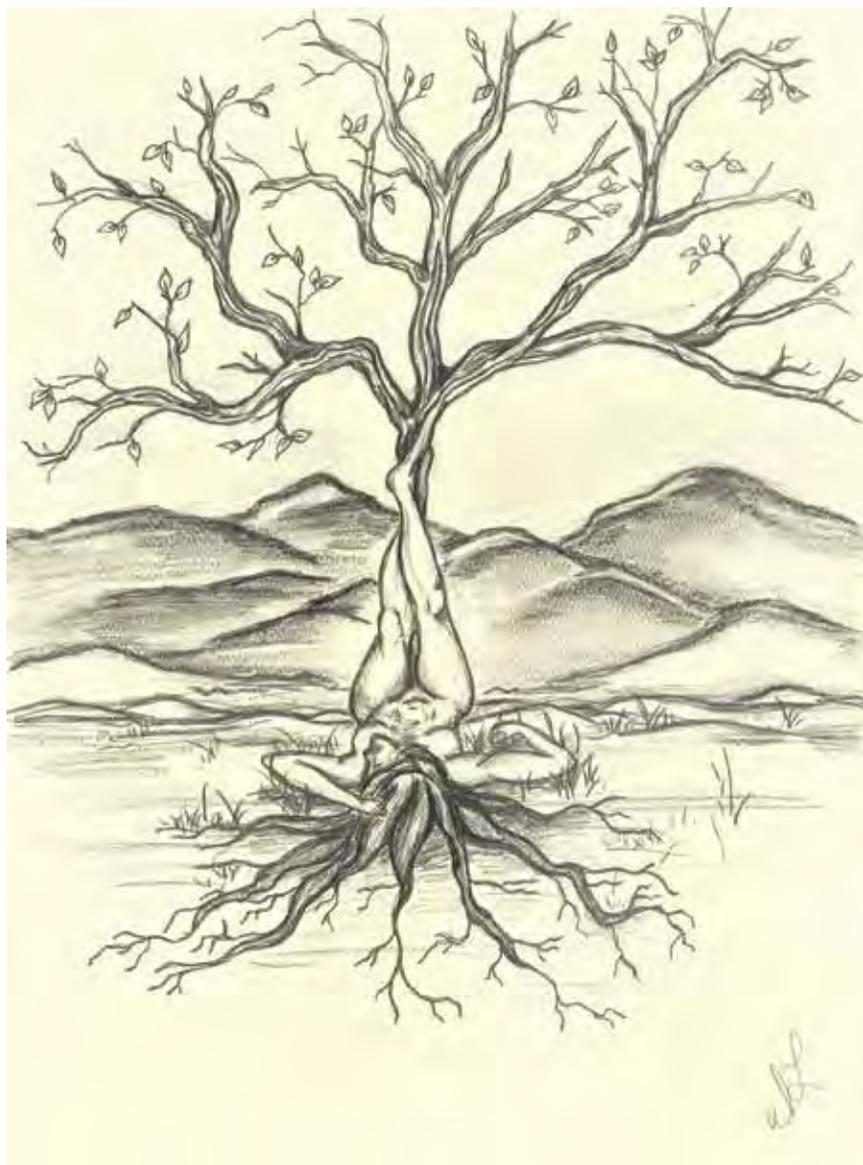
to belong to you.
I have snipped the twigs,
trimmed the leaves,
examined and,
smiling, slashed

the roots.
I have potted it,
watered it,
and surrendered it
to the windowsill,
where it spends
its afternoons
in the sun.

the caterpillars love it.

Tree of Life

Ivy Luke

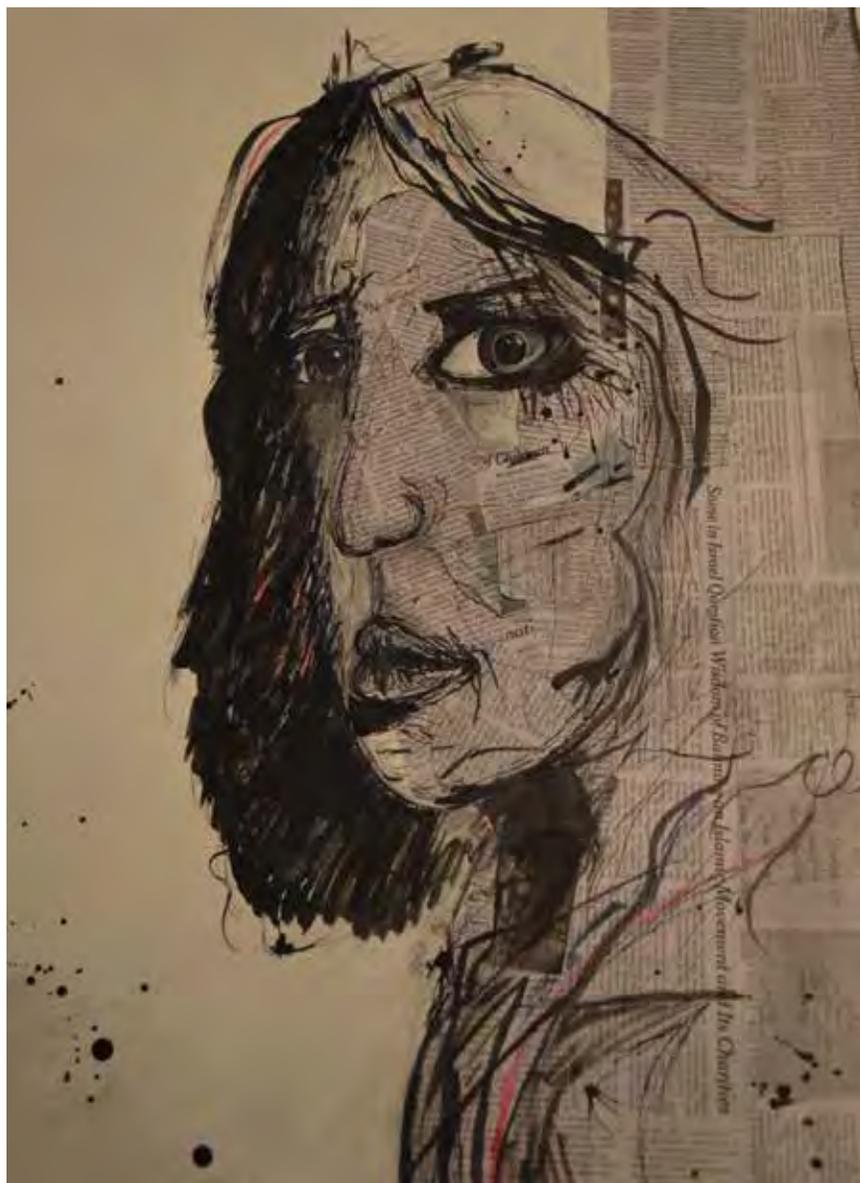


pencil on paper

9 x 12"

Emerge New(s)

Jade Jarvis



ink, charcoal, and pencil on paper and newspaper

Day Twelve on Planet Earth

Leena Richardson

Phoenixes are giants that never move;
with many arms they reach toward the half-dark dome.
Once a year, these sun worshipers burn
and are reborn in flurries of cold ashes.

Puddles are mirrors that expand when the world is sad
and shrink when it is happy.
Some are smooth and reveal the mountains;
others are rough and swallow the sky.

The humans have two types—
XX and XY.
They fit together like puzzle pieces
and combine their alphabets in the night.

The humans have misplaced their fur,
change color like slow-moving chameleons.
Every day they take off their skins
to submerge them in cylinders as punishment.

After the explosion of the sun,
the humans collapse on soft earth and fake death
until the sky pictures and the old man fade,
and the feathered tree-hoppers sound the alarm.

My Blue-Blue Light

Kelsey Bode

Mirror the stars, pulled by waves, so blue-
Blue. Plunge foreword, inward, breaking softly.
Touch silk winter waters, pinking skin red
Tracing familiar hands, watery
Un-taken photographs in a still, still
Wave. A never-ending mirror, captured
Our stars, pulled by waves, blue-blue.

Moon-lit lips crush the air softly to
Blue frosted fingers, lost to her rising, falling
Chest. Beat. Oh sigh-silent time, too quiet
For the heartbeat, beaten, beating ocean.
Crushed, cracked ice reaches, grows, breaks away,
And mirrors the sharp cut of stars at night.
Mirror—mirror? Oh, my cold glass.
My blue-blue light.

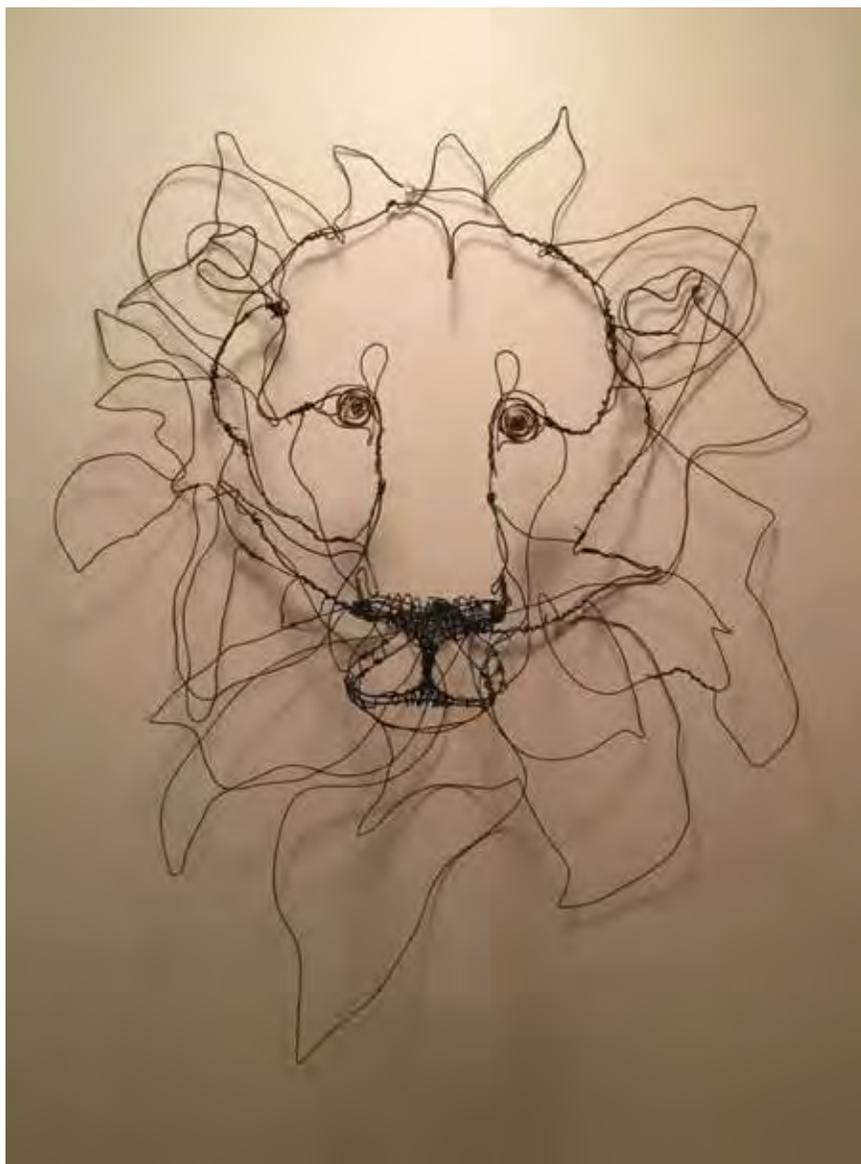
Emma Beelieves

Olivia Marr



pen, thread, and recycled materials

Wire Lion
Kirsten Higgins



wire sculpture

Rabia

Briana Brady

Before you
I had never known anyone
who could release a string of words
like music from their mouth,
never knew what you were saying,
but always exactly what you meant.
We had conversations in pantomime
our eyebrows dancing
to the rhythms our mouths made.
You told me to call you mother
Oumi
my mother
so that it was my voice speaking
when you touched your heart.
I learned your life story
in winks
as you pushed more food my way,
learned that *kulshea*
meshi mushkil
because everything is
good good good.
it can all wait for tomorrow
and *insh'allah*
we will speak again

Chrome

Brian MacDonald

So. I've made something of myself. I'm not a man of no means. If you look around you see a lot of pretty hardware in here. And outside, my name, on the sign, big chrome letters—Sheffield Chevy. You know . . . people from everywhere see that. When you drive by, you see that and you say to yourself, “Sheffield—he knows business. He owns lots of cars.”

My job, you know, the way I see it, is not only to make money, but also to show other people about money, and also, show them what the potential is for them to become somebody. Maybe not exactly like me—I don't need the competition, though I would be happy to go toe-to-toe with just about anyone—but in general, you know, that I'm here to help people say things to themselves like, “Yeah, I'm capable, I'm smart, I'm young, I have ambition.” And let me tell you, ambition is as important as ever, and unfortunately, it's a thing that many kids lack.

Anyway, every once in a while we hire a new kid. Now, this kid could be male or female, although typically it is not female, but I have no problems hiring whomever is the most qualified for the job. You should know that I'm a straight shooter when it comes to gender. So, a lot of times I'll get a kid, and you know . . . kids, lots of them don't know what they want to do. Do they want to wash my cars? Do they want to gather parts in my service area? Do they want to mount tires? There's so many options here—this is what I know—so what I do is, I have this little aptitude test with them. I give it to each of them, no matter what department they're in, or how high or low they seem to be looking.

Everybody should have that kind of opportunity, and I'm selfish, I admit, because I'm always looking for a special person. Specifically, a person that does something innovative with balloons. Yes. I want someone to innovate with balloons. Balloons, believe it or not, are a bellwether indicator and predictor of car sales. Today, if you walk into a car shop, a showroom, and there are no balloons, it feels like a crematorium, and the cars are coffins. I'm saying . . . even one balloon per car. Now that is special.

I've tracked this. I've tracked this informally of course, but I have found that the return on balloons is directly proportional to the number of balloons on display. For instance, if I have a month with no balloons, I might sell 100 cars, but if I have a month with lots of balloons, I might sell 120. That is an excellent R.O.B.

So what I'm saying is, I hire people and they come into my office as a first thing, and I say to them, "Hey, you . . ." This is pretty much exactly how it goes . . . I say, "Hey, you. Welcome to the team." And they often say, "Hey. It's really good to be on the team." And I say, "Hey. I got a little project for you. I know you're busy rolling tires around and whatnot, but when you get a chance, I want you to tell me what I should be doing with balloons, because I think balloons are an import part of our strategy."

Sometime they'll throw their arms up in the air and say, "So that's what this is all about!" I have no idea why they say that.

A lot of time they'll say, "Balloons?" Or they'll say, "I don't know what to do." And I say, "Go out into the showroom and look at the frickin' balloons right now! Make 'em better!" Or sometimes they say, which I prefer, "I like balloons. I'll do my best."

That's the kind of person I'm looking for. Actually, the person I'm looking for is the person who says, "You know, Shelby. Can I call you Shelby?" And I'll say, "It's Sheffield, goddammit." And they'll say, "Sorry, Mr. Sheffield, but I've been thinking more and more about balloons."

I've been waiting for this conversation to happen, and it has not, which is no reason it won't.

So I say to them, "Hey. What are you going to do about my balloons?" Because my showroom is almost like an art show, the way I run it. It's like a gallery. It's like a Gallery of Balloons. That's what I want people to think. I don't even want people to just come in and buy my cars. If I had my way, I'd have people come in to see what my balloons are doing, as long as many of them eventually buy a car.

So I say to a kid, a new guy, the other day, who was the most qualified at the time. I say to this guy, because he looks sharp, I say, “Hey. I’ve got a balloon dilemma.” And he says, “I’ve been thinking about balloons.”

I say to myself ohmygod, could you be the one? And you may wonder what happens to someone who turns out to be the one. And I will tell you that being the one with balloons is a fast track to the sales team. Now, you don’t make much money on the sales team, but nobody knows that until they join the sales team. So this is a really good deal, aspirationally.

Anyway, I ask the guy, who’s called Stan, I say, “Hey. So what do you think?” And he says, “So. Do I have a budget?” and he puts his elbows on the table. Smart kid. And I say, “A budget? You got a hundred bucks! And we got a tank of helium out back! And all the string you can use, because that’s why we save the string from the tire wrappings! So you can do pretty much whatever you want!”

And Stan says to me, “OK,” and off he goes.

Wouldn’t you know a week later he comes back with a sketch. Let me tell you, confidentially, that there aren’t a lot of things in life that make me happy, but when I see a sketch like this . . . that he even took the time to sketch out trapezoidal balloon clusters bound by tire string, made me smile. And the clusters weren’t even mounted to the cars—they were hung from the ceilings, which means I can save on helium! Now that . . . that’s exciting! And he also had a name for it. It was the Inter Car Balloon Mounting System. It was all I could do not to fist pump out loud.

So I say to him, casually, I lean in a little bit and lower my voice, I say, “Stan, if you can successfully deploy these balloons, you may have a future with us.” And he says, “OK.” And then he says, “Do you have other balloon pictures from the past, or diagrams?” Nobody has ever asked me this before, and I wanted to cry, but instead pulled out my balloon folder, and handed the whole thing over to him.

And I wait a week, again, as good things take time, and he doesn't deliver. No sheepish knock on the paneling outside my door. So, I ring the boys in the parts pit: no Stan. I call the guys in the tire pit: same. I call Frank the manager and he tells me Stan's quit. And not only that, but he got a job at Viking Honda. That little shit. If I had rubber arms, I'd stretch 'em down the street and smack him from ankles to chin.

Viking Honda has never used balloons in their showroom. Sure, they have a lot of balloons in their circulars, who doesn't, but their showroom is a mausoleum. Their sparkly pennants are yesterday's pom-poms. They may have a new waiting room, but their coffee sucks. If I get wind they're putting up balloons . . . if I even see one balloon when I drive by . . . well, I've never backed down from a good fight, a fair fight, and if they want a balloon war, by god, they've got one.

Contributors' Notes

Jefferson Ash is a member of the class of 2016, but you may know him otherwise. He's sailed the seas, been perched on pyramids; he's done everything and nothing at the same time. He wants to thank the ones who discouraged him, as well as the ones who supported him. One group provided him with the character and drive to become the person he is today, and all the other group did was support him.

Kelsey Bode is an English and Media Studies double major from Groveland, Massachusetts, with a love for storytelling, particularly through writing and film.

Briana Brady is a graduating senior who wears hats when it's cold, shades when it's sunny, and nothing but her socks when she's feeling wild.

Mallory Cain Breiner is an artist and educator currently living and working in Vermont. She received her BA in Fine Arts from Saint Michael's in 2007 and her MFA in Combined Media and Sculpture from Hunter College in New York City in 2014. She is the creator of *Fink and Theel Contemporary*, an online space that features contemporary artists through a discursive questionnaire about the interests that shape their work. Breiner makes sculpture, installation, painting and video that explore ideas of the body, identity, memory and fiction. She is currently an Adjunct Professor of Art at Saint Michael's.

Judson Browning '16 "Alive and well I stood—stark and brainwashed, like a good boy should." Art major with minors in Philosophy and Art History.

Nick Clary is a member of the English department faculty. He hopes that students in other classes will understand that his remembrances of them are equally warm.

Janet P. Cody, '05, is an artist and student living in San Francisco. Lately, she has been exploring artmaking as a path to some of the more elusive emotions and memories as part of her training to become an art therapist. California livin' has softened her tolerance for cold temperatures, while enhancing her appreciation of the beauty, spirit, and community that make Vermont special.

Colleen Daugherty-Costa has never been able to maintain platonic relationships, which she explores in some of her poetry. She has recently realized that snuggling isn't all that platonic.

Jordan Douglas teaches both darkroom and digital photography, in Fine Arts. "Central Havana" was captured on the gritty streets of Cuba's largest city on 35mm black-and-white film and printed in the darkroom with the alternative lith process. "Festival of Fools" was shot on medium format film with a \$25 plastic Holga camera.

Alex Dugas '14 has been wandering on Turtle Island, farming, hauling wood, reading, and learning to put out fires. The life he saves may be his own.

Megan Durocher '12 (BA) and '14 (MA) has been preoccupied this past year with developing her small business as a polymer clay artist. Luckily, she has had time to dabble in other art forms, too. The creation of "Complementary" consisted of a weird combination of imagination and a love for strawberries.

Jessica Engels lives and teaches English and writing in Groton, Massachusetts.

Lily Gardner is a low grade pasteurized cheese from the Land of Fluff, currently steeping in maple syrup.

Kenny Giangregorio is still suffering from writer's block.

Emma Gilfix has a wandering mind with an abstract imagination, which she channels into her artwork.

Lexi Goyette is a senior English and Theatre double major with a minor in Creative Writing. She likes hot coffee, cold beer, and warm baths.

Edward F. Griffin graduated from Saint Michael's College in 2010 and is now working on his doctorate in neurobiology at the University of Alabama. This poem is dedicated to Jon Wheeler, also of the class of 2010.

Gabriela Heermans is a junior from Vermont. She took this photo with a Pentax 500mm camera. She says, "Love is like taking a good photo; it is a fleeting moment that must be captured, and though the process of taking it is fast, the memory always remains. It must be taken spontaneously, shamelessly, and freely. The speed of the shutter sometimes works in conjunction with its surroundings and allows for the creation of something perfectly pleasing to the heart. Though I am thankful that some of these captured memories fade, I am also thankful for every opportunity at love that I have had. Thank you for ours."

Kirsten Higgins is a sophomore Communication major at the University of Maine. She's been painting in varying mediums for about 14 years now. "Montana Snapshot" was done for a close friend and inspired by the vast, cool-colored and extremely picturesque Montana landscape in Glacier National Park.

Jade Jarvis is a first-year Biology major at St. Mike's from Albany, Vermont. She has taken art classes all throughout high school, and is considering an art minor at SMC. Jade wanted "Emerge New(s)" to provoke emotion from the viewer and show how newsprint may tell the story, but it doesn't always show the emotions.

Rachel Jones is a junior Political Science and History double major, originally from Winnetka, Illinois. At the time of this publication, she is studying abroad in the picturesque city of Bath, England. Through her watercolor paintings, she aims to capture lifelike textures and colors, sometimes making a statement on social justice, and sometimes simply depicting beauty.

Emily Joyce is a Biochemistry major from Hopkinton, Massachusetts. She is an optimistic space cadet who #hasvertigo and is constantly losing her Knight Card.

Mark Joyce landed in Vermont to attend St. Mike's in 1983, and never left. He lives and works in Richmond with his wife and two young sons, 9 and 6, who you can probably hear right now, tumbling across the room in a tangle of limbs and accelerating laughter. "Boys . . . Daddy's trying to work . . . Boys . . ."

Annemarie Kennedy '99 lives in Providence, RI with her cat and with Moonie, her troll doll sidekick. She is trying to figure out her life but knows that whatever happens will include words, a camera, a guitar, and cookies.

Colleen Knowles is a senior Philosophy major and Creative Writing minor from Proctor, Vermont. She spent her early years as a writer lamenting the fact that she couldn't craft like her favorite authors until finally, when she was 16, a fellow amateur poet gave her a verbal slap and told her to write like herself instead of wishing she was a Ginsberg or a Picoult. She has been discovering and refining her own style ever since.

Nick Lemon, having briefly occupied STE 334 for nine days while completing his final papers, graduated from Saint Michael's College in 2014 with a degree in English. Since then, he has been acquiring nerdy tattoos, collecting strange experiences (such as reciting Old English at a friend's wedding and translating lines from the musical *Hamilton* into Ancient Greek), and ogling power tools. Mr. Lemon has lived in Chittenden County for 24 years and counting.

Casey Lendway is a Psychology major and Gender Studies minor from Nantucket Island. She enjoys dragging the patriarchy, iced coffee, and cats.

Buff Lindau retired as Marketing Director at Saint Michael's in January of 2014, after going on four decades at the college. And she still can't stay away. Her poetry sticks close to home—to her sons, her new grandson, gardening, cooking, aging. Congratulations to *Onion River Review* for its long, admirable history! Thank you Editors, and thank you Will.

Ivy Luke is a Biology and Spanish double major from Milford, Massachusetts who will never stop looking for her tree house. “The spirit of her invincible heart guided her through the shadows” – Gabriel García Márquez

Brian MacDonald likes the Doppler effect and the literary agent hypothesis, and is pleased with instances of either. *Interstice* is a photograph shot with a Canon 5D2 using a 100mm macro lens.

William Marquess has been a ragamuffin in Cincinnati, a boulevardier in Paris, and a ne'er-do-well wherever. He has taught English and writing at Saint Michael's longer than you have, unless you're Nick Clary or Carey Kaplan. His poem “In Saginaw” owes a debt to Theodore Roethke. He himself owes a debt to all Onionists, hither and yon.

Olivia Marr is a garden gnome detective, Scorpio, tree climber, mixtape maker, half full jar of honey on a sunlight shelf robot dancing through life. Liv and let Liv.

Jonathan Norton is a lizard-human person from Revere, Massachusetts.

Shawna Norton is a 2015 graduate of SMC. You can still find her in Winooski waiting tables and substitute teaching.

Karleen “Leena” Richardson is a senior double major in English and Psychology with minors in Creative Writing and sarcasm from a small town no one has ever heard of in Central Vermont. She hopes her communication with extraterrestrials will lead to a fulfilling career in governmental cover-ups. She plans to retire to an underground bunker at an undisclosed location to write a tell-all exposé for conspiracy theorists.

Jonathan Sherrill has been a ragamuffin in Cincinnati, a chef in Colorado, a carpenter in Nova Scotia, and a photographer in western Massachusetts. He has sat in a hunter’s blind for hours waiting (with a camera, not a gun) for the perfect heron moment. And he has apparently been a poet for years without knowing it.

Haylee Tower is a junior English major and MJD minor from Chateaugay, New York. Haylee is an editor and writer for www.theodysseyonline.com.

Like the plane trails he loves to watch, **Cory Warren** is always awaiting his return to the world.

Cody Wasuta is not really a writer and not really an editor, but he sometimes looks that way. Don’t give him too much credit. Share some with yourself, because on Friday nights when the lights drop to mauve and lustful smoke fills the crowd, it takes two to boogie on down. So if you would, could you boogie right this way?

The *Onion River Review* would like to thank:

Will Marquess, for the bagels and the noms de plume.

Summer Drexel and George Goldsworthy of Printing Services, without whom we'd be a pile of computer paper stapled together.

The English Department, for creative and fiscal support.

The Student Association.

Abby Adams, Sophie Adams, Judson Browning, Anna Cook, Lexi Goyette, Gabriela Heermans, Mikayla Hoppe, Natalie Jackson, Jade Jarvis, Emily Joyce, Shannon McQueen, Jonathan Norton, Maddie Schneider, and Sammy Sidorakis for their epic auxillence.

And of course, thank you to faculty, students, staff, alumni, and all the members of our community: to those who submit as well as those who simply take the time to read. You make us what we are.

Completely

Casey Lendway

My mother always told me
that there would come a day
when the plot of my own life
would not make sense to me anymore.

She never told me about boys
who are godless with their mouths,
or the ones who sit like
cicadas on your doorstep
screaming about the ghosts
who inhabit their brainstems.



About the Cover

The artwork of **Mallory Cain Breiner** has been published in the *Onion River Review* many times, and on the front cover in 2009. Every time she submitted her works to us they were reviewed anonymously. By an act of coincidence or historical fate, the editors have chosen her work to grace our front cover again.

What we unanimously admire most about this work is its absurdity. This natural creature is here depicted beyond nature, perched on a topsy-turvy plane. When asked to describe the piece, Breiner offered us instead an encounter with the absurd as accompaniment:

In this day and age, there are myriad reasons why one would hide their proverbial head in the sand. War, political corruption and buffoonery, misogyny, disease, injustice, fine lines, cell phones dropped into toilet bowls.

As an alternative, I propose you do one of the following:

Hire an exotic dancer.

Provide him or her with a polar bear costume.

Ask them to perform on the Capitol Hill flag pole.

Make a one hour video of yourself repeatedly yawning.

Broadcast it on public access television, late at night.

Re-enact the scene from *Rocky* on the stairs.

But when you get to the top, act like it ain't no thing.

We are happy this ostrich will outlive the rest of the herd as our cover for the 2016 review. For more of Mallory Cain Breiner's work, visit www.finkandtheelcontemporary.com.

Written by Onion River Review editor Cory Warren, based on an e-mail exchange with the artist.