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THE BRIDGE

A STUDENT JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS AND LITERATURE







THE BRIDGE

A STUDENT JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS AND LITERATURE



Bridgewater State University
131 Summer Street
Bridgewater, MA 02325
Phone 508 531 2317
Fax 508 531 1781
www.thebridgejournal.com
thebridgejournal@bridgew.edu

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Editorial Staff

Kate Camerlin / Editor-in-Chief
Catherine McFarland / Editor-in-Chief
Colleen Barber
Christopher Boudrow
Ryan DiPetta
Taylor Lynch
Kristen Lyons
Michael Malpiedi
Anthony Rotella
Amanda Rae Rouillard
Joshua Savory
Sarah Springer

Faculty Advisors

Melanie Joy McNaughton
John Mulrooney

Mission Statement

The Bridge is produced and managed entirely by students. Our charge is to serve, as we are dedicated to showcasing the artistic talents of the student body while providing internships in editing and design. Our goal is to excel, as we wish to pay a debt to our alumni, keep a promise to ourselves, and set an example for our successors.

Copyright Statement

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For all your help and support, we dedicate this volume of **The Bridge** to

Dr. Rita Miller

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Introduction

When we met in January, we wondered how to draw together the work we had received into a coherent whole. After spending several weeks looking over the material, the twelve editors met to share their insights. We found ourselves with a body of work that explores the tension in our culture between simulacra, or simulated experience, and what we perceive as being real. The works we have chosen cover this spectrum in a fashion that runs from the whimsical to the morbid, stopping along the way to reflect on the fidelity of art to human experience.

Our interviewee for this volume is poet Alysia Harris, whose work includes elements of slam poetry and spoken word. Speaking with Harris allowed us to further highlight an aspect of poetry that thrives on the Bridgewater State University campus. The interview broadens our thematic conversation: one concerning the way that creative work is arrived at by synthesizing the remembered and the invented, the natural and the simulated, and the stoic and the satirical.

While shaping this journal, we hope to uphold the high standard that previous volumes have set for us, which includes such accolades as Volume Eight’s recent Pacemaker and Gold Crown awards.

Each year, we are honored to choose from the vast body of work in the journal to highlight that which most effectively succeeds both technically and artistically. The pieces selected for this honor are given our yearly Bridge Awards.

We wish to extend our sincerest gratitude to the offices of President Mohler-Faria, Provost Howard London, and Associate Provost Andy Harris, whose administrative offices were instrumental in bringing this journal to life. We particularly thank Associate Dean Rita Miller without whom we could not have produced this volume and to whom it is dedicated.

We thank our faculty advisers Dr. Melanie McNaughton and Professor John Mulrooney. Our gratitude is also extended to our contributors who bring us such rich work, our faculty who continue to inspire us, and the University’s support staff, including Lori LeComte and Moakley’s maintainers who accommodate our late hours.

We hope we’ve created a book that reflects as much of you—readers, writers, and artists—as it does of us. We thank you for your continued support, and hope that the ninth volume of *The Bridge* serves as a refreshing and enjoyable read.

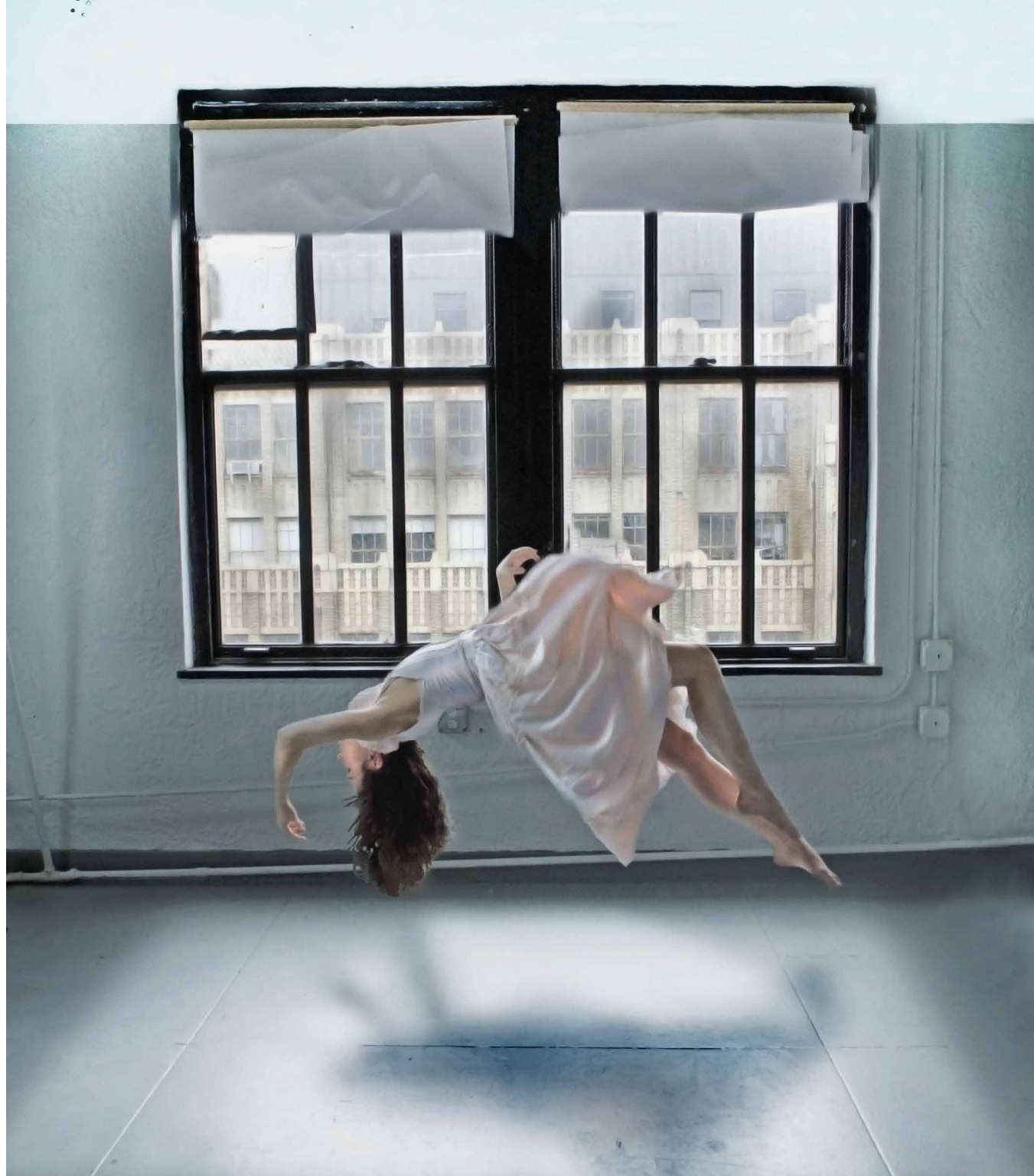
The Editors

Whispers of Fall
Kelly Mullin / Film / 9.4 x 6.4



Lullaby in Birdland

Douglas Breault / Photo Manipulation / 11 x 13



Frostbite

Allison Tweedell / Wool / 17 x 50





Chained II

Molly Wilson / Ceramic / 8 x 5 x 5

PTSD

Hillary Batzner / Mixed Media / 18 x 24

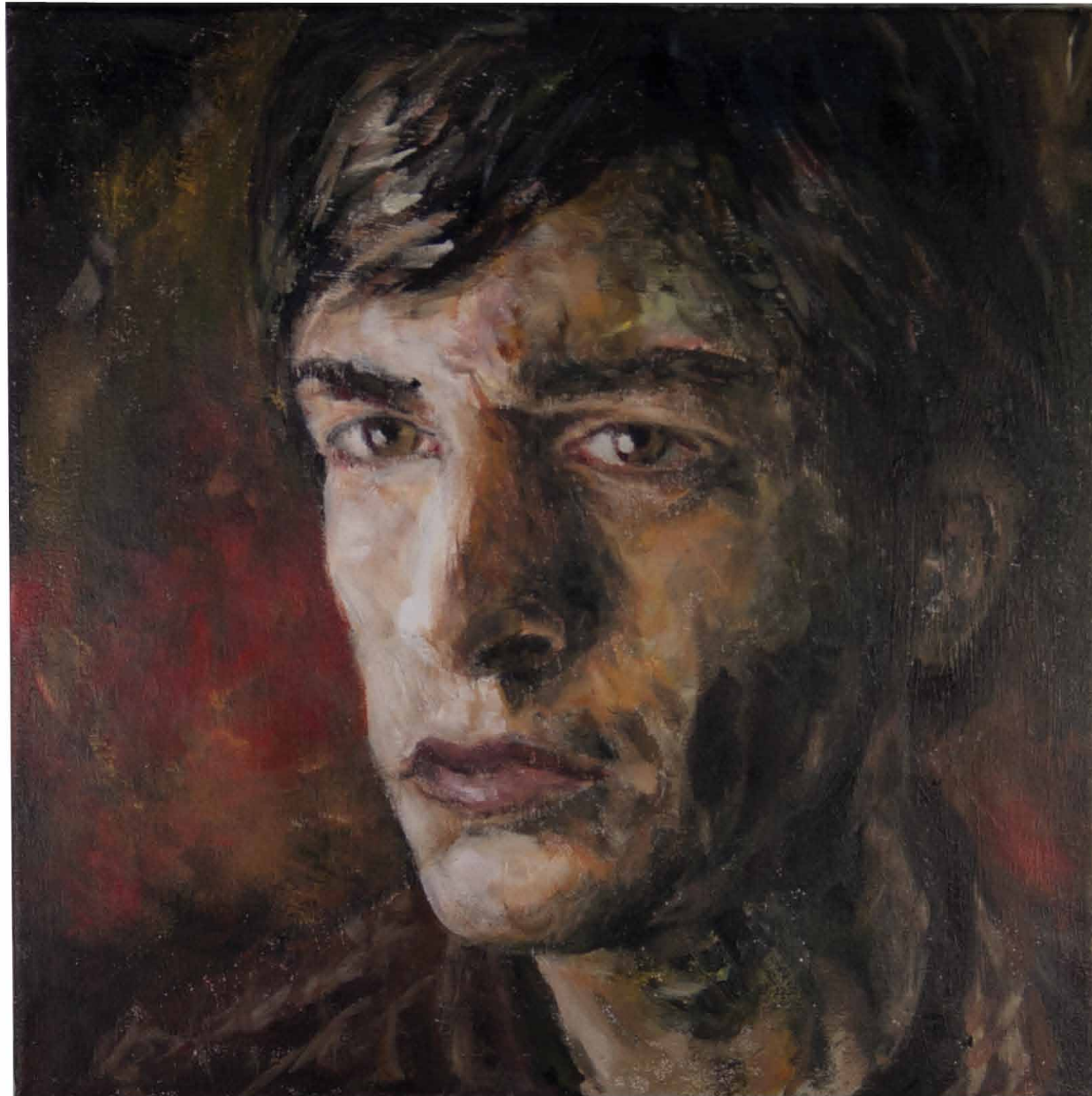




Untitled

Kenneth Fontaine / Printingmaking, Bookbinding / 9 x 6





Apologetics

Ryan DiPetta / Poetry

I.

I have considered the remedy that
holding a gun sideways would
make me more intimidating
if I didn't have wrists too weak
to withstand the kick.

II.

I am entrapped in a sky of metal walls
roll thirteen feet in any direction:
heights & drops of sudden police
barriers. A myriad relief of soda cans
beer cans & cigarette butts.

III.

I have dreams of benches
beset by the wavy snowman
melting away the patches of blood
scraping away the sand to reveal
familiar concrete flooring
that hurts: underneath.

IV.

I have been climbing stairs to reach the stars
gripping at metal rails & pieces of shoelaces
eyes fixed on stickers up high
while the painter peddles hot dogs
from the ground floor: where the
long blue hallway lies.

Watercolors — — — — —
Marissa Meade / Fiction

When I was younger, I really wanted to go to China.

I was six, almost seven, and my mom and I were sitting on our back porch. It was sunny and she took off her sweater. This was a big deal, you know, because she never did that if someone was around—she said it was because modesty was important. Looking back, I know she wasn't lying, but she wasn't being entirely honest, either. Adults are like that. She was really slow about laying the sweater on the back of her chair and smoothing out the empty sleeves. In the light, her pale skin seemed to glow almost fluorescently, and I felt sick to my stomach. My friends' moms were always browner, like me, from being out in the sun with us. Even my teacher, Ms. Kummings, didn't look as pale as my mom.

There's a soft, quiet kind of pain when I think about my mother's skin. Purple and blue and green blossomed like watercolors across her shoulders, down the curve of her arms and tapered off at her sharp and thin elbows. I thought it was beautiful. A small part of me still does. As time passed, I told myself I didn't really understand, that I couldn't have really known—but I think I understood, perhaps more than I do now. Adults focus on people's eyebrows and foreheads instead of meeting their eyes; kids match your pupils and stand still, straight backed. If

they're shy, it just means they know too much of what you're feeling. I was always shy.

It was a sunny afternoon, and we were sitting outside and her sweater was off. I was coloring. I liked that a lot; I liked the quiet accomplishment of filling in the spaces between the lines. It was rhythmic.

Even when I was younger, I was always a little forlorn, a little predisposed to sadness. The empty figures in the back of my coloring book always made me sad; I felt bad for them and their loneliness. I loved completing their outfits, their hair, the shade of blue in their sky and adding a family dog or minivan to the picture. The women's hair I outlined in yellow, always attempting a yellow-white shine like my mother's.

I was coloring and my mom was sitting with her sweater off, then I heard a *thuh-dunk* from inside and my stomach started to hurt. I looked at my mom, but she was looking at the grass. It was really green that day, almost like the pus seeping out of the scab on my knee.

I remember the accident that got me that cut, which involved a small dog, a not-so-sturdy-fence, and a curb. The bike was blue, a really dark blue, like the stockings my mom would

wear the days after dad was in his worst moods. I remember I was thinking that, about my bike and my mom. I was in the middle of this daydream about balancing my mom behind me on my bike and pedaling fast down a hill and the ground opening up and pedaling all the way to China and popping out on the other side of the world and the blues and purples fading and the sun was warmer and the grass was greener and my mother was smiling and so was I. Then it hurt. Everything hurt.



When I woke up, my throat felt thick. I remember bending my fingers, then toes, constricting my stomach muscles. Everything ached. I stopped moving when I heard a rustle beside the bed.

“Don’t try to talk. Raise your hand once for apple juice, twice for orange, and three times for cranberry.” My eyes stung when I tried to open them, so instead I pictured my aunt standing over my bed. She was a quiet woman, very clean, her hair always piled on top of her head. She washed her hands a lot and smelled like soap. I asked her, after it was all over, what she used to clean her hands—her private bathroom was still a mystery to me. She only smiled and touched my hair, reminding me of how much I looked like my mother.

I remember swallowing. It hurt. I thought about my gym socks, big and puffy, shoved into the back of my locker. Gross. I thought about juices. I wanted orange, but it was my dad’s favorite, and in those moments, I hated him. I thought of my mom, whose favorite was cranberry, but I didn’t want to take any from her. I raised my hand once, hoping to convey a thank you through a bend in my wrist.

“Apple. Good. I’ll be right back. Try to go back to sleep; it’s early and your mom’s still in bed.” I listened for her footsteps, slow and level, to leave the room and guessed where I was. I determined I was in the guest room, which was confusing, because it usually smelled like cats, and I didn’t like cats, so I would have noticed it. I thought about why I couldn’t smell anything, and I started to cry.

“Did you drink your juice?” My mother’s voice, a while later. I remember feeling her fingers on my cheek and hoping the moisture from my tears was gone.

I nodded slightly and felt my mother lie down at the foot of the bed. I wanted to tell her I could move to the couch so she could rest better, but the gym sock was still in my mouth so I stopped trying and thought about China.

I thought it was on the other side of the Earth: the perfect escape. I wanted to take my mother there. She was my mother, my glowing white blur before falling asleep. I was an only child, so I was particularly attached to her.



I remember around the time I most wanted to pedal us to China, she was pregnant. I didn’t really know what that meant. I was just a kid, but I remember her telling me I was going to have a little brother or sister.

She was kneeling next to my bed like she did when I’d go through my coloring book with her. Most of my friends had their parents read to them before bed, but I liked to show my mom the pictures I finished each day. Every picture had a different story and, as I got older, I connected the characters so there was a plot to the whole thing: the mother, the father, the sons, the daughters, and the neighbors. I saw people in the supermarket and video store and imagined where they fit into my coloring world. I made judgments based on how nicely they thanked the cashier, or if they walked their dog enough: a child’s ruling on an adult’s merit. My mom didn’t care, really. I think she just liked hearing me talk with such excitement.

I got through five pictures and I noticed she had her hands on her stomach for a long time. “Does your tummy hurt?” I asked, plopping the book onto my lap.

She shook her head and smiled. I concentrated on the curve of her thin lips and was glad the swelling never stayed. Sometimes, and I’m ashamed to admit this, I was terrified that her face would stay ugly forever, all puffy and dark, like mixing the wrong colors. “Mommy has something very special in her stomach: a little brother or sister for you,” she said, and I almost didn’t hear her.

“That’s cool,” I said, but inside I was ecstatic. All of my friends had little brothers and sisters, and I was jealous of them. I was a little scared, too, and I think my mom could tell.

“I won’t love you any less,” she whispered, her hands moving from her stomach to grasp my smaller ones. I stared at their whiteness.

“Will Daddy love it at all?” I asked, my eyes still downcast.

She laid her head on my stomach, and I put my hands in her hair and thought about China.



At school, the prettiest girl in my class had hair like my mother’s.

Her name was Marie. She sat two seats to the left of me in social studies and I liked looking at her instead of Ms. Kummings. After lunch, the sun hit her hair so it turned almost white, like my mom’s, and that’s when I knew I loved her.

Her skin was darker, like mine. Ms. Kummings said this was the time of year we all looked sun kissed, and I wondered what sun kisses felt like. I remember sitting in class and feeling guilty for having sun kisses if my mom didn’t have any.

It took me a while to talk to Marie because kids are stupid like that. I was terrified. I waited until it was drizzling outside, and we were all hanging around under the trees to keep from getting wet. I gave her my jacket, like I saw my dad do for my mom, and told her that she should wear it because it was cold and she didn’t want to catch pneumonia and also because modesty is very important. She blushed and put it over her shoulders and all of her friends screamed. I got very red. I was ten.

I gave Marie my jacket eleven recesses in a row before I touched her. Those moments before the first real touch, skin to skin, don’t fade with time—she might twist her arm in the other direction or glance to her friends for help. I remember the terror I felt when I thought she might stop wanting to wear my jacket when it became sunny, but when she kept putting it over her shoulders I knew she loved me too. I was excited for the day she would have dinner at my house and then afterwards we would color. I’d tell my parents we were buying the house across the street and her stomach would get big just like my mom’s and we’d be happy.

I remember filling in my coloring books and thinking that the only issue with our future wasn’t the size of our house or the color of our grass or how many dogs we had, but that she didn’t look enough like my mother. Marie’s skin wasn’t the same color—not as white, so distant from mine, but still wrong. I didn’t mean to hurt her the first time I touched her, but I wanted her to look right. In my mind, I thought she’d understand that this was a part of the growing up all the adults talked about. I wasn’t trying to make her cry, but I didn’t know how else to make the colors get big and dark and beautiful like watercolors splashing down her shoulders. I didn’t touch her face. I was just a kid.

“Stop it! You’re hurting me!” She shoved my chest. I stumbled back, surprised, and skidded backwards on my heels, hitting the ground with a sharp cry. I was humiliated. Even at ten I felt wrong for expressing fear, such a feminine emotion.

“You’re hurting me!” She yelled again, and this time she was crying. Her friends ran over and formed a wall between us. I stayed on the ground, stunned, staring.

I heard a voice from behind. “Come with me.” It was Ms. Kummings, her hand on my shoulder, soft, but heavy. I tried so hard to swallow and explain to her that it’s just a misunderstanding, we’re in love and very happy, but my tongue felt like it was stuck to my teeth, and I was too scared to meet her eyes. I remember, more than anything, how badly I wanted to apologize to Marie. I shook and got very red. I just wanted to tell Marie I was sorry, that I just wanted to make her skin look pretty, like my mom’s, like the watercolors, but suddenly I was in the principal’s office and everything was blurry and I felt a warm wetness in my pants and I started to cry.

I was at home in the bathroom, with the shower still running, and heard my dad’s voice. “He pissed himself? What the fuck. He’s goddamn ten years old!” My mother’s voice,

muffled. I put my ear to the door and still couldn’t hear. She was so soft spoken, always.

When my mom had come to pick me up from school, I tried explaining to her what happened—that I loved Marie, and she loved me back and how badly I wanted us to be like her and dad. She didn’t talk on the way home and when she told me to change and shower, her eyes were wet and her hands were on her stomach again.

Little Sister
Jillian Moore / Nonfiction

Blanche stands in the doorway of my bedroom. She’s pursed her lips in a familiar way, like she’s trying to suck something off the inside of her cheek. One hand is on each side of the doorframe, and she demands an answer. Her head is tilted at a slight angle. I’m familiar with this stance: she expected to get what she’d asked for without trouble, and is gauging how to react to the “no” I gave her. Her typical first tactic is to play victim. She doesn’t disappoint me.

“So ... how am I supposed to get to work?” she starts, her tone tinged with irritation. She’s not angry yet, but she will be. I’m determined to not give in this time.

“I dunno.” I shrug and know that I sound more annoyed than I meant to, but it’s too late to take it back. My attention remains on the videogame I’m playing. It’s a first-person shooter, and I’m playing a match online with some guys I game with frequently.

“Well, I can’t afford gas right now, and I’m going to need to get to work somehow, so why can’t you just give me ten bucks? How am I supposed to get to work?”

“Not my problem.”

“It’s only ten dollars for gas; why are you being such a bitch?” Now she’s angry. Tactic two has already popped up. I imagine her insults will just get worse from here. I pretend that her words don’t bother me by keeping my expression stoic and my eyes on the game. I pretend her words don’t bother me, but they do.

“You owe me two-hundred dollars and I haven’t seen it for months. I’m not giving you any more money until you pay me back.” I mentally prep for the explosion I know is coming.

“You’re such a bitch! I’m your fucking sister, and you can’t even lend me ten dollars for gas? I’m your family and you’re supposed to love me. But you don’t. You don’t care about me at all. All you care about is your videogames and having sex with your boyfriend. So much for the family I thought I had.” She isn’t yelling, but her voice is louder than usual. “Stop being so goddamn selfish and think about other people for a change.” She turns away and slams the door of her bedroom down the hall. There is silence for a moment before I hear her talking to someone. I assume she’s on the phone.

I exit the match I was playing, abandoning my guys, and close my bedroom door. I just stand there.

Blanche knows how to attack; she’s lived with me all her life. She chooses words she knows will bother me and continues to succeed. I tell myself: *I do love my family. I do care about them. I’m not selfish.*

All I hear is that word circling in my head: *selfish*. My stepfather, Michael, called me that when he was angry. She reminds me so much of him when she’s angry.

When my stepfather screamed, there wasn’t a section of the house you couldn’t hear him from. He would attack character, and batter down objections and arguments with shows of force. If he slammed the door, you hid in your room and hoped he didn’t come to yell at you.

I remember one instance where he stood in my doorway after having thrown it open. He was in one of his moods. One large hand still on the door knob, he looked at me, sitting on my bed, homework spread out. Around me, there was a minor mess. His eyes turned to me after a brief evaluation, his bulky form blocking any sizable space in the doorway. He called me lazy, and asked me if I liked living like a pig. He described to me the state of my future house: covered in bugs, dirty clothes, and a horrid smell. There would be mold, disease, and I would be alone because

I wasn’t worth anything. No one would marry a woman who was such a mess. If I couldn’t keep my room clean, how did I expect to run a home?

He slid his thick, freckled arm flat across my desk, knocking every item onto the floor. After he spat more insults in my direction, I was told to clean up the mess he’d made, or else I’d be grounded for a week, forced to sit in my room with no lights, no open windows, and nothing for entertainment. He left the room, the force of the closing door shaking the wall. I slunk off my bed to check if any valuables were damaged. I didn’t emerge for the rest of the day, refusing dinner.

I was called selfish, lazy, and a failure many times. I’m still struggling to convince myself otherwise. My sister doesn’t help by bringing Michael’s voice back into my head whenever she’s upset. It doesn’t help that I occasionally criticize myself in the same fashion. I’ve learned to recognize his criticism. I recognize it now, after Blanche brings these memories back from their stasis.

After closing my bedroom door, I sink back onto my bed and close my eyes, trying to swallow the accusations that had been thrown my way. I find myself questioning the nature of my personality often.

Why does she do this to me? She has no right. My teeth press together and anger tenses my muscles.

I know on the surface it’s because she wants gas money, and she knows I have it to give. But why the insults? I asked her once why she feels the need to attack a person’s character when she argues. Her response was because what she says is true. In her eyes, I am apparently a lazy, selfish bitch. I don’t think I’m lazy or selfish, but, then again, I’m biased.

There has to be some connection between her behavior, the mental self-attacking I’m recovering from, and Michael. I’m hesitant to say it’s his fault we’re like this now. I’m afraid of using him as a scapegoat. Maybe it’s my fault I let it get to this. Maybe it’s her fault, too, that she reacts the way she does to people. We’re all to blame in some way. Or maybe that’s just hints of self-criticism.

I can feel my chest tighten, tell-tale signs that I’m fighting not to cry. I don’t like to cry. Crying is weak. Crying is for little annoying children and girls who are just trying to get their way. Michael said that. And Blanche has tried tears on me many times to get what she wants. I continue to remain quiet and repress the sadness creeping up through my ribcage.

The anger is gone, replaced with this new, unpleasant emotion. *I’ll be fine in a few moments*, I tell myself.

The moments pass. I turn on my PlayStation again, and re-enter the game. The guys ask me if my system froze. I tell them it did. After a few matches, I go downstairs for a drink. There I run into Blanche again, and she asks me if I want to go out to Subway with her to pick up some lunch. She waits patiently for an answer. There isn’t any tension in her stance, her lips aren’t pursed, and her hand lays casually on her bag, relaxed. She asks like she wouldn’t have even bothered if I hadn’t come downstairs and reminded her of my existence.

I’m almost insulted. The anger I’ve suppressed claws violently back into being, and the “no” I deliver is laced with bitterness. She seems stunned by the tone, raising her eyebrows.

“Okay, wow, no need to get snappy about it ...” she heads off toward the door, keys in hand, and leaves.

I wonder if she’s forgotten about our conflict. It seems possible. But her accusations don’t slip easily from my mind.



I'm sitting downstairs with my mother in the early morning. The sun hasn't come up yet. I couldn't sleep. She's just relaxing before she has to go to work, smoking a Virginia Slim. We have one of Masterpiece Theatre's Jane Austen adaptations on the television. Our topic of conversation is the car, a steel-blue Chevy Cobalt sitting in the dark driveway.

"I just can't afford to make the car payments for her anymore. I've had to pay the last three. She can't afford her phone bill either. There was over two-hundred dollars last month that I had to pay for." She refers to Blanche, who has never been good with money. My mother has asked me to take over my sister's car. This means taking on her monthly payments and insurance costs.

"I understand." I sip the coffee I have in my hand. The only time I get to see my mother is early morning and late at night. She works three jobs to make up for the income lost when Michael left. My mother has not started J1, as she calls it, but she'll leave in a few moments.

"Blanche is going to lose everything if she keeps on like this. First the car, then the phone. She can't pay her bills."

"And she's under the impression she's going to Australia

for a semester. She can't afford that. I don't know why she doesn't see that."

My mother makes a face, brows up, eyes wide, silently asking me if I'm serious. I don't answer, facing the screen. She seems to understand, and shakes her head. I wonder if my sister realizes that her disregard for how much things cost, and who will pay for them, affects more than just her. We remain sitting quietly until my mother departs for work. I spend the morning making breakfast for myself and looking through my mail. My sister comes down about noon.

"Morning," she says sleepily, looking through her mail. "They sent me another bill? I'm still in school, duh, why don't they know that?"

Perhaps you should tell them, I think of saying. But I don't.

"When do you want to switch cars?" I ask instead.

"Oh, um, I have to go to class in like ... ten minutes. Are you free Tuesday?"

"No, I have class and a meeting; I'll be gone all day. Wednesday?"

"I don't have class Wednesday until like, one." She nods, gathering up her backpack and making her way into the bathroom. I predict she is perfecting her hair.

"Okay. I'll come here before one on Wednesday," I say. There is silence, but as she emerges, with her hair a little curlier, she nods. She grabs her backpack and exits the house. I sigh as she leaves, watching her take what is to be my car down the long driveway, and head down the road.

All my interactions with my sister seem to be tainted by some bad business. We used to have a better relationship. We played together as children. She would be the princess who needed to be rescued from the dragon in our grandmother's backyard. I was the prince that would save her with my Sword of Truth and Bow of Justice. The closest we get to spending time together now is watching television, and ever so rarely playing a videogame together.

As Blanche leaves, I think about Michael again. I think about how he took loans out on the house to buy himself boats and big screen TVs. I think of how my mother still has to pay off the house loans Michael left her with, and I worry that my sister will end up similarly. He and I only interacted in the living room in front of the television, either watching bad police

shows or playing a racing game, when I could convince him. I'm afraid his presence changed her from the little girl I got along with into the young woman I have to deal with now.

There's a difference, though. Michael knew the financial ins and outs of what he was doing. He manipulated the money he and my mother earned in a way that benefitted him. What is left here is the debt, but none of what it bought. A mess to clean up. My sister is leaving a mess behind her, as well, a mess of receipts and overdue bills: a trail of IOUs. My mother and I are cleaning it up, something we're familiar with doing. But I don't think it's because my sister is out for her own gain. I think she's just naïve enough to believe that, in the end, everything will be taken care of, and that things will work out. She believes she has the money to cover all the costs, and that the overflow is to be taken care of by her parents, as it has always been. I think she's just money-stupid.



I walk in the door of our little duplex. I'm only here for a while, and I'm planning on leaving as soon as I've quelled my insistent stomach rumbling. I spent the morning at a Burger King in Weymouth with my boss, learning how to prepare, cook, and construct the new breakfast products the company wants my restaurant to test. I'm sleepy,

hungry, and half-there mentally. I'm greeted by Blanche, who is sitting on the couch with her binder open beside her. The news is on the television. She has not done her hair yet, so it's in a messy bun atop her head. There is no make-up, nothing fancy on either of us. No ceremony.

"Oh, hey," she says, puzzled by my unexpected arrival to my own home. I haven't been here in a while. I've been staying in the dorms at school with my boyfriend most of the week. The room doesn't look different, just less clean. "Where were you?"

"Work thing." I flop my leather jacket over the couch, closing the door behind me, and head for the kitchen. A familiar pair of Labradors stands in my way, wagging their tails and begging for pats. I don't really like dogs, but these two have squirmed their way into my heart. I pet them as I move into the kitchen. My sister continues to talk at me, the volume of her voice increasing as I move away from her location.

"I made coffee if you want some."

"Oh ..." I look at the near-full coffee pot. Michael used to make dinner and not even alert us of it until it was cold. It was nice to have something offered while it was hot and

freshly-made. It was a minor difference, but it brought me comfort. "Thank you."

"No problem. We seriously have nothing to eat in the house. Or any liquids except water," my sister remarks with annoyance. I start fishing in the fridge for food. She's right. There is leftover spaghetti and sauce of questionable quality, yogurt, and a whole lot of pieces that don't quite make a meal.

"Yeah. Wow."

"Have a bagel and cream cheese. That's what I had."

The bagel is a bit frozen, so I let it thaw in the microwave before toasting and spreading cream cheese on it. I settle on the armrest of the couch where my sister sits. Quietly we coexist, watching TV and every so often talking about the poetry class we both attend. The dogs loiter close by, standing, tails wagging, wanting attention as they usually do.

I'll take these moments: simple, quiet coexistence. I never had these with Michael. But I have them with Blanche. While she might have picked up traits from Michael, she is not him. His ghost might have infected her, but there are

still parts of her that care about me. I have to keep reminding myself that they are different. I just hope the differences stay. We may not get along, but I don't want to lose the sister I had when I was younger. I especially don't want to lose her to the memory of a stepfather who left us both.

St. Paul

Ian Marsan / Poetry

I've been chasing steeples for three months through the old country,
amassing databases of digital religion
that are no more than pay-per-view cultural landmarks
(what's the deciding factor for the cost to enter a house of worship?)
My immortal soul in monetary value,
concessions paid like every other sinner:
or to lie and enter the gates a marked man.
(the contrast is too stark for irony)
and still, beside my jaded mind,
I feel my heart quicken as I enter:
a beat
that quiets my mind until
I am staring wide-eyed into
The Almighty,
putting myself into
contemporary...
 Oh! Winged inspiration!
 Oh! Blessed passion!
 To what heights doth no bounds!
 Pray! Soothe thy folly thought!
A tour guide bumps my elbow.
 Check the time.
 Snap photo.
 Exit.

Pantoum for a Brother

Michael Malpiedi / Poetry

for Chris

I met the love of my life
on the bank of a cranberry bog,
not yet in bloom
and I told him, I'm sorry.

On the bank of a cranberry bog,
I remembered I once called him Cain
and I told him, I'm sorry
for the many years when I was blind.

I remembered I once called him Cain
in fear that he would take my life.
For the many years I was blind
I never saw the words in his eyes, do you love me?

In fear that he would take my life,
I shunned him and hoped he would get the point.
I never saw the words in his eyes, do you love me?
But I see them now and I so much do.

I shunned him and hoped he would get the point.
And I hope this apology will do, I just did not see things clearly,
but I see them now and I so much do
treasure this moment in which I found him.

And I hope this apology will do, I just did not see things clearly,
I was just a young boy who had trouble sharing, but now I
treasure this moment in which I found him
and this fraternal connection now keeping me high.

I was just a young boy who had trouble sharing, but now I
want nothing more than to see him grow old with me.
And this fraternal connection now keeping me high
when I might trip throughout future days.

Want nothing more than to see him grow old with me,
a piece of time still to come
when I might trip throughout future days ,
because there is so much I must learn since that day.

A piece of time still to come,
not yet in bloom,
because there is so much I must learn since that day
I met the love of my life.

¿Adónde Vas?

Justin Mantell / Poetry

ONE

Josè bought a classical guitar at a tiny music shop in the heart of Buenos Aires:

A personal, portable translator with six strings, six vocal chords tuned five separate ways.

And five separate fingers familiar with the cold kinship of steel felt foreign to its elastic warmth, to the lively bounce of taut nylon, but quickly fell for its unfamiliar accents and action, devouring new dialect and diction, as starving strays licked the naked knees of hurried strangers.

TWO

It comes from some place far off,
not necessarily the north,
and certainly not the south,
but from up.
Way up—from the tip of the Earth.
Not the top, but the tip,
which is an objective observation
relative to the uncertain beginning
on the surface of any sphere.
It pours from here:
the highest point from which all water flows.

And behind two large rocks of glinting quartz,
we bathe our bodies broken.

THREE

With a firm grip, and nowhere near heavy, but firm, firm, firm—a lightly persuasive curling of four fingers and one thumb—and totally carefree for the parasites living lavish lives over every inch of the L-shaped metal knob, I nearly coddled the cold, curved brass and gently, slowly, carefully pulled the chest-high window open.

I spotted a child sitting at a child-sized table directly across the narrow alley, screaming the instant he and I both found our focus, both became clear. Before the window opened, nothing existed beyond its chipping, wooden frame but a loose and lazy mosaic, a blur of color. And this kid would have seen much the same, if not for a considerably less vibrant splash of light behind his view of the factory-cut privacy glass.

And when the window swung completely open, the sudden realization of mutual visual intrusion sent me jumping just enough to slightly urinate on the seat.

FOUR

I’m alone, and sometimes the automatic sensor light forgets that I am here. But moving anything more than my pen, and I’m shocked by a sudden flood of blinding white which flickers lazily before going out as quickly as it came in.

A screaming rectangular man, whose geometric mouth hangs open nearly the length of his entire body, beckons me to travel up his enchanted staircase. To my left, a crew of stunted thumbs with faces, three hotdog humans, and two long-eared dogs share one wall of a brightly lit hallway lath-ered lime green.

Their two-dimensional guidance promises a bustling bar of lingual nonsense, or a quiet roof in the rain.

BUS BEDS II

Ours set slowly beneath purple Pacific plains, and may never rise again to kiss thin tin skin or filthy sliding glass. But beyond a transparent maze of human oil, a hazy mixture of milky-way gardens, magnum moon pies, and ghostly glaciers still scurry skyward through a powdery, chocolate crust, as southbound beams—two tiny electric streams slinging sleep across exhausted eyes—link lunatics in the left lane with madmen in the right.

SIX

Wind-whipped eyes [or are they tear-filled for the love of me?] hold fast to a three-inch screen on a five-inch box aimed at a very real and really tiny white mess. I’m a rat-mutt—a meatball—nipping, yipping, and drowning in creamy Pacific Alfredo.

“Alfido, oh Fido,” he cries, tracking my fuzzy and half-matted mane prancing through a set of slowly moving hand-held frames.

See he, my man, seeks to capture real-life—my life [is this even really happening?]
—and lock it away on a disc in a drawer of some dusty desk. But his picture cannot keep up with me, like real-time amnesia, or worse: déjà vu ever so slightly.

He’s balding from behind, my guy, but unless his eyes can see across the sea, riding the curve at 280° West and back behind himself through a lens in a box on a screen made in Japan, he may never even know it.

Walking Through Water

Diane Sullivan / Nonfiction

The view that my mother had from her window was no longer the same. More precisely, the window itself wasn't the same. It was no longer the wall of glass doors that looked out over Buzzards Bay, but a set of double-hung located on the third floor of my brother's house. Failing health had forced her to leave her beloved Cape home, and it had been over two years since the house had been closed, shuttered, and left to stand a silent sentinel over the changing tides, waiting for her to return.

As much as she longed to return, my mother knew that she couldn't. I wondered that day, as I was taking her tea from the microwave and caught her gazing out the window, if that was what she was thinking. She seemed intent on the view of treetops and patches of blue sky that this window afforded her. Was she wishing for her old view that she couldn't have? Or were the monotonous treetops becoming more entertaining than the satellite TV that my brother had wired into the house? My mother had access to hundreds of channels, from Brazilian soccer to English comedies, and she complained that there was never anything on. Maybe being in her mid-eighties she'd seen it all. Or had seen enough.

"How are you doing?" my mother asked me as I handed her the cup of tea. This was a pointed question. When I arrived,

we performed the ritual of inquiring about each other's physical well-being. Now, she was asking about the state of my emotions, because the eighth anniversary of my son's death was approaching. The month of July was a depressing one for my family. A pall seemed to hang over our house that didn't lift until the date had passed. Then, there came such a relief; it was like we could expel a breath we had been holding since the end of June.

"Well," I said, "hanging in there, I guess. Each year it gets a little better." This was the answer I customarily gave, and the one I thought she wanted to hear: all messy problems tied up into a neat package.

"Hmm," she said, gripping the tea cup in her lap like she was trying to warm her hands on it. The A/C was on; my mother was dressed in a sweatshirt and had a blanket draped across her lap. Her thin body and poor lungs, decimated by cancer and the encroachment of emphysema, could not keep her warm. The A/C needed to be on to make her breathing easier. If allowed to build in this room, the humidity would suffocate her. She continued, "It will never go away completely. The loss of a child."

My mother knew of what she spoke. She had a stillborn

daughter. The child, named Jeanette, would have been my older sister by nearly ten years. That wasn't all for my mother, though. Starting with the loss of her father at the age of ten, grief had become her shadow companion. A fiancé, mother, sister, and other siblings passed—and as life progressed, the list lengthened, adding friends, a husband, and, finally, a grandson. She even lost a country when she left her native Australia and married my father.

I pulled up a chair closer to my mother's La-Z-Boy and put my bottle of Diet Pepsi on the table next to me. As she eyed the bottle, I detected a slight wrinkling of her nose; she hated soda. I was rarely allowed to drink it as a child and she may have viewed it as some maternal failure on her part that I now guzzle it constantly. I didn't know what to say to her last statement. My mother rarely expressed any emotion, and when she did, it was usually in a violently-pitched scream. Her way of dealing with the unpleasant feelings of loss was to crush them under the weight of wine. That's why I was astounded when she spoke again, expanding on what she had said.

"You'll feel that loss every day. It really doesn't get better. You just learn to live with it." She paused and took a small sip of tea. "You develop ... skills, I guess the word is. Ways to

cope." The tea cup went back to her lap. She again embraced it with her thin hands. "So, tell me what it's really like."

This was a new experience for me: a discussion of raw emotions with my mother. My gaze wandered her room, taking in her small bed with the covers turned down, the stack of folded laundry on her bureau, and a collection of family pictures on the entertainment center. I searched for a way to describe the struggle, to frame it in an understandable manner that would have low emotional impact. My mother seemed prepared to take the impact; however, I was not.

"It's like walking through water," I said. My mother's head tilted slightly in query. I took a deep breath and continued. "It's like being in a pool, with your feet touching the bottom, the water up to your chin, and trying to walk. You have to fight hard against the wall of water, use all your energy, but it's still like moving in slow motion. It takes all your effort to get from one side of the pool to the other. That's what every day was like after he died. I'd drop into bed at night completely exhausted." My mother was focused on me, her scrutiny made me uncomfortable, so I averted my gaze to the clutter of pill bottles on her nightstand. When she didn't comment, I continued.

"Little by little, it got better. Like I was walking toward the shallow end of the pool and the water level was dropping; first to my chest, then my waist, then hips, then knees. With your upper body free, it's easier to walk."

I wanted to grab my Pepsi and swallow a mouthful after that, but I didn't want to disturb the silence with the sound of escaping carbonation when I uncapped the bottle. "Well," my mother said after a moment. "Where's the water now?"

I considered this as I watched my mother take a sip of her tea. "I'm splashing through puddles now," I said. An image from my childhood flashed into my head: a younger version of myself in boots and a raincoat jumping into puddles with the unabashed joy of sending water splattering outward. My present situation was nothing like that.

My mother twisted her upper body in my direction and focused intently on my face. "When you think that you're finally stepping out of the pool onto dry ground, don't be surprised to find that you'll forever be walking around in soggy shoes." She turned to face forward again, her gaze now on the blank television screen. "I needed to let you know that, my love."

I really needed the Pepsi now. Cracking the bottle open, I took a swallow. My mother was back in her position, hands wrapped around the cup of tea, which had to be lukewarm. I asked her if she wanted a fresh cup and she shook her head.

"It's sort of like that with me," my mother said. "The water and all."

"How so?" I asked.

"Sometimes, I can't get my breath anymore. If I stand up too fast, or do too much, it reminds me of when I was a little girl and we'd go swimming. We loved to dive very deep, to touch the bottom, but sometimes when you went too deep, and you were running out of air, you'd be kicking like mad to get to the surface. That's how I feel sometimes now. Like I'll never be able to catch my breath again. I'll never break the surface."

"That must be very frightening."

She just looked at her lap and nodded. All those years of cigarette smoking had destroyed her lungs; it's no wonder breathing was a chore. Quick as we were on the subject, we

were off it again. My mother announced that it was time for me to set her hair.

Every week, when the aide came to help my mother bathe, I was summoned to set her hair. According to my mother, I was the only one who knew how to do it correctly. She lived with my older brother, and my sister had been taking care of most of her personal needs for years; it felt nice that there was this little thing that only I could do for her.

As I began to wet down her hair, my mother launched into one of her favorite debates regarding the existence of God and whether there is an afterlife. I inwardly sighed; she would not let this go and agree to disagree. She was not a believer and I was. Her vehement opposition to God, which she claimed had been a life-long belief, was contradicted by the years she spent in the choir loft singing His praises. I never asked her about this dichotomy, but I suspect that she just wanted to sing. She had training as a singer and actress, and this simply was an opportunity to do it. It probably didn't matter to her that she was singing about The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost, as long she sang.

"I think that when you're dead, that's it," my mother began. The rollers I was using on her hair were nestled in the blanket

across her lap. I reached down, chose the appropriate size, and rolled it into place.

"Well, there are a lot of people who feel that way. The condition of the world is not a testimony for the existence of a loving God," I said.

"But you don't feel that way."

"No."

"When you die, it's all over," she said. "That's why you have to make the most of your life. There is no punishment, no reward."

"Okay, if you believe that and find comfort in it, fine."

My mother was addressing the subject with her usual zeal. She kept twisting her head to make eye contact with me, a difficult task with me standing behind her. I wasn't making much progress in setting her hair with her head moving around.

"It's not comfortable. It's true!" she said. Her shoulders shook slightly; I placed both my hands on them, trying to steady her.

If she got agitated, her breathing would become labored.

"Ma, whatever you want to believe is fine. Just allow me the same privilege," I said. "Honestly, you're getting so worked up. It makes me wonder just whom you're trying to convince, me or you?"

"Oh, crap on that," my mother said, waving her hand dismissively. The discussion ended there. I wasn't sure if I'd won the debate, but at least my mother settled back and quietly let me work on her hair. Nearly finished, I reached down into my mother's lap and grabbed one of the pink, spongy rollers. Before I could withdraw, my mother reached over and grabbed my hand, squeezing it tightly for a few seconds. She released it, and as I pulled my hand back, I paused for a second to squeeze her shoulder. It was so bony, there didn't appear to be an ounce of fat anywhere on her body. I wished she'd eat more.

I also wish I had told her that day, told my mother how I'd been able to walk through the water. I should have told her about the faith that had been the gentle hand on the small of my back, pushing me forward through the water toward the shallow end. It had held my chin up when the water was deep, caught me by the elbow and righted me when I

stumbled. It was a constant presence, never wavering, even when in my pain I blamed it for my misery, it simply kept guiding me forward. But, I didn't tell her. I doubt it would have made her believe, but maybe she'd understand why I did.



Three months later, I was standing next to my mother's bed feeling the level of the water rise. My mother had been in and out of consciousness for several days and tonight her face was gaunt and pale; her mouth was wide open, her breaths shallow and slow.

"Has she opened her eyes or spoken?" I asked, but gathered family members only shook their heads. The emphysema that was taking her life was bad, but the morphine given in regular doses to make my mother comfortable was also making her unable to communicate.

Reaching over, I took her hand. I leaned in close to her ear and whispered to her, letting her know that I was here. I thought I felt the faintest tremble in her fingers. My sister, Lisa, and I held her hands. She, on one side of the bed, and I on the other. I knew that in the shadowed corners of the room the angel was waiting for his turn at my mother's bedside.

My brother rose frequently during the night to check on my mother. He was there when she took her last breath. My mother’s battle with lung disease was over. I’m sure she thinks she lost. I think she won. I think she finally broke through the surface.

Lisa didn’t cry when the funeral directors wheeled my mother out the front door of my brother’s home. Instead, she let loose with a wail accompanied by the demand that they return her immediately. I clung to her as she went to the window, and we watched them carefully negotiate the long set of steps down to the black funeral coach. We had a time of communal grief when she could do nothing but violently keen and I, using all my strength to make sure she didn’t collapse, could do nothing but cry.



The funeral was done to my mother’s specifications: everything, including the coffin’s design, was the same as my father’s. My family followed the pallbearers with the coffin into the church. The cherry mahogany, polished to as high a gleam as were the brass fittings, glinted even in the subdued light of the church. A soloist up in the choir loft was singing a plaintive “Ave, Maria” as the coffin was placed in front of the altar, and we took our seats.

The last funeral I had attended in this church was my son’s. The small, oak box containing his cremated remains had been displayed on a table. Now, as I crossed myself, following the prompt of the priest performing the mass, tears leaked from my eyes. I carefully patted my cheeks with a tissue, mindful of the make-up that had been applied that morning. I didn’t recall crying at my son’s funeral, only the blur of ceremony, and the tremors vibrating through my body. They had been so ferocious that I had found it necessary to grip the pew in order to stay upright.

My oldest brother stepped to the podium and eulogized my mother. He spoke of a life well-lived: a large family, successful career, and her love of singing and stage that she fulfilled by performing in local community theater. Eight years previously, my daughter Tara stood at the same podium. She, by what power I cannot imagine, gave a poignant eulogy about the loss of a most beloved brother. She recalled his many gifts and pointed out a few of his faults, which were presented as endearing quirks rather than flaws. Death at seventeen had afforded him little chance to experience the world. My mother’s ceremony celebrated a life; my son’s reflected on the lost opportunity of a life that was too brief.

The priest circled my mother’s casket waving a thurible

which poured out thick, sweet incense to carry the prayers of the congregation heavenward. All heads in the church were bowed as I covertly glanced across the pews. One would think that a person who was not of a religious bent would opt for a simple, graveside service. However, my mother went out with all the trappings and ceremony of a Catholic funeral mass. I supposed that she might be hedging her bets, just in case she was wrong about the afterlife. It could be that I’m not giving her proper credit; she may have wanted it out of respect for everyone else’s beliefs. As the priest walked down the center aisle, still waving the incense about, I had to raise the crumpled tissues to cover the smile that was turning up the corners of my mouth. It occurred to me that she might think it amusing: a church full of people praying for the soul of an avowed atheist.



I didn’t have to walk through the wall of water for long after my mother died. It dropped rapidly. My grief was easy to manage knowing that she was no longer gasping for air.

This is where the grief for my son is harder. He had been healthy his whole life, rarely even plagued with a cold. With such a constitution he could have lived to be a hundred.

I think of all the things he is missing. Selfishly, all the things I’ll miss seeing him do; the satisfaction of having a diploma placed in his hand, accomplishing career goals and falling in love. I’ll never see my son marry, and more profoundly, never have him place his newborn in my arms. I’ll never get to look into the face of the child of my son, to search for him in the shape of the nose, the slant of the cheekbones or the tiny cleft in the chin. Instead, as my mother forewarned me, I’ll have the constant reminder of his absence as I move forward though life in my soggy shoes.

A New World Pope

Anthony Rotella / Poetry

Crouching behind the ancient, fallen tree
my breath is forced steady
like brakes skidding on a wet road.
Hands
bloody, bruised, and branded
and a fist as stiff as rock.
They approach with a murderous carelessness
as my hand tightens around the axe.

What kind of god is worshiped when people devour each other?
Thoughtlessly.
A god cannot love us as we believe
when the dead walk amongst the living.

I grip my axe and bless it as the new papal staff.
My blood stains, the color of papal robes.
My blessing, to offer salvation to those
who need to be freed from their mindless sins.

I arise as a shepherd
tending to a diseased flock
and shear their coats of flesh
with cracks to the skull
as blood and brain pus sprays a fountain of
holy water.

Omnipotence!
Omnipotence!
Blessing each follower by forgiving their sins
with blows to the head.

Amen.

The Woman Playing Harp in the Cancer Ward

Bryan Way / Poetry

"It's the best cancer hospital in the States,
perhaps even the world."
"Oh?"

"People fly from all over the Earth to come here.
Look!" An old Asian man walks by with suitcases
stacked and rolling,
his life is crumpled into a canvas box.
"See, he even has a suitcase."
Comatose dreams drip from the waiting room walls.
"You look tired." "Yes, I am."

Sleep on tattered couch—half the size
of my torso, fetally burdened in the covered cloth.
We follow him into pre-op—they plug
him and his blood is sucked through manufactured tubes.
He is plucked like a crow in the vulnerary light. Catheter
draining him of his health. He vanishes with each drip
of anesthesia, he closes his eyes
as though ready to die—
he falls asleep.

We sit in the hospital,
and she walks around and paces.
He is getting sliced in places, and little pieces
of him are pricked out of his chest.
In the distance through the waves of nausea
and the shadows of Ivy League statue-geniuses,
I hear the wound strings of a harp being plucked.
"Your family," the doctor calls
he says "I'm sorry it's either
Thymoma or Lymphoma."

Are those both cancers?
"They are."

I watch her cry.
I stand stone-centered unworthy of anything
better than the filth of human disease
and I hear the harp louder
and louder and then, of course to no
surprise, there is a woman playing harp
in the cancer ward, or it could be
a harpsichord, but I don't know the difference
anyway.

A black woman walks up to the harp player
and asks where is the bathroom and she does
not see the sign of a silhouetted skirt,
she does not see her fetally burdened
on the plastic-stretched chair—the incessant tune
of songs I do not know swinging through the air
across the globes of my brain,
sizzling in the fevered stink
of the surgery ward.

Flight of Heart

Taylor Daley / Poetry

One cardinal is
perched, restless, standing out in
the blankets of snow.

Fluttering aimless,
even its pounding heartbeat
thrums flakes from branches.

But, it will not fly.
What does the little bird fear?
The hand that shoos it.

I Came to See New Models

Steven Dutra / Poetry

I drink tea and read Marquez
before going to bed. It's a
ritual
that isn't important and
comforts my mind while the light
is still on.

When the red light comes on
I would rather sleep
in the manicured grass planted
outside
Ship 5. North Chicago.

From the grass
whited out windows
and red lights are on the
outside.

Jenkins isn't snoring
or drawling on about
making hot tamale
to the Mexican
girl who serves slop
on Wednesdays.

Matthews isn't crying

a tumor
isn't growing on Andrew's
brain
in the grass

outside
Ship 5.

I could pray but I enjoy sleeping
with Rebeca
now that José Arcadio is dead.

Ugly Blood Heart

Bryan Way / Poetry

I'd follow you anywhere. Into a car accident on the south end
of Macarthur's Boulevard to a bathroom stall
in the back of the Elk Horn, dirty walls stained with rust and off-blue.
How many nights can we spend counting the time between stars,
falling asleep in the wake of dawn, barely sleeping?
It's been a long time coming.
To reason with the disparity would be to fight a plague the size of the old world.

It's all been built on a lie.
And how many poems can I write about love?
How many times can I possibly attempt to exemplify sadness?
Each time fails and I'm left in the stalls of mediocrity,
peppered with a few good moments and a bed of regret, like love.

Still, I'd follow you anywhere. From the reaches of the end of the sky,
where space suffocates the tweed of life,
to the crank sheds in Brooklyn
in a sea filled with the dreams of mystics—where paramount ideas
are the spit that drips from absolved tongues, I'd follow you into the lion's den.
But there will be a time when the lion is hungry
and I will no longer skate on a lack of fear;
that luck will run out and there I will succumb to my imaginary fate
at the teeth of primates.

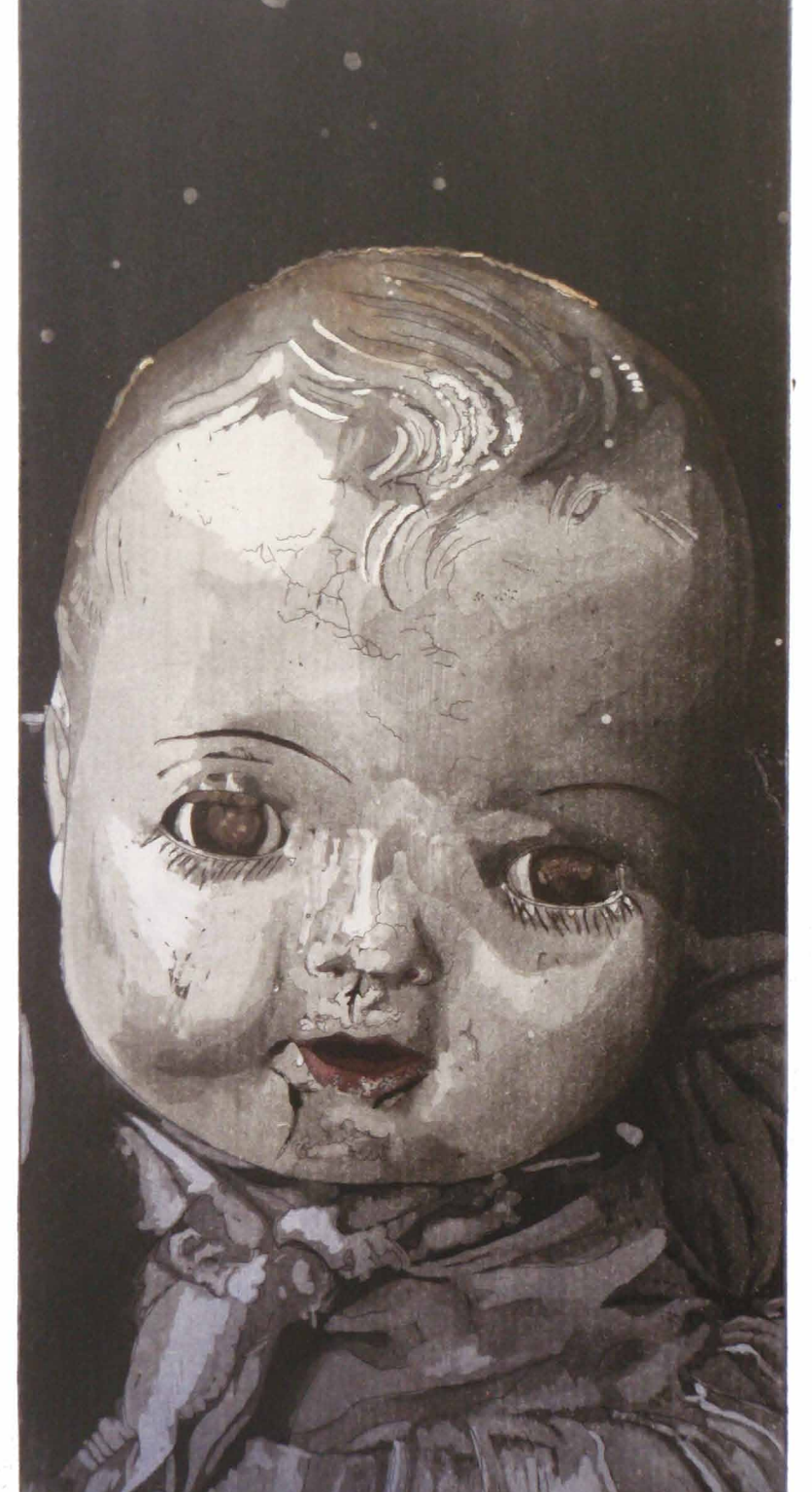
How many times can I plead insanity to your insanity? And how long
before I finger my way through an oracle hope that none of this
is worth it, that every poem was nonsense and I should have
just let you kill yourself in that hotel room? That I should have
slept alone and shunned the idea of being saved? Or stuck with
the free rum and cokes and stuffed myself on the mounds
of tortilla and tomato, gratis?

Sometimes I deeply think in the desperate mid-morning, staring
at the brain-melting screen, seething like a viper
to mop up the blood of the kill.

I think I've written enough about you, for once.

Gary Busey: Snack Attack!

Andrew Lavery / Etching, Aquatint / 5 x 10



Ozzy Macro Series #1

Brittany Rollins / Digital Photograph / 8 x 10



Qualms

Alexa Noe & Justin Mantell / Digital Photograph / 4 x 4

Chinese Factory

Hoi Yuk Pang / Digital Photograph / 15 x 11



Rain

Katyann Farrar / Gelatin Silver Print / 9 x 11



Untitled

Andrew Smith / Acrylic / 16 x 20





A sneeze snaps past, aimed with purpose,
directly at a beverage with an opened top
in order to make dead the recipient with
"style" in less than a week of weak illness.

See also: Lack of response.

See also: buried past in .45.

See also: Gunship Diplomacy.

See also: See also: See also: Lemniscate.

Scratching the back of the neck and
blessing oneself is not a good way to
ensure yourself a safe passage to
wherever the hell a destination is.

Tonight, everyone heard the seventh angel
sing the song that was meant to end the
world but no one had a box to correct the
pitch. Our lives are over? No gracias.

My insistence that red-robed wizard
named Chris does not work at my place
of business is not called non-sense but rather
discrimination. Blatant with long thin
beards necessary.

If a fifth line appears in a stanza,
protocol dictates that action is taken
against the next stanza. Violence begets
violence. Begets beget baguettes.

I heard I liked references so I put
a reference in this reference so I can
reference while I read. A poem:
where references go to die and repetition of
really matters, referentially speaking.

I should have titled this,
"A Poem on the Topic of Misdirection"
or
"Time Consumption."

Shi: The Seventh Stealth Assassin

Joshua Savory / Poetry

Weaving Community from HBO to Cairo



An Interview with Alysia Harris
by Michael Malpiedi



Poet Alysia Harris' work thrives on many platforms, including the performative and spoken word. This form of poetry is most energized when presented orally. Traditionally, the poet does not separate him or herself from the poem, a convention intended to create a connection between the poet and the audience. The poems themselves are often written exclusively from the writer's own experiences, and are often performed competitively in "poetry slams." Harris has been featured nationally in these competitions, including HBO's *Brave New Voices*. In addition to her work as a poet, she is currently pursuing her PhD in Linguistics at Yale University. We are pleased to present her perspective on identity as it relates to the creative process.

The Bridge: Although you write poetry, you also perform spoken word, or slam poetry. What do you feel is the difference between the two?

Alysia Harris: Yeah, they're definitely different. One thing is that we have a misconception about poetry. We always think that spoken word or slam is some new-age type thing, but it is the original form of poetry. Homeric verse was not written down. Homeric verse was performed orally. It was meant to be spoken aloud, and it was definitely a performance that people watched and engaged with. I think that trying to re-orient people's perceptions about spoken word, and what it means to be an oral poet, is really essential when talking about the difference between spoken word and "poetry," as if spoken word wasn't poetry. It is.

For me, one of the crucial differences is that in spoken word the author is always visible. In fact, I'd say the author is the key element. Everything comes through them: word choice, emotion. As a spoken word artist, you get to control what your audience feels, which is not the case having your work on the page; you sort of fade into the backdrop, and you allow the reader a little bit more autonomy to decide what they want to extract from your work. You have to be a little more economical. You can also be a little more obscure on the page; people can spend time studying the poem.

People can pore over it and read it to themselves, and come back and look at different lines, right? But when your medium is a performance, it's limited to that particular instance. If the audience doesn't get it in that moment, then they're not going to get it. If it's too obscure or abstract, they can't understand you, and you have not done your job as a performance artist. You have to be more transparent as a spoken word artist than writing on the page.

The Bridge: Do you feel like spoken word is a revival of an art that we lost?

Harris: Yes. I think one of the issues is that poetry doesn't have a very wide readership in America versus in other parts of the world. In the Middle East, for instance, poetry is huge because it has always been performed. Poetry's always been something that had a performance component to it, whether it was set to music or otherwise. But I feel like in Western tradition we sort of lost that along the way, and then poetry became very abstract: either too angsty or too meta for people to really relate to. I think spoken word does a good job of allowing people to really access that. It's also democratic; almost anyone can make spoken word. However, there's a lot of training that goes into

writing on the page effectively that may or may not have to be done when making spoken word.

The Bridge: As you just said, a lot of people can do spoken word. Almost anyone can do it. A lot of scholars and poets use that against spoken word or slam poetry. Some think it is just a fad. What would you say to that?

Harris: Well, I would say it's clearly not a fad. It was being performed three-thousand years ago. Not every culture attests to a written tradition, even today, but everyone has an oral form of poetry. I feel like it's fundamental to the human experience. I would say, granted, that there are some more effective spoken-word artists than others. That's definitely clear. I think I've grown considerably in my craft just from listening to other people. I'm constantly pushing myself. I'm able to be in situations where I can say, "That was a crappy performance," or "I wasn't really present," or "I was just going through the motions. I was trying to puppet the words, instead of letting them direct me." So, I would counter scholars who say that spoken word is not rigorous, because I would say, "It does its job. It makes you feel."

The Bridge: Yeah, a lot of your poetry really taps into a strong emotions. Do you feel that would even make it more

difficult to portray these emotions in the written form?

Harris: Oh yeah. I think it's more difficult because you have less to work with on the page: people can't see you, they can't see your face, they can't see how you respond to the words, so the words really have to work on their own. They have to do all of the work in a way that's a bit more difficult when trying to connect with your audience. You also don't have control over what they're going to feel. You can say, "I want to create a mood," or whatever, but ultimately the author is pretty divorced from what the reader takes away, which is cool. I write page poetry, and I definitely would love to hone my skills as a writer who works primarily on the page. I think, especially performing such personal work, you don't necessarily want the reader to come away with just anything willy-nilly that they pulled out of it, because it's personal to you. You wrote it. It's your life.

I feel spoken word is much more personal, more private than page poetry, and the themes of page poetry, generally. I'm not saying that they don't cover issues like love, loss, grief, and things like that. I think, as a genre, spoken word takes as its baseline that you are speaking from your own experience; you've lived this. It leads people to view spoken word in a kind of light that they may not view

page poetry in. There's a kind of authenticity that goes along with it that you want to preserve. I've had people perform my work and it's flattering on some levels, but it's also a bit weird. Because I actually lived this experience; it wasn't an idea, it was my life. Seeing someone try to project that, it's a bit bizarre.

I've written a couple poems about experiences I haven't lived, and I'm a little more tentative to do that as I've continued doing spoken word. For instance, I wrote this poem called "Hir," which is about the experiences of a transgendered individual. It was really powerful, it's got a lot of feedback, and it's been used at conferences, LGBTQ meetings, etc. but I didn't really have any experiences with any transgendered individuals when I wrote that poem. I just thought, "What would I feel like if I didn't feel comfortable in my own body?" But later in life, I realized that's really problematic. I didn't do any research into the community. I don't know anyone. I didn't ask people their experiences. I just abstracted and said, "Here, let me package this for you." So I haven't performed that poem since. I don't want to represent other people's stories. I want to represent my stories, because I have the authority to do so. I don't have the authority to speak on what life is like for you, or for some other individual.

The Bridge: What kinds of experiences do you like to draw on most?

Harris: Specifically, my experiences in Cairo and the Middle East have changed me; especially in regards to the way that I conceive of my own faith. The way that I practice Christianity is heavily influenced by Islam. It also changed the way that I view stress and things like that. When I got to Egypt, I couldn't understand how people were not stressed. When I went there, they didn't have my class schedule and I had to start class in two days. They just said, "God willing, Insha'Allah, everything will happen!" And I thought, "What do you mean 'Insha'Allah,' I just flew four-thousand miles and you don't have anything!" I was really frustrated the first two weeks. I was going to kill everyone, but then I started to internalize this idea that if it's going to happen, it'll get done. You can't speed it up or slow it down; if it happens, it happens. If it doesn't, everything will be fine. You'll go home to your family, they'll love you. You have a roof over your head. What are you complaining about? It was invaluable learning that. Even in grad school, when I'm really stressed out about something, I think, "It'll work out. If this paper doesn't get written, the worst that'll happen is I will fail out of grad school and I'll have to do something else. My life will not be over. I will do something that I love just as much, that'll be that." It kind of

put things into perspective. I also write a lot about the places I've visited because locations have personalities.

The Bridge: You're very much in love with the Middle East, but what is it exactly about the culture that makes you want to keep going back?

Harris: There's a quote that says, "The veil between God and Man is peeled back there." It is true. Even though there's a lot of turmoil, there's a peace there that is in the soil. I don't know what it is. There's so much history! Damascus is one of the longest continually inhabited cities in the world—four thousand, five thousand years old. Just knowing the prophets that walked there before you, there's this wisdom. People are invested in the lives of the whole community. In the States, somebody could fall down on the street and people just laugh at them and walk away. In the Middle East, if you fall down on the street, six people will run from all different sides of the street, pick you up, carry you to the sidewalk, dust you off, go to their house, bring tea, fan you, and make sure that you're not about to pass out from the heat! People care in that way. Cairo's a huge city of maybe fifteen million people. I walked that city at four o'clock in the morning almost every day that I was there, and I never felt unsafe, not once. Not once did anyone harass me, not

once did anyone make me feel uncomfortable. The most that will happen is you'll have the old men sitting outside on their steps saying, "You should be inside, it's too late, it's not safe." That was the most that would happen. I felt safe, I felt protected. I felt like people looked out for you, they wanted the best for you. Random strangers would say, "Come into my house, eat dinner." And you'd say, "I don't know you." And they would say, "It's hot outside, you need food." And you'd say okay. I really appreciate that, I really do.

The Bridge: I know that you study linguistics. Do you feel that it affects your writing in any way? How does all this knowledge come into play?

Harris: Well, I feel like it should. And I feel like the desire for it to affect my poetry does, more than any amount of knowledge that linguistics contributes; namely because I know what the English language can do, in terms of its syntax. I want to explore different syntactic structures in my poetry that will make it pop, or give it some new twist. It always sounds stilted, and I struggle a lot coming from a spoken word background to make my poetry sound like a conversation, because that's how it's most honest to me.

But then, on the page, there's a lot more emphasis on be-

ing novel and coming up with simple but interesting ways of playing with the word order, syntax, and word choice. Whenever I try to do that, it just doesn't feel natural to me. It doesn't feel like people would actually say this in real life, and then it turns me off. But one of my favorite quotes ever is an E.E. Cummings quote, and a line in one of his poems: "A heart of star by him could steer." Men back in the day used to navigate by the stars. He's talking about his father, saying, "My father's heart is so steady, you could navigate a ship by it." He says that in eight words! "A heart of star by him could steer." Eight words! He conveys what I would convey in three sentences in eight words. And I think, "Oh my God, that's so efficient, I wish I could do that." So that haunts me in my sleep. I have that line posted up everywhere in my house.

The Bridge: Do you remember exactly when you started, or the first poem you ever wrote?

Harris: I do, I do. [Pauses] I first started writing poetry when I was ten. I used to just fill notebooks up with short stories before then, but at ten we had our first lesson with poetry. My fifth-grade teacher was outlining what a sonnet was, and I said, "I could do that." And she said, "No, no, no," shaking her head, "Shakespeare does sonnets."

So during recess, all the kids went out to play, and I thought “I’m writin’ myself a sonnet!” So I sat down and started writing. I was counting out the syllables, ten syllables per line. I remember getting stuck on this one line. I was trying to rhyme “fire,” and the only word I knew that could rhyme with fire was “desire.” So I wrote, “All of this passion leads to desire.” That’s the only line I remember from my first poem. I didn’t know anything about passion or desire! I was ten, what did I know about passion? But I thought, “Well I gotta make it rhyme, so, here.” I showed her a copy of my poem and she said, “You wrote this? How long did it take you?” And I said, “Twenty minutes.” She said, after a pause, “You didn’t write this. What do you know about passion?” I said, “I don’t know!” From then on I would do all the poetry exercises that I could.

The first poet that I fell in love with [Pauses] I’m trying to think, who was the first poet that I was dying over. I’d say Coleridge. Yeah, Coleridge. No, reverse it: Edgar Allan Poe. Yeah, huge influence. I used to write just the blackest, most morbid shit. Sorry if I’m not supposed to curse.

The Bridge: [Laughs] It’s okay.

Harris: I thought, if Edgar Allen Poe could write 174 lines of

“The Raven” then I would write 225 in the same style. If he could do it, I could do it. I had weird nicknames; I was the poet girl. My eighth-grade fortune was that I would find out at twenty-five poetry doesn’t pay the bills and to that I say, “Look, bitches, it does.” [Laughs] Sorry!

I think one of the poets that is most influential on my work is Atmosphere’s rapper, Slug. When I was going through an angsty stage in my teenage years, I would write whole poems modeled off of his songs. Then I started getting into Charles Bukowski, and Hemingway, who is not a poet, but is my favorite writer. My daughter will be named after him. I have a trinity; my trinity is God, Ernest Hemingway, and my mother. I’m always debating which words I would have tattooed on me first. I wonder, “Should my first tattoo of words be the Bible or should it be Ernest?” I can’t decide! My mom says it should be the Bible. But I don’t know! Heming-way is definitely profound but simple. Simple truth, no big words, not all this pomp, not too complex, just truth. That’s what I’m after. My favorite poet is Anne Carson, who just slaughters the game, and I love her.

The Bridge: Well, you mentioned that someone told you that poetry doesn’t pay the bills. Now, you’re making a bit of money and you run with a collective called “The Strivers Row.”

Harris: Strivers Row; our one-year anniversary was yesterday.

The Bridge: Wow. Congratulations.

Harris: It spawned out of the Excelano Project, which is a spoken word project at UPenn, started by Carlos Andres Gomez, Joshua Bennett, and myself. And we’re in Strivers Row, as alumni from the Excelano Project, because we all went to UPenn, or still go there. And Joshua Bennett, who is a very famous spoken-word artist, a phenomenal poet, and a great friend of mine, has had all these crazy tours. He’s flown to the White House, and he’s been at the Sundance Film Festival; he’s a genius. His sister, Latoya, pretty much managed his career because you can’t trust him with any type of paperwork, form, anything; he will lose it, he won’t return a call. So his sister’s basically taking care of gigs and trying to figure out how much he should be paid. And she thought, “If I can represent Josh, and I know that he and his friends are talented, why don’t I represent the rest of them, and really start a collective?” So she pulled together a group: I was the second member of The Striver’s Row, and Miles Hodges, Carven Lissainte, and the last member was Jasmine Mans, she goes to Wisconsin. So Latoya basically manages us; she wants us to be not just writers, but actually producers of culture. She wants us to be role models, mentors and

artists, but very involved. She wants to recreate the Harlem Renaissance. And that’s what we’re trying to do.

The Bridge: Impressive. And do you know any spoken word communities that someone interested can go to in order to get into this scene?

Harris: Yeah, yeah. Definitely. You definitely need a community. Period. That is the best, and the only way, I think, people can ever really evolve as spoken word artists. They were invaluable to me, all of the communities that I was a part of, like the Excelano Project, which is probably the biggest influence on my life, outside of my mother and my religion. I actually have a tattoo for the project on my arm.

I would say get inside a community, a community that is comfortable and dedicated to active, and sometimes harsh, critique. You don’t need people telling you your work is great. You need people telling you it’s good, but it could be better. That is the death of any art, people telling you, “Ooh, that’s good! That’s great! That’s really—” Like, no! Tell me it sucks! Tell me how to do better! The second thing is that people should write every day. I know it’s very difficult. But they need to write every day preferably at the same time. Me? I come home from school and the first hour and a half I am

home, I write. I'm not gonna do anything else; I don't care how much homework I have. You produce when you write. That's one of the things I try to tell myself. I say, "You're not a poet if you only write when you're inspired." You're not a master of your craft. If you're a master of your craft, it comes when you call it. You don't just listen and get inspired. No. No, no, no. When the blacksmith wants to make a sword, he doesn't wait for the metal.

For me, it's about writing through the uncomfortable, "I don't have anything to say, all of this sounds whack." It's writing through that when I think you really tap into your ability. It's not just, "I had a good idea, and that's the measure of how good a writer I am." Instead it's taking any idea, and making something of it. So that's the second point: writing consistently. And then, the third point, reading. Reading other contemporary poets, and not only spoken word artists. We have a very tight-knit community, so if you keep reading or keep listening to each other, we'll all sound the same. You've gotta read other people; they just do different things to give you a new skill-set. The fourth thing, I would say, is observe. Go out into the world and stare at things. And don't make it overly complicated. Just say the truth about the thing.

The Bridge: I would think being within these different

communities would lead you to be in various venues and competitions, say for example, *Brave New Voices*. Do you want to talk about what *Brave New Voices* is, or your experience being on it?

Harris: Okay. I first was on *Brave New Voices* in 2007. This was before it became the HBO show. And we won that year, Philadelphia won that year. It was beautiful. The best competition experience ever.

Brave New Voices is from Youth Speaks, which is a youth activism, youth poetry, non-profit organization in California, run by James Kass. It's a city-wide event: cities hold slam competitions and then the top five people get onto the team and practice and rehearse. They come up with collaborative poems, solos, and then they go to competition. The poets compete for their city against all the other teams across the country.

I was on the team again in 2008, which was awesome. I mean, I was there with my best friends, so it was great. Our team struggled a lot because we weren't in the same place; Josh was in San Francisco, Aisha was in Chicago, and we were all going through very heavy transitions in our lives. But it was a great experience, being on HBO. It opened a lot

of doors for all of us, especially for Josh. We started thinking that we could possibly make poetry more of a career than we had thought before. But it allows gigs to happen when you can say, "Oh, you know, I was on HBO. I was on *Def Poetry Jam*." It makes you more desirable.

For me, the best part about it was the community, getting to interact with young people from all over the country. There's not a city that I could go to where I don't have people that would let me stay with them. We have this open house policy. It's like, "You're a poet and you're in town? House is open, just call us up, Facebook us." It really feels like extended family everywhere you go, which is awesome.

The Bridge: Besides doing these things, are there any other writing communities or programs that you were a part of?

Harris: After being on *Brave New Voices*, I mentored the 2009 team that came out of Philadelphia, which was awesome. Just doing writing exercises, and it ended up being more than that because the leader of the Philadelphia poetry movement is more than a spoken word artist, more than a coach, he is a father. So it involved taking kids out to dinner, making sure they had clothes, making PowerPoints for school, and just making sure that they were generally

taken care of. It was awesome to show them the resources that an Ivy League school has, and to be able to say, "You can go here! It's not out of your reach!"

Currently, I'm really not doing anything since grad school has the majority of my time. But yeah, I would definitely like to start a writing program for the inner-city kids in New Haven.

The Bridge: You're still continuing with your education, but what do you plan to do afterward? Do you plan on continuing a career on spoken word?

Harris: I always get so much flak for my answer. I don't know how realistic it is; it's very idealistic. After I get my Ph. D, I wanted to move to the Middle East and buy a large piece of land and raise goats and olive trees.

That's really what I want to do. My mother says I won't. I probably won't, but that's what I dream about. I don't know; I might do field work. That's probably more realistic. I'd probably do some field work in Yemen or Oman. There are a couple languages down there that are not documented yet, and I could get some grants to go and document the languages down there.

If linguistics doesn't work out, I would want to run a writing

colony. I would actually want to start two. One up here, in these gorgeous woods. And then one in the desert. The desert, man. It's so powerful. There's so much raw energy there. Yeah, I want a writing colony. Maybe one for youth. Definitely one for spoken-word artists who want to do more page stuff. And maybe the elderly; I feel like they are an untapped resource of wisdom, and they have perspectives that, if not written down, would be lost. I don't know why I feel this way, but maybe I'd run a writing colony for elderly people.

The Bridge: Why go raise goats in the Middle East?

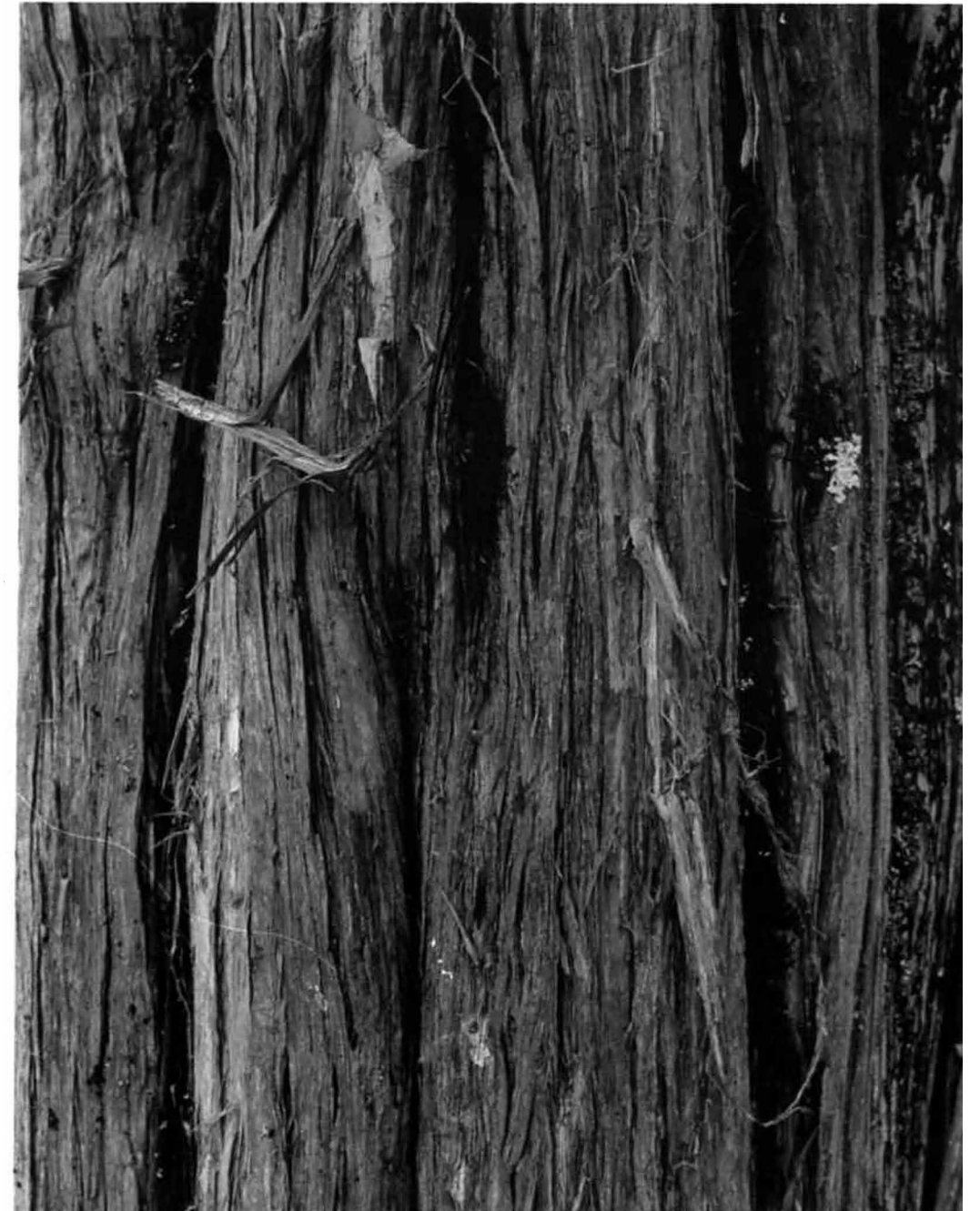
Harris: Here we're attached to material stuff. And time. But in a way that I don't feel attached to things there. Here I see these shoes in the store, and I need them. I'm think, "Oh my God, I have to have them." But I don't feel that pull there. I feel very content in the Middle East with the bare minimum of things. I don't know, maybe because people have the bare minimum of things there. Don't get me wrong, there is a culture of decadence. But where I stayed, people that I lived with just didn't have the resources to have that kind of lifestyle.

I firmly believe that all the evil in the world stems from the separation of man from the Earth. We don't cook our own

food, we don't kill it, we don't grow it, we don't know how to grow it, we live in buildings. We're so separate from the Earth. We walk under umbrellas to keep ourselves dry in the rain. We don't feel the bare earth under our feet. I feel like this disconnect is not good for the human soul. I want to be able to look out over land that I own, knowing that I provide something for my community and for myself, and that nobody else provides for me. I want to get up in the morning and do manual labor. I know it sounds weird, and it's nothing that I've ever done, but it's something that I want to do. I feel like it is necessary to the human experience. I can have this whole abstract life, living as an academic, doing work that nobody reads, and going around basically masturbating my ego all the time thinking, "I'm the shit, I have a PhD. from here," but I can't do anything. I can't create anything. If I grow olive trees, and press my own olive oil, at least I did that. If I kill my own goats, if I raise them, love them, and then kill them, at least I feel like I deserve to eat meat. I eat meat now, but I don't feel like I deserve to. I've never killed anything. I don't know ... I don't sew my own clothes. That bothers me! I wonder, "Why do I get to wear this? I don't know how to sew it; I don't know how to knit!" That bothers me. I want to live in a place where these things are not trivial things that you can just outsource to someone else.

The Sorrow

Ross Dunham / 35mm Film / 7 x 9



Tamarinds

Alysse Gerardi / Fiction

“Have you ever had a tamarind?”

“A what?”

“A tamarind,” I repeated. I didn't bother to look at him; I just slid my elbows off the edge of the table and tucked them into my sides for warmth.

“That's a fruit, right?”

“Yeah.”

“No. Don't think so,” Joe spoke over his newsprint. “I don't like fruit.”

It was a beautiful day, but not a beach day by any means. It was the kind of day that artists got up extra early for: a bright, glowing day, where ethereal curtains of alien sunlight splashed the mailbox and the lawn. It shone off the chrome of our beat-up Camry. The poor, rumbling Camry with its tires forever only half-inflated that bore my husband to work, day in, day out.

There was no heat anywhere. The breath of autumn made one peer deeper into the dark pavement awchirl with leaves, but it gave nothing back. All light was cold: a reflection.

Two hours later, puffing in the airless cold, Joe looped his tie and slipped into his blue tailored coat. “Work dinner party, hun,” he'd said. “You can come along if you want.” Thinking about it now, I'm sure if I'd been paying attention I'd have said yes, but my eyes couldn't leave the pale slant of light across the bed. I told him I was tired. Distracted.

Two days later, I was in the grocery store halfway across town. I didn't usually shop there (too many Hispanics), but that day I was low on gas. Weighing my options, I concluded that saving the three bucks-a-gallon would be worth a few moments' discomfort. Mother would've been proud. I clucked my tongue, conscience hurting. I pulled the old Camry into the nearest spot and got out, remembering even in my absent-mindedness to roll up the windows. Mother never trusted windows, either. Thinking of it, I mused how the poor woman never trusted anything not made of steel or plastic. When Dad proposed to her the first time, she'd turned him down flat. Even diamonds made her suspicious.

A funny thing, I thought, and locked the doors.

I had grabbed all the usual: milk, eggs, and Joe's morning coffee, when I saw them. Tamarinds. There were lots of them. Long, fat, hard and lumpy: skinny potato-fruit. I smiled,

puzzled at myself. I must've stared a few seconds too long, because this one Latino stopped sweeping. His gaze settled on me: my pale lips, my bed-head hair.

“You like Indian dates then, ma'am?”

I broke out of my haze and acknowledged him with an “mm.”

“I said, 'you like the Indian dates, ma'am?'"

At first I wasn't sure of why he repeated himself, then it dawned on me that he wanted a response. I looked up.

Broom left against the bread shelf, the middle-aged Latino peered at me. He was small and dark, and a few thin wisps of hair clung to the underside of his chin. His deep, black eyes held the warm, chunky lighting from above the aisle. I pulled my wrists further into the worn sleeves of Joe's faded Emerson sweatshirt. (He never went there, but his brother did.)

“You mean tamarinds?” I said, posture straightening, spine bristling. *Men like this rape little girls*, my mother's voice echoed in my head.

“Yes, tamarinds,” he nodded. There seemed nothing scary about him. He was big, but his heavy shoulders were rounded by the slow slouch of a difficult life. This, I understood.

I felt my muscles tense and then suddenly relax. It was just Mother, after all: poor dead Mother, who trusted only steel bridges and sandwich bags.

“I know of this great recipe my Non used to make my sisters and I back home in Calcutta. Maybe you're aware of it? Tamarinds go something fantastic as chutney.”

“Oh ... no, no. I haven't heard of it. Thanks,” I added, hesitant.

So he was Indian. It explained the precision in his accent, the tinge of British. I half expected him to go on with a whole yarn about family history and nonsense, as immigrants are inclined to do, but the man must have sensed my disinterest. He smiled chillingly, in the same absent manner that Joe and I used upon waking up together. He smiled with memory, and something like pleasure.

The warm and chunky light above the aisle flickered, and he returned to his broom.

I left the store with two tamarinds that day.

They sat in the back of the fridge for a week before I remembered they were there. It had been a harder day than usual. I'd just stormed in the door and shoved off my heels. Joe wouldn't be home til nine and his office phone had been busy for hours. I realized too, with a grimace, that his cell phone was still on the coffee table. He had twelve missed calls and four voicemails. I didn't need to wonder who they were from.

I ran my hand hard down my face and left it there. It was freezing in the house, but for once I didn't really feel it. All the pacing and panic of a few hours earlier had left a warmth of its own, a burning, and that had overruled any cool or cold I could have felt. I leaned forward on the couch. With his cell phone and parents out of the picture, it seemed likely, albeit very unfair, that I would be the one to lay the news on him.

Joe's brother had died that morning. He'd often been in and out of hospitals in the years since that mistake in college, but this time the virus beat him to it. I had spoken to the doctor myself.

“Pneumonia,” he'd said. “Unfortunately, Mrs. Kohler, it's not an uncommon killer for a sufferer of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. He was a brave man.”

I did not know if he was brave, but I did want to cry for the poor man. I wanted to ache for my husband, but, unfortunately for me, my grief manifested in anxiety instead. It was a family curse, I knew, but I still didn't like it; Mother had been of a “nervous temperament” too. When father died some years before her, neighbors whispered. They said that it was mum who had bothered the man into an early grave. I tried not to think of Joe's brother there, in the ground, beneath dark swirling leaves and pavement, but hospitals do that to you sometimes. They remind you of the cold and the quiet. The heat of stress suffocated my shiver.

I paced the hospital twice, doubled my medication, and took the bus home. Joe had the Camry, and tonight was another late night.

Then I found the tamarinds.

“Chutney,” I muttered, and let an idea wash in. I clunked both fruits down on the counter, went over to our old

Windows 98, and booted it up. I looked out the window, mostly at nothing, while waiting for the thing to whirl itself awake. There was dust, floating off and about, each speck dumbly carrying on its journey down from the ceiling to the window pane. I clicked the internet icon like Joe showed me.

Apparently, the tamarind is a very versatile fruit. It is naturally sour. One wouldn't expect so much from a skinny, lumpy, tropical potato. Some even use it for healing purposes. I learned that in Ayurvedic medicine, whatever that is, tamarinds are good for digestion and have been used to treat malaria. Useful as both fruit and a spice, tamarinds can be mashed into a jam, sweetened into a drink, or chopped into a fruit bar. It can also be made into chutney.

I focused all my energy on the tamarinds. I set the pods to soak, and then peeled the softened shell from the sour pulp: half with a butter knife, and half with my hands. I let the pulp squish away from my cold-reddened fingertips into the blender. I was calming myself; an engine put in the shade to cool. The chill of the house was returning again. Soon, it would be cold enough that Joe would be willing to pay the gas for heating. He liked to wait for the snow. I just had to wait for the snow.

In with the fruit pulp went the dates, the cumin, the chili pepper, and the coriander. I dashed in some iodized salt and brown sugar. As I turned the blender on, a sound louder than the machine made me jump. I shut it off, feeling the adrenaline of panic bring me back to five hours previous: the smell of the hospital, the doctor's stern shaking head. Upstairs, I heard a scuffling and a loud thud, like shoes hitting the floor. There was a voice. Voices.

"Joe? Joe honey, is that you?" Of course it was. I thudded up the staircase.

He didn't hear me come home, of course. Surely, he'd heard the news and returned early. He must've had a fall, poor Joe!

I rushed in the direction of the shuffling. Our bedroom door was only partially opened. I pushed it all the way—

I smiled, and then I did not. It was Joe. He was propped up against the headboard, shirtless, his bottom half covered by white linen. His right arm was outstretched, a perfect portrait of Adam the Sinner, his hands knuckle-deep in the crinkled shirt of another man. This man, too, was half-dressed, with hair thick and dark. He was belting his pants, but the erotic

bulge remained poorly hidden beneath thin khaki. Joe didn't even look at me; he didn't seem to see. He just whispered to the nimbly dressing man, pleading and apologizing.

The man pretended not to notice that I was there and hurried past. I heard the steps creak, and the front door slam in that other world below the staircase; that alien world where only man-made metals are trustworthy and tamarinds soak in blenders, staining good plastics with their acrid juice.

Keeping his eyes downward, Joe swung his legs over the side of the bed and began to dress. My eyes found the windows, curtains wide, just in time for a bright burst of clean November light to fling itself down between the clouds. It fell upon the bed.

"Tommy's dead," I whispered, remembering his brave brother.

"I know," Joe replied.



Rae

Molly Wilson / Silver Gelatin Print / 8.5 x 11

On The Landfall

William Regan / Poetry

for Eli Keating Buguey

Allagash white, amaretto, and fresh-squeezed juice.

"It's called a school bus" Keat said. "Because it picks you up in the morning." and brandished it with a maraschino cherry and a lemon twist skewered on a plastic naval cutlass sword. "But it's afternoon." "That works too."

It's happy hour. Twenty-five cent wings and fish bites. Keat tells me it's actually Pacific cod, "But don't let that fool or scare you." I don't like seafood so I order five wings and a stuffed quahog and he warns me not to say it loud, "They'll kick you off the island" as he hands over a basket clinking with small glass bottles: "Heat in a hand basket."

I sample sauces over my light fare, Keat cranks the juicer, and I come to a jerk sauce, deceptively green, the Scotch Bonnett's bite being bigger than its bark, and reggae plays, but stops strictly at six as the retired sweater-necked dinner crowd strolls in and I, emblazoned, find I won't make it back to the boat for sunset.

Time pauses at the bare bones and barren shell before me, any company is welcome as my lips tingle, roll with the tongues of fire that the sun sets on the swelling harbor.

I swill the final sip and swirl the half-melted rocks. "Keat" I say,

"I'm ready for another."

I Want To

Amanda Rae Rouillard / Poetry

When I wake up, I will eat them.

They are as small as cherries and
as blistering as the stark red moon.
They smolder and cast light upon
the dusty window.
And fey dance like fey
in the palms of hands owned
by the people robbed of fantasy.
The last fruit falls from
skeletal trees no longer rasping
the final words of their ancient tale.
Scattered, alone,
the cold air is still.

When I grow up, I want to
eat the weak.

Some Reasons Not To Join

Craig Sirois / Poetry

a world awake.

It's 2:45 and your plane hasn't landed safely
on the nightless side of this continent
when there is a *knock-knock-knock*
at the front door. I hesitate
because it's 2:46
and I just woke up
and the blood is still betraying
me and leaves everything as stiff
as the ephemeral visions of you

fucking someone else—
there was also a pharmacy drive through,
a second first kiss
in the order of the vague first-blink.

Then a defeated sounding double-knock
that doesn't expect an answer
because its 2:49 on a Tuesday
and no one should be home.

But I'm not one to avoid
betraying expectations.

Are you patriotic?

I say I have a buddy in the army
which seems to satisfy the question
without answering it.

Just ask me how do I get my points.

But when I ask my mind is wandering
to this condo behind me and the nights
I spent drinking vodka with this buddy, my friend,
shooting fake people,
and the mornings when he vomited blood.

Our alcoholism was transferred
into a dreamless gray gradation he termed 'anxiety'
over a girl that left him and caused him to
cry or recover, I was never sure.

And that's how I could win a trip to Italy before I go.

My friend now he talks about real people
the same as the fake people and I wonder
if it's because of his anxiety
or something more natural in him—alloys before the metal is
formed.

I can't. I'm unemployed.

God bless.

And I look back inside
at the staple of living a sleeping life—
12 empty beer bottles and a stale peanut butter sandwich.
I think I'll smoke all my cigarettes with only that number
to know what's passed.

I cross the threshold wondering if I could canoe
to Venice or if I can learn to kill.

The Hunter

Jillian Moore / Poetry

His mind is full of shrieking kids and seagulls.
His eyes, a whirlpool, water, wide-open sky.
His words are a blanket.
Like his arms, his voice will lull you to comfort.
They'll keep you warm.
And you'll be his for as long as he wants you.

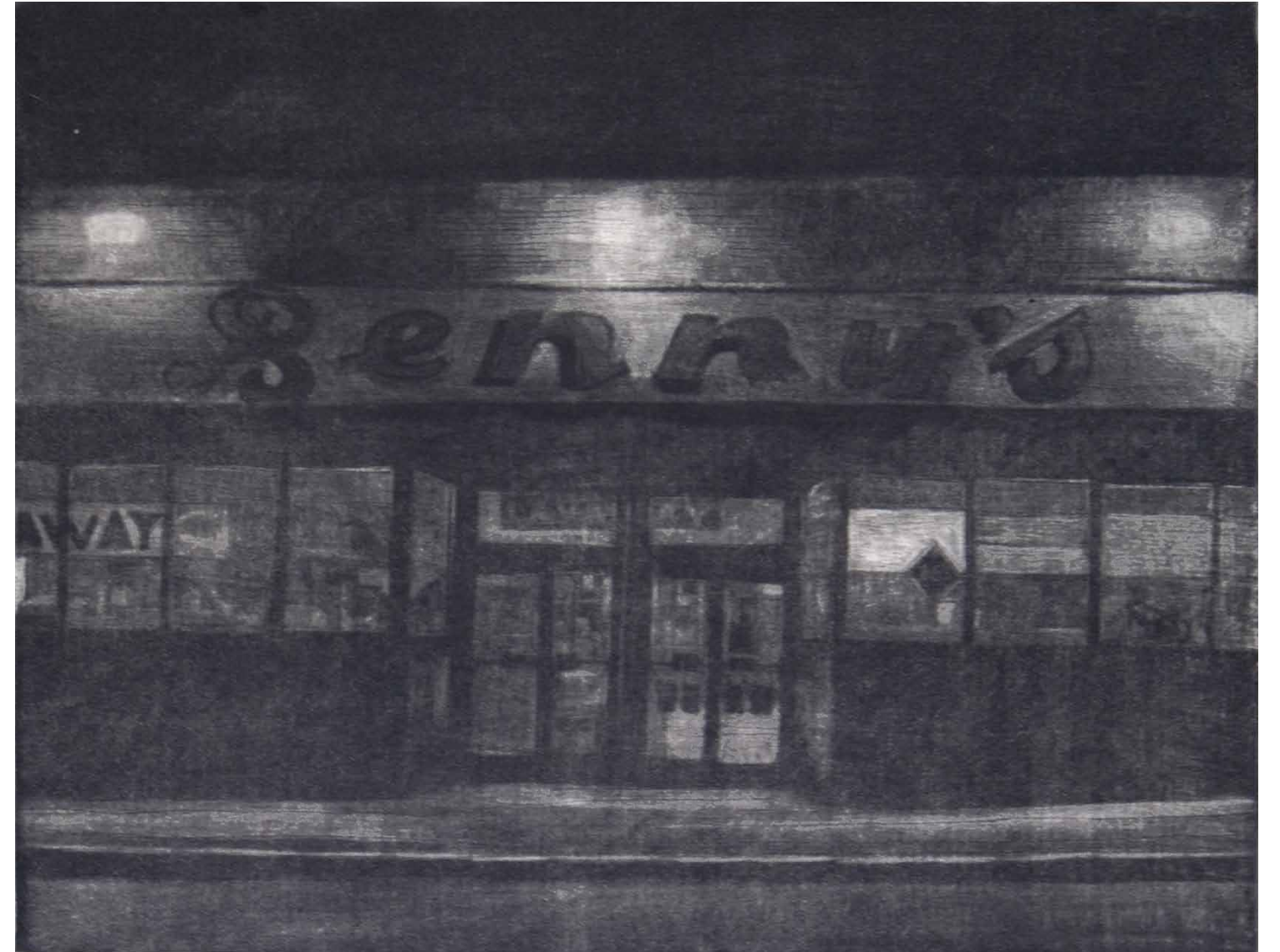
The leather hands caress like silk
and the nipping teeth press open.
His whirlpool possesses your thoughts
kisses sap from you the heat, the warmth, the very light
and cast you in shadow.
because you're his for as long as he wants you.

His words scrape like sand, like diamonds after time.
Sparkle and impress, rough and hardened:
they hit like concrete. Like bullets.
But never a blade.
There are no cuts, no slashes.
Just impact.

Your salty pebbles will fall, and he'll lap them from the ground.
And you'll be his just as long as he wants you.

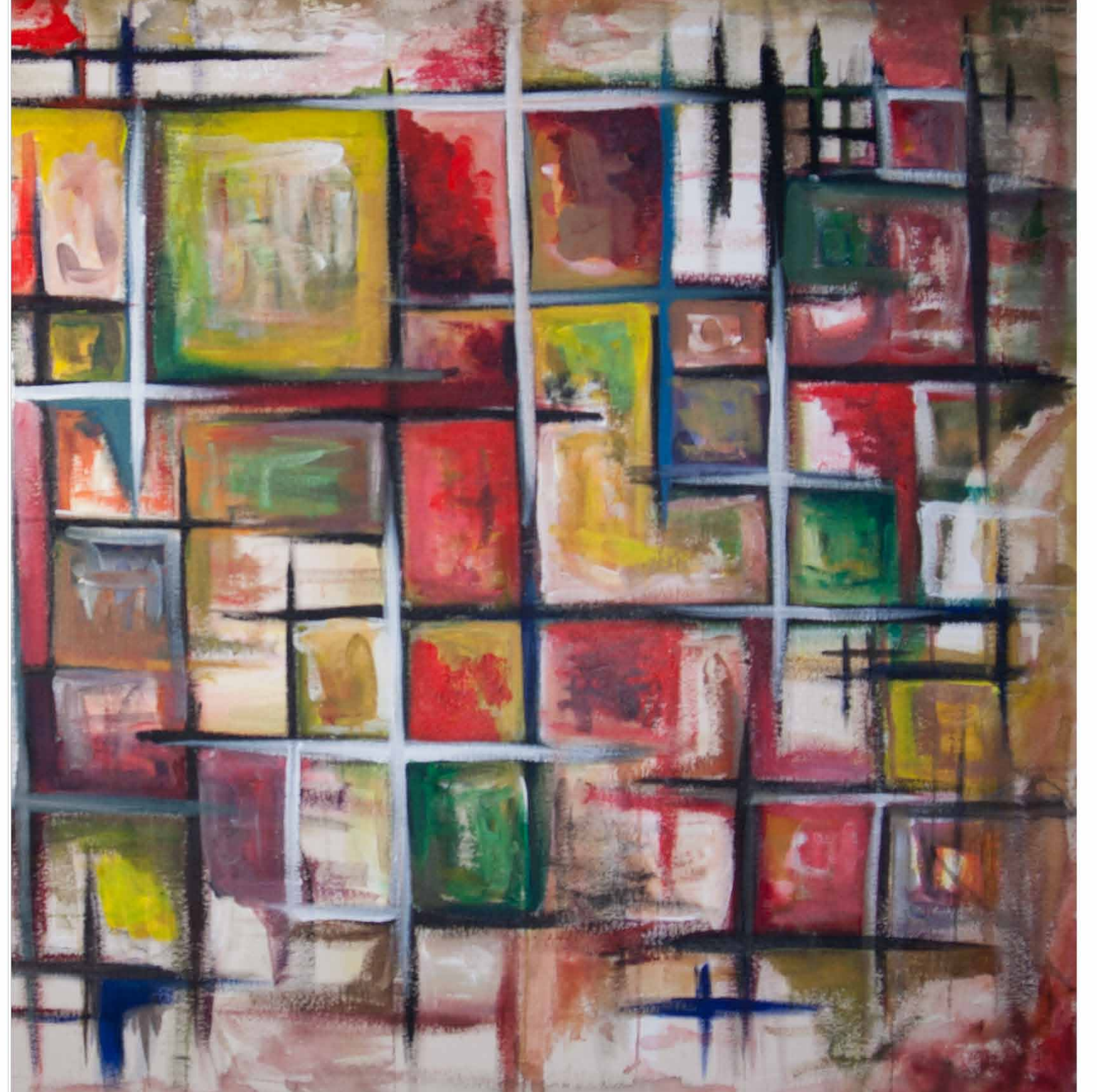
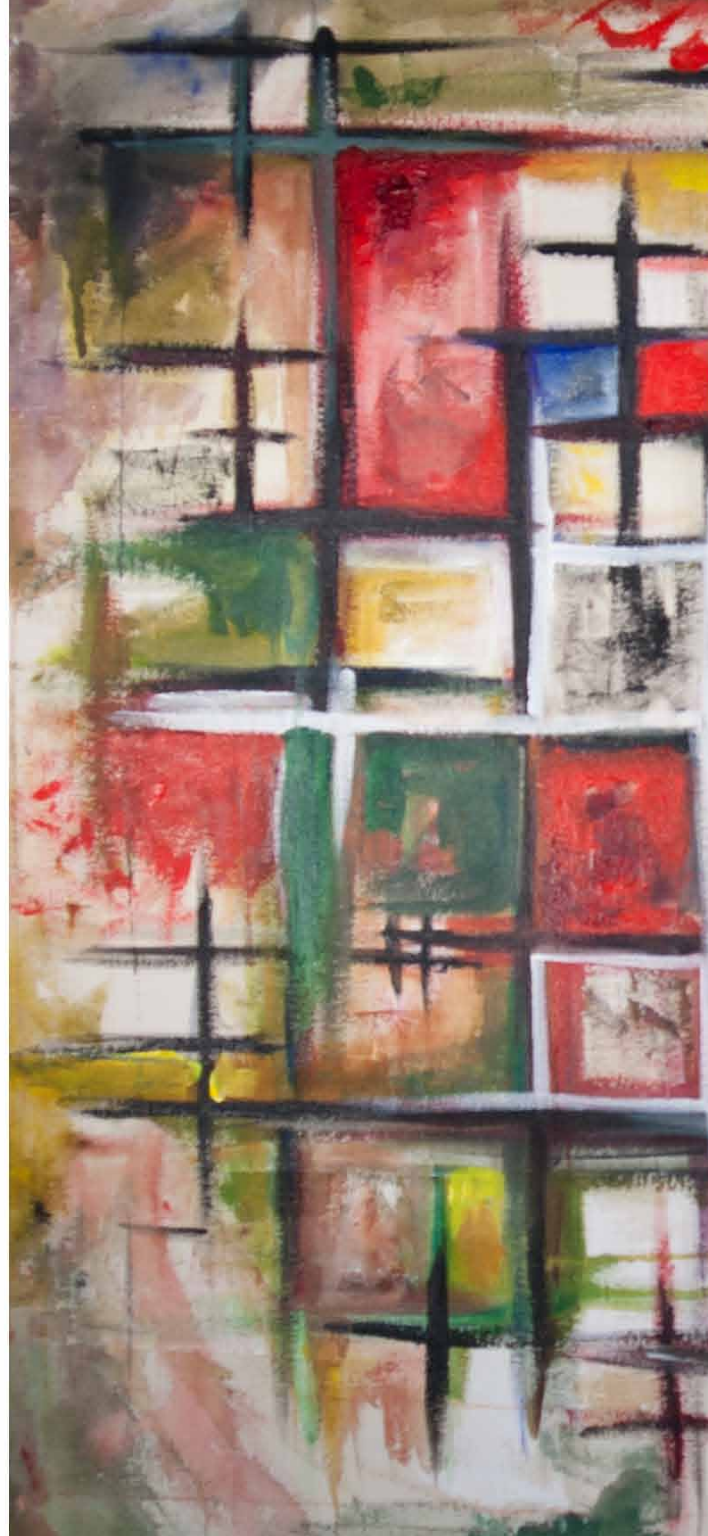
Benny's Layaway

Kenneth Fontaine / Mezzotint, Chine Colle / 6 x 8



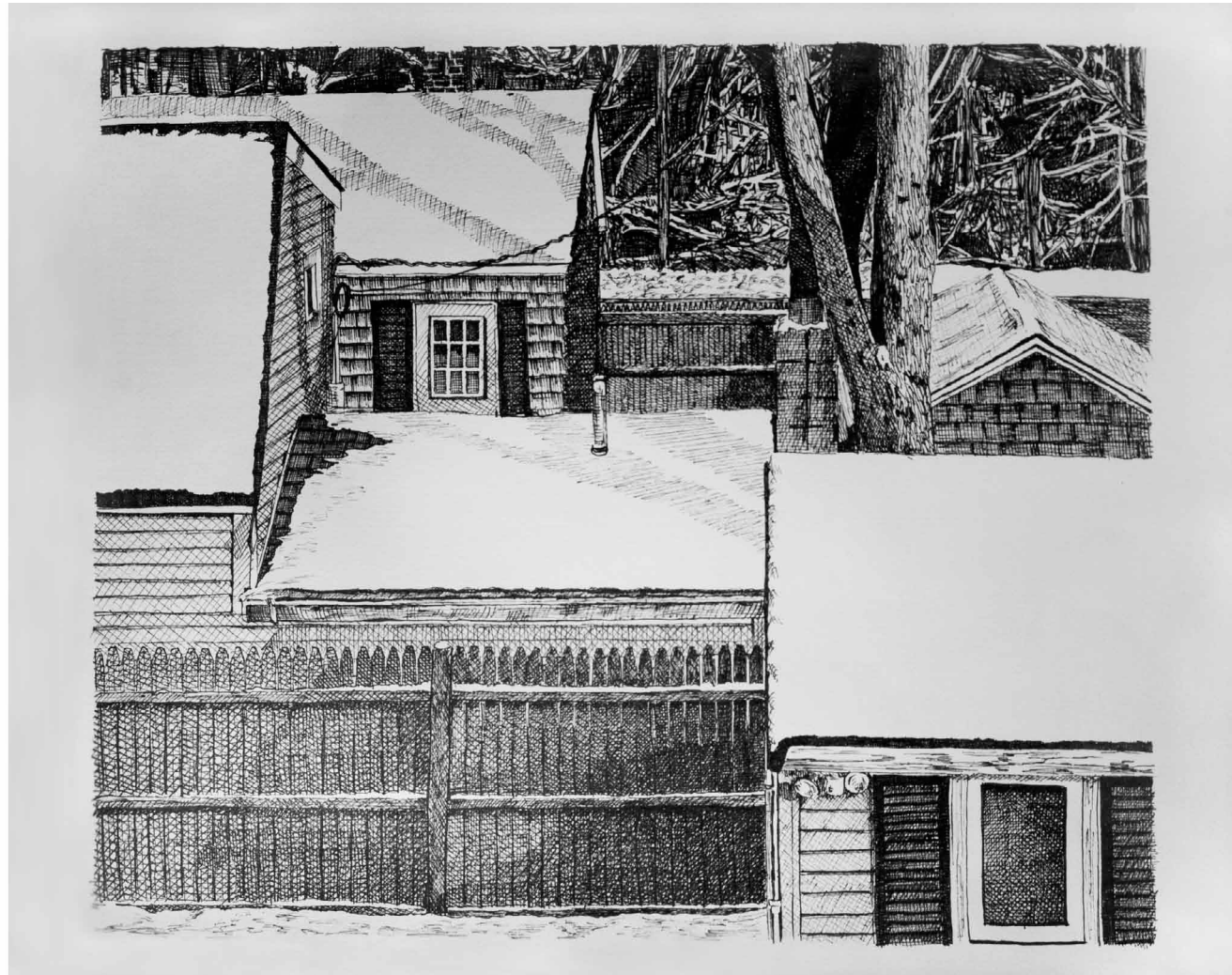
Mondrian

Douglas Breault / Acrylic / 28 x 40



Snow-Covered Rooftops

Kenneth Fontaine / Pen, Ink / 7.5 x 7



Untitled

Taylor Lynch / Digital Photograph / 10 x 8



Human Nature

Brian Thomas / Alabaster, Soapstone, Wood / 21 x 21





Old South Meeting House

Mei Fung Chan / Colored Pencil / 19.5 x 24

Forty Foot Squall

Steven Dutra / Poetry

Jimmy's dad is a
fisherman
a drunk
who sold grass

he would leave
Jim
with a quarter pound of
brick to sell
to buy groceries with
when he would go
fishing for two weeks or days.

Jimmy would sell quarter ounces for \$40
which is a lot of money when you're 15.
The bags were always short and seedy.
Jimmy was the only white guy
who had dope when we were 15.
It was ok.

When his old man came home
he was a mean old bastard.

My moment of clarity struck me when the drunk
old man
threw an ashtray thru the TV screen—

my father
gets drunk
he throws horseshoes
into the wind.

Osric

Evan Dardano / Fiction

Osric died comfortably and quickly, and his only immediate thoughts before being hit by the commuter rail as he walked from home to the last class of his high school career (along the tracks, tottering on his feet in a way that did not suggest an imminent fall, a subsequent severing of tendons and spinal cord, and an eruption of fluids) were that his character in the Korean online roleplaying game *Luminescent Apocalypse* was only a few battles away from reaching his highest level, earning the best armor, and who would pay the auto-renewal fee?

He felt nothing other than a momentary sharpness, a quick gust, and then he saw leaves moving against a hazy summer sky. Moving, he decided, without poetry.

He decided his death was uninspired and necessarily uninspiring, and that this was best.

His headphones played soft sounds too loudly and they were not the sad twangs of soft rock in emptying cafeterias when light bends and is orange, but he thought about other places like that. For a moment, as his torso lay on the opposite side of the tracks from his lower abdomen and legs, he thought he should call someone, anyone, and say he loved them; but he'd lost his phone that morning, and he thought, again, it was best to leave quietly.

Osric was dead before the train stopped moving.

Jason's house was quiet. He rolled from the mattress and listened to the soft breathing of a girl whose name he had not forgotten. A name which should have slipped easily from his thoughts in the hours between which romance, for Jason, became ritual.

"I've got to go," he said, shaking her.

They did not speak as she gathered most of her clothing and left, forgetting to pick up a blouse that Jason moved to a pile in a corner, composed of laundry not his own, mostly clean. The soft smells of perfumes and perspiration still lingered in some of the unclaimed things of the prior mornings that went, so routinely, like the one that lit his room as the girl closed the front door two floors below.

He knew that he was unhinged, in a way; it was a vague sensation for which Jason did not have language but felt daily. Each morning came and Jason felt an isolation from the events, whatever they were, of the days and nights before, as if each were a kind of discrete and frozen unit, an uninfluenced kernel; things would be exactly the same even

if he hadn't gone out the night before, even if he woke alone, whether he stammered aloud in dreams or didn't, whether he dreamt at all. Neutral, without time under a sky the kind of bright gray that makes light uniform until it gets dark. To look at Jason standing by a window was to see him monochrome in its unshifting gray.

And toward all this, Jason directed no protest, only muted acknowledgement, vague respect, mostly unaffected. When the girl was gone he wasn't sure he knew her name. Then he had it again, but the image of her face was blurry. Then it was gone again. All in the time it takes to yawn.



In his own room, in a pile of his own laundry—of fashion not unlike Jason's—Osric's phone lay buried. A thin black cord snaked from the laundry to a power outlet obscured by the bedframe. Underneath the smells of clothes now ownerless, Osric's phone retained its battery life.



Jason's phone vibrated on his counter, but he did not check it. Instead, he showered, ate the breakfast his grandparents had left out for him, and went for a walk. Jason saw only trees and neighbors' cars as he walked.

After, in his room, he read the one message from a name that had almost become unfamiliar: Osric's. *MAN! Did you know that Luminescent Apocalypse is giving double exp points this weekend?!*

Jason replied, *you still playing that I should prob start up again then I need a new game. h2ven't played in awhile, had finals. Still using the same name?*

And that was all. He put the phone away and sat by his coffee table, clearing the ashes of last night's joints before rolling a fresh one. He emptied the bag of the sparse dregs that were left, getting only high enough to feel a mild fuzziness and, with relief, no leaping anxiety. He would get more, he decided, but only after he met with the rest of his crew, who could probably pay for it instead.



And they did.

A collection of vague anachronisms: Buddha faces constructed of cheap material dotted the shelves along with candles, incense, a broken record player, old tobacco pipes, a fedora hat, what might have been rosary beads. There were books whose purpose to Dalton did not extend beyond the repu-

tations of the names printed upon their well-crafted covers. Dalton acquired these things that smelled like attics during what he called, without irony, a sabbatical and read only a few of the hundreds of books that lined his room—the room of an identity premeditated.

He was sitting on a brown leather couch that, months prior, he'd dragged from the curb without paying the one hundred dollar fee announced with an unsteady script of green marker on a torn bit of notebook paper taped to the cushions. He stole it in the dark and positioned it away from his windows, where his neighbors wouldn't see, never removing the makeshift price tag.

He sat with Martin and Ilya, smoking, their feet on a coffee table by the laptop, as Jason walked in without knocking.

"Welcome home," Dalton said. "I trust your final exams went underwhelmingly, you nerd."

"D, you look studious," Jason said.

"That's all he does," Ilya said.

"Got any of that left for me?"

They smoked.

"I might go back to school," Dalton said.

"You mean go to school," Ilya said.

"Yeah."

"Your room looks more expensive than the last time I was here," Jason said.

"What, like six weeks ago? It hasn't changed. You're spending too much time at school, getting confused."

"You're not going back, then?"

"Yeah, I don't know," Dalton said.

Ilya and Martin fumbled through leather-bound classics, giggled at archaic words that sounded dirty, got bored and snatched Dalton's laptop from the flimsy glass table.

"I got a text from Osric today," Jason said. "Remember that dude? Wants me to play *Luminescent* again."

Dalton said, “He had pretty sweet gear, if I remember right.”

“I thought he was dead or something,” Ilya said, typing. “He hasn’t been on his Myspace in a while; months. Look.”

Ilya swung the laptop around and showed a half-smiling picture of Osric captioned with the words, *Last Login: Over 6mos Ago*.

“He left before that fucking site got trendy,” Dalton said. “Good for him.”

“Okay, Dalton,” Martin said, throwing a crushed beer can at him like a Frisbee.

Jason said, “Whatever. He’ll probably be back. He just texted me today.”

“Wait,” Ilya said, still typing. “Let me check the *Luminescent* page.”

He swung the laptop around and showed a grinning picture of a tattooed, humanoid ogre, captioned with the words, *Playing Now*.

Jason left when it got dark, but Martin and Ilya stayed. They spent the rest of the night online, installing the game on Dalton’s laptop and PC, and playing with Osric, whom the three only ever knew in-game, only occasionally having passed him in the halls of their high school. Osric: the peripheral underclassman and acquaintance, the malnourished and slightly googly-eyed one who didn’t speak; they had a vague idea that Jason knew him better, but never saw the two together.

Between their team of three, they tried to speak to him in-game but he never responded. Osric favored instead the pre-programmed gestures of his avatar: victorious brandishing of a blunt weapon that teemed with the ethereal light of some enchantment best for hunting creatures made of slime and less effective against ghosts, or a .wav grunt of agreement. Dalton provided background commentary on the game’s lore (“A vulgar Marx-Tolkien pastiche,” he said to no audience).

Martin played an elf-like priest whose talents in-game, Dalton remarked, did not extend further than occasionally making light come out of his body, green numerals dancing above the squared heads of the game’s chunky representations of the sentient.



The news reports would terrify them not only because they bore the word of Osric’s death—of legs thrown so far away from the train tracks, and one shoe farther, and one missing—but because Osric logged off at dawn, without having typed a word to his peripheral friends.



Meanwhile, Jason’s grandfather made a rare visit to his room and seemed at first not to acknowledge anything in it. The stereo whispered the sounds of a college station, mostly jazz, no voices. He stopped at the top of the stairs; Jason stood from his couch. And there was a mirror, aged: taut over narrow bones, his skin, a lighter brown, was like Jason’s under a graying beard that was a shrub, exploding from a jaw that jutted and twitched with absently ground teeth. His grandfather carried himself with a kind of restrained lunge, a misleadingly tense gait, and eyes that would fix on things, any things, with a consistent but elusive eagerness. He stared with equal intensity at ceiling fans, dogs, or the smoldering pipe Jason had left out—only the object gave weight to the stare, never the gaze itself.

“Don’t want that stuff in the house.”

“I’m sorry,” Jason said. And his tone wavered, as slightly as the fuzz in the stereo, and to the old man the opaque Jason was not opaque:

“Your friend?”

“Yeah.”

“Heard it on the news just now.”

“I heard it on the radio. There’s a service at the high school tomorrow.”

“You going?”

“No.”

“All right. You’re okay?”

“Yeah.”

“I don’t want that stuff in the house anymore.”

“Okay, Pops.”

He exited.

Jason finished smoking and had none left to throw away.



In the afternoon, he found them at the mall as he expected to.

“You guys neither?” Jason said.

Martin and Ilya shook their heads, not in unison.

Dalton said, “Nope. Don’t really belong there anyway.”

And Jason looked up at the high ceilings, the ominous pitch of the glass roof that brought through it pale light. Echoes were up there. Of babble, footfalls and plastic bag noises and it was not the same as the high-ceilinged train station that held echoes and bird noises, but Jason thought about other places like that and:

“You don’t belong at Osric’s service? What does that mean?”

“I don’t belong at a school,” Dalton said. “Sorry.”

The long white hallways, dappled with bluish backslash, flecked artificial marble everywhere, were breathing. People passed. Phones were making noises.

“He texted us all,” Ilya said. “He asked me to help him fight undead warriors. What the fuck, man?”

“That’s where we were playing yesterday,” Martin said. “In the cemetery.”

Dalton said, “What the fuck is this? Did you guys write back?” None had responded. Dalton wrote, *what the hell is happening?*

They waited.

“We have to buy the game,” Jason said.

“No,” Ilya said. “We still have a copy. Let’s just leave. I can just bootleg more for all of us and then we can find him or something.”

“I need to buy a hat first,” said Dalton.

Jason stirred. “Fuck you, Dalton. We can take my car. I’ll get you back here later.”



Ilya’s room looked like Martin’s room because it was Martin’s room. The brothers, not twins but so close in age that it confused people, looked dwarfed next to the flat screen monitor. The machine was a creature, an amalgamation of third-party hardware, unmatched and unrivaled in brand name. They built it specifically to handle new games. The retail value of the machine, they said, was four thousand, but they paid nine hundred for the parts. *Luminescent Apocalypse* was already five years outdated.

“Think Frankenstein can handle the game?” Dalton asked.

No one laughed.

“Do your parents have any hard liquor?” he asked.

“No,” the brothers said, not in unison.

Dalton left for the bathroom.

To Jason, Martin said, “The other day Dalton was over and my dad was making lunch, and Dalton said to him ‘Just as a poem is first and foremost a piece of music, a knife is first and foremost not a bread knife.’”

“What’d your dad say?”

“He didn’t say anything.”

And then they didn’t say anything.

Then Dalton came back.

“Is it already installed?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Martin said. “I used to love this game.”

“Me too,” Jason said.

Martin logged into the game and they found themselves in the jagged, pixelated space of a place once a spectacle: an open-air market in which bird sounds, ambient wind, and the babble of prose were everywhere. In the lower left corner of the screen, a box gleamed with text, the aliases applied to the demi-human avatars of unseen operators shot forth rapid, stunted prose in abbreviated language. And then, in a deep green font denoting private correspondence, they saw a name: Osric’s.

The message read, *i need a fellowship. the highlands’s fog is not a road traveled alone.*

Martin’s fingers hesitated above greasy keys.

“He ... or whatever this is ... is roleplaying,” Dalton said. “Good luck getting him to break character.”

your not Osrice, Martin wrote.

A pause. *Then, indeed i am not, not in some lives.*

u sent all my friends and me messages.

when the last soul left i inherited its kin of this realm, some of flesh.

“He’s hacked Osrice’s account, or something,” Ilya said. “He could have found all our numbers easy enough. I think?”

“Give me the keyboard,” Dalton said.

Martin moved aside, but in the keyboard’s interregnum, Osrice logged off.

“Fuck,” Dalton said. “Really?”

Martin said, “It could be anything. He got hacked, or

abandoned the account long enough that the mods took it over. Makes sense, right? Mods or admins or whatever take old accounts, use them for promotion and stuff? Does that happen?”

“That can’t be legal,” Ilya said. “What if he gave his account to someone else? Got bored, let someone else take over?”

“But he has our phone numbers.”

“Easy enough: our numbers might be linked to our accounts. It’s a mod, then, or a hacker. Or both.”

Jason said—only marginally aware of the way in which his friends’ tones reflected only their immediate curiosities of an impersonal mystery and not the ... the ... what was it, then? anguish? that death was, quite literally, in the air around them via the clanging noises of not-Osrice swinging an axe—“Were the texts from Osrice’s phone or from this account?”

They weren’t listening, and he did not indict their apparent disinterest; they never knew Osrice. Did Jason?

Dalton said, shifting in his seat. “He’s back online.”

A new message read, *forgive my absence.*

Dalton wrote, *you’re using the account of a dead man. he died yesterday. This is too much. bad enough you’re texting us. You need to stop. Close the account.*

A long pause, then: *i’ve sent no correspondence accept thru the channels and couriers afforded to a man of my status in this realm (seriously dude I don’t even text) im sorry..... what was Osrice’s real name?*

Their correspondence ended there, and they waited until a dozen images materialized onscreen: other players, in-game friends of Osrice in flourishes of color, armors and robes once exquisite now muddled in polygonal shortcomings, obscured by eras ever encroaching. These were Osrice’s friends, now surrounding the Osrice onscreen, waiting for Dalton-as-Martin.

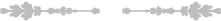
A message: *ill stop using the account after this quest ok?* Dalton didn’t respond.

The game, the last place Osrice might have walked, would offer no funeral. There were no programmed animations to accommodate such a thing. But it occurred to Jason that Osrice might have wanted one; he remembered seeing

the most dedicated players recreate every ceremony imaginable. With only minimal lagging and stuttering frame rates, the other characters onscreen would cast magic around the deceased. Gerontic, pale bubbles would explode from their bodies, lasers out of feline ears on human heads, lapidary fire from the hands of alleged wizards. Someone would eulogize. But, Jason decided, it was best to leave quietly.

Soon after, as promised, the Osrice possessed noiselessly went offline. The avatar, the elegant oaf, lingered, went transparent, and was gone.

So was Jason.



He left them without a ride and drove to a place he only recognized as something nascent: a neighborhood visited only once or twice in childhood, in a poorer part of town, half a mile from the train tracks. He knew he was not lost because there were camera crews huddled by a gas station near the condos.

Nausea wriggled at him in his car and he looked along his dashboard, at little yellow spiders that crawled from the

vents each summer, at dust motes through small beams of light and for a moment none of this was the same as mist over cold harbors, sneakers floating in brown water, ugly noise and thunder, vestigial pulp of meat ripped from human legs floating in low tides, but he thought about other places like that and into his hands, he vomited.

Light bent; it was orange. She would be leaving her job at the cafeteria any minute.

He knew she was home because he did not remember her but saw cameras flashing, a swishy brown and black mass of coats moving to the front steps to follow her tired figure to her door, which looked not to slam but to limp in its hinges. He saw her before it closed: larger, gender-neutral—she wore a purple sweater of a cut that best suited a man, or not a man, thick-soled rubber shoes for kitchens. He refused to categorize her, refused any observation that might reveal her to be a breathing and multidimensional being; refused any participation in characterization because he knew already that—even after he reached her front door, had a conversation with her—she would only ever stay a glimpse and not a memory; such were his thoughts; she needed only to be grieving to be. The opaque Jason saw opacity in all but the ache in her gait and he felt sad for the sad woman,

and that was enough.

The crowd moved away and Jason was not like them but he went to the door.

She answered it, seeming relieved. A reporter lingered, watching them.

“Who are you?”

“Jason,” he said. “I was friends with your son.”

“I don’t recognize you.”

“I was only here a couple times, a long time ago.”

“You went to school with him?”

“I’m in college now, but yeah.”

She seemed to sigh when she noticed the reporter, and the two others who crept back to see.

“He was going to graduate,” she said.
“I know.”

“And what do you do at college?”

He knew the mistake as he uttered it: “Journalism, maybe.”

The door closed by the third syllable. Cameras flashed.

“Please wait,” he said to the door.

Through it, on the other side: “You’re not with any of them?”

“No. I promise.”

“And this isn’t some article?”

“I miss my friend.”

“Don’t let them see me.”

The door yawned and he went in it.

There were smells in the house, of food and a thick smell Jason knew only as the scent of narrow condominiums, or of their green carpets specifically. It was a meager place, aged, but a home of restrained tastes, revealing its character in smaller furnishings: delicate patterns engraved on wooden

coasters and in the trim of a bookshelf probably handmade, housing early modernism and history books. His father, Jason remembered, worked in publishing, dabbled in lopsided carpentry. His mother, though, did not. She was folding an apron with the food company’s logo on its breast.

“I’m going to leave that job,” she said, gesturing to the apron.

“I understand.”

She spoke in brittle rhythms.

“I don’t want to work in a school anymore.”

She seemed to hear something, or become aware that she did not and should have.

“My husband—he makes enough money that I should quit; he tells me to—he’s at work, too,” she said. “Neither one of us wanted to be home, not with all that outside— but he ... I think he’d be happy that you were here ... I don’t know where he goes sometimes. You can sit down if you want; I have to—the service is tomorrow. There’s stuff in the laundry I need to switch—”

Jason was silent.

“I won’t need to dry his—”

She left the room, turned a corner, into folds of shade beyond a hallway. She wept, but not so Jason could hear her.

He took a step forward. “I’m sorry, but—”

Unseen, she offered no response.

He went upstairs, slowly at first, pausing to invite protest that did not come.

The room was as he remembered it from a decade before. Bare walls, bluish, a bed near a desk and computer, a dresser, one window. It smelled crisp like a different season in a way the rest of the house did not. His were the only wooden floors in the house, as if some renovation either went unfinished or simply privileged, with what looked like parquet, one room, a son’s room.

He traced the room for power outlets and saw the black cord dangling into a pile of laundry, composed of clothes that looked just like Jason’s. Brushing jackets aside, he took the

phone. Thumbing its screen, Jason looked for messages sent to himself, Ilya, Martin, or Dalton, and saw none, knowing he would find nothing, but wanting it anyway., He held his phone next to Osric’s and saw that his response to the initial message was still undelivered, floating in pre-archival space.

But, scanning through hundreds of names in the Sent folder, Jason found one message, addressed to him, dating back almost a year, asking if he was around some weekend. He couldn’t remember if he’d ever replied. He re-sent the message to himself and waited for it to deliver. It didn’t.

Half-aloud, he said, “You left quietly.”

He pocketed the phone and its power supply, noticing finally, in the corner of his eye, a note taped to Osric’s computer—*pay Luminescent bill!*

Downstairs, the woman was gone. A washing machine hummed and rattled the pantry doors that concealed it. Jason saw a moth on a windowsill. It was twilight outside. The reporters were gone.

From his car, he could see that there were no lights on in the house except the faint blue of a monitor in some room that was not Osric’s.



At Martin and Ilya’s house, Jason found the crew still at the computer, but surrounded with plastic cups and empty plates.

“Where’d you go?” Dalton said.

“Nowhere.”

“We might have figured it out,” Ilya said.

Martin said, “It’s in the contract for the game—did you know there’s an article in the Terms and Conditions that says you agree not to use any of the technology in the game to assist in the development of nuclear weapons?”

Jason shrugged. “I’m not shocked.”

“But it’s in article nineteen,” Ilya said, “that you agree to let the moderators do whatever they want, basically, once you abandon your account for more than a full year or stop paying on time, like if your auto-renewal overdraws your bank account and stuff. Normally, I guess they’d just delete the account, or archive it—and they might have—but something happened. What’s weird is that someone was actually playing

the account, not just using it to send ads.”

“He said something about inheritance,” Dalton said. “Like Osric gave the account away.”

Jason could have told them that the only recent message he’d gotten from Osric was not in character, that it seemed a mere advertisement, that it lacked the rhetoric of a medieval adventurer, that it seemed, still, more personal. And he could have told them that he knew Osric, knew he paid his bills on time, and that he loved the game too much to stop, that the last message delivered to Jason while its sender still lived, a year ago, read, *u around this weekend? help me out. still like a year away from unlocking evrything! we culd hang in person too haha.*

He could have told them as he told himself that the message he had received only the day before sounded just like Osric and no, not an advertisement, not really.

“It’s a mod gone rogue,” Martin said. “Maybe.”

“Did you save any of that conversation?” Jason asked. “No,” Dalton said. “Maybe we should have? It’s gone now.”

"Do you guys want a ride back to the mall?"

"Okay."

They agreed that they felt sad for Osric as they passed a joint throughout the car. Jason smoked too, unsure of what else to do. The car was moving—against hazy summer backdrops of straight ranches, colonials, just houses, creaking places with rusted-out tractors, lights going off, the smells of grass and sodden earth and air, and though they had done this all before, the rolling tableau was not the same as any other place or night Jason had known—he decided, without music.

After, in his room: the fading smells of what might have been perfume or could have been his own air freshener; the musk of sneakers and smoke; a stereo muted but still on, tingling the air with its presence; the smell of vomit on his knees; corners where Jason wraithed through days; skylights too dark to silhouette a thing; the small machine, the little machine with a blue window. Jason plugged it in and propped it on the coffee table before he went to bed. Soon its service would be cut off, he figured, but it would function as long as its battery was charged. The message he had forwarded to himself finally arrived with a defeated kind of pulse that reverberated against the tarnished wood by his

ashtray. Places leapt in his head. Amnesiac light bent, but it could not have bent because it was dark, and there were no lights when it was dark, Jason knew. Jason, then, must have bent.

He opened his skylight and couldn't see birds in the trees, but knew they were there when a train's horn scared them into flight, scurried beating wings breathing through the window.

Prone, reaching for Osric's phone and bringing it close to his face, Jason composed a message and sent it to himself, then turned the phone off. The message would be delayed because they were always delayed. But whether he slept or didn't, or felt anything in the morning, whether he stammered aloud in dreams, or didn't, whether he dreamt at all, a blue window would flicker an announcement to the sighing night, so that in the morning Jason might remember his name.

He watched shadows turn to birds on his walls, heard a train with every passing car and saw their headlights' refractions more as liquid than light, more splatters than beams. He found language for the state in which he knew he would wake, knew the sound of the word, its shape and letters, but heard it not off of his tongue but in the fading blasts of the last train to pass his home in the night.



Self Portrait

Mei Fung Chan / Charcoal / 23 x 30

The Past’s Accord with the Present

Craig Sirois / Nonfiction



Sitting in the recently flooded basement that belongs to my girlfriend Cheryl’s parents, I stare past the two humming computer monitors toward the small, lone window. I’ve covered it with a dark plaid sheet so the mid-afternoon daylight will not wake me. Despite the lack of light, I see the radiant outline of another day skipped surrounding the corners of the window. Today, or yesterday, I would have graduated high school ... if I hadn’t missed the last three years. A strong scent of mildew initially pierces my awakened senses, but as the nightmares of me screaming rebellious gibberish in the halls of high school fade, so too does the scent. Closer to day or night, whatever time it is, awake time is unplanned but simple—I’ll scrounge some food, turn on the television as white noise, and, in front of a computer screen, I’ll forget what I should be doing with my life.

At times like this I wish I was a pet, maybe a dog that ate and slept and found its own pleasures, waiting for Cheryl to return from a busy day at human life. But for now the best I can do is occupy my mind, leaving no room for regrets. I might refuse to admit the complete lack of control, refuse the lack of any willpower to change, but I also deny any hope or dream that these problems will one day cease entering my mind. Where did I lose the balance between the cruder realities of waking life and my former imaginative strength—

strength that allowed me to not just forget my problems, but to form solutions?

After venturing upstairs for a bowl of Raisin Bran, I sit in front of the monitor to the right, watching the double-green modem light flicker. I slowly chew the stale cereal, dreading having to listen to my own thoughts, hoping the internet will eventually come and silence them. I think of myself when I was younger. I neither had nor desired electronic avoidances; I had blocks. I would spend hours of alone time building with a set of uniquely carved selections of wood my Uncle Jack, a carpenter, had given to my parents as a toy on the day of my birth. My family didn’t have a lot of money and didn’t believe in spoiling children with toys, so while other children my age neatly assembled LEGO blocks or went to war with vast armies of G.I. Joes, I tied a blanket behind myself like a backpack, grabbed a blue spectre-catching block, and I was a Ghostbuster. When Jack Gill made the playground argument that the merits and qualities of *Thundercats* far outweighed the simple plotline of *Ghostbusters*, I wasn’t stuck with outdated toys; I simply reimagined the blue block as a Thundertank carrying warrior cats. The fact that toy guns were not allowed in my household was also circumvented with some creative block-usage and quiet explosion noises when my mother was around. Neither

economic nor authoritative limits prevented me from doing what I wanted, or being who I desired.

Where did those detailed, imaginative worlds I lived in as a child go? At some point, I traded in a vast world where the only time I wasn't a victor was when I was tired at the end of a busy day, for one bounded by the rectangular limit of the computer screen. Is there some way to regain that former energy?

The last of the soggy cereal is gone and I stare at the help dialogue in Microsoft Internet Explorer. It suggests I should check the network connection. I look past the monitor, seeing Cheryl's various art work mounted on thick black paper. I don't have her gift for the visual or her patience with Photoshop, so I impulsively open Notepad and begin to write. Grammatically incorrect sentences scrawl across the screen as I begin to envision the sardonic, abandoned playground of a former child's imagination. After typing something that makes me grin, I pace off for a cup of water. As the water pours, what I've just written replays in my mind, and I begin to hate it. Whatever my younger self's imaginative process was, it never had to deal with the judgmental self-loathing I feel at this moment. When I make my way back into the room, I see a third green light flashing

on the modem. I close Notepad without saving and open Internet Explorer.

A few days later, I go out to lunch with Cheryl. The conversation revolves around what she's been doing at college. I mainly listen, with nothing to contribute myself. When we finish eating, she drives me back to her parent's house, explaining she has to go back to the art building and continue working on a project that is due the next day. As her light blue Ford pulls into the driveway, I wish her good luck and give her my love. She won't be home until late that evening, so I believe all my human interaction is done for the day.

As I step out of the car, a light breeze shifts through the recently greening oak leaves and I breathe in the rushing aroma of the blooming lilacs. I could go for long walk like I used to, maybe visiting my family's house or my grandparents', but I might see someone I know and the fastest way walking is through the high school. I resign myself to going back to the basement, and maybe just napping until Cheryl is home. As I walk to the front door, I see the black van of the contractor Cheryl's parents have hired for some remodeling work on the house. Hoping I won't have to speak to anyone else, I quickly make my way inside.

As my right foot hits the ground, I feel it stick to the tacky substance of what I now realize is a torn-up floor. Today is Friday; today is the day I am supposed to use the basement entrance because the new wooden floor is being laid down. Footsteps from what is probably the contractor are rapidly approaching from the deck and I feel my ears heat to the reddish color they always do when I'm embarrassed. Rather than turn around and admit my mistake, I panic and try to make my way to the basement without being seen. As I walk, each step bears more weight than the last and the gluey sub-stance snares one of my shoes. I hear a knock at the front door. I yank the shoes off my feet, tear them from the once smoothly laid glue, and with no time to make it to the base-ment, hide in the coat closet.

"Hello?" A voice calls, "anyone here." The last statement is more an acknowledgement than a question.

I calm my breath and try to shrink deeper into the closet. Right now I realize how ridiculous this is, how stupid it was to not just turn around. But I've already made so many mistakes I just do what I do best—I hide from the person. I hear his careful footsteps maneuvering from the entryway to the office carpet, and I hear him stop just short of the closet. I almost think he might be able to detect the thump

of my heart. Whether he saw the torn-up shoe prints that lead to the closet, I'm not sure, but I hear him turn around and go back outside.

Once I'm confident there's no one in the house, I make my way to the basement door, cautiously avoiding any open-curtained window. I lay down on the bed, too tense to fall asleep but too flustered to move. As I try to interrupt the scene from replaying in my head, my thoughts shift once again to questioning how I've arrived at this embarrassing debacle in my life. I'd run from people before, but it was always as a child and always for the sake of adventure. There was no fear or embarrassment in getting caught, just the excitement of escape. In first grade, an open first-story window in the principal's office meant a chance for a brilliant escapade. At that point, the school had a system in place for dealing with me. But I ran for a different reason then; I had no fear, I wasn't running to escape authority, but to show I could buck it with indifference. Maybe my former self would have dove into the closet, but he would have just as soon taken a chance to go for a walk on a beautiful spring day. I'm no longer a child; I'm no longer fearless. The queasiness in my stomach begins to clear and exhaustion sets in as I fall asleep.

When I awake, I see Cheryl at the computer. It has to be one or two in the morning.

“Hi. So I had an interesting day,” I say, and recount the events with each cringe-inducing detail.

“That’s ... really not good,” she says, with more astonishment than empathy. “We need to do something. Get you help ... a therapist, or medication. I love you, and I don’t want you to feel like you need to hide.”

“Yeah. Yeah, I know.”

“There’s some egg noodles if you want some.”

“Sure,” I say, and feel even more awkward than before. Getting this reaction from her, a self-proclaimed misanthrope, and no stranger to panic attacks herself, truly makes me feel miserable.

I walk across the kitchen’s newly laid wooden floor to spread cold marinara sauce onto lukewarm noodles. I eat upstairs for once, too embarrassed to immediately go back down to the basement. I consider what my younger self would think of where his life was going. Would he even understand terrible embarrassment and guilt? Can I even say I’ve done

one thing better with my life since I’ve grown? I try to focus on difficult childhood events, trying to think of anything that I would handle better than before. What did I used to fear? There was my family’s basement, but with its dirt floors and multiple entrances for unknown creatures, I still had more of a timid tolerance than outright fear of the place. There were more frightening things too, like when, for the second time, my mother almost died after childbirth. I and my youngest brother Joey (the first child to give her birthing problems) were sent to my Aunt Paula’s house on the fourth of July when my mother continued to get sicker after the June 2nd birth of my sister Catherine. I had no answers for Joey; the only thing I could do was rub his ears when he cried in reaction to the fireworks, telling him it would be okay. As I think about those fears, I don’t feel like I could have done anything differently, and that comforts me. Maybe I don’t have to live in competition with my former self. Maybe there is some unity between the past that seems so distant and my current situation. Finishing the egg noodles, I head down to the basement, this time with plans to set the alarm clock and awake early the next day.

When I wake up, I ask Cheryl for a ride rather than walking to my family’s house. This time, it is not the fear of being seen that keeps me from walking, but my plans for the rest of the

day. When I open the front door to my childhood home, the family dog trots off the couch, not yet shooed off the furniture by the sounds of my mother waking.

“Buddy, want to go for a walk?” For a quiet, older dog this is the one question that can elicit a cacophony of barking.

“Hey, who’s here? Oh, hey Craig,” Joey says from the opposite couch, looking away from the Super Nintendo to acknowledge me.

“Hey, me and Buddy are going for a walk, and you’re coming with us,” I say. Joey is still only eight, so older brother command-speak is a much easier way to deal with him than trying to negotiate him out of playing videogames on his day off.

“Um, okay. One second.”

Joey grabs his coat and Buddy dashes out the front door. I walk behind them trying to avoid clotheslining my small brother with Buddy’s leash.

“Where are we going?”

“Sheep Pasture.”

“Oh, cool.”

We walk up the block to the entry path of the old farmland. A few large rocks adorn the entrance, along with a sign, long since faded, listing the rules of Sheep Pasture. Joey picks up a stick and begins walking with it.

“Did I ever tell you about Hurricane Bob? Before you were born, it came through and knocked down limbs from every tree in the neighborhood. John and Mike were about your age, and we all built a giant fort. Then a couple days later, another storm came through and knocked it all down.”

Joey laughed. “Cool.”

Since I moved out a few years ago, Joey has grown up with John and Mike as his only older brothers in the house; they’re fourteen and fifteen now. Anytime I mention them once being the same age as Joey, he listens because he’s so used to them acting like teenagers, which he seems to interpret as much cooler than he is. I think he finds it amusing that they used play outside and run around—the same things they now tease him for.

I take us down a hidden path he’s never seen, and when we arrive at the old wooden bridge he says he can’t wait to show

our sister Catie the path. I tell him about how John, Mike, and Mom would play a game from Winnie the Pooh, throwing sticks under the bridge, and watching to see whose floated past first. I tell him about how my friends and I would come fishing here during the summer, even bringing snow tubes as makeshift rafts. When he looks at the murky, polluted area, I lie and tell him it was cleaner back then.

I look toward Buddy—he's been panting and taking breaks every few steps. Joey looks tired too. I feel like an older brother, maybe only pretending to be wise. Maybe this was just a walk. I'll still be afraid of people; I'll still miss who I used to be, but right now my present and past selves seem to be in unison. Days like this might not last; they might not solve my anxieties and fears. But to enjoy a moment, any moment, without guilt or regret, gives me hope that even if a situation is out of my control, I can still find comfort. At least right now, the morning sun is radiant, the breeze is fresh, and the day seems right.



Nightlights

Taylor Nash / Acrylic / 14 x 11

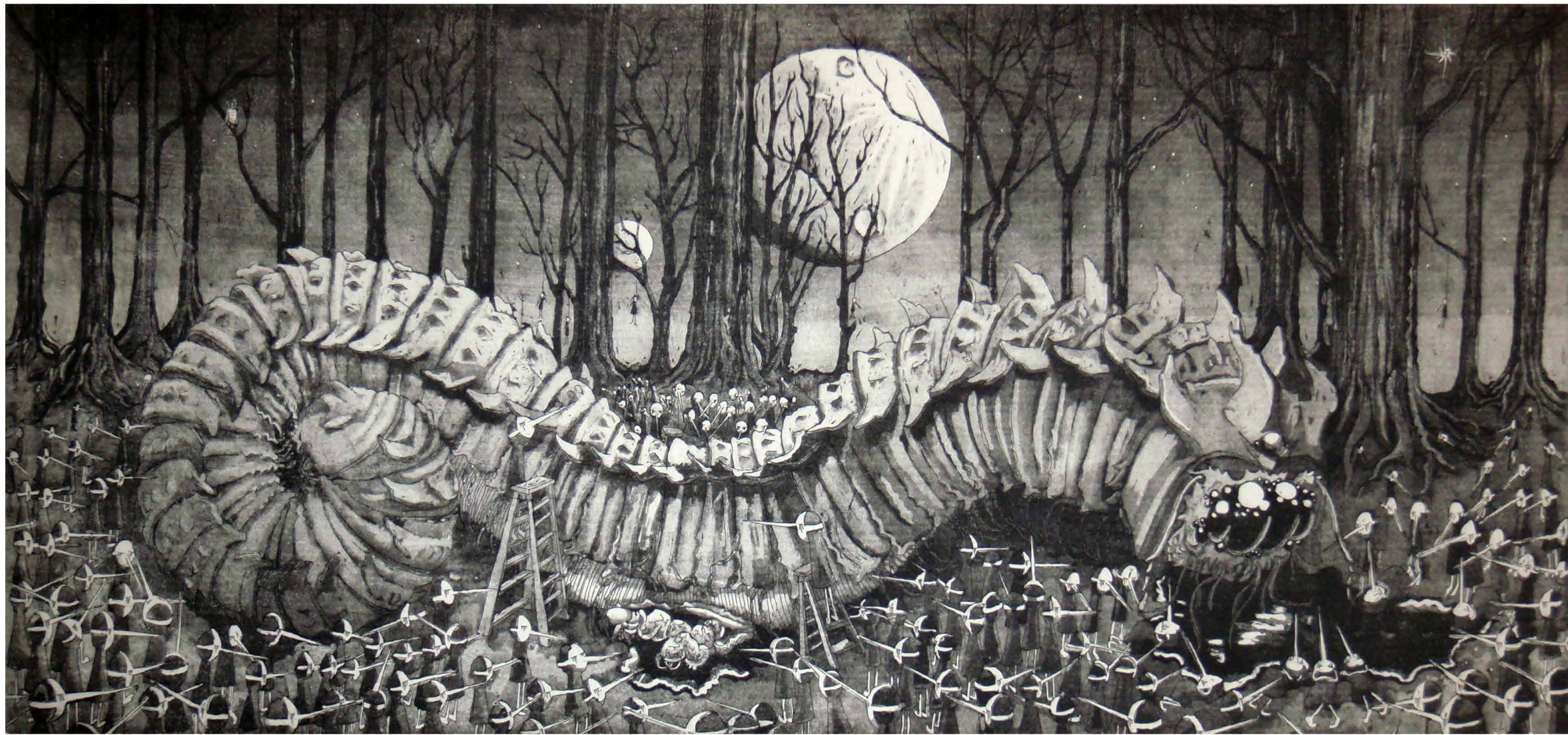
Metro

Stephen Plummer / Vector Drawing / 11 x 17



Horsehair Vase

Andrea Byron / Ceramic / 3.5 x 6



Newt Gingrich

Andrew Lavery / Etching, Aquatint / 7 x 16



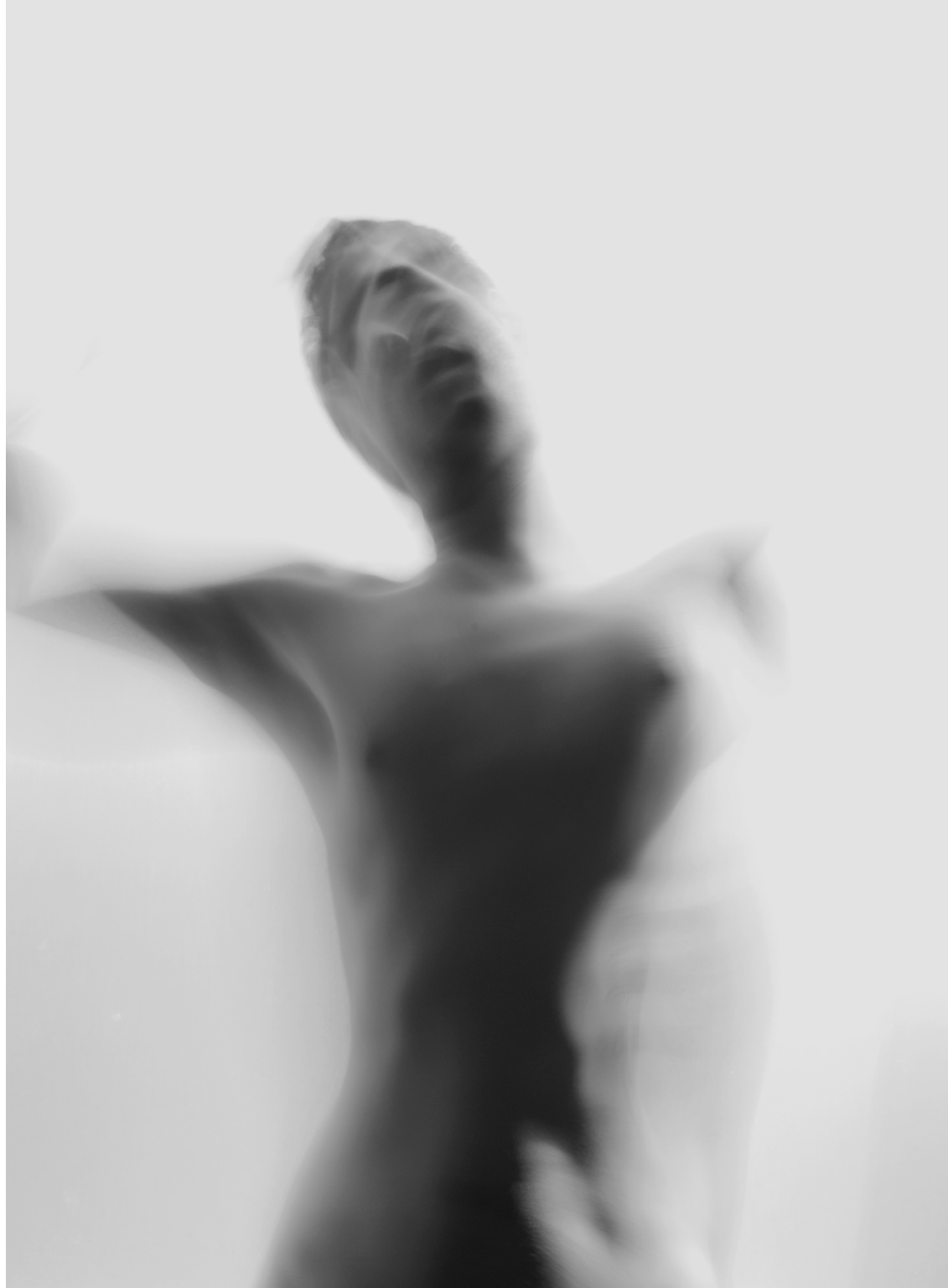
Kracken

Sean Smith / Epoxy, Wood, Metal, Clay, Tinfoil, Spray Paint / 29 x 19 x 17

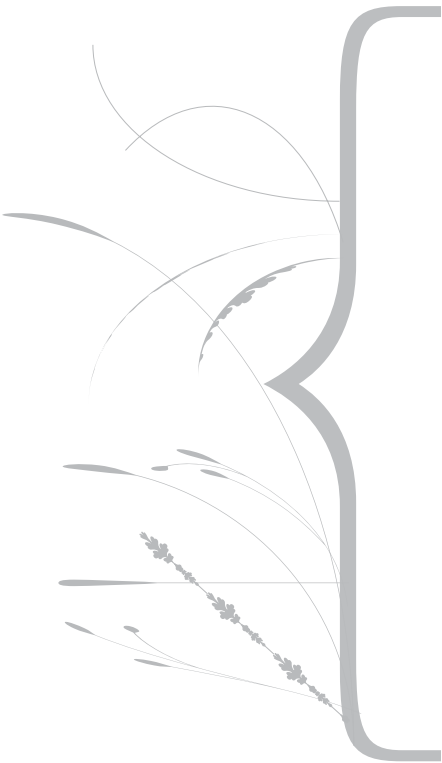


Androgyny

Douglas Breault / Digital Photograph / 11 x 16



Honorable Mentions



Cori Darling / Rose Path / Weaving

Alex Pawling / Cool and Warm / Photography

James-Ace Thackston / Art Building / Photography

Jing Ting Long / Bird and Lady / Glass

Art

Literature

Ryan Austin / Invisible Ideas / Poetry

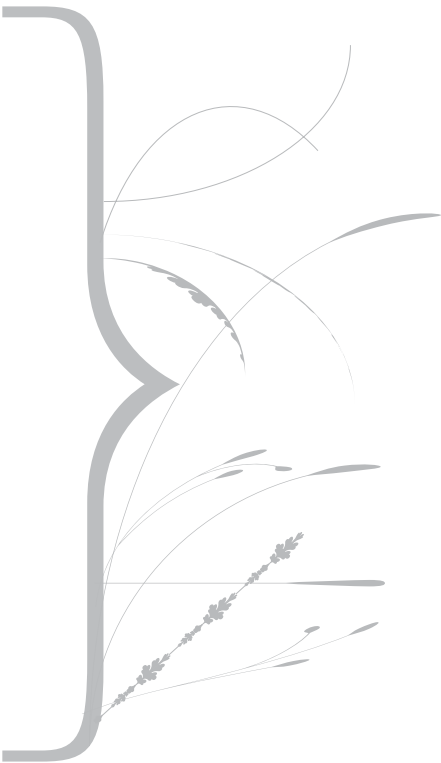
Devin McGuire / The Baptism / Fiction

Kelly Schoop / Rhapsody in Blue / Nonfiction

Christopher Groux / Life in a Honeycomb / Nonfiction

Kelly Whelan / Father-Daughter Dance / Nonfiction

Betsy Scarbrough / Oh Mother / Fiction



Editors' Notes

Kate Camerlin / Editor-in-Chief is the Graduate Assistant at BSU's Second Language Services. She likes beaches and books.

Catherine McFarland / Editor-in-Chief is a senior majoring in Graphic Design. She would like to dedicate her work on *The Bridge* to LVM, DMR, JEM, and MIM.

Colleen Barber is a senior at Bridgewater State majoring in Studio Art with a dual concentration in Photography and Art History. She enjoys laughing too loud in inappropriate situations. After graduation, she plans to travel the world and pursue a career within the photography industry.

Christopher Boudrow is a senior majoring in Graphic Design. After graduation he hopes to pursue a career in print design. He is rather tall, enjoys cycling, frisbee, and crusading.

Ryan DiPetta is a graduate student whose passions include writing, ice cream, and literary criticism. He hopes to one day be a writing professional.

Taylor Lynch is a senior majoring in Studio Art with a dual concentration in graphic design and photography. He is a rock climber who would like to someday mix hobby with career.

Kristen Lyons is a senior majoring in Studio Art with a concentration in photography. After completing her degree in May, she plans to pursue a career within the art field.

Michael Malpiedi is a senior at BSU majoring in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. He is the current President of the writing and performing arts club, The Seeds of the Poet Tree. After graduating he will attend Naropa University to start his MA in Writing and Poetics.

Anthony Rotella is graduating in May 2012 with a major in English and a minor in Psychology.

Amanda Rae Rouillard is a junior with an intense drive to learn. She is an English major with a concentration in Creative Writing, and intends on becoming a professor after graduation.

Joshua Savory is a second year editor for *The Bridge*. After this edition, he will finish his MA in English. He is going to focus on his own poetry and, along with the infamous El Pollo, will begin work on crafting a new arts magazine.

Sarah Springer is a freshman majoring in Art with a concentration in Graphic Design.

Melanie Joy McNaughton / Faculty Adviser is a professor in the Communication Studies department at BSU. Her work explores visual and material culture. She would like to dedicate her work on *The Bridge* to her imaginary friend Sir Chauncy Willington Esq. III.

John Mulrooney / Faculty Adviser is a poet, musician, and filmmaker. He is a professor in BSU's English department.

Contributors' Notes

Hillary Batzner recently graduated from BSU with a concentration in Photography, earning a BA. Her work can be found on page 005.

Douglas Breault is a senior majoring in Art with a concentration in Photography. Doug's body of work was the strongest collection submitted to Volume 9 and is featured throughout the journal. Doug would like to dedicate his work to Professor Mercedes Nuñez for her faith and support. His work can be found on pages 002, 048, 074, and 112.

Andrea Byron is an Art major with a Crafts concentration. She is a senior who plans on further studying ceramics. Her work can be found on page 107.

Mei Fung Chan is a Visual Arts major in her sophomore year with concentrations in Painting and Drawing. She is an exchange student from the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Her work can be found on pages 080 and 097.

Taylor Daley is an English major with a minor in Management/Marketing. She hopes to someday open her own business and publish one or more books. Her work can be found on page 038.

Evan Dardano graduated from BSU in May 2011. He is now an adjunct taxidermist at several local daycare centers. His work can be found on page 082.

Ryan DiPetta is a graduate student at BSU studying English and Creative Writing. His work can be found on page 009.

Ross Dunham is a sophomore majoring in Art with a concentration in Photography. His work can be found on page 061.

Steven Dutra studies English with a concentration in Writing and will graduate in Spring 2012. His work can be found on page 039.

Katyann Farrar is a senior majoring in Photography and Art education. Katyann currently resides in Brockton, Massachusetts. After graduation she plans to teach high school art. Her work can be found on page 046.

Kenneth Fontaine is a Fine Art major in his senior year with a concentration in Printmaking. After graduating, Kenneth plans on getting an MFA and teaching art. His work can be found on pages 006, 073, and 076.

Alysse Gerardi graduated from BSU in May 2011 with a degree in English. Her work can be found on page 062.

Andrew Laverty is a senior studying Graphic Design. He would like to thank his teachers and parents and dedicate all work to Grammy. His work can be found on pages 041 and 108.

Taylor Lynch is a senior double majoring in Photography and Graphic design. His work can be found on page 077.

Mike Malpiedi is graduating in May 2012 with a major in English. His work can be found on page 025.

Justin Mantell graduated from BSU with a degree in English. He was born in 1987. His work can be found on pages 026 and 043.

Ian Marsan graduated from BSU with a degree in English and History. His work can be found on page 024.

Marissa Meade is a senior graduating in May with a major in English and a concentration in Creative Writing. Her work can be found on page 010.

Jillian Moore is a gamer, writer, and BSU graduate with a degree in English. She is a passionate believer in the power of the imagination, and games as art. Her work can be found on pages 016 and 072.

Kelly Mullin is a sophomore majoring in Art with a concentration in Photography. Her work can be found on page 001.

Alexa Noe is a junior majoring in Art with a concentration in Graphic Design. Her work can be found on page 043.

Taylor Nash is an Art major in her freshman year. Taylor hopes to become a book illustrator after graduation. Her work can be found on page 105.

Hoi Yuk Pang is a graduate student. She is pursuing an MA in psychology. Her work can be found on page 044.

Stephen Plummer graduated from BSU in May 2011 with majors in Art and English and a minor in Communication Studies. He is pursuing an MA in Graphic Design at Suffolk University. His work can be found on page 106.

William Regan is a senior majoring in English. His work can be found on page 069.

Brittany Rollins is a junior majoring in Art with concentrations in Photography and Graphic Design. She incorporates her interest in biology and nature into her photography. Her work can be found on page 042.

Anthony Rotella is graduating in May 2012 with a major in English and a minor in Psychology. His work can be found on page 036.

Amanda Rae Rouillard lives in Norton, Massachusetts, but her proverbial soul resides in Norway. She pretends to art. Her work can be found on page 070.

Joshua Savory is a graduate student at BSU studying English and Creative Writing. His work can be found on page 049.

Craig Sirois is happier now. His work can be found on pages 071 and 098.

Andrew Smith is a senior majoring in History. His work can be found on page 008.

Sean Smith is graduating in May 2012 with a major in Art. The Kracken is the first in his series of monsters. His work can be found on page 110.

Diane Sullivan is a junior at BSU majoring in English with a Creative Writing concentration. She lives in Hull, Massachusetts with her family. Her work can be found on page 028.

Brian Thomas is a senior majoring in Art with a concentration in Graphic Design. His work can found found on page 078.

Allison Tweedell is a senior majoring in Art with a conentration in Crafts. She is also majoring in Biology with a concentration in Environmental Biology. Her work can be found on page 003.

Bryan Way graduated from BSU and is now growing a beard. His work can be found on pages 037 and 040.

Molly Wilson is a senior majoring in Art with concentrations in Art Education, Art History, and Crafts. Her work can be found on pages 004, and 068.

Bridge Honors



Volume 8

Associated Collegiate Press

Pacemaker Award

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Gold Crown Award

Seventeen Gold Circle Awards:

Amanda Rouillard, "Silent Tungsten"; First Place for Poetry: Open Free Form

The Bridge Staff, "Silent Tungsten"; First place for Literary Single Spread

The Bridge Staff, "Literary Presentation"; First Place for Literary Multi-page Presentation

Janessa Hanna, "Superhero Music"; Second Place for Single Illustration: Computer Generated

Evan Dardano & Alex Pawling, "Exploding Christmas Ornaments, Blue Jays and Storytelling"; Second place for Non-fiction Interview

Catherine McFarland, Second Place for Table of Contents

The Bridge Staff, Second Place for Overall Design: Specialty Magazine

Stephen Plummer, Third Place for Cover Design

Bridge Staff, "Blue Dream"; Third Place for Special or General Interest Magazine Single Page Design

Justin Mantell, "Does the Moon Affect the Snail?"; Certificate of Merit for Poetry: Open Free Form

Andrew Linde, "Untitled"; Certificate of Merit for Single Illustration: Computer Generated

Diane M. Sullivan, "The Others"; Certificate of Merit for Poetry

Bridge Staff, Certificate of Merit for Overall Design: Literary Magazine

Bridge Staff, "Pages 32-33"; Certificate of Merit for Typography: Single Spread/Page

Bridge Staff, Certificate of Merit for Typography: Throughout Magazine

Bridge Staff, "Working Shoes"; Certificate of Merit for Special or General Interest Magazine Single Page Design

Bridge Staff, "Dichotomy of Wholeness"; Special or General Interest Magazine Single Spread

Volume 7

Associated Collegiate Press

Best-in-Show for Literary Magazine, Second Place

College Media Advisers

Apple Award: Best-in-Show for
Literary/Art Magazine, Second Place

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Gold Crown Award

Annual Critiques, Gold Medalist

Seventeen Gold Circle Awards

Volume 6

College Media Advisers

Apple Award: Best-in-Show for
Literary/Art Magazine, First Place

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Gold Crown Award

Annual Critiques, Gold Medalist

Twenty-three Gold Circle Awards

Volume 5

Associated Collegiate Press

Pacemaker Award

Best-in-Show for Literary Magazine, Third Place

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Gold Crown Award

Annual Critiques, Gold Medalist

Thirteen Gold Circle Awards

Volume 4

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Silver Crown Award

Twelve Gold Circle Awards

Annual Critiques, Gold Medalist

Volume 3

Associated Collegiate Press

Pacemaker Award

Best-in-Show for Literary Magazine

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Gold Crown Award

Annual Critiques, Gold Medalist

Nine Gold Circle Awards

Volume 2

College Media Advisers

Apple Award: Best-in-Show for
Literary/Art Magazine, First Place

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Annual Critiques, Gold Medalist

Volume 1

College Media Advisers

Apple Award: Best-in-Show for
Literary/Art Magazine, First Place

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Silver Crown Award

Annual Critiques, Gold Medalist

Six Gold Circle Awards



General Guidelines

Submissions are accepted during the final two weeks of the Fall and Spring semesters; submissions are advertised in Student Announcements. All enrolled students and alumni are welcome to submit work. All submissions must be accompanied by a submission form (available online at thebridgejournal.com, as well as in paper copy at the Bridge office). BSU students and alumni may submit multiple pieces in multiple categories; however, no more than 10 works per genre, per person, will be considered (for example, 10 works of poetry, 10 photographs, 10 sculptures). All identifying information will be removed from submissions before they are reviewed by the Bridge editorial team. Up to seven works (art and literature combined) will be selected for Bridge Awards, which carry a \$200 honorarium. Bridge Awards highlight outstanding art and literature submissions and represent work of the highest quality—both in terms of creativity and execution. Bridge editors may submit work to the journal, but may have only one piece accepted, and are ineligible for Bridge Awards.

Art Guidelines

All work must be submitted in person (to: Bridge Office, 239 Tillinghast Hall) during the submission period. Authors must stay with their works while they are photographed. Digital works are welcomed, but the minimum required file size (300 dpi or higher) makes these files too large for emailing; please bring a copy on a flash drive. No work will be stored, except in special circumstances. Please note that on rare occasions a piece may need minor editing to appear at its best for publication; Bridge editors reserve the right to exert discretion over final approval.

Literature Guidelines

All work must be submitted electronically (to: thebridgejournal@bridgew.edu). Preference will be given to shorter pieces. Prose submissions must be double-spaced. Poetry is accepted in traditional and open forms. Please note that pieces may need editing for publication; Bridge editors reserve the right to exert discretion over final approval.

The Bridge Journal

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