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the Bridge

Volume 10 • Bridgewater State University

Art Bridge

Volume 10 • Bridgewater State University



the bridge

the bridge

the Bridge

a student journal of fine arts and literature

10 anniversary edition

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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.

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contributors and editors, past and present:
we dedicate this anniversary edition to you



foreword

There is duality in the very nature of any anniversary—hope for the future and a celebration of the past. As *The Bridge* editorial staff has embarked on this, our tenth anniversary edition, we have been mindful of this important milestone.

In reviewing the nearly 500 submissions, we found ourselves most drawn to pieces exploring connections to places and time. In the same way that our journal observes its own anniversary, the artwork we have selected observes the occasion of its own position in time. This fascination with temporality also surfaces in the work of our interviewee, poet and editor Dana Ward, whose verse is energized by the monumental power of the everyday.

As student editors, we have a responsibility to exhibit the artistic and literary talents of our student body. We were honored to have a colorful array of quality pieces to choose from, and, frankly, the process of making selections for inclusion in this year's volume has been heartbreaking. We would like to thank everyone who submitted work for giving us such a wide field of student literature and art. We only wish we could publish more. The most compelling pieces—both technically and artistically—have been selected for our annual Bridge Awards.

Looking back at the successes of past *Bridge* teams motivated us to meet their high standards. In celebrating this anniversary, we would like to extend our thanks to their editors and contributors for establishing a legacy of excellence to build upon. In particular, we would also like to congratulate the editors of Volume Nine on their recent accolades, which include an Associated College Press Pace-maker, as well as a Silver Crown and nineteen Gold Circles from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association.

We wish to extend our most sincere gratitude to the offices of the President of the University, Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, Provost Howard London, Interim Associate Provost Ann Brunjes, Dean Paula Krebs, and Associate Dean Rita Miller. Without their tireless efforts, we could not have produced this or any of our previous volumes. For their support throughout this past decade, we are truly fortunate. We would also like to thank our faculty advisers, Dr. Melanie McNaughton and Professor John Mulrooney. Their dedication to fostering a creative and stimulating work environment is greatly appreciated.

Our selections highlight the ten-year evolution of *The Bridge*, and its continuous movement toward an innovative future. In

this anniversary volume, we wish to offer a fitting salute to the journal's decade of excellence. We hope that the work in this volume will inspire you as it has us, and that *The Bridge* will continue in this storied tradition for many volumes to come.

The Editors

table of contents

ix	foreword
1	g1ants route • photography • erica adams
3	plaid alphabet • digital art • alanna mehrtens
4	homage to bipedalism I • photography • brittany rollings
5	myself and my thoughts • lithography • jennifer mcgunagle
6	pyre • poetry • steven dutra
7	pictures of a stranger • non-fiction • ashley rose
14	4 am poem • poetry • christopher lindström
15	the imperfectionists • fiction • shane rocha
19	aurora's inception • poetry • jessica melendy
21	requiem • poetry • tasha ramos
22	emanation • photography • alexa noe
23	three soldiers • photography • nequisha rivera
24	nightowl • painting • liz young
25	dreamscape 1 • multimedia • nicholas doyle
27	water • photography • ross dunham
28	coffee break • drawing • alanna mehrtens
29	wang li • painting • andrew laverty
30	i'd rather listen to RZA and drink old wine • poetry • christopher lindström
31	alive to the occasion • an interview with dana ward • ryan dipetta & william regan
39	hedge parsley • photography • ross dunham
41	rhapsody in blue • nonfiction • kelly schoop
45	november 13th • poetry • michael malpiedi
46	D- • multimedia • virginia kelly
47	coaster • photography • courtney willis
49	flatware & tooth bangle • metalwork • shannon collings
51	illumination series 2 • photography • melanie mcgrath
52	purple feather • glass • zoe palmer
53	burned copper plate • photography • brittany rollings
54	my dental stories • printmaking • chan mei fung
58	ambrosiated • poetry • amanda rae rouillard
59	25 miles of nothing • fiction • william regan
69	untitled • silkscreen • christina novotny

71 a return • poetry • **ryan dipetta**
72 untitled • photography • **leah astore**
73 church • poetry • **joshua savory**
74 the core • painting • **sarah bates washburn**
75 end of coaster • photography • **courtney willis**
76 superman (new 52) • painting • **alanna mehrtens**
77 hynes • photography • **meaghan casey**
78 bounty • photography • **chloe andrade**
79 flight of the storm • photography • **leanne mocker**
81 cathedral ceiling • painting • **alanna mehrtens**
83 editors' notes
86 contributors' notes
89 honors: volume 9
92 submission guidelines



glants route

erica adams • photography • 3x7





plaid alphabet

alanna mehrtens • vector image • 8x8





brittany rollings • photography • 8x10

homage to bipedalism I



myself and my thoughts

jennifer mcgunagle • lithography • 30x22

pyre

steven dutra • poetry

Redwoods rocked me to sleep off the Mattole
Lightning felled trunks
cradled dreams in Pamplin Grove.
Under writing starlight
I watched snake spit hang
from a spider's web and
realized
it's a different country there.

9pm fog rises from the valley
slopes clear cut last August.
How rotten it is
that after two thousand years
the smell of mortality is diesel fuel
living rooms boarded and floored
stinking of Connecticut living.

Twelve miles down the 36
the Van Duzen flows softly downhill

moonshine ripples swaying crowns,
no shadows, but nighttime islands.

pictures of a stranger

ashley rose • non-fiction

I slid the photographs out of the thick manilla envelope that my grandmother handed to me. The clasp was still intact despite its age and faded color. I could tell that it hadn't been opened in years.

The first print I saw was an old wedding photo. The colors were very faded, grainier than what I was accustomed to. It was backed by a sturdy cardboard frame with "DeAlmeida's Photography" printed on the protective cover. A couple that I did not recognize stood, arm in arm, in front of satin curtains. The woman wore a delicate lace dress with a high neckline and a tulle veil that was cascading from a floral headpiece. She held a single, purple orchid with thin, white ribbons tied around it, hanging elegantly. Her warm, brown eyes, bright with her smile, were framed by a short brunette bob.

The man who stood beside her resembled a version of Alec Baldwin. He smiled only enough to betray the mischief in his hazel eyes. His black hair was streaked with white at the temples, and he seemed pleased to be posing in that sharp white suit and black bow tie. His arms were wrapped around the beautiful woman in white. His sly grin seemed to shout that he had won the prize of a lifetime; his eyes laughed with it.

That was how I recognized it as Papa—his eyes. He always looked like he was on the inside of a private joke that no one else was allowed to hear. As I looked closer at the picture, I realized that the beautiful woman did, in fact, look like Nana.

“Nana, I can’t believe this was you and Papa. Why didn’t you ever hang this on the wall? Or frame it? You have pictures all over your house.” She and Papa each sat in their favorite recliner. Nana watched me as I sifted through the pictures. Papa continued flicking through the television channels, trying to find a show about painting.

“Oh, my darling,” Nana began, “that envelope is filled with old pictures. I had them in my cedar chest for years. Nobody asked about them and I always forgot to take them out,” she shrugged. The oven timer buzzed in the kitchen. Nana got up to check on her roast. She leaned heavily on her cane, favoring her newly replaced hip as she walked, and gripped the easy chair for balance as she passed. She mumbled something about burnt rump roast.

“Papa, you and Nana looked like movie-stars,” I said. “I can’t believe this is your wedding picture.”

“I guess so.” Papa’s voice was soft and raspy, almost unintelligible. About ten years ago he had a massive stroke, and his speech became very difficult to understand. It was difficult for him to control his articulation and tone. He had also lost most of the strength in his left leg and, with that, his sense of balance. I always laughed at the dry humor behind his raspy voice.

He would laugh at his own joke and his eyes would light up with the secrecy of it. Then, he’d bashfully run his fingers through his white hair and allow everyone else to think he’s just a senile old man. I looked at the man in the picture again and realized that there was more to Papa than even I had ever given him credit for. It made me curious.

“It’s a beautiful picture, Papa. How did you and Nana meet?” He put his head down and squeezed his eyes shut as if he could see the memories more clearly with his eyes closed. He had been forgetting things lately. As he attempted to answer, he painted the scene for me, image-by-image in my mind.

“My brother, Frank. Ugh, it’s a tough one. Frank knew a buddy from the war and he had her...”

The four of them are laughing and joking around the sticky wooden table of a local diner. Nana—the way she looked in her wedding photo—revels in the taste of a banana split. A nameless, faceless man sits beside her with his arm around her shoulders as he slurps his milkshake. Frank, who looks a lot like Papa, is talking to him across the table, but Papa’s mischievous movie-star eyes are on Nana.

“We probably met at a dance or something,” Papa interrupted.

The band in the corner does a cover of Elvis’s “Can’t Help Falling in Love” that always goes over well at their wedding gigs. The high school gym is decorated for spring with pastel streamers and balloons. Frank and his nameless buddy stand near a punch bowl, speaking in hushed tones, while Papa glides Nana around the dance floor. “If I stay,” the lead singer croons, “Would it be a sin? If I can’t help falling in love with you.” Papa leans in close, dipping Nana low with a sly grin and that ever-present mischief in his gaze.

“No, I can’t dance. Mary can’t either. All those guys dance, not me.”

“Papa! What happened?”

"Oh cripes! I'm trying to think of it! Frank had a friend and well, she wasn't married so I jumped in. I was nineteen when we got married."

I laughed as Papa leaned back in his chair with a smug grin on his face. He winked at me when he noticed me smiling along with him. Sliding another photograph out of the envelope, I asked, "Is this Frank?" Papa took the picture, this one of a young man in military dress, and squinted to get a closer look.

"He's dead," he said, handing it back to me.

Not quite knowing how to respond, I asked, "He's dead? Is this Frank? Or someone else?"

Papa nodded, "Yeah, Frank. That's Francis. He died."

"I'm sorry, Papa. In the war?"

"Yeah. No. Not in the war. After. We both came home. He died then."

"He died after the war? And you fought in the war, too?"

"Yeah. Everybody." He shrugged and looked at me as if I should have known.

"Oh, that's right," I said, "everybody fought. What did you do in the war?"

"I rode the planes that flew the bombs from east to west."

Papa sits in the cockpit, confident and sure as he flies military weaponry across miles of ocean, determined to complete his duty to his country.

"We destroyed 'em," he shrugged. He was never a man of many words.

The photograph of Frank seemed to be thicker than the others. I noticed that another photo was stuck to the back of it. I gently pulled them apart to find another young man in military dress. He had the same strong, handsome jawline and eyes of my Papa, but was much younger than the man in the wedding picture. The photo was clearly older than their wedding photo.

"Is this you?" I handed both photos back to him.

"Yeah, me."

He looked at the photo and nodded his head. He handed it back to me as if he could give the burden of his memory

away just as easily. He looked at the picture of Frank a little while longer. "He got what I got."

Papa and Frank step off of a city bus, both looking worn out and carrying heavy sacks on their backs. Frank looks up and down the street as if trying to see what has changed since he'd left for Japan, but Papa starts walking, heading home.

"He got it from the war. Right after he came back, he went with our sister. Frank and Eveline drove the car up to California and back."

"Eveline and I are leaving, Normand," Frank calls ahead as Papa keeps walking, "You should come with us." Papa turns to face him. "California's just gotta be better than Japan, Norm. You can't deny that." Papa smiles and shakes his head as he continues towards their family home on Orange St.

"His legs were swollen up when we got back. For two or three months they were like that. If your legs swell up, it kills you. What do they call that?" Papa rubbed his eyes, trying to remember.

Suddenly, Frank, with ankles the size of cantaloupes is entreating Papa to join him.

"Water, uh, water-something. What the heck! It kills you." Papa gave up trying to remember. "He died."

"I'm sorry, Papa. And you had that?" The end of his story was a bit difficult to believe. Papa shrugged again and ignored my question.

"It happens," he said.

Nana shouted from the kitchen, interrupting our conversation. "Normand, I'm making your plate for dinner. What do you want on it?" Rather than answer her and risk his voice not being heard, Papa sighed and pushed his way out of his easy chair. He began to teeter so I quickly offered him his walker. His brows furrowed and he pushed the walker back toward me. Taking a moment to steady himself, he started to the kitchen.

"Get that thing out of my way," he grumbled as he passed, touching a hand to the furniture for balance. He reached the kitchen and I heard him say as firmly as his voice could manage, "Mary. Put the plate down. I can do it." It made me smile.

A month later, my family and I are sitting in a hospital room together. I think of all the stories that Papa had told me. He has been here for over a week and nothing has changed. The stories are helping to keep me distracted.

Nana turns as the intravenous monitor begins to beep. Papa groans and rolls over in the stark white sheets of the hospital bed. He's not asleep. I ask if he had been able to sleep earlier, and he grumbles, "Nobody sleeps here. Comatose patients. That's it." He falls silent, ignoring us.

The Create network plays silently on the seven-inch television screen by his bed but Papa isn't paying attention. In fact, he hasn't been paying much attention to anything for the past few weeks. He's become even more distracted, forgetful, and unsteady on his feet. He fell at home and has a nasty scrape down his rib cage where he hit the corner of the stationary desk. My father brought him to Southcoast Hospital after Nana called and said that he had fallen again and wasn't responding to her coherently. The medications the doctors are giving him now make him groggy and crankier than ever.

Since then, his condition hasn't improved and his doctors don't know why. Though

his health has declined, his temper has persisted; a man who is sarcastic and independent to a fault does not make for a complacent hospital patient. He's the irascible old man who has long since stopped caring what other people think of him. Since he's been admitted he's tried to escape twice, marching his way right out of the hospital room with his bum sagging, free from his johnny. My tenacious old Papa would have made it, but this sick man's legs gave way before he reached the elevators.

Under the dim light of the monitors, Normand Rose looks pale. He's lost so much weight in the past few weeks. His cheeks are hollow and his arms and legs look frail, all skin and bones beneath his johnny. His left arm is bruised from where he tore out his I.V. before attempting one of his great escapes.

Nana's face has also aged in these past few weeks. She sits in the wooden hospital chair, rubbing both her temples as if to force the tension out of her mind. Frown lines have appeared around her mouth and forehead where the stress has etched itself.

She leans over and places her hand on Papa's leg beneath the thin hospital blan-

ket. For a moment, she does nothing else and I can't tell if she means to comfort him or shake him for being so uncooperative. Eventually, she puts her hands back into her own lap.

I pick up the manilla envelope of photographs from Papa's untouched dinner tray and hand it to her. I had brought the envelope to keep myself occupied, but Nana seems to need it more than me.

"Papa told me about these pictures," I said.

"Pictures? What did that man tell you about these old things?"

"Lots of stories about how you met, and what Papa did in the war. He told me about his brother, Frank. I didn't even know Papa had a brother before that."

"How we met? Sweetheart, why did you want to know that?"

"Because I didn't know, and right now he can't tell me. So, I'm glad I asked before." I gesture to the manilla envelope and the wedding photo, "I hadn't ever seen these pictures before. There are people in them that I didn't recognize. I didn't know that he was in the war either."

"Everyone was in the war." She begins, "He only fought in the tail end of it. Normand used to travel with the cargo that the military was transporting by train. He left Japan when he was 19, and I met him a little while later. Normand was always hanging around my sister Lynn's boyfriend. That's how we met. One day, he invited me to go out to the beach with him and that was that."

"Wait. That's not what Papa said. He said he flew planes in the war and that he stole you away from one of Frank's soldier friends."

Nana becomes silent for a moment, but then she hoots with laughter. Each whoop is emphasized by the loud thump of her rubber-tipped cane on the laminate floor. It isn't long before she's tearing up and gasping for breath.

"Oh, that man! What a man he is! Sweetheart, none of that happened. I'll tell you if you really want to know." Nana leans back and gets comfortable. It looks like this is going to be another, longer, history lesson.

"After the beach he started calling me up to go out all the time. We used to roller-skate and ice skate. Ooh, I loved

that! Bicycle riding too. I should have good hips!" She emphasizes her point with another thump of her cane. "I was athletic when I was young!"

I laugh and remind her that Papa is trying to sleep.

"Oh, he's been keeping me up for weeks! Anyway, I dated him. It wasn't even a year and he wanted to get married. I said 'No, no.' I did not want to get married, and I told my sister I was going to give the ring back. My mother said, 'What's wrong with that girl?' But that's just what I did. I wasn't ready to get married."

"But you did get married eventually."

"I went back to him ten years later when I was good and ready. Lynn threw a party and I saw him there. I was thirty-five when we got married, Normand was two years older."

"He said he was nineteen," I said, shaking my head. "What did you do for your honeymoon?"

Nana scoffs, disgusted. "We didn't have one. We were driving down to Atlantic City and Normand said we'd never get there, so he turned around and we drove

back home to live in his trailer." She shakes her head and laughs quietly, "It was cute though. We made it a nice little trailer." Nana looks back over at Papa and takes a deep breath. "I had your Aunt Betty two years after we got married and your daddy three years after that."

She watches Papa sleep as if she can see the memories float back and forth between them across the hospital room. "He's not a sentimental guy, my Normand. He doesn't think of Valentine's Day or Mother's Day. He doesn't smother the kids either. He loves them, but he doesn't show his love. I'm not afraid to show my love, but he's more reserved."

It's strange to think of my grandfather as reserved. He is so uninhibited in some aspects of his life that I had never considered how guarded he is of others. It's true, when I think about it, though. It is always Nana who parts with a kiss and an "I love you, my darling" before sending us on our way. Papa usually smiles from his easy chair and waves with love in his eyes, but he rarely says the words.

A shrill voice comes over the loud speaker to announce the end of visiting hours. Papa jolts in the bed, but he remains unfocused; a side-effect of his medication. We

each kiss him good-bye and say a prayer as he falls asleep.

"Oh, Nana, one more thing. How did Uncle Frank die?"

"A heart-attack."

When we return to the hospital later that week, Papa's doctor meets us in the hallway, as we make our way toward his room. For the first time this week, it looks like good news.

"Mrs. Rose," he says to my grandmother, "Normand is doing very well today. We have managed to stabilize his blood sugar and that seems to have helped significantly with his other symptoms. The drastic spikes and drops in his glucose levels were severely affecting his motor functions and thought processes. He is still a bit disoriented at times but it is a significant improvement. He's awake, coherent and he's even gotten most of his energy back. We still do not know if his sugar levels will remain stabilized since they have been so inconsistent lately, but as of right now, he is doing pretty well." The doctor smiles and it becomes a bit easier to breathe. His words lift a weight

from our shoulders and it is visible in each of us.

"As for his remaining symptoms," he continues, "you mentioned when you brought him in, Mrs. Rose, that Normand was forgetting certain things and was confused at times. I'd like to speak with you about the opportunity to do some more tests when Mr. Rose is feeling up to it. I'd like to explore the possibility that he may be exhibiting the early symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. Hopefully, these tests will prove that he does not have anything to worry..." It's hard to listen to the details after a statement like that; the weight is back. Papa could have Alzheimer's.

His doctors were correct and after a couple days, the color has returned to Papa's cheeks. He is almost back to his old self again, but is worn out from his time in the hospital. The next time we arrive, Papa struggles to pull himself into a sitting position. I'd offer my help, but I know that he wouldn't accept it. When everyone else goes to the cafeteria, I take the chance to pull over a chair and talk to him instead.

"The doctors say that they are going to let you go home soon." His white hair is

mussed from his time in the hospital, but his mischievous hazel eyes are clear as he smiles at me.

“Good,” he rasps.

“Guess what, Papa.” I cross my arms on the side railing of his bed and rest my head on them.

“What?”

“I asked Nana about those pictures.”

“So what?”

“She told me some very different stories from what you told me.” I look up at him, laughing a little at his expression. He isn’t surprised and just smiles as if I haven’t caught on to his private joke yet.

He looks away as if he’s thinking about the memories, whether or not they were true, whether or not he remembered them correctly. He turns back to me with another of his smug grins and a wink.

“Oh yeah?” he says. “Mine were better.”

4 am poem

christopher lindström • poetry

I never make plans in advance.
The days are like inessential laundry
abandoned on the floor
left to do later.
Is today Monday?

Sleep wake sleep wake.
All the Ecto Cooler is off the shelves
and out of the stores
and out of existence
maybe like us.
I don't know what I think.

My vision has always been bad.
Hindsight is much worse.
My memories are blink-182 concerts and cigars behind
churches and bike chases and beer and then the rest sort of
hang
in the air
lost in the fog between the trees.

the imperfectionists

shane rocha • fiction



Midnight cheeseburger binges are a reaction to post-masturbation loneliness and the worsening condition of the depleted soul. After all, cow is man's best friend and friends don't last forever.

Four nights a week I prove this point over and over again. Around midnight, I'll walk into any of the twelve burger joints within a ten mile radius of my house and order six, no pickles. I get my hands on them and it's like clockwork: unsheathe the lot from their wrappers, transform them into petroleum-textured mush, and digest. Full on spongy, reheated sandwiches. Gravity sets in and immobility is imminent.

Tonight is no different. What little shame I am left with is consumed by a few gulps of cold soda while watching the customers who come in. I've taken a particular interest in the young, beautiful fat girl at the counter since she is the only one I can hear clearly.

"This is no Happy Meal!" she protests. She waves the frowning box over the register for effect. A man dressed in a company-stitched red polo emerges from a sea of white.

"I'm sorry ma'am," he says. "That's very unusual."

"My daughter is depressed. She won't eat anything I put in front of her."

The man tries to cover his laugh with a cough, but it is obvious.

"I apologize," he says. "Can we get you a couple gift certificates on the house?"

"They better be 'on the house.'"

With that, the matter seems to be settled. When the woman leaves the employees take turns putting the faulty box over their faces, lending to it different voices and personalities. It is improvisational theatre for no extra charge, unwittingly playing to an audience of one.

"Why are you all smiling?" one kid says.

The tallest says, "I have an action figure inside of me—it hurts!"

They get into a rhythm that seizes as the door chimes.

On alert, the workers return to their stations. The girl at the register shoves the box under the counter. As she rises to her feet she is met by a customer with a disguise of his own: a ski mask. He points his gun at her face before she can get a

word out. Her complexion is shiny with sweat under the florescent lights. He tosses a pillowcase at her from across the counter.

"Fill 'er up," the man muffles through the mask.

The pimple-faced teenager starts to hiccup. Jostling between fear and excitement she transfers the money from the register to the pillowcase. She looks nervous. I doubt that this type of scenario had been briefed in the training videos. Regardless, she is doing well. Even the easiest of tasks becomes difficult with a gun between your eyes. He gestures at the cash register beside her.

"That one too."

Behind her, the other employees appear oblivious to the robbery as they work to fill orders for the sudden horde of hungry customers in the drive-thru. It's unnerving how they tune out the unfortunate reality at the counter. There are better ways to die, I think, as I slurp the last of the soda. The burgers slowly release their grip and I ease out of the chair, accidentally dragging the legs across the floor. The shriek cuts through the muzak piping in overhead, giving me away. At three

thousand calories, stealth is just another word. Movements are limited, lethargic at best. If there is a logical reason for the invention of the drive-thru, this is it: this feeling of enormity.

"Don't move!" he shouts.

Good idea.

Of course I picture killing him. For some reason it is with a two-handed sword. I slice down on his head and watch both halves of him fall to the floor. In this little fantasy I walk out alive, untouched.

"Everybody on the ground," he says. "Now!"

I get down on all fours. He turns to single me out.

"Wait," he says. "Doyle? Is that you?"

He leaves his post at the counter and walks toward me as I cower under the table where the floor is sticky, germ-infested. No one has called me Doyle since high school, and it was followed by a fist bump or a derogatory comment about my mother. It's been five years since I've graduated from the days of playful camaraderie and slander. I have a hard time imagining anyone from my class commit-

ting armed robbery. Adulthood can be a son-of-a-bitch.

“On your feet!”

I stand up and he gets close enough for me to catch the pungent scent of his cologne. It’s Intrigue #6. There are only two people I can think of who are suave enough to wear it. One died years ago trying to save an infant from a burning Buick and the other disappeared after high school. Naturally, I expect it to be the latter. His name is Elliot.

“Holy shit,” he says. “It is you.”

He throws his arms up in amazement, puts the pillowcase full of money on the floor, and reaches into his back pocket. When he pulls out his wallet I am initially confused; he does not have the urgency of an accomplished robber. This is stupid. Eventually, he produces a card with his name and telephone number embossed on it.

“Call any time after four,” he says. “It was good running into you.”

I put the card into my coat and secretly hope he makes a clean getaway.

Five weeks later, at a bar, one of the patrons asks for a piece of paper. When I can only produce Elliot’s card, I give him a call.

We agree to meet over beer, a tradition started in our teens when we would secretly get drunk in our parents’ basements and punch holes in the plaster walls. Not just a show of strength, but of stupidity. With bloodied knuckles, we would continue to drink and spout off homegrown philosophies, while depreciating the value of the property.

Our parents had gone through messy divorces. We took turns relating to each other’s rabid selfishness. I wondered what became of him after graduation. I still do.

“Where did you go?” I say into my pint glass.

“When?”

“After high school.”

We down the first round and order another. He begins to pry open his chest.

“Followed my heart up to Nepal. Susie’s family moved there after living in Kolkata their entire lives—that’s in India.

Her sister still held a job there, working for the government as a high school teacher. And get this, in the middle of her lecture on democracy four kids bust in the door with semi-automatic weapons. After rushing the students out they hold the teachers captive. It turns out that the kids are resentful for failing out; a few had even been homeless because of it. Well, days pass with both sides at a stand still. The only demands the disgruntled students make are rupees. Lots of them.”

“Just money.”

“It’s a promise that isn’t kept. Unsure of their bargaining power, the hostage-takers settle on trading the teachers’ lives for their enrollment back into school. It’s probably the best outcome.”

“No one dies. The students learn, and the world keeps turning.”

“And that’s how it read in the paper the next day. Susie and I ended up nearby for support. When we saw that it was having an incredible effect on the city as a whole I decided to start talking to people about it. Susie volunteered her talents as a translator. A little time passed and the story was picked up by several news

sources and produced enough pay for me to make it back here.”

“It couldn’t have been so bad for you to resort to knocking over businesses.”

“Not there, here. The coverage I was getting wasn’t newsy enough. People like to read about others in danger. The more hopeless the situation the better. The hostage mess was an example that actually worked. After that I realized that it would be possible to live off of my writing if only I could find real people stuck in the same kinds of instances.”

He is an asshole, but he is determined.

“An article.”

“You know there is not much going on around here.” He paused. “It has helped me back to my, to my...” His words fall away from the table.

He could be in a drunken reverie the way he is leaning back in his chair. He soon tosses out of it, possessed by the default arena rock song playing on the radio. His dancing gets chaotic and convulsive and he knocks his body into the table several times, sending the empty glasses crashing to the floor. After he

leaves the table he begins examining one of the walls all snotty-like with his hands balled into fists.

“It’s time to go home.”

aurora's inception

jessica melendy • poetry

I

*When moonbeams shyly kiss the morning's blue
and moisture sulks on daybreak's turquoise bloom
while dawn brings songs that promise life anew
a patient sun ray waits in sleep's cocoon.*

Within an innocently pastel space
a toddler whimpers helplessly alone.
Like diamond speckled zig zags on her face,
her tears spill sorrow fearing the unknown
in childhood wild terror devilled dreams,
cerebrals favored trickery, and those
moonless nights lacking lazy midnight cream.

When anxious thoughts can creep in and impose,
like eerie eels that slither slippery,

a child snuggles mommy wearily.

II

"I had bad dreams as well not long ago
when Luna left the opaque earth awake
and goodbye trumpets caused my bed to quake.
I'd make a halo out of my pillow
and tremble as the music cranked and crowed.
I'd clutch my sheets and wait for day to break,
swallowing sobs that broke in my heartache,
and scan the walls for shards of morning glow.

The havoc reeled upon my every sense
incensed expulsion from those crumpled sheets
and on the threshold cold I crept to peek.
Still, nothing has compared to that suspense.

I almost witnessed Luna's soft retreat,
before she turned she brushstroke kissed my cheek.

III

Sometimes I wake up heavy with sunrise
between the night still just before the day.
I tremble when I hear her sorrow sighs
and curl and hope that soon her song will stray.

'Don't worry precious moon inspired girl'

With sprinkled murmurs slushing on my lips
and gentle kisses blushing twilights swirl,
I softly tumble cast from my dream ships.

So when you wake up scared at such a time
don't be afraid of what the darkness tries
because she hides sublime behind her chimes
and masks her sweetness in her song's disguise."

When baby's curls fall soft upon her bed
her mother hushes Luna from her head.

requiem

tasha ramos • poetry



I.

My whale song travels for miles
in the frigid water, a mystery
to those who do not speak my language—
a humpback's moaning lamentation.
Below, I am weightless,
a motherless calf,
rocked by the pull of the moon
in the quiet of my ocean-womb.

Below, all days are one day
and I am left to sing my sorrow in peace:
How far to the surface?
How far to the ocean floor?

My grief stretches out before me
like a thousand mountains,
peaks and valleys.
There is no end to the longing
At times,
the air is so sharp and thin
each breath is a prick.

II.

I pretend my mother is the wind.
She sings to me dragging her fingers
through trees,
brushing hair from my face.
I pray for Nor'easters and hurricanes.
Wind that will pull at me and howl in my ears.
Wind that requires preparations:
the boarding up of windows,
stockpiles of batteries and bottled water.
I lift my chin to the sky
and listen hungrily

for something to believe in.
Wisdom in the bend and sway
of late-summer boughs.
I am met with only my breath.



emanation

alexa noe' • photography • 6x5

three soldiers

nequisha rivera • photography • 11x17





liz young • painting • 14x18

night owl



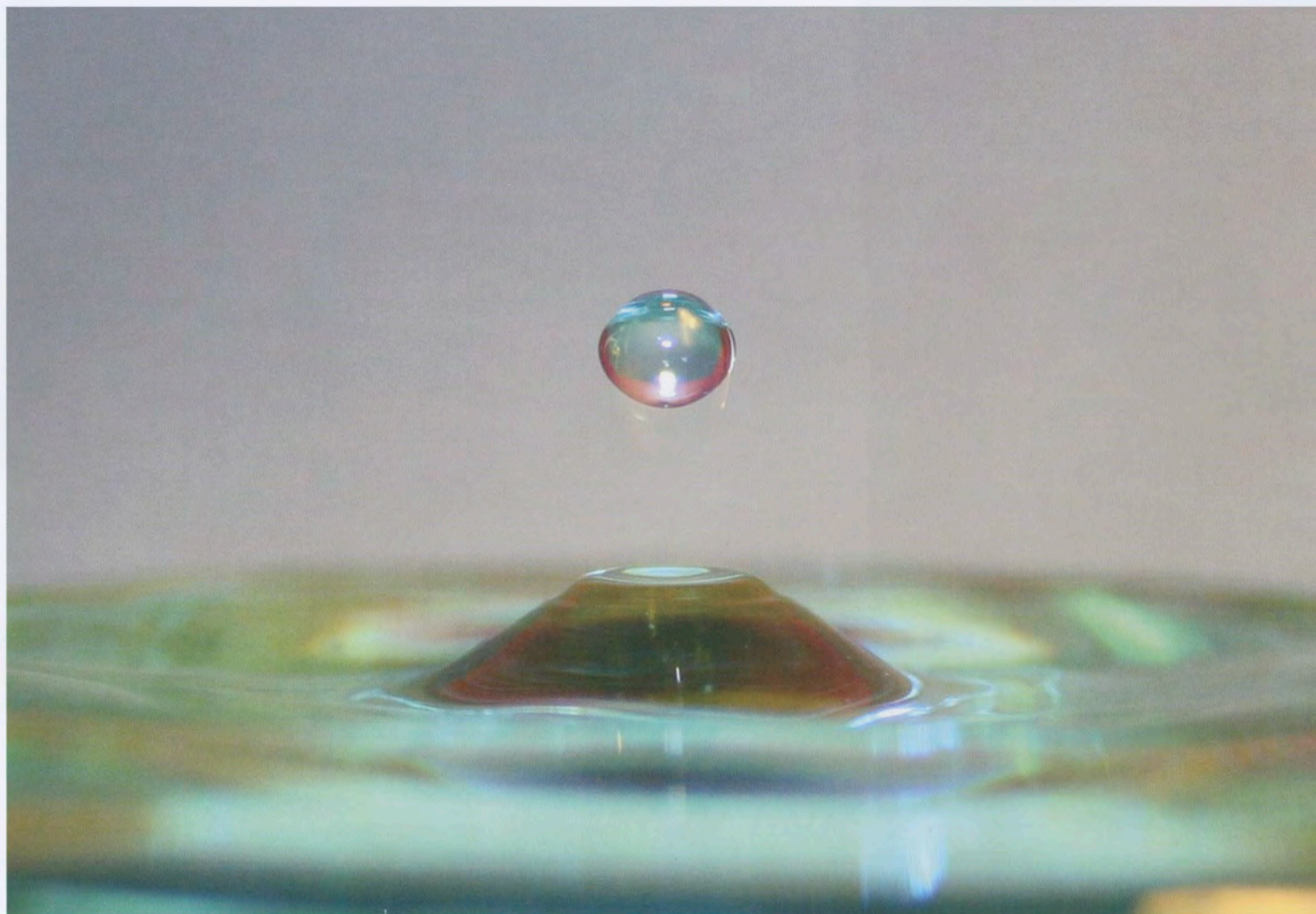


dreamscape 1

nicholas doyle • multimedia • 30x22

water

ross dunham • photography • 10x8





alanna mehrtens • drawing • 8x10

coffee break

wang li

andrew lavery • painting • 24x36



i'd rather listen to RZA and drink old wine

christopher lindström • poetry

Got invited to some bar but I don't want to go. Girls will be there, he says.
Mad bitches get laid son, he says.

I won't get laid. That never happens. Best case scenario, I buy some
faceless blonde a vodka juice thing in the dark. Best case scenario, she
pretends to be interested for 2 minutes and she says words and I'll nod
while thinking about slowing my pulse down with my mind the way monks do
and I'll slow my pulse and I'll slow my pulse until I feel like I'm floating,
floating hopefully towards the exit sign and then back towards my room
and my unmade bed and the cobwebs and the ash and the hole in the
window where the bees get in.

alive to the occasion: finding song in lived experience

an interview with dana ward • ryan dipetta & william regan



Dana Ward is the author of *The Crisis of Infinite Worlds*, just out from Futurepoem. Other books include *This Can't Be Life (Edge)*, and *Some Other Deaths of Bas Jan Ader*; *Flowers & Cream* is forthcoming. He lives in Cincinnati, OH, and edits Perfect Lovers Press with Paul Coors

Photo by: Andrew Kenower

The Bridge: So Dana, I guess the first thing we'd like is for you to tell us a little bit about your poetry, as a place to start.

Ward: Yeah. In general, where to begin? (laughs) Well, I'm a poet. I've been writing poetry and working on poetry every day since I was sixteen. The kinds of things that I've done have certainly evolved and changed, in some ways dramatically since then and in other ways seemingly not at all, but that would be, I guess, the broadest response to a very broad question.

I'm never sure—and maybe this is something interesting in general about writing—where to begin with the broadest apprehension of my own writing practice—which is to say the most general and generic description always seems to elude me because I'm always attempting to do something entirely particular in the poetry and in the writing itself.

The Bridge: You mentioned how your poetry has changed over time. Much of the work that we're showcasing in our journal seems to reflect a fascination with time. How do you feel that time affects your work, and manifests itself within it?

Ward: That's a terrific question. I think there are a number of ways in which it

plays out: verse or lyric writing has a temporal component to it, in a musical sense. There is a measure there. Then there's time as it's organized in a hegemonic, economic situation, in a capitalist situation—which is to say, the tension between labor and the demands of labor in one place, however that labor might be manifested; in domestic work, like the kind of work that I do as a full-time parent, or the wage labor that one does at one's job. It informs the temporal shape of some of the writing and that's constantly changing in relationship to the type of labor one is doing at any given time.

I've written these last two books, *This Can't Be Life* and *The Crisis of Infinite Worlds*, in the fall of 2009, and I finished another book in October of last year. The temporal shapes that were manifesting themselves in those books were deeply impacted by my life as an employee, or as a domestic person taking care of my daughter. Each book reflects that in some very deliberate way. So I guess it's those two dimensions, and then there's always the broader sort of cosmic time, of mortality that's always there and always asserting a kind of gravity that animates or engages a kind of music as well. That can be urgency, torpor—which is to say the affective states that result from one's

entanglement in various kinds of time: mortal time, the time of labor and then the musical time of verse.

The Bridge: There's a section in your poem "Typing 'Wild Speech,'" in which you tell the story of this man named Andy, and his place in a "system of labor & force, international in scope, violent, tragic, freezing the world on its way to some unbidden future." The whole piece definitely has this very deliberate Marxist feel to it. Do you think of your poems as political texts, in that there's this distinction between the political poem and the non-political poem?

Ward: The distinction is not terribly important to me in a general sense. In the particular sense, there are times where the Marxian framing of experience for me might be hyper-engaged, like in that instance, and there are times when my Marxian relationship to experience as a totalizing critical impulse might not be right there on the surface. It might be superseded by some other things. I might be more interested in getting at something really emotional, or making a very particular kind of sound in the world that day, or mourning something, and while that Marxian aspect never just disappears, it is a question of strategy,

moment to moment, in relationship to the content I want to address.

Félix González-Torres, who's one of my favorite artists, says this wonderful thing. I'll paraphrase him, and paraphrase badly, but he's like, "You know, some days I wake up in a ferociously fucking political mood and as an artist I'm going to put that right there on the surface of my work." These moods, again, it's not that they don't get entangled, and I mean to entangle them, but they have a particular valence on any given day and they have a particular valence in relationship to whatever content I'm obsessing over. There's a modulation there for me, in terms of the affect of intensity. I never want to put those politics, those opposing feelings or thoughts, under erasure but if the mood is not quite there that day, they might be turned somewhere else. Some days I just want to be really frivolous and like throw a bunch of confetti into the air in my poems. You know what I mean? Some days, it's an apocalyptic mood and I want to attend that and give that a shape, and one way you might give it a shape is to subject that mood to a Marxian critique. Another way you might give it a shape is to entirely neglect the critique and just fully embrace it, just take some horrifying risk, do something really terrible

that you'll be ashamed about forever or something like that (laughs).

It's like being alive to the occasion of whatever I mean to address demands a strategy, and inside of that strategy is where the emergent and the submerged get into some kind of tension, and then that creates the life of the writing.

The Bridge: Do you feel like the way that you mix the political and the non-political, or the things that are less political, since there's nothing that's not political at all—

Ward: Right.

The Bridge: —that this tension that occurs when you bring them together in a poem seems to reflect a way that they are in tension in daily life, more so than say a book about politics and a book about literature as separate themes would reflect this?

Ward: Exactly! Exactly. That's exactly the thing I mean to say.

The Bridge: How does this reflect the stylistic choices that you make in your poems as well? The movement from using line breaks to not using line breaks, or from the more colloquial and narrative voice to the more lyrical one.

Ward: Yeah, it's a related set of phenomena—sorry, I'm outside smoking and now the air traffic is roaring over the west side of Cincinnati—I think, metaphorically, in my mind, there's a phenomena that might be imprecise as a critical discourse. I'll attempt to describe it: I'm always thinking of myself as singing, and in this sort of writing, that singing is verse; although I recognize the idea that song gets distended radically, or attenuated radically, by a prose sound. I think of prose and chatter as a kind of music. It's the old [American Objectivist poet Louis] Zukofsky trip, right? So for me, it's all a musical thought. Then, I choose the form of music that I hope can best address myself to that occasion.

To work out a political idea, around which I have a lot of uncertainty, and I'm trying to give my own confusion, my own sense of aphasia—my own stupidity, or my own blindness, or my own ignorance—sometimes a prose form is really useful, because I can just talk like I'm talking to you now. Then I really work it up and aestheticize it in a particular way. It's the sound of trying to talk to someone about something that maybe I feel really unsure about, about my own relationship to it, about how my own gender and my own class complicates my thoughts. There, the prose work seems to be the best strategy.

Then, there's another part of poetry that's the suddenness of something coming on from nowhere: the angelic quickness of a sound or a feeling. Maybe that speed, and the sort of terror and awe goes along with the experience of that suddenness. I mean this as a reader, first of all; the astonishment that [San Francisco poet Jack] Spicer talks about. Maybe sometimes I turn to the lyric in that occasion because I feel like it gives me a sound that's quicker to that awe, quicker to that experience of suddenness. Again, these are not exactly poles. I'm describing them as poles to create a schematic for convenience, today. The writing really means to depolarize them, in a number of respects. Again, because we're talking, it has its own libidinal cloy and its own libidinal quickness and it also has its own deficiencies, right? We turn to polarities in order to hear things clearly, and then we can maybe set out for a territory from there. It's about generating tension that's the musical life of the thing.

The Bridge: Right. You have to construct a dialectical thing, even though there isn't one. Stylistically, you're all about the ampersand, instead of the word "and." And there are lots of poets who do this, but what does it mean specifically to you to use this instead of another signifier?

Ward: Yeah, I think I just like the way it looks. If you look at the whole page of a text it looks like a bunch of Christmas ribbons scattered on the floor. It's just this sort of decorative, happy, graphic element, and I just like to see it. I like the way it curves around and twists around like a ribbon, and it's a purely aesthetic relationship; a purely pleasurable sensuous thing.

The Bridge: You have said that you feel as though the two books you wrote most recently are connected. Where do you feel the progression between these publications has gone? Do you feel that they are different texts in their intents?

Ward: Yeah, they are definitely related. They were written on a continuum, and they kind of mean to bleed into one another. I see them almost as one body of work. I'm still not sure how I feel about the relationship between them. I keep changing my mind about whether they're cousins, or whether the new one is a sequel to the old one. I have a lot of uncertainty, myself, and one of the things I've been trying to work out in my own new writing is what that relationship is.

Certainly, the second book is so dramatically impacted by the act of having a kid, and becoming a full-time parent. That's

the enormous experiential difference, the psychic information and the lived information, that radically impacted the book. To work in poles, I think the core experience that I was trying to work through in *This Can't Be Life* is the relationship between mortality and politics and loss. Maybe the core thing I was trying to address myself to was natality and the suddenness of a new existence—not the "new" in a Poundian, modernist sense, but in another sense—a new body being in one's life and in the world. It was also written in a very different political moment, in 2011, when there was an incredible surge of political intensity in the world, and I was in my house all the time with the baby.

All of these sorts of tensions and experiences are different than the kinds of things that were happening in 2009 and 2010, when I was writing *This Can't Be Life*, and I'm very much about just using whatever's in front of me, in my own life and in the world. I don't have a lot of delectation. Like, I was able to use that movie about Joy Division, *Control*, as a way to write through my feelings about Jeff's suicide in "Typing 'Wild Speech,'" but I didn't have any grand desire to write about Ian Curtis. It wasn't a life-long fantasy or ambition of mine, but the material presented itself to me. Writing's so

fucking hard, so I'm not going to neglect the world offering me the materials with which I might be able to sing some song I'd long-hoped to sing and maybe hadn't found the materials for, or discovered some materials, but found them insufficient. Again, when we're talking about efficiency and inefficiency as it relates to writing, there's not some perfect mean. By efficiency, what I really mean is what becomes hyper-valent and can seem to carry the most information and contradiction; what can carry the deepest reservoir of problems for me to sing through and address. I don't mean to suggest that these materials offer a resolution. They may, in fact, offer a deepening and a thickening of the problems that are at the core of what I'm attempting to give a body to in the world.

The Bridge: Your poetry moves between what's traditionally pop-culture and "high art," in the same way that New York poet Frank O'Hara talks about Billie Holiday and Rachmaninoff, but you don't seem to make a distinction between them. Does that distinction hold any meaning to you anymore? Is there something in the world that isn't artful enough to write a poem about?

Ward: No, no, no. I don't believe in the cultural high/low distinction, and in fact

I often—(laughs) how can I say this without sounding horrible?—I often think that distinction has a residue in people's poetic practices that drives me kind of batty—and that's totally fine, I'm not trying to be shitty or anything—but, for me, that distinction is not a real distinction. It hasn't been a distinction for a long, long, long time. What I would really say, personally, is that the erasure of that distinction was a native cultural fact of the world that I came into. I never even thought about it until this sort of proprietary logic of poetry, and I mean this in broad way, sort of forced me to reckon with it somehow. The initial poets that matter the most to me, somebody like O'Hara, whom you mention, that distinction didn't mean that much to him either. Or certainly there was not a lot of angst about it, and that felt really true for me.

The Bridge: So then the erasure of this distinction is a mechanism to get outside of the idea that poetry can only do this one thing?

Ward: Indeed, indeed. I think that's really true. I really like how much what might be called popular culture offers a lot of really troubling and problematic manifestations of pleasure. That's just something I'm really interested in, in my writing, be-

cause my experience of pleasure and the experience of disaster—disasters of race, class, war, violence, gender, intolerance, bigotry—and the way these things are all bound up in certain cultural encounters. What I find attractive in those materials is that they give me this immediate access to this richness, this thrilling pleasure and absolute sadness and terror and heartbreak and anger. So the immediate access to that affective onrush is a really quick way to poetry.

The Bridge: Do you find that the mechanism in something like surrealism is a way to move outside of the restrictive pre-existing meanings of words? Is there a way that trying to shift a word's meaning is a thing that, through poetry, you have to continuously work at?

Ward: Yeah, I think that the musical life of any word, especially in a lyrical situation, it's signification, can always, thank God—well not always, but—be thoroughly compromised by the musical duress that lyric can put on it. That's at the very core of the relationship between language and things, and the huge chasm between them, and the total distinction between a word and a thing it means to refer to. Whether that's shifting its meaning gets tricky, but you

can draw out tonal expressive colors by putting these words under lyric duress, by putting them into different combinations, all kinds of different tonal lives. What it is, is broadening the spectrum of expressivity and thought and feeling that a word might have in any given poetic situation. [American poet Emily] Dickinson, that's so much in Dickinson. Any writing that I like does that to some degree. It gives them some new charge, some new lacerating quality, or some new cushion quality or some new suddenness or reinforcement, or rings a colloquial color that maybe we wouldn't hear otherwise.

The Bridge: Since we are working with student art and literature we wanted to get some insight from you, since you also run Perfect Lovers Press, about how you feel publishing poetry and publishing literature is unfolding differently than it has in the past, say, twenty years, before these small presses and the internet started affecting publication.

Ward: I think that my experience of publishing, and this was part of the traditional repertoire of being a poet in America, was interested in the line that comes out of modernism and moves to Donald Allen's anthology, *The New American Poetry* and its immediate contemporaries, and

moves to language poetry, and opens out into a broader field that now meets us in our contemporary moment. You started a small press as a way to publish your friends, as a way to meet new comrades and allies, and to advocate for the things you cared most about in the world of poetry. Both Cy Press and Perfect Lovers Press operate from that same basic premise of advocacy and social conviviality and excitement. So I think that these old fashioned forms—the short book, what's often called a chapbook, and the broadside, and all the analog forms of making poetry public in the world—will continue to have a pretty long utility. I don't think they're going to be just erased or absorbed by the internet, but there's absolutely no doubt, that the social distribution of attention that the internet has provided has changed the field of relationality, both dramatically and not at all.

I think that with Perfect Lovers Press I can answer the question in the way that my co-editor Paul [Coors] and I have answered it for ourselves. Which is to say we're going to have an online monthly magazine, we're publishing chapbooks still, and artists' editions, because a lot of people are still making things that they mean to have show up in a book. A lot of people are making

things that they have no interest in having show up in a book at all.

It's really interesting, one of the poets we're publishing is this woman named Debbie Hu. She's an extraordinary writer, and the book of hers that we're publishing was initially composed and published on Tumblr. But at the same time that she was utilizing Tumblr in this really glorious way, she was also looking at old books by [American poets] Alice Notley and Bernadette Mayer, who were published during the mimeo revolution on those old big 8½ by 11 format—you know, no verso recto, just type, on one page, stapled. It was interesting to see the way in which her relationship to the formal site of Tumblr got all bound together in this book. So we're now publishing this book of hers as a big old-fashioned mimeo-style chapbook. It's exciting things like that, blurrings in your resolutions, Tumblr pushing out into a chapbook, and chapbooks pushing into a virtual space, that really excites me. You feel the tension between these things, and also see the way they touch. You get these glorious Frankenstein iterations of something that's really familiar to all of us in this moment.

The Bridge: Do you feel that poems are read differently on the internet than they are read on the page?

Ward: Yeah, I think it's a different experience, but I wouldn't privilege one over the other. A book is a technology like an alphabet is a technology, and the internet is a particular kind of technology. The experience you have in that moment with the text is charged by the way in which you interface with it. I'm not sure if there's a particular formal relationship between poetry and the internet. Obviously people have done things that are very particular to the internet and they've written texts that mean to address themselves to that technology directly. I think those kinds of things are really exciting.

Cassandra Gillig, who is this really great poet, has made this incredible Power-Point poem about Jay-Z and Beyonce. It's just this extraordinary thing, and the writing is brilliant. It uses all these different interlocking windows and it's hilarious and witty and has its own musical poetic life. There are various ways you can engage with technology, just like there are so many ways to engage with the page. Once the typewriter became a technology that intervened in poetic production, someone like [American poet Charles] Olson thought through what the typewriter meant in relationship to breath and sound and composition. There have been things like that going on for a long time.

There's a rich tradition of digital poetics out there, and one that I wish I were more well-versed in. It's something I only know glancingly about, I'm not entirely—probably—the best person to speak to, except for whatever that glancing knowledge is worth in this moment.

The Bridge: You just got back from the Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference, which was in Boston this year. How did the experience of being there and seeing other writers affect you? Was it enjoyable to be there?

Ward: It was fucking heavy, man. It was heavy. Obviously, at the social level, it was so great to see friends. There were some glorious events, you know, on Saturday night I gave a reading in a church with friends. It was this church over in Cambridge, and that didn't feel like AWP. That felt like a poetry adventure of the sort one would have when we go to the Boston Poetry Marathon, or when you go to New York and you see your friends read at the Project, or Sequeway, or at a bar, or whatever. It felt like that kind of intimacy and intensity where the apparatus of it belonged to us, like that's *our* thing.

The convention? I don't know how to regard all of that, the hyper-profession-

alization of it. The way that all feels emotionally. I don't mean seeing the faces, talking to friends, but the sort of sea-sickness of being down in the fluorescent lit convention. That was really, really hard, you know? It was almost like, down there, one felt a little lonely, even though I was surrounded by many of the people I love most in the world. It was an alienating situation, and everyone you talk to is like "Goddammit, this fucking sucks." Nobody's like, "Man, I love this convention space, this is great, this is where I always wanted to end up." Nobody's saying *that* shit. I think this binary plays out anytime anybody talks about AWP. It's great to see friends, and some of the events I went to were awesome, but the whole thing's a fucking disaster. And I had, I think, the archetypical experience in that regard.

I love big poetry events. The Boston Poetry Marathon and its various offshoots and iterations were a life changing experience for me as a 24-year-old. Boston, and its relationship to my life, and that city's relationships, and its poets relationships to my life as a poet is indispensable. So maybe there's something emotionally in that too. I was there, but it was winter and I was in this convention center basement as opposed to being out in Cambridge in

that little room with people cooking out. The sort of life in that other place feels so true to my own desires both socially and aesthetically. But, AWP is what you've heard it is, basically.

I also fucking fell in the goddamn snow and busted my hand and it's still swollen (groans). I was so ready for spring, and we had that weather in Cincinnati and then I got on the plane and I just flew right into that shit.

The Bridge: You mentioned small press publishing as a way to publish your friends and to advocate for the things you care most about in the world. Does publishing and working with other poetry influence your own work?

Ward: Indeed. Especially the experience of listening to poetry is really important to me. The ever-increasing archive of recorded readings that are available online has only magnified it; being able to listen to those voices on repeat, over and over and over. I mean a repertoire is hastened by repetition in the sense that you get the particulars of that kind of vocal information into your body much more quickly. If you, say, go to see Fred Moten at the venue, once you leave you can't hear it again. The way in which it contributes

to a repertoire of prosodic thought is a little different. I think my fascination with voice has always been there, but it's been magnified and quickened by these archives, and the way in which obsession hastens a repertoire. You know, 'cause you get obsessed with a poem and you're like "I'm gonna listen to that fucking thing a thousand times today because it's the greatest thing I've ever heard."

The Bridge: What poems have done that to you? Which poets count as the ones that put you where you are?

Ward: Those are examples that are primary for me: Notley, Fred Moten, [John] Weiners, Kerouac, as a teenager. I would say those people have formed that ear to body to text sort of trajectory most dramatically in terms of listening. Bruce Boone, who I have not gotten to hear a lot of recordings from, has been of tremendous importance to me in a more traditional sense, in the sound which you hear in your own head when you read. Those are really primary, primary influences.

I mean, a lot of those people are friends, like my friend Stephanie Young, but it's just as large of an impact. Dodie Bellamy, Harry Mullin, that list would just go on for an eternity. I am very ambivalent

about trying to list these kinds of things because inevitably I leave out some really consequential stuff. That's why it's easier to carve out this space of the listening part, because those are very particular things that I have a particular kind of access to. It's also not to say that those people's books, their texts, have had any less effect on me. I read those people's books as obsessively as I listen to their recordings. That one particular phenomenon might be routed through that handful of writers that I felt obsessively invested in listening to online. That's why there's a ton of Notley, there's a ton of Weiners, there's a ton of Bruce Boone right on the musical surface of everything I make. All the other influences are, well, from there it gets enormous.





hedge parsley

ross dunham • photography • 10x8

rhapsody in blue

kelly schoop • nonfiction

The grey morning seemed fitting for my visit with the man who cried death. He was slouched in his wheelchair, his back turned to me. I wasn't sure it was him until I walked around, ducked my head, and looked at him square in his big, brown eyes. Even then I wasn't completely positive that it was him, when he didn't react immediately to my gaze. He stared for a moment, finally he said, "Oh, Bell! Give your daddy a kiss!" His speech was just as unrecognizable. He was missing almost all of his teeth and his accent had taken on an entirely new life. I bent down reluctantly and let him peck my cheek. "This is my youngest," he told the old woman in the wheelchair next to his. She stared at me. I don't think she knew what was going on.

His strong, tanned legs that I remembered from our frequent dog walks were now skinny, covered in dirty sweatpants. He wore an oversized grey sweater draped over a faded, yellow dress shirt. He hadn't had a haircut in months; the dark, trimmed hair I remembered was now white and uncombed. It grazed his slumped shoulders. His cheeks were swollen, as though he held a large gum-ball in each, and flecks of spit escaped his mouth whenever he spoke.

His name is Ernst. He was born and raised in the city of Vejle, Denmark, but moved to

Boston in his early twenties. His sister, Lita, who had previously moved to the States, purchased his plane ticket as a college graduation gift. He never went back.

He has tried to kill himself more than once. I don't know what the definitive number is; I don't think I ever will. The earliest attempt that I am aware of occurred after he moved to America. There were a few more times before he married my mother, and there have been others since.

We stopped at the nurse's station before leaving for lunch. "Can I have my meds before I go?" he asked a nurse.

"I can't give them to you until two," she seemed agitated.

"What if you're not here when I get back?" he yelled. She said that she would still be here when he returned, and he raised his arms up in surrender. "Alright, alright, alright. Just give me the sign out sheet."

I remember when things got really bad, after his stroke. We would come home to find him sprawled on the living room floor, an empty glass and open pillbox on the coffee table; his pants were often damp with urine. Mom would check his pulse, then dial 911. Sometimes I'd stay in the kitchen, but usually I retreated to my room to avoid seeing what would happen

next. Five minutes would pass before the flashing red and blue lights penetrated my window and danced around excitedly on the walls of my room. I wondered why the fire trucks had to come with the ambulance every single time.

My sister Maja was lucky. She was two years older and was already in college and holding a full-time job. She was barely home. I was still in high school and was home all the time. I saw everything.

I forgot I would have to deal with dismantling his wheelchair and playing chauffeur when I agreed to take him to a restaurant. He sat in the passenger seat, lighting his first cigarette of the afternoon, while I struggled to fit the wet wheels of his chair into the back seat. I had already discovered it wouldn't fit in the trunk. He shouted back instructions. I gritted my teeth.

My father directed me to an Italian restaurant off the highway. On the way, he asked some routine questions about school and work. It had been seven months since we last spoke and I wondered if he remembered where I went to school, or where I worked.

Inside The Chateau, he asked what kind of pizza I wanted. I hate pizza. He said, "I'll let you pick," and I said chicken.

While we waited for the pizza, my father and I snacked on bread and butter. I stuffed my face to keep my mouth busy during the awkward silences. When I wasn't gazing at other people sitting at surrounding tables, I took notice of the old man slouching in his wheelchair across from me, gumming his slice of sesame seed bread. He took shallow breaths as he chewed. He finally asked, "Still play piano?"

I nodded. He stared blankly at me, the piece of bread rolling around in his mouth. He took a deep breath, "Playing anything good?"

"Yeah. Some Gershwin." I still wanted to impress him. He had encouraged me all along, was the one who drove me to my lessons every Tuesday. He seemed impressed.

"I see a therapist every Monday," he said, as the pizza arrived. "We've been talking about you and Maja, and why I don't feel as close to you as I do with Maja." His breaths quickened, and his shoulders rose and fell. His body seized up in a coughing fit. When he was done, he cleared his throat and continued. "Now," he said, "why is that?"

I shrugged, "You know why. I don't have to say it."

"No, I think you do." His voice gradually elevated. "We used to spend a lot of time together, don't you remember? With the dogs and the walks?"

Our longest walk had lasted ten miles. We went out for ice cream after that. I told him that yes, I remembered.

"So how come it stopped? How come we've stopped talking?"

"Because you stopped walking."

"So you're blaming the stroke?" he raised his voice. His eyebrows furrowed.

"No," I argued. "I'm blaming you." There, I said it. I watched his big eyes droop even lower. I'd opened something.

"We stopped walking the dogs because you couldn't walk the way you used to anymore. We stopped spending time together. The dogs died." I surprised myself, saying these things out loud.

He sat there, looking dazed. He spoke after a moment. "I think there's more to it than that. We still could have continued a relationship."

"A lot of things happened. I don't have to tell you all this."

"I had a stroke. That's what happened to me. But that's not why people stop talking to each other."

"It's not like I'm the only one that had a hard time."

"Tell me how to make you understand!" he insisted. "What don't you understand?"

I felt myself getting very angry.

"I don't understand..." I gave up on phrasing it that way. "This is how I remember everything: the stroke you had was horrible. It took a lot for you to get back on your feet again. You went from wheelchair to walker to cane, and it was great. I remember even teaching you how to write again."

He kept repeating "Yes," and "Right," as I spoke.

"And then you stopped trying. And you started drinking. You started mixing your alcohol with your medications. You weren't fun anymore. You lost your motivation, and it was horrible. Worse than the stroke itself." I had silenced him, but I had to continue. "You remember driving drunk into that ditch in front of the high school during Maja's graduation? Driving home from work completely toasted? What about my sixteenth birthday party?"

At first, I didn't know what had happened on the day of my surprise party. I came home to a house filled with my friends and family screaming "Surprise." But it was the end of May, and my birthday is in the middle of June. I really was surprised, and so many people were there that I was completely overwhelmed. I spent the majority of the day outside with all my friends. Some of the guys had their guitars out and we gathered around like it was our own outdoor concert.

Inside, my half-brother, Billy, heard my father's voice booming from the kitchen and rushed over. My mother was walking away, shaking her head, and Billy found my dad lying on his side on the floor, with his cane beside him and his khaki shorts wet. His father was an alcoholic, so Billy was familiar with self-destructive behavior. He told me later what had happened.

"Kill me, kill me. Please, kill me," Dad had pleaded with Billy.

Billy knelt down and whispered to him, "Are you in a competition with my father to see who can die first?"

"No," my father answered him.

Billy managed to pull him up off the floor and onto his feet. My father leaned on him and limped into the spare bedroom

down the hall. Billy helped him onto the bed and shut the door, hoping none of my friends had seen anything. Mom was back in the kitchen, wiping up the mess on the floor, quietly crying.

I had no problem believing Billy's story, as events like this were not uncommon. I remember, one Friday afternoon, I had just leapt off the school bus and crashed on my bed. No one else was home but us.

"I want to kill myself," he said.

Years later, the words ring clear. I didn't say a thing; I couldn't. My father stood crookedly in the doorway of my bedroom, steadying himself against the frame as he spoke. "I'm going to the hospital. The ambulance is on the way," he continued, "I just thought you should know." He turned around and walked stiffly down the hallway. I listened to his heavy limp on the wooden floors grow softer and softer as he walked further away.

"But you don't know how much time I have left," he responded. "Don't you think we should try to get back together again?" He was yelling. People had started staring, including our waiter, who had been avoiding us and neglecting our table. I rested my head in the palm of my hand and concentrated on the cold slice of pizza on my plate.

I looked up. "I don't enjoy coming up here because I just see you—"

"Wasting away," he finished.

"You're not who I remember; you're not who you should be." We looked at each other until I averted my gaze down at the table.

I looked up again when I saw hands gathering plates. Our waiter asked if we would like to box up the pizza we had picked at. "I didn't want to come over and bother you. You two looked like you were having such a nice visit." He smiled, and I laughed nervously. My father said nothing. I thought about running to the bathroom to cry.

He immediately lit a cigarette upon exiting the restaurant. I guided him down the ramp and then ran to get the car. I circled the parking lot toward the entrance, staring at the withered man slouched in the wheelchair smoking a cigarette. The exit was just to my right. I thought about just leaving, but instead I drove up to the bottom of the ramp. After he shakily got himself in the car, I got out and shoved the wheelchair in the backseat.

"*Let's do the Time Warp again,*" he sang along with the music on the ride back. "You know, I went to see that show probably seven times."

When I pulled into the Eastwood Living Center, my father ordered me to drop him off at the front entrance. I stopped the car, left it running, and unloaded the wheelchair once more. I held the box of pizza for him while he got back in his chair. When he was settled, he wheeled away, holding his pizza box, into the persistent drizzle.

"I'm just going to take off," I called out, already backing away.

"Alright Bell, see you later," he said, without looking back. I quickly got back behind the wheel and drove off. I didn't look back to see if he made it in okay.

On the highway, I switched the music to "Rhapsody in Blue." I waited for the tears that usually follow a visit. They never came. So, I mimed the piano trills of Gershwin on the steering wheel.

november 13th

michael malpiedi • poetry

There was a time when pixelated Eve was all heaven and horizon to this body. I created a form of her that I could hold in chambers and lungs through light emitting diodes, midnight hellos, 3 am video calls in 720p, posts of wanting an end, and her subtext that longed for a beginning. I loved her in docs, jpeg, wmv, and gif. We had nothing but distance, dial tones, and voice.

But I knew her more than I had ever known any woman. She was always there in code, in reception, in text. I just want you to be here, why are you so far from me?

I met her body four months ago. I tasted the always on her tongue and I still cannot enjoy the flavor of anything else. I created an Eden of skin and intertwined limbs; three weeks on I-70 West. And I find myself falling since I left her to stay in fields and sunflowers.

I want to love her again in digital, create her again through binary, but my body searches for her in all the midnights since. Nerves and memory cascade data: remember her, remember caresses, remember emeralds, remember sunflower lips. Always her real is whispering in blood and bones.

I find myself again tonight on I-70 West, homebound. I have become an addict for that touch and I am tired of pressing stars because nothing else satisfies.

I met a woman some months ago. We both were sleepless looking for rest and we longed for each other through bought time and satellites. I flew her to me because something told me that this pixelated Eve would give me peace. I can no longer accept photos, screens, and acronyms. I find myself on roads back because I hunger for our beginning and end melded together on a twin size bed in Ottawa.

D-

virginia kelly • multimedia • 15x24



coaster

courtney willis • photography • 10x8







flatware & tooth bangle

shannon collings • metalwork • 1.5x9.5 & 3x2.5



illumination series 2

melanie mcgrath • photography • 11x17



purple feather

zoe palmer • blown glass • 5x5x5



burned copper plate

brittany rollings • photography • 7x5



my dental stories

a suite of intaglio works by chan mei fung









all works are aquatint etchings

this page: don't freak out like a lion • opposite: you are either getting candy or dentures
inside left: grumpy cat • inside right: stop talking and do your flossing

ambrosiated

amanda rae rouillard • poetry

I held a pool of water up, ready to drink, and
found a tiny mermaid, hair
brimming with tinier fish-
hands raised to greet me
touching the lopsided surface, eyes
laced with promises, how
beautiful,
it was torture
for I could never kiss her
and we could never share
this horrid world, so I opened my hands
letting her crash upon dirt
like the devil she was.

25 miles of nothing

william regan • fiction

It was three days and two nights without heat in December; December of '88. We were renting the second floor of Joanie's parents' triple-decker on Ernest Road, and even they didn't know that we were behind on the bills, that our service was getting cut. Each unit was on its own meter, so we got a little leftover heat through the creaky hardwood floors. Joanie and I dug into the crawl space, unearthing the old camping equipment, which hadn't seen the great outdoors since before the kids were born. We pitched the two-man Coleman pop-up atop our queen size bed, shoved our L.L. Bean sleeping bags inside, along with all the blankets in the house, and told the kids we were playing camping. Shelly was four and Daniel was two, almost three. We knew that it would be warm enough for the kids to be comfortable all bundled up between us, but the tent was psychological insulation; a way to divert their attention from the dropping temperature of the little two-bedroom apartment.

The kids were punchy, excited by the novelty of the game, by the change of scenery, in the way only children get excited. I might have been envious if I hadn't been there to feel the buzz of their elation, in practicing the parental art of claiming it as my own. I tickled

them into a frenzy, attempting to warm them up and wear them out so that they would go down easy. Shelly squirmed, balled up, with her head plugged into a mess of fleece, while Daniel sat upright, wobbling, unable to catch his breath, wheezing his deep stomach laugh.

"Cool it, Frank. We don't want them to P-I-S-S themselves," Joanie warned.

"Aw. No fun," I said.

When I stole her favorite line, Shelly jumped to her feet, cheeks flushed. Her fine brown hair danced, static drawing it to the taut nylon walls of the tent.

"Did you spell pee, Momma?" Shelly smiled. She couldn't spell, but she was sharp.

Daniel, still laughing, mumbled "'pell-pee- Mumma!" between breaths. If Shelly was a master of observation, then Daniel was a master of repetition.

Once the kids were worn out, Joanie tucked them up to their necks in blankets. I flicked on the flashlight that was strung from the tent's peak, and read shorts from Alvin Schwartz's *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*. The cast

shadows, waning under the swinging lamplight, provided a spooky feel without the fear that came with total darkness. In the past, the cover had proven enough to invoke nightmares in them, so I didn't dare show them the drawings.

When the children were sleeping, breathing rhythmically in turn, I looked at them in the lamplight. They looked like little copies of grown-up people. Shelly, so serious, with her mouth shut tight and straight like a librarian perturbed by chatter. Daniel had both hands behind his head as if he were laying poolside, waiting to be awakened by a mimosa-wielding waiter. I almost told Joanie what I was thinking but she wouldn't find it funny. Not tonight. I lay back and flicked the flashlight off. "Disaster averted," I said.

"For now," she sighed.

"Well, I'm getting a check from the cemetery tomorrow, and Jimmy said he would cut me a check for this week's hours. If I pay it tomorrow, it'll be back on Friday."

Joanie remained quiet. My eyes were adjusted to the dark now, my depth perception recapturing the tent walls and the shadows fanning over them. I could hear Joanie's breathing, too,

the melody line in a harmony of air.

"At least the wine will be chilled to perfect cellar temperature," I joked without looking over. If she wasn't sleeping, she pretended to be. The tent had filled up with the warmth of their breath, swarming over their bodies. I stuck one leg out of the covers, restless, and thought that the only thing between myself and a sound sleep were the very thoughts that I was thinking. It was only December. Technically, winter hadn't even started and we were already behind. The heat bill was not getting any smaller, and if I pay the minimums, we'll be paying for the winter's heat all summer. Before we knew it, winter would return to steamroll us into more debt. It was *already* December, and I couldn't even begin to think about Christmas; about the scarcity of crappy toys, the pathetic display that the children would wake up to. I imagined that the house would be cold on Christmas, too. In my mind, the hardwood floors were gray.

It had become stuffy in the enclosed space of the tent as if it were vacuum-sealed and all at once it became clear to me, like in the moment of lucidity that follows a fever breaking, that it wasn't about me anymore. It wasn't

about what I planned to do, or what I could put off until later. I was still young, sure, but I didn't have my whole life ahead of me anymore. My life was right there in the tent on the bed in the cold apartment on Ernest Road. My dreams were just a speck in the rearviews now. For some time, I might have called what happened that night growing up, but now I wonder if I ever grew up at all.

By that first morning, the novelty of our indoor camp-out had worn off for the kids too. When we climbed out of the tent, even the thick carpet of our bedroom had gone cold. We huddled around the grated orange glow of the space heater, which looked hotter than it was, pretending half-heartedly that it was a campfire, and ate Quaker oatmeal.

I dropped Shelly off at pre-school on my way to work. When I got to the cemetery, I sat in my truck, finishing my cigarette, and I just didn't want to work. I had never had that feeling before, that empty complacency. So, I sat beside the two empty car seats packed into the little cab of my mid-sized pick-up and slid a second cigarette out of the pack, another first. Sometime between lighting up that second cigarette and flicking the butt as I stepped out of the cab, I decided it would be my last one, and that was

all there was to it. I tossed the rest of the pack to Donnie, a college kid, who couldn't afford smokes and surely would have bummed a few of them anyway, as I walked into the musty break room in the back of the shop and punched in, just on time.

I always checked the caller I.D. before I answered. *12/08/10 - 6:32 p.m.* I couldn't believe that it was already December. The caller information doesn't show up until after the second ring, so I waited. It was Shelly.

"Hey, Shell."

"Hey, Dad. How have you been?" I hated when she talked like that, over-enunciating as if to suggest that I was doing worse than okay. But I've come to expect it from her.

"I'm good. You?" I ignored her insinuation.

"Good." She paused, must have needed something and didn't know how to ask.

"So, what's up?"

"Well, we just wanted to see what you were doing for the Pats game Sunday." Now *this* caught me off guard.

"Nothing." I looked at Angus, our Black Lab, my Black Lab. I must have looked surprised and a little confused because that's how he looked.

They say that dogs often look like their people. Well, at first sight Angus doesn't look anything like me, but we have the same mannerisms. We've been told that he mimics my facial expressions. I like the thought of it, like to think we're deeply interconnected. "I mean we don't have plans. Angus and I were just gonna take it easy over here." Angus sighed.

"Cool. Stu and I thought about maybe coming up your way." She and her boyfriend, Stu, live in a college town about an hour away. She's working on a Master's in Comparative Literature and teaching French and freshman composition at an affiliated Community College. Stu's trying to be a writer and bartending on weekends to keep up with the bills. He's a good enough kid. "That is, if you're not too busy. If that's okay with you."

"No, yeah. That sounds great."

"Alright, great. See you Sunday, Dad."

I didn't realize until I hung up that they hadn't been up since they helped me

move back onto Ernest Road two years ago when the house sold. I thought about the empty moving box that I was still using as a coffee table and the seedy couch from the old basement that I had yet to replace. I looked at the stacks of Amstel Light boxes, full of empties, and turned to Angus. He looked concerned.

Joanie and I did alright, though. For the kids, that is. I stopped trying to make it playing ball the year Daniel was born. Stopped taking night classes when the town Public Works Department took me on full time; that was '89. Before that, I had been working part-time for them and doing side jobs. The pay raise wasn't anything to write home about, but the benefits were good. I started umping too, just beer league and some local Babe Ruth games. It wasn't so much about the money as it was an excuse to stay in the game. For me, there is nothing like a summer night under the lights. The way those lights make the grass glow green, the way the smell of the wet clay sticks to the back of your throat so you can taste it.

Sometimes, I would bring the kids along and seat them on the concrete barrier behind the backstop with Screwballs from

the ice cream truck—they weren't allowed the faces with the gumball eyes because they were too messy—and they would laugh and holler and mimic me when I called a strike, like I was not myself when I was behind that mask but some mythic figure, a fictional character they might have seen on T.V or in the movies.

Joanie had been a Special Ed. teacher, but she stayed home with the kids for those first few years. That next September she started taking classes again, went for her Master's in School Administration. She really took off and flew from that point, and so did the time. We finally bought a house, not far from the house on Ernest Road. It was a small cape with shutters on the front door on a street of capes with shutters on the front doors. I thought it odd, thought they made it look like a birdhouse. I wanted to take them down but Joanie said I couldn't because the whole street had them. I didn't know why that mattered. By the time Shelly was in high school, Joanie had received a Ph.D. She turned down an offer for a principalship at her school and instead taught at the college level. I didn't understand that either; going through all that schooling for something, never practicing it, and then continuing to teach what you had learned but never really knew. I

guess she was happier in higher education. By then I had stopped umping, too. I don't remember exactly when I stopped, or why for that matter. I suppose it was because the kids had obligations with sports and activities and no licenses, and I liked going to their games and recitals anyway. Joanie was busy day and night.

We got Angus for Daniel's thirteenth birthday and it seemed to me like that was it: the nuclear family. We had achieved the dream.

Looking back, that's all that it felt like. A dream. But I had been happy enough in the security that settling afforded me. After all, it was easier that way. I had worked my whole life to achieve something that didn't exist, and my biggest problem was that I had figured it out.

I got up early, shaved, and loaded the returnables into the Ranger on that Sunday that Shell and Stu were coming up. I stirred the chili that had been slow cooking overnight. With a single stir the robust aroma swarmed from the pot, displacing the insipid air that had inhabited the second-story kitchen for so long. I added a few dashes of cayenne

pepper without tasting and just waited there until 10:15 a.m. I called—still call—Daniel every Sunday just after ten, which is just after seven out there. He works at an Air Force base in Nevada, in the middle of the desert. He goes in at 8, so I catch him while he's driving down the single lane highway to base, what he refers to as twenty-five miles of nothing.

He picked up the phone, waited about six seconds, and coughed into the receiver. "ello." He sounded groggy, half asleep.

"You sound like shit."

"I feel like shit." It seemed that Daniel was more and more often hung over for these early morning calls.

"Well, how's the desert?"

"It sucks. That's why I get pie-eyed every night."

"Yeah, well it's been freezing here. At least it's warm out there, right?"

"Not as warm as you'd think." I heard his truck start reluctantly. A late start.

"Well. Your sister and Stu are coming over today."

"What do those hippies need money or something?" He gives them a lot of shit. Shell knows he's joking, but I can tell it sort of pisses Stu off.

"Well, there's no money here. She can see your mother if it's money she needs."

"You kidding? With mom's new live-in financial advisor, she'll need a formal business proposal to see a cent." I didn't expect myself to laugh aloud, but when I did it was genuine, and I realized that I rarely really laugh anymore. "How's Angus doing?" he said.

I looked over at Angus, sprawled out on the rug by the back door.

"He looks tired, to be honest; a little sluggish. I think it's his diet."

"Yeah well, he's getting old, Dad. Go easy on him, let him relax a bit."

"I guess." I thought about what his age was, in dog years, but didn't bother calculating it.

"Hate to cut you short, Dad, but I gotta call my supervisor and tell him I'm running late."

"Well, I wish you were here, Daniel. I miss having you around."

"Miss you too, Dad. Take care of yourself. Love you." He hung up.

The truth is, I call him every week to hear him say that, but it's more than just that.

I've never told him that I imagine the sunrise that he's looking into while we speak. That if I listen close enough to the silence behind his voice, I can see the orange and pinks burning in the sky along the horizon, so vast in breadth that it curves out of sight without ever really ending. Sometimes it's so clear that I see it in dreams days later.

Joanie left me two weeks after Daniel went off to college. It was a Thursday evening, and she had come home late from the University. I was up watching the Sox, one of those late-night, late-season games. They were playing the Yankees. I think the A.L. East was still up for grabs, at least the Wild Card. She looked like she had been crying when she walked in, but she wasn't anymore.

"I'm leaving you, Frank," she said.

Five minutes may have passed before I asked why.

"Mikhail." Mikhail was a retired professor, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs or something at the University. I was surprised; I honestly thought he was gay.

She told me that she couldn't live like this anymore.

"Like what?" I asked abruptly.

She was still standing, hunched on the threshold, said something about "can't spend the rest of my life with a cynic."

There was a momentary calm before the resentment set in, "A cynic? I am a realist, Joan. You're the one that's brimming with discontent. You're miserable."

"You have no ambition, Frank. You're not the man I married."

"No ambition? My ambition took a back seat to yours."

"Thank you for proving my point." She was getting warmed up, "The consummate back seat driver." She sniffled.

"It's hard not to be cynical after twenty years of marriage to a selfish bitch."

"*After?* I think the word you're looking for is *throughout!* Your 'poor me' act is nothing new." She called Mikhail cultured and passionate, said, "he has re-awakened my zest for life."

I said, "Bullshit."

And that was it, really. Well, it went on like that for an hour or two—at some point, exhausted from arguing, I almost forgot what we were talking about, like when you repeat the same word over and over again and after a while it loses its meaning altogether, reduced to just a sound.

"This is my life, Frank!" she said, as if it weren't *my* life, as if it weren't *our* life. I guess it just seemed there was nothing else to say after that, and if there was neither of us could find a way to say it.

I started smoking again, as a sort of occupational fix, something to do with myself. Picked the habit right back up like I had never stopped. Perhaps I thought that the tobacco smoke and tar would take the place of all that I had managed to lose.

She moved into his condo in the North End and two years later they relocated, since she can't just say moved, to New York, as if it were all a part of some grand scheme. She took most everything of value, monetary and sentimental: paintings and most of the family photos—claiming that she had taken them all—the flatware and crystal. She left the big stuff that couldn't be moved easily: the beds and dressers, the living room hutch and couches and the entertainment center—mostly the stuff we had bought to fill the extra space we had when we moved from the small apartment on Ernest Road—and the house itself. After a while, I wasn't mad at her for leaving me, once I realized that our love had dried up years before. We were too busy raising the kids, maintaining the dream, to stay in love.

Even though I stopped being mad at her, I still thought a lot about what had happened. Let's just say I settled on the fact that men and women aren't all that different. Not by nature, at least, as much as by habit. Boys wear their hair short, drink beer, and get dirt under their fingernails; girls do whatever it is that girls do. People call attention to the differences as a way to isolate themselves from the opposite sex, but it's a learned behavior, a Pavlovian condition. I guess that's what we did,

not just in the end, but all along. The fact is, we never tried to transcend the 'guy things' and the 'girl things,' but instead we fell back on them: I dug holes, got my fingernails dirty, and drank beer, while Joanie did whatever the hell it is that women do. I sometimes wonder if we loved each other at all.

I had just never pictured us not being a family. I was angry for the kids' sake. Maybe that was just how I justified my own anger, because, looking back, it didn't even seem to faze them. I guess they were grown up by then and didn't need us as much as I had thought. Maybe I was the only one that didn't see it coming. When Joanie jumped ship, it seemed like the kids already had their life preservers on.

About a year later, I put the house up for sale by owner. But I didn't like the idea of open houses, showing the house to strangers, and so it sat on the fringes of the housing market for two years. Finally, at Shelly's urging, I hired a real estate agent. The house sold in just a few weeks, fully furnished, at a loss. It didn't hurt my pride in the least, moving back into the apartment on Ernest Road, renting from my ex-wife's parents.

I lifted the lid off the chili once more, breathed in the steam, swollen with spice. "Heading to the store, Gus. Keep an eye on that chili, will ya?" He lifted his head slightly, sneezed, and licked his nose.

I must say I make a damn good chili, though I couldn't remember the last time I had cooked a pot; in fact, I'm embarrassed to say I could've counted the times that I had cooked on that stove on both hands.

I got thirteen bucks for the bottles at Skip's and put it toward another case of Amstel and a twelve-dollar bottle of Shiraz. I stopped off at the Salvation Army and bought a small wooden coffee table for twenty bucks. It was kind of sad looking, certainly it had never known a coaster, but I figured it had character. By the time I got home, they were already there. I pulled the table out of the bed of the truck and hiked it up so its top was propped up on my back. Stu hurried over to me, "Whoa Frank, let me give you a hand."

"I got it. Grab the beers and wine from the cab, will ya?"

"You got it, boss."

Shelly was perched up on the porch, the midday sun shining on her like a single stage light, lightening her brown hair, her flyaways showing amidst floating specks of dust. It was as if her beauty had incited something in the little universe of air around her. "What's with the table, Dad?" she asked.

"Nice to see you too, honey. Can you get the door for me?" I kissed her on the cheek and continued up the narrow stairwell to the second floor. "Skip needed to get rid of it, so I took it off his hands." She followed me up the stairs and immediately noticed the cardboard U-haul box as she stepped into the apartment.

"Dad, you didn't have to go get that because we were coming up."

"Well, I was planning on picking it up tomorrow, but I figured it'd be nice to have an actual table for my guests. You should've seen it. I was standing on the old coffee table changing the bulb in the ceiling fixture and one of the legs snapped." I felt the need to carry on, as if to distance myself from the lie that I had told her, but proved only to expand upon it. "You

would've laughed, but it did screw up my back a bit; haven't slept right in a week." When I heard what I was saying, I immediately recognized that it sounded a lot like desperation.

"Where is it?" She was sort of glaring at me now, more playfully than her mother used to.

"Where is what?" I didn't let on.

"The broken table."

"What?" I busied myself with breaking down the old cardboard box without looking over at her, but I sensed that her glare persisted, could almost feel it creeping over my shoulder.

"You didn't take it to the dump because the dump has been closed for years. I know the trash collectors wouldn't take it," she pressed.

Stu stormed in, unwittingly relieving me of Shell's interrogation. "Smells awesome in here. Chili?" he asked.

"You know it. My famous recipe."

"Nice. I'll throw these beers in the fridge."

I was hoping Shell would let this one slide, but I wasn't so lucky.

"Dad! Don't lie to me. I mean, come on, that's the same 'Pots & Pans' box you set there when we moved you in two years ago." I looked over at her, and, in spite of herself, she was smiling.

"I know, I know. I just didn't want you to make a big deal about it. Besides, it's just me and Angus here. Who am I trying to impress?"

"Well, that's the point. Maybe you could invite some friends over. Maybe some of the guys from work?"

"I see my friends for breakfast twice a week at the Good Egg." I also see them about three times a week at the pub, I thought. "And I see more than enough of my co-workers in a forty hour week."

"Well. What about a lady friend? Maybe if you got some furniture in here, you could meet someone."

"Nope, Shell. Not interested. I'm too old for all that."

"Thanks for having us up, Frank," Stu shouted from the kitchen, again provid-

ing a welcome interruption. "The only time I miss having cable is on Sundays during football season." I looked at Shelly and her cheeks were already red.

"So that's why you're here? Using Dad for his cable. I see how it is." I laughed, hoping to put a diplomatic end to the whole conversation.

"Alright, we're even," she said. "But we've been trying to come up and see you anyways. We don't see you enough. And there's also the fact that," she raised her voice so Stu could hear her in the kitchen, "Stu spends as much money at the Stoned Rooster in a single Sunday as it would cost for a month of cable."

"What? You talking about me?" Stu asked, walking back into the living room. He handed me a beer and Shell a glass of wine. "Almost kickoff. Big game today, Frank." I like Stu.

Once the game started it was all football talk, punctuated with beer and chili, the way it should be. The first half went fast, like it always seems to. The Pats were up two touchdowns after holding the Jets to an early field goal. It was warm for December and at halftime I threw some tips on the grill. Stu came outside too,

and I think he had a buzz on, because he talked and talked, "Truth is, it's nice not having cable, ya know. Sure, it got shut off because I didn't pay the bill, but we decided we don't need it anyways. It's a luxury that we can't afford."

"Cigarette?" I offered. He consented, only after peeking over his shoulder to be certain that Shell wasn't spying out the kitchen window.

"Thanks." I lit it for him. "But yeah, nobody thinks like that anymore, they think that having 155 channels is a fact of life. I didn't have cable as a kid."

"My kids didn't either," I cut in. "Hell, half the time we didn't even have heat." I don't know where that came from, why I said it.

Stu carried on, "And they turned out fine, all the better for it. The fact is, I'd rather buy more books and a nice bottle of wine once in a while." The grill smoke stung tears from my eyes. "Watching television is a mindless diversion from life, and I'd rather do something more productive. I've been writing a lot more, making up time I didn't even know I was losing," he said. I like drunk Stu too.

"I hear you on that." I almost told him, then, that I had started writing myself. Mostly just to keep my mind occupied, to clear out the junk that I don't need running through it. I caught myself, knowing that he and Shell wouldn't rest until I let them read what I wrote, and, frankly, I wouldn't know how to do that.

In the second half, the Jets made it a game. Brought it within a score with a pick-six. One big play and they're one play away. That had hurt the Pats all year. They'd get an early lead and then sit on their haunches; prevent the deep ball on defense, work the clock on offense. But you can't be tentative; you've just got to play 60 minutes of football. They eeked out a win, but you can't expect to win playoff games like that.

They left right when the game ended, which was fine; I was beat. But not before Stu used the bathroom, made some joke about the chili, which Shell was horrified by. Once we were alone, standing in the kitchen, she said, "Dad, have you talked to mom?"

"Not recently. Why?" I avoided eye contact again, shuffling dirty dishes from the counter to the sink.

"She said she's been trying to get a hold of you. I know you're busy." It was so odd to me, communicating with my wife through my children. There was something unnatural about it, unsettling. "They're getting married, Dad." I knew such were the case, but this was the first I was actually hearing about it.

"And I need to sign papers." I looked up, forced a smile, "And then I don't have to return her calls anymore?" I joked, because I didn't know what else to say. She looked relieved that I was pretending to take the news lightly.

"If that's what you want, be my guest. You know why I waited to tell you?" she asked. "Because I wasn't going to bring it up if the Pats had lost."

"Well, in that case, I could've waited for them to win the division 'til next game." I almost cried, but I clenched my body shut so hard that it made my stomach ache.

"For me, Dad," she smiled. "Just tell yourself that you're doing it for me."

"We ready to roll?" Stu burst in, tossing the keys to Shell. "Thanks for having us Frank. We doing this again for the Miami game? Two weeks?"

"Yeah. Yeah. Anytime you want, Stu. You guys are always welcome." It was a genuine comment, but I was immediately aware that I sounded like an old man giving his adult child a guilt trip about not coming around enough, even though I doubt it occurred to Shell at all.

On the way out, she stretched up, pecked me on the cheek and said, "I love you, Dad." And they were gone.

After they left I thought about Joanie getting married. Who gets re-married at our age? She must think she owes it to herself, owes herself a fresh start and wants to make sure everyone knows it. I just don't get it, though. I thought about our kids starting their own lives, and the whole thing seemed backwards. But what I really wished was that I could call her up and make a joke about it, a joke that she would take lightly, but that would be just spiteful enough that she might pity me in the most considerate way. That for five minutes we could act like everything was fine, if not quite back to normal.

I took a longer shower than usual that night to clear my head. I thought that maybe I would start doing beer league games again. About rejoining the three-piece ensemble of the batting circle to

hear the ping of leather on aluminum, or the pop of the ball into the catcher's mitt and my own guttural response to its call from deep inside like it were someone else's voice, all coming together like something new and foreign and thrilling. I thought about showing Shell and Stu what I had written, about them being so awed by its truth and transparency that they had no questions, no need for clarification or explanation. I thought about taking all my vacation days this year for the first time and going out to visit Daniel. Maybe we'd head to Vegas for a night, stay out drinking and gambling until the early hours. We'd drive home to classic rock on the single lane highway passing a flask between us while the desert came alive with the sunrise.

When I got out, I realized that no matter how long a hot shower lasts it still feels short-lived when it's over. I wiped my palm across the foggy mirror, and almost didn't recognize myself in the blurry, clean-shaven face of the reflection. I saw a different me in that first glance, like it were a different person looking back. His face looked thin without the scruffy beard I had adopted, his wrinkles flushed out in the steam. I didn't see an underachieving husband or an inadequate father, didn't see a

cynic or a grave-digger, or a has-been baseball prospect, or a never-was big league catcher. For the first time, the aloneness was comforting. For the first time, the patches of grey in the eaves of my widow's peak looked like a part of me and not some genetic typo, some glaring biological mistake.

When I came back into the kitchen, I did the dishes and I found the running water comforting, as if it were taking the place of the tears that I hadn't let fall earlier. I realized while I was scrubbing the chili pot that in one day both my kids had told me that they love me. What more could I have asked for? What did I have to complain about?

It occurred to me, leaning over the kitchen sink, that they were never mine to lose: not Joanie or the kids, not the house, not the insecurity that I spared myself in settling.

I turned to Angus, lying prone, paws stretched out before him by the back door. "I guess we are getting old." I said. He looked up at me sympathetically, without lifting his head so that his eyelids drooped on the rug where his drool puddled. "I'll take care of these dishes," I said, "You just relax."





christina novotny • silkscreen • 10x14

untitled

a return

ryan dipetta • poetry

I told the internet I had absconded
from poetry. There was a collapse of global
economies and a dialog box above
the sink went missing, and has not yet
reappeared.

It's 96 degrees in Massachusetts and it feels like the loss of all
numerical order, the throes of the alphabet of freedom.
Why write a memoir when a poem will do? Can I
verify these thoughts are my own and cannot
be reproduced or retransmitted by any other?

I'd like to dance inside your skull in the most loving of ways,
to tie myself up and fill you with thoughts of a radiant kidnapping

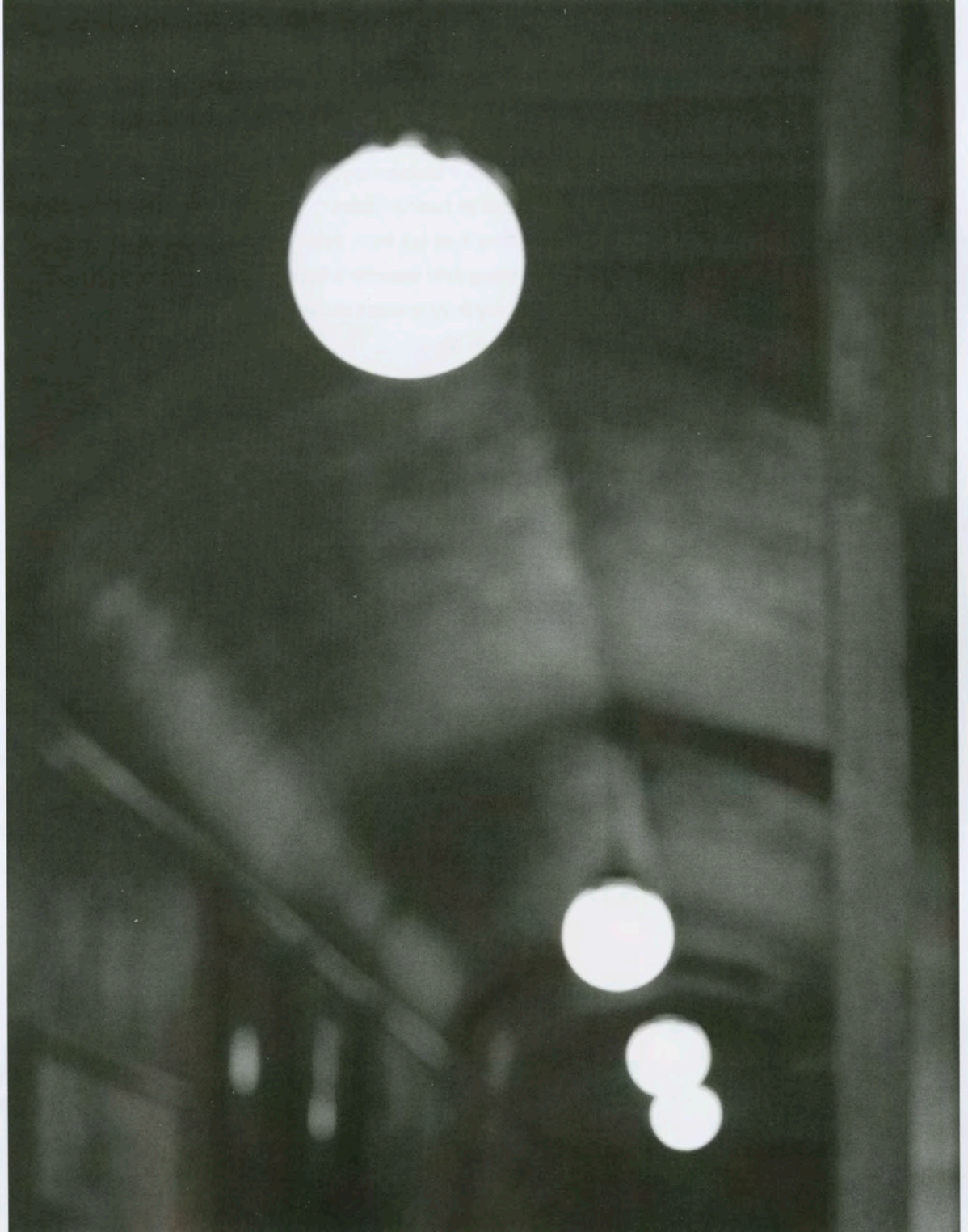
which is all just a metaphor for jazz. Dizzy Gillespie and
I have been collaborating on this piece for two years,
in the auditorium where each photon of light is a girl
I never had the nerve to ask out. Someone stage left
is giving a talk about AUTHENTICITY which is very important
and our (I mean Dizzy and I's) minds are bombarded
by the cannonballs of absolute truth. It's such a heavenly
way to lacquer on one's self-worth.

I got stung by a bee once, like a heroin needle!
or heartbreak! I like to drink, and women
make me nervous. Am I man enough
to live, with a hotdog in one hand, coming
home late at night wrapped up in a delirium

faith at the ready to believe what I tell you?

untitled

leah astore • photography • 5x7



church

joshua savory • poetry

I.

Does it bother anyone
that in twenty years
they'll all fall from their
trees and wonder where
they fell? It won't make them
more alive.

II.

Drinking seven sips of
saké from a dirty Ikea "glass"
does not help retain
the flavor. Look at flowers;
note where the root meets
the stem.

III.

After dinner, six pieces of
rock candy will be given to
you by him but they will all,
unfortunately, be coconut.

IV.

Fearers fearing
females fellate
feezing fervent
ferrets.

V.

Technically speaking, every
day is after Labor Day so it's best
to stay home, read a good book,
and wear no clothes, you sly
minx.

VI.

My name is no longer
in play so I'm replacing it
with one that matters, one
that can hold more weight
on scales.

VII.

I own a gold pen
that was refined
in a fire.



the core

sarah bates washburn • painting • 18x24



end of coaster

courtney willis • photography • 10x8

superman (new 52)

alanna mehrtens • painting • 12x12





hynes

meaghan casey • photography • 10x8

bounty

chloe andrade • photography • 10x8





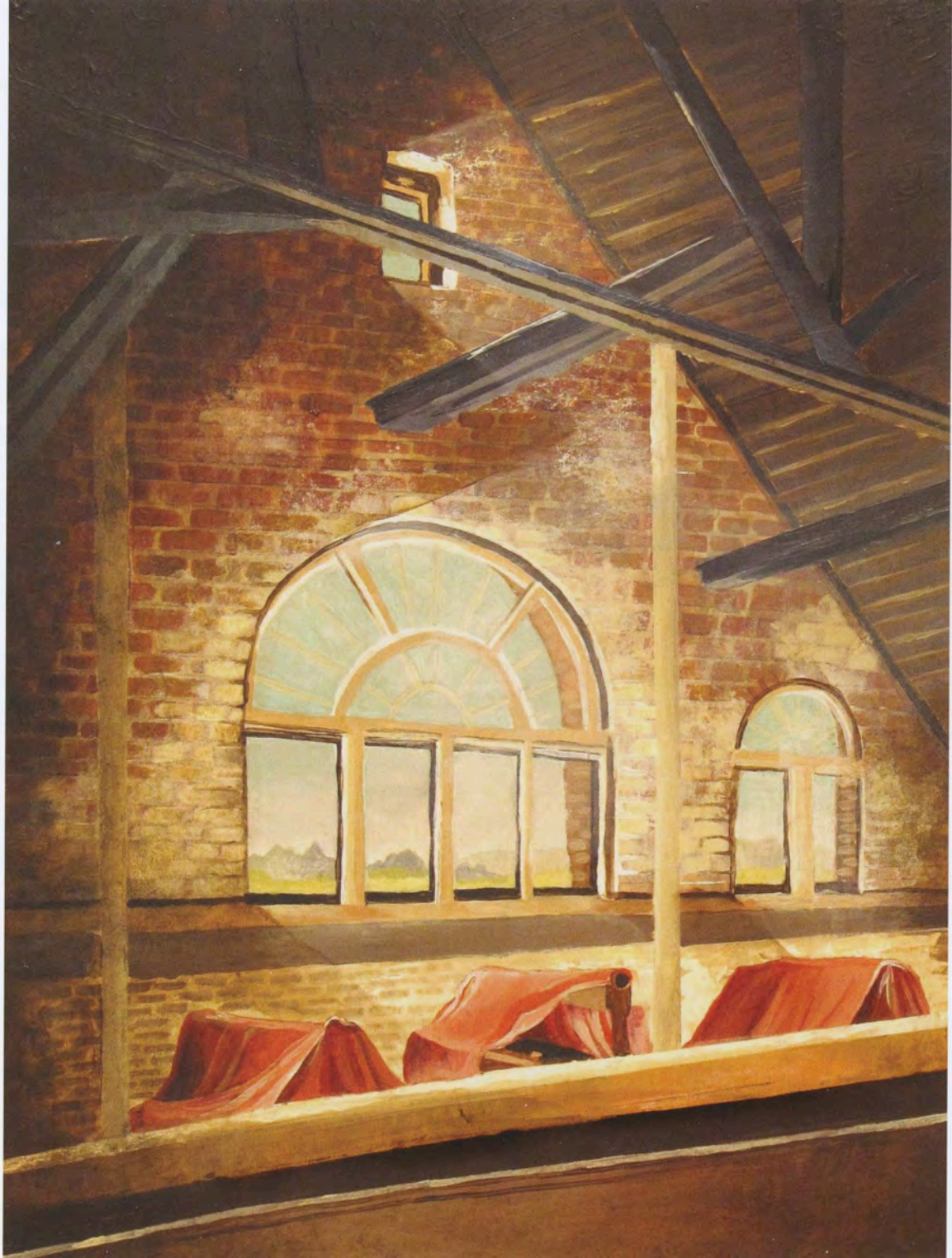


flight of the storm

leanne mocker • photography • 14x10

cathedral ceiling

alanna mehrtens • painting • 9x12





editors' notes

Ryan DiPetta • Editor-in-Chief enjoys writing, reading criticism, stockpiling candy, and dressing sharp. He hopes to head off to another part of the country and not come back for a while.

Alexa Noe' • Editor-in-Chief is a senior studying Art with a concentration in Graphic Design. She has an amazing family and a bird named Java.

Meaghan Casey is a junior at BSU majoring in English and Art, with a focus in Photography. She can be found reading a range of books from *Leaves of Grass* to *The Communist Manifesto*, fixing old cameras, and drinking copious amounts of iced black coffee.

Kacy Blais is a freshman studying Art with a concentration in Photography. She is a Celiac who cares dearly for her cat.

Gabriella Diniz is a junior studying Art with a concentration in Graphic Design and dual minors in Art History and Management. She loves her family very much and is often inspired by one little life in particular—LRA.

Brett French is a sophomore English major. You can find him on street corners talking about Boethius and Marxism. He longs to write High Fantasy, but just can't find a Hawaiian shirt that fits.

Andrew Laverty is an Art major, with a concentration on Graphic Design and is not too sure what grade he's in. He dedicates all of his work to Grammy.

Jessica Melendy is a senior double-majoring in Communication Studies and English. She plans on attending Emerson College's creative writing MFA program next fall. She hopes to someday become a professor.

William Regan is a senior majoring in English. In the fall he will attend Emerson College for an MFA in fiction.

Lee Anne Wentzell is a freshman with a dual major in Psychology and Art. She loves recycling and always has a smile on her face.

Melanie Joy McNaughton • Faculty Adviser studies visual and material culture, and continues to be inspired by *Bridge* editors' creativity and dedication. She is an Assistant Professor in the Communication Studies Department.

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

contributors' notes

Erica Adams is a designer based out of the South Shore. She enjoys exploring the relationship between inner self and external media through her artwork. Her work can be found on page 1.

Chloe Andrade is a senior double-majoring in Early Childhood Education and Art with a concentration in Art History. Chloe received a Bridge Award for her photograph titled "Bounty." Her work can be found on page 78.

Leah Astore is an English major in her senior year. She is a writer and photographer currently residing in Plymouth, MA. Her work can be found on page 72.

Meaghan Casey is a junior majoring in her two biggest passions, English and Photography, and is excited to make her mark on the world. Her work can be found on page 77.

Chan Mei Fung is a senior majoring in Fine Arts with a concentration in Printmaking. She is also a dental hygienist in Hong Kong. Mei received a Bridge Award for her collection of prints titled "My Dental Stories." Her work is featured in a portfolio, and can be found on page 54.

Shannon Collings is a senior majoring in Art, with a concentration in Fine Arts. Shannon received a Bridge Award for her metalwork pieces "Flatware" and "Tooth Bangle." Her work can be found on page 49.

Ryan DiPetta is a graduate student majoring in English, with a concentration in Creative Writing. He hopes one day to be a college professor. His work can be found on pages 31 and 71.

Nicholas Doyle is an Art major in his senior year, working on mixed media and sculpture. Originally from Milford, he currently resides in Bridgewater. His work can be found on page 25.

Ross Dunham is a Photography major in his junior year whose work also appeared in Volume 9 of *The Bridge*. His work can be found on pages 27 and 39.

Steven Dutra meditates on gutter grass and prayer flags. It's about becoming human, again. Maybe for the first time ever. His work can be found on page 6.

Virginia Kelly is pursuing a Master's of Arts in Teaching with a concentration in Creative Arts. She currently teaches in the Mansfield School District. Her work can be found on page 46.

Andrew Lavery is an Art major with a concentration in Graphic Design, and is not too sure what grade he's in. He dedicates all of his work to Grammy. His work can be found on page 29.

Christopher Lindström writes poems in between naps. He hopes to get his MFA in Creative Writing. His dream is to fix the *Terminator* series and own a raccoon. His work can be found on pages 14 and 30.

Michael Malpiedi is an alumnus of Bridgewater State University and is currently completing his MFA in Writing and Poetics at Naropa University. His work can be found on page 45.

Melanie McGrath graduated in January 2013 with a Bachelor's of Arts in Graphic Design and Photography. She enjoys creating art which captures a feeling and a moment in time. Her work can be found on page 51.

Jennifer McGunagle graduated from BSU with a Bachelor's degree in Art, with a concentration in Art Education. Her work can be found on page 5.

Alanna Mehrrens is a junior at Bridgewater State, majoring in Art with a concentration in Graphic Design and a minor in Art History. Alanna received a Bridge Award for her drawing titled "Coffee Break." Her work can be found on pages 3, 28, 80, and 81.

Jessica Melendy is a senior double-majoring in Communication Studies and English. She plans on attending Emerson College's creative writing MFA program next fall. Her work can be found on page 19.

Leanne Mocker is an Elementary Education major in her junior year. After college, she plans to become a teacher in Boston. Her work can be found on page 79.

Alexa Noe is a senior studying Art with a concentration in Graphic Design. She has an amazing family and a bird named Java. Her work can be found on page 22.

Christina Novotny is a senior double-majoring in Mathematics and Art with a concentration in Fine Arts. She will be graduating in Fall 2013. Christina received a Bridge Award for her silkscreen series "Untitled." Her work can be found on page 69.

Zoe Palmer is a senior, majoring in Art with a concentration in Crafts. She will be continuing her craft in glasswork this coming April, when she will begin restoring antique stained glass windows in the Outer Banks, NC. Her work can be found on page 52.

Tasha Ramos will complete her Master's in English this spring. She lives on Cape Cod with her husband and two children. Tasha received a Bridge Award for her piece "Requiem." Her work can be found on page 21.

William Regan is a senior majoring in English. In the fall he will attend Emerson College for an MFA in fiction. His work can be found on pages 31 and 59.

Nequisha Rivera is a senior majoring in Art with a concentration in Photography. She would like to thank Professor Mercedes Nuñez for her guidance. Her work can be found on page 23.

Shane Rocha is an alumnus of the class of 2011. He currently lives in an apartment with few windows and plans to teach conversational English overseas. Shane received a Bridge Award for his piece titled "The Imperfectionists." His work can be found on page 15.

Brittany Rollings is a senior majoring in Art with concentrations in Photography, Graphic Design, and Art History. She hopes to work with Ferrottype and Collodion printing in the near future. Her work can be found on page 4.

Ashley Rose is a senior at Bridgewater State University double-majoring in English and Elementary Education. She is especially interested in creative non-fiction and hopes to further her work in that and other genres after graduation. Her work can be found on page 7.

Amanda Rae Rouillard is an alumna of Bridgewater State, and will be moving on to grad school. She hopes to one day be a professor, and if that doesn't work, Squirrel Girl is the most obvious choice. Her work can be found on page 58.

Joshua Savory is a graduate student majoring in English. He has a collection of poetry titled *Botany: The Flower and You*. His work can be found on page 73.

Kelly Schoop graduated from Bridgewater State University in 2010 with a Bachelor's degree in English and a concentration in Writing. She now resides in Southern California and continues to write. Her work can be found on page 41.

Sarah Bates Washburn graduated from BSU as part of the class of 2001. She was awarded a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts, and works as a professional artist in Plymouth, MA. Her wife is a senior at BSU, and will be graduating this year. Her work can be found on page 74.

Courtney Willis is an Art Major with dual concentrations in Graphic Design and Photography. After graduation she plans to pursue a career in magazine publishing, while also working as a photographer. Her work can be found on pages 47 and 75.

Liz Young is a Fine Arts major in her junior year at Bridgewater State University. She has published work in the third volume of *Sugar Ninjas: Sweet*. Her work can be found on page 24.

volume 9

associated collegiate press

Pacemaker Award

columbia scholastic press association

Silver Crown Award

Nineteen Gold Circle Awards:

Bryan Way, "Ugly Blood Heart"; Second Place for Poetry: Open Free Form

Steven Dutra, "Forty Foot Squall"; Certificate of Merit for Poetry: Open Free Form

Amanda Rae Rouillard, "I want to"; Certificate of Merit for Poetry: Open Free Form

Michael Malpiedi, "Pantoum for a Brother"; First Place for Poetry: Closed Traditional Form

Taylor Daley, "Flight of Heart"; Certificate of Merit for Poetry: Closed Traditional Form

Evan Dardano, "Osric"; Third Place for Traditional Fiction

Diane Sullivan, "Walking Through Water"; First Place for Essays

Michael Malpiedi, "Weaving Community from HBO to Cairo"; Certificate of Merit for Non-Fiction Interview

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

The Bridge Staff, Certificate of Merit for General Use of Typography Throughout Magazine

Kenneth Fontaine, "Snow-Covered Rooftops"; Third Place for Single Illustration: Hand-Drawn

Kenneth Fontaine, "Benny's Layaway"; Certificate of Merit for Single Illustration: Hand-Drawn

Taylor Nash, "Nightlights"; Certificate of Merit for Single Illustration: Hand-Drawn

Stephen Plummer, "Metro"; Third Place for Single Illustration: Computer-Generated

Kenneth Fontaine, First Place for Portfolio Illustration

Hoi Yuk Pang, "Chinese Factory"; Third Place for Photography

The Bridge Staff, "Human Nature"; Second Place for Literary Single Spread

The Bridge Staff, "Kracken"; Third Place for Single Spread

The Bridge Staff, Third Place for Literary Multi-Page Presentation

The background features a large, light blue silhouette of a bridge arch spanning the upper half of the frame. Below the arch, a series of white, stylized triangular shapes are arranged in a row, resembling the truss structure of a bridge. The overall color palette is soft, with light blues, whites, and pale pinks.

the Bridge

general guidelines

Submissions are open to current and former students of Bridgewater State University. Literature and digital art submissions should be submitted via our website. All work must be accompanied by a cover letter that includes the submitter's name, phone number, email address, year or graduation date, major, and each entry's title and genre; please also include a 20 to 25 word biography (all contributors will be acknowledged with a short biography in the journal). Submissions will be accepted in more than one genre or as multiple works in the same genre, but no more than 10 works per genre per person will be considered. Up to seven student works will be selected for Bridge Awards (which carry a \$200 honorarium). Editors may submit work by following the established guidelines, but are only eligible for one acceptance and are ineligible to win awards. Sending a submission to the journal indicates consent to have your work published. For our most current submission policies, or further information, please visit our website or contact the journal at: thebridgejournal@bridgew.edu.

literature guidelines

All work is to be submitted electronically, via the forms on the submissions page of our site. Prose must be double-spaced. Poetry is accepted in traditional and open forms. Preference is given to shorter pieces. Please note that pieces may need to be edited for publication and editors reserve the right to exert discretion over final content.

visual art guidelines

Digital art submissions are to be submitted electronically, via the forms on the submissions page of our site. Works must be 300 dpi (minimum), in jpeg format, with a maximum file size of 1 MB. In person submissions (pieces which must be photographed, like glasswork, painting or sculpture) must be brought to the Bridge office in Tillinghast Hall (room 239) during our submission period (see website for details). Work will not be stored. Please note that on rare occasions a piece may need some minor editing to appear its best for publication.

thebridgejournal.com



The Bridge Journal

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