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Welcome to

THE BRIDGE

A STUDENT JOURNAL OF
LITERATURE AND FINE ART



The Bridge

A Student Journal of Literature and Fine Arts

Volume 14



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*This journal is dedicated to
Evan Dardano for his
consistent volunteer
presence and
unwavering support.*

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Acknowledgements

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We cannot move forward without thanking both Donna Balkcom and Megan Plante, of the copy center, whose turnaround time knows no bounds. We would have been stuck with low print balances and papercuts had you ladies not helped us out. Thank you to Michelle Handley, the administrative assistant in academic affairs who supported us while working with the budget for the journal. Thank you to Orson Kingsley the head of archives and special collections, who assisted in creating this wonderful cover by providing materials and support.

An additional thank you to Clarence Major, a previous visiting author of the campus, whose support comes in the form of an author profile found on page 97.

Mission Statement

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

Copyright Statement

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Letter From the Editors

Picture this: it's September, the first day of classes. Four students walk into a room on the ground floor of the Maxwell Library. None of them have ever been on The Bridge staff; some of them have only ever heard rumors about the literary journal you hold in your hands now. Accompanying us is Katy Whittingham, serving as the advisor of The Bridge for the first time.

We were all a bit apprehensive. How would we go from a group of four literature-crazed students, to a staff ready to mold and build a journal out of the artwork and literature submitted to us? It was a very daunting task. We were told horror stories about The Bridge. That we would not be able to make plans for spring break because that week would be filled with ten hour days of making layouts and cover designs. That copy editing symbols would fill our dreams and conversations. That it would be a taxing and extremely long process, but in the end we would feel so full of accomplishment that nothing else would matter.

Looking back now, doubling our staff and having our team grow, the obstacles we have overcome together, and the time we spent making this journal something to be proud of, we are all, in fact, filled with a sense of accomplishment. The creation of this journal was an incredible journey. We would have gotten nowhere had it not been for our amazing advisor Katy Whittingham. Who worked tirelessly to assist us in any way that she could. Without her this journal would not have existed. We would also like to extend our thanks to Evan Dardano, who taught us more about working as a team and creating something we could all be proud of.

This year along with many other firsts, will also be the year we launch an online companion of The Bridge. The online companion will feature the full manuscript of some of the longer works that were submitted to volume 14. This can be located at bridgebsu.com.

Turn the page and begin to enjoy the art and literature, of the Alumni and students, whose pure talent and dedication to submitting only their best work is evident throughout the rest of this journal.

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April 2017

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Et Tu, Brute

All the words and their definitions that we are meet and collide and suddenly there are new words and new definitions and we are one.

A cacophony of light and hate and darkness and love and indifference.

We are lost in translation.

Something from the Qur'an maybe.

A dua mistranslated from its mother tongue.

Maybe we are not supposed to be.

But on those marble steps we seized the day.

We are Greco-Roman folklore, a story in which everything goes well for a while then suddenly I'm in the midst of a circle of my friends with a knife in my stomach.

I don't want this story to end, but we're three pages from the other cover and I don't know how much longer I can hold on to you, or you on to me.

Please don't let me collect dust on your shelf.

Please don't let me be like the other books you've read and got bored with after a few chapters.

Don't let me become a book you read in between others, and when you have nothing better to do.

Please don't let me collect dust on your shelf.

Imagine That

Kelley Barrett
Non-fiction

According to my mother, I had an internal clock that woke me up every morning at 5:00 a.m. to watch Pappyland, an ecstasy-induced, live action children's show featuring Pappy Drewitt, a suspicious yet enthusiastic hillbilly with a real knack for drawing and interacting with small children. Pappy and his peculiar friends lived in *Pappyland*, which he created using a magical pencil and the free time his failed art career allowed for. When they weren't learning life lessons from a talking paintbrush, a turtle fresh off the boat from Italy, or a beaver in a propeller hat, children were encouraged to draw along with Pappy. He would often start out with merely a squiggle on a piece of paper, which could turn into anything from a snake, to a rope, to a full-blown but slightly wobbly circle. Anything was possible in Pappyland, which is something Pappy said roughly twelve times per episode. In this land, you could color outside the lines. You could create and recreate with reckless abandon. You could even tell someone it was "blue after two" and it would be taken as a legitimate measurement of time. I became immersed in this intoxicating Eden of imagination, inspired by the limitless possibilities and thrilled by the genuine disregard for the objective bounds of reality.

Our refrigerator soon became cluttered with the pencil-drawn tour de force I myself deemed worthy of public acclaim. "Wow, look at that detail!" my mother would exaggerate, shooting a smile in my direction before taking out the milk. I began distributing my artwork on the street, meaning I would put drawings in my elderly neighbor's mailbox without her asking. I watched from my window as her car pulled into the driveway, excitedly anticipating her reaction. She would bring the illustration over to the house later in the evenings for me to autograph.

"And who should I make this one out to?" I would tease, pretending that the scribbles somehow translated to my name in cursive. For all intents and purposes, I was Van Gogh on the verge of *Starry Night*. I drew everything I could possibly imagine, and would often accompany the drawings with even more absurd stories. *The Mystery at the Museum* was my debut novel, which chronicled the curious case of missing bones at a dinosaur exhibit. My readers, who consisted of four family members and two neighbors, praised the work, unanimously noting that they never expected the culprit to be the unassuming, purple-polka-dotted Dalmatian with three prior arrests.

Whether I was doodling along with Pappy or making clay figurines to go along with a short story on talking mice oppressed in a world geared towards humans, I was creating and imagining, chronicling it all in a handmade journal. Thanks to Pappy, I walked through my very small world with my head somewhere between the clouds and the aliens that most definitely inhabited Mars. I saw a world with dragons, and

imaginary friends, and flying pigs. Reality was merely a suggestion, and the limitations were endless. However, around the fourth grade, a wicked being stormed my whimsical world, waging war against my imagination with the power of Narnia's White Witch. She came in the form of a perpetually angry and presumably constipated art teacher, Mrs. Dell.

Mrs. Dell was a crayon-wielding Gestapo officer, dedicated to using art as a vehicle to curb children's creativity. An interesting approach—cleverly attacking the practice from inside the system. I'm not sure what happened in her life to induce such a deep-rooted disgust for children, but students like me didn't remedy her condition. Her patience teetered on the line between non-existent and *Seinfeld's* Soup Nazi on his very worst day.

She drew everything in meticulous detail on the board, with each line measured precisely to scale, using a yardstick that I always feared would end up on the wrong side of someone's face. "None of you know what you're doing! It's not that hard!" she would scream at a class of eight-year-olds, pointing hopelessly at the three-dimensional hexagonal prism on the board that none of us could seem to recreate. She would circle the room like a flesh-starved shark, ready to pounce on the unfortunate soul who drew a four-inch line instead of a three-inch one. This was a severe offense in her book, which undoubtedly featured a hit list of shaky-handed children.

She would scream with the intensity of a soap opera murder victim over menial things, such as someone using the wrong color, or sketching outside the lines. "WHAT. ARE. YOU. DOING?" she

she yelled, pointing to my paper, "FROM THAT," she motioned towards the board.

"Um, I just...the mountains reminded me of skiing, which reminded me of snow, which reminded me of Christmas, which reminded me of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," I offered anxiously as if I were on trial. "ARE YOU ALRIGHT IN THE HEAD? FOLLOW DIRECTIONS!" she screamed, marching to the front of the room. On her way back, she scanned the other creations, determining that they lacked the innovation and signs of early-onset schizophrenia that characterized my work. She grabbed another girl's drawing and held it up to me. "THIS IS WHAT YOUR PAPER SHOULD LOOK LIKE! IT'S NOT DIFFICULT! START OVER!" A sudden rage sizzled in my chest. Instead of erasing the extraneous details on my paper, I added more; filling every available white space with whatever popped into my head.

"The reason I want these to come out perfect," she said, in a slightly calmer tone, "Is that they will be put on display at the art fair next week."

some minor adjustments. I added snow, skiers, reindeer, and an Abominable Snowman waiting for the opportune time to strike. Just before I began to sketch the peppermint mine for Yukon Cornelius to uncover with Rudolph, I felt a warm breath on the back of my neck. "WHAT? STOP! STOP WHAT YOU'RE DOING NOW!" she roared, snatching my paper with her spiny hands.

With steam threatening to spew from her ears, she crumpled the paper and then slammed it back onto my desk, her bony fingers pointing out the obvious errors. "YOU ARE INSULTING CLAUDE MONET!" she announced, before giving a lengthy explanation of the fact that we need to have respect for art, and not do what I was doing, which apparently was the art class equivalent of spray-painting profanities on a public building.

"EXPLAIN HOW YOU GET THIS,"

would howl, spitting in our faces and speaking to us like we were hearing-impaired toddlers. If you wanted to borrow a pencil during class because, hypothetically, you snapped yours out of fear, you would have to give Mrs. Dell your shoe for the duration of the period in exchange. "You'll get this back when I get my pencil back," she'd scoff, creating the warden/prisoner dynamic that the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks was clearly lacking.

As much as I feared Mrs. Dell and genuinely believed she was in cahoots with some malevolent force, I could not bring myself to follow her instructions. During one class, we were commanded to recreate Monet's *The Alps Seen from Cap d'Antibes*. A simple task, if we were world-renowned impressionists instead of nose-picking eight-year-olds. I attempted the feat, but with

Our classroom erupted into an excited chatter, with students whispering, "Let me see your paper!" and "Will the best one win a prize?" and "Do you think Mrs. Dell will actually give me back my shoe this time? Because it's snowing out and I have to walk home and frostbite is a real concern but I don't want to ask her."

"SILENCE," she bellowed, prompting everyone to sit upright in unison. "I will determine which papers go on the wall and which ones do not. Start finishing up."

As an anxious student who strove to achieve perfection, it was uncharacteristic of me to rebel against a teacher. However, with a firm grip on my colored pencil, I pulled a full-blown Pappy. I now decided that one of the mountains would become a volcano in mid-eruption, spewing molten lava all over the fresh-fallen snow. The other students in my group were amused by my lack of regard for Mrs. Dell's authority, and in what felt like a peasant revolt against a tyrannical czar, they began to veer from the instructions as well. One boy drew himself standing on the mountain with his friends. The girl across

from me included the entire cast of Spongebob on her mountain range that she now decided would be a coral reef. Another girl thought it would be funny to draw faces on the mountains, which just looked like a deformed Mount Rushmore, but her attempt was duly noted.

Minutes remained in the class and Mrs. Dell announced that she would be going around the room to collect our papers, assuming they were good enough for the asbestos-ridden cafeteria wall they would be so elegantly hung on. She picked up at least ten acceptable papers, causing face-cracking smiles at the students who had followed her directions. This unnaturally pleasant demeanor shifted as she approached my area of the room, picking up the first boy's drawing as if it were covered in feces. She quickly dropped it from her grasp in disgust, sniffing out the other recalcitrant artwork before it could float back onto his desk.

"DO YOU PEOPLE THINK YOU'RE FUNNY?" she hollered in disbelief. We looked at one another and then at the floor while she berated us for daring to have a spark of creativity in a children's art class.

"It's you," she said, pointing directly at me. "You think you can just draw whatever you want—it's poisonous behavior. Your mind is in la-la land." Our three masterpieces were not chosen for the prestigious gallery. And, to make matters worse, I was now a pestilent creature, infecting the innocent minds of those around me. Choking back the tears I refused to let stream down my face, I got up to sharpen my pencil, all the while avoiding eye contact with Mrs. Dell.

"We are drawing mountains," she said. "Not what you think a mountain should look like, but what the mountain actually

looks like in the painting. We are drawing reality, not your daydreams. Understand?"

I turned to look at her with my freshly sharpened pencil, blowing the shavings off and staring back at her. I wanted to call Pappy and see if he might take a break from frolicking around to summon his band of creatures together. They could all sharpen their pencils, crayons, and maybe a pitchfork or two. The talking beaver would yell, "CHARGE!" and with our razor-sharp pencils and hearts teeming with passion, we would advance valiantly forwards, ultimately cornering her until she raised a white flag, screaming, "Fine! I don't care anymore! Draw whatever!" The gang from Pappyland would, of course, never resort to actual violence—this would merely be an intimidation tactic. Nevertheless, we would fight for the right to doodle.

"Hello? Understand?" she snarled again. The battlefield in my mind faded just before we could celebrate our victory via an outrageous parade through Pappyland. The classroom came back into focus. "Answer me right now!" she added, for good measure.

I felt the weight of twenty frightened eyes on me and, in one of the more badass moments of my elementary school career, said, "No. I don't."

A simultaneous gasp seemed to suck all the oxygen from the room. "Sit in your seat right now," she commanded. I obeyed, doubting my decision to be insolent with every step back to my seat. "Do you want me to tell your homeroom teacher about this?" she asked, very close to my face, which now undoubtedly bore a resemblance to the "torch red" Crayola crayon she held.

My audacity began to evaporate, however, as I thought about Mrs. Dell reporting my concerning behavior. "Yes," she would sigh loudly, her hand on her forehead as if she might faint, "To a Monet piece nonetheless! She's dangerous!"

My homeroom teacher never approached me, so I wasn't sure if Mrs. Dell refrained from ratting me out or if the teacher discounted it, chalking her outrage up to some severe personality disorder. Nevertheless, it struck me that acting on my imagination would be considered dangerous. I was no child psychologist, but I reflected that perhaps meandering into walk-in closets half hoping to reach Narnia—something I did alarmingly often—was a red flag.

We did not have a walk-in closet, but I had several friends and family members that did. "I'm just going to the bathroom," I would

lie, and within minutes find myself
knee deep in some forgotten
Christmas decorations, headed
for what I hoped would be the
snowy, magical land of Narnia. As
a logical being, of course I knew
that disappointment inevitably
lay at the end of the closet. But, it
was that irrational shred of belief
that there might be something
that thrilled me to no end. And
what granted me some sense of
solace, was that someone even
more dangerous than me created
that wondrous world, inspiring
my wandering mind to fall down
a rabbit hole. And, try as she might,
Mrs. Dell could not suppress my
urge to imagine

The Fox

Emily Harrington
Art
Colored Pencil
8" x 5"



Worth of Pleasure

Mitchell Reid
Poetry

Flower: you are not a mere foil
Heaven cursed for me:
or, by heart, to be dragged through
Harsh turmoil
of mine. The Sun won't see
you till the soil,
yet seducing rays shine on me.
But, had I been birthed
right, my pleasure'd have worth.

For me, you sweetly implore otherwise;
how lovish, a honey's moon! Still,
I fret:
is faith in God's craft, his prize-
All there is to get?
My soul - a shrouded winner, cries
for an almost surged kiss. Still,
I bet
our worth (though initially snared)
in bunches blooms, in loving paired.

Accordion Book

Ghada Masri

Art

Book Art/Mixed Media

6" x 6"



Modern Day Persephone

Cailin Doty
Poetry

To my husband,
my darling Hades,
my dearest Plouton,
I hope this letter finds you well
in good health and mind.

Spring has come with my arrival
back to my mother's farmlands.
Though if you could see it now,
you would think we were in
the quarries of your domain.

The freezing rain and hail that keep
new growth from blooming remind me of
the time you took me to see a storm surge,
the roaring oceans and the howling winds
that crashed against us as we stood
above it all on an eroding cliff.

(Your smile then was as wide as the one you wore on our wedding day.)

We have to keep saplings on the heaters.
Mother had to take in her little window-box full of wildflowers.
We depend on the sun and heat for growth.
You do not my love. You and your employees can work
in the bitter cold and blinding dark and flourish in too.

(Please don't work them too hard in my absence, my dear.
They too have spouses that love them and wait for their return.)

But these harsh few days will yield
to the golden sun and the blue sky's glory.
and everything that died in my absence
will be brought back to life
with my and mother's hands.

But I've noticed, as soon as we begin planting:
the wheat, the grains, the roots, the tubers,
the crawling roses and the sprawling flowers,
a darkness blossoms in my heart
demanding for their quick and violent end.

Oh my love, spring is deceptively kind
in our first few days apart.
But even I tire of song birds pecking at my window,
the blistering sun scrapping its rays on my skin
and the regal matron kindness of my mother.

My dear,
I count the days until your shy, cold hands will reach for mine
to chase away the loathsome heat
that clings to my tanned skin
and my gauzy dresses of the lightest cotton.

I wait for the silent nights and mornings of the quarry,
where no birds dare fly and bother us,
so I can revel in your heavy breaths and sighs
that I mine with every tender kiss
I plant on your pale throat.

I miss you.
Gods I miss you.
I miss that danger-seeking, ever-knowing smile
that can shame the diamonds found in the cufflinks of your shirt
or the silver that make our rings.

Hades,
if I was given the chance,
I would gladly let the world freeze over,
leave the crops to wither on and the people screaming in eternal frost,
just to stay by your side all year long.

Baton Rouge

Morgan Amaral
Poetry

I don't feel lonely when no one makes me hot soup when I get the flu
I don't miss you when I'm standing alone outside in the cold with no one to share a coat with
I don't need you when I am looking at the empty dark space in my cold bed
and I try to tell myself I don't still love you but it's hard to deny the way my sleepy fingers stretch across to
search for a body that was never lying next to me

and never a day goes by when the voice inside my head isn't yours
and not a day goes by that I am not not reminded of you

I smell fresh laundry—I think of you
I drink coffee—I think of you
I smile—I miss yours
I laugh—I miss your humor
I cry—it's because of you

I don't feel lonely when no one makes me hot soup when I get the flu
I miss you in the silence after I sneeze

I don't miss you when I'm standing alone outside in the cold with no one to share a coat with
I need you in the way my fingers were never warmer than when interlocked with yours

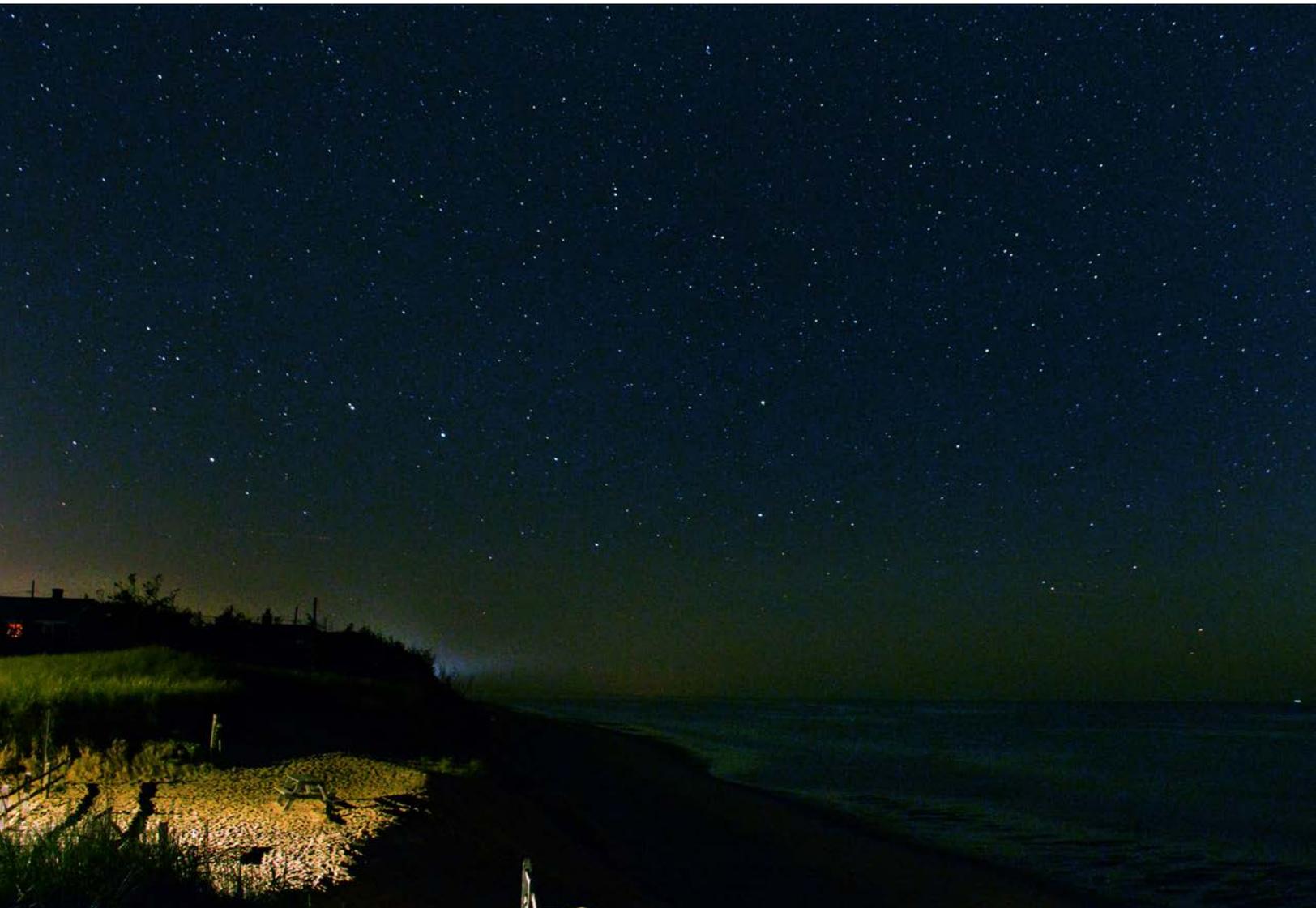
I don't need you when I am looking at the empty dark space in my cold bed
I need you in the way I could feel your smile radiate sunshine even in the darkest rooms

I miss you in the way my head thinks this is a bad idea but my body
my body, shows all signs of needing you

// esCape //

Charlie Frodigh
Art
Digital Photography
5328 x 3622 px

Bridge Honors
Best Photography



craters have intentions

Caitlin Westgate
Poetry

the moon punches through
black construction paper,
matte, wobbling like an aluminum sheet.
fluorescence pours out
sheer film of
moon rays like limbs
reaching tenderly, eagerly, for the ground.

i watch the process from my bed,
swaddled in cotton spirals
wondering what those glow
hands are stretching for,
or if they're simply sore
from holding up the sun so long.
small grid lines of my insect
screen obscure and intersect
but i see them as clearly
as on the night we met.

Moth's on the Porch

Kate Pallis
Fiction

While the sun went down, we didn't talk. Nothing but random grunts broke up the rhythm of our shovels and the crisp scoops of soil beneath us. It was dark now and the peepers had started. Fireworks we couldn't see whistled their way dead, crackling somewhere off in the distance. We were digging a hole behind the shed for Moth's dog, Pablo. Pablo was not a Chihuahua. It was around that time that everyone's dogs started dying. These were the dogs that our parents got each of our families when we were all still little kids. What they didn't tell us was that one day the dogs wouldn't be puppies anymore. No. They'd eventually be the whole full-grown fucking thing. A Newfoundland mix or some shit. And we'd be the ones who had to dig the giant fucking hole to plant it in the ground.

I had found Moth on the porch steps earlier when I opened the screen door. You could tell by the way he was sitting that his body was tall and all angles. His elbows were on his knees and his head hanging down in his chest so his shoulders kind of looked like wings. He held his blue hat in his hands and kind of played with it, spinning it around occasionally. It had been a gift from his cousin, Oscar, in Colorado. Moth'd been telling us he was moving there to meet him for years. He'd always have a job lined up that would somehow fall through. I had stopped asking.

Anyways, I could tell something was wrong because he heard the door open behind him and he didn't look. I tickled his armpits. He was still. So, I sat next to him for a minute without saying anything; tried to enjoy the late afternoon sun.

"Pablo died." He said after a while. His face was emotionless. His mouth thinly underlined his nose. I don't even think he blinked. He just kept half-heartedly spinning that hat in his hands and nodding his head.

"I'm sorry Moth, he was a good dog," I said. This was mostly true.

"I can't bury him at my house it's too close to the lake, if it floods again..."

"What do you mean bury him? You still have him?"

"He, uh, he got hit by a car," he swallowed, "I, ah, dragged him into the yard, put him in the wheelbarrow." He stopped spinning his hat. Nodded his head. He opened his mouth to say something else. Stopped.

"Jesus Christ, oh my god, that must've—you must've—what're you going to do?" I was shocked. I mean, that had to be suicide. The dog was how old? And we lived on a back road—There weren't even any lines painted on it. There was never traffic.

"I was wondering if, um, we could bury him here," he said.

"Of course," I said without even thinking. I lived further from the lake than any of us. Moth just wanted to put Pablo some place safe.

"Do you have a shovel?"

So now here we were. In the fucking dirt. I was sweating a lot so the dirt was all stuck to me, and if I looked anything like Moth then pretty soon you'd only be able to see the whites of my eyes in the darkness.

We figured that, at 110 lbs Pablo was the size of a small adult human, we would have to bury him below the frost line. That way the grave wouldn't heave open from winter freezing or spring thawing. Six fucking feet. I was about to stop at four.

Moth had been really into it when we first started. I figure he must have been digging for clarity. He was excavating the memory of having dragged the dog's mutilated body onto the lawn and into his wheelbarrow from his psyche. Now I could tell he was starting to get a little tired.

His digs were slower. He poured each scoop of dirt out like a sigh. I stopped to take a breath and offered him some of my water.

"How's work?" I asked when he handed the bottle back to me. He'd started a new job last week. He was now taking inventory for some grocery store, part-time, working nights.

"It's alright, except everyone's Hispanic," he said, sat down on the edge of the grave.

"You're Hispanic," I said.

"Yeah, but I don't speak Spanish," Moth said, shrugging. "And working nights fucks me up. I feel like I'm just off from everyone." I could tell he was frustrated the way he shook his head and lit a cigarette.

"At least it's cooler now that the sun's down." I changed the subject.

He nodded and said, "We need to find a way to mark the grave."

Downstairs

Hannah Green
Poetry

Bridge Honors
Best Poetry Piece

Grass never grew in our front yard,
just cement necco-wafer blocks pushed
into the dirt
like fingernails.

Our cat Khaki was so fat that her tail
didn't wag;
she looked like a mound of play-dough
that someone stuck a toothpick in.

I used to play with the trash in our yard,
and the best was a big plastic bucket
filled with swirling debris and rainwater.

You could draw dust pictures on the TV,
and I still picture Bill O'Reilly covered in
grey film with a smiley face on his
forehead.

My uncle always smoked in the house,
and I would sit on the couch with him
and
ask him to blow it out of his nostrils.

He dug up the whole backyard with a
rototiller
churning up the last of the grass
to grow vegetables that he gave away.

Tobias

Christina Ouellette
Art
Digital Photography



the crescent hill we've never been

James Holbert
Poetry

you're not made of the chemistry
that makes trees bend.
somewhere, nothing is blooming.

i can't help but see,
pictures, pictures,

a hill catching the sun,

the gums of all the children,
half-licked suckers,
day-time daddies.

us in hand,
galloping comets
crashing the night.

no longer can i watch
the women
face their fears.

You Can't Tell Me That Hungry Isn't An Emotion

Dominique Durden
Poetry

You look like you've been starving.
Like you ain't been fed in weeks.
Like you're waiting for something good to be there when you get home.
Like something other than the crippling loneliness.
Something other than the skeletons in your closet.

I wonder, when your mother asks
"Have you eaten?"
Do you tell her that you've been starving?
Or that you're just not hungry?

Future Ex-Patriot

Bryan Way
Poetry

you and I were supposed to be
the death enemies of Sinatra's
best years.
in cyclical bribery, in the
sleepy days and months that followed:
summer, winter,
summer, winter,
and then summer again.

where did we go wrong?

cardiac arrests on the redline,
speeding through the city
to follow the mountains, to follow
the redline of the skyline, to see
it to its bitter end
buried in the pine trees,

on MacArthur's boulevard, 28,
passing dead dogs lining the snow-stained
streets, ice crimping the rime
of winter, and then spring, and then
summer again.

where did we go wrong?

you're 46 years old.
you were. you're dead now,
you're dead now.
microwave still in the house.
truck still parked out back.
even a bottle left untouched,
unopened.
even still.

you're 12 years old,
you still love your father,
in the distance
is a dog playing in the street,
the cadillacs passing by.
sixty-five miles an hour.

you don't know what it tastes
like yet.

fall asleep after pissing into
the house plants,
it's summer.

and then it's winter, summer, winter,
and then summer again.

when I was younger I used to write
poems about you.
your sister said "why the fuck would you write
this? this isn't what it's like."

oh yeah?

Caitlin Westgate
Non-Fiction

Absentee Ballot

We had the house to ourselves. Brian cooked a large bowl of pasta sprinkled with Parmesan cheese for dinner, a side salad with croutons nested in the lettuce leaves, and garlic bread. His cat slept on top of an old cardboard pizza box on the kitchen table. We spread blankets on the living room floor and put on a movie about vampires, or crime, or both. I said it was the best Valentine's Day I'd ever had.

During car rides, Brian said Obama this and Romney that, and I would stare out the passenger side window at the unfamiliar landscape, naked trees stooping over guardrails and scraping pavement. I didn't even vote, maybe to spite him, maybe just because I didn't really know how an absentee ballot worked.

I tried to teach him how to play gin rummy, but he became enraged when I told him he was supposed to pick up before he discarded. He broke his favorite record player and then sent shards of glass and candle wax spinning across the floor of his bedroom while I cried on my knees in the hallway.

I used to drive around with him when he delivered Chinese food, getting high and chain-smoking Marlboro Reds that we would buy for six dollars across the New Hampshire border. I was living in a haze of marijuana and what I thought love should look like. It didn't matter how successful Obamacare was or wasn't; none of the Obama paraphernalia that decorated his car or his winter jacket made us any better for each other.

He broke up with me once during a snowstorm. The roads were icy and unplowed. I was trapped in a house with someone I thought I loved who didn't want to love me anymore. I smoked cigarettes with my body squished between the sliding door and its frame; there was too much snow to step out onto the porch, so I was stuck halfway between indoors and out, inhaling fire.

My constant assertions that I needed to leave were met with concern for my safety if I tried to navigate the icy roads, so I spent most of my time burning myself with the stinging hot end of my Bic lighter, until he decided he had changed his mind and didn't want to break up. I should have made him stick with his decision. Instead, much like the election, I didn't vote.

When we finally broke up for good, I pulled out of his driveway and drove the two and a half hours home, the dog tags he used to wear pressing indents in my palm when I turned the wheel. When I got there, I burned his letters.

Bridge Honors
Best Overall Piece

Grandpa Jim

D.S. Hooker
Poetry

His laughter once shattered
like a Budweiser bottle. His teeth

the brown pieces. Now, his beard
ajar & machine breathing,

he's been poured. Cold tile
& divider curtain replace

his kitchen; its linoleum, wood
paneling & warm ESPN glow.

Sandwich done him in. Shook
& sweated more than sobriety

facing that last bite. Beneath
fluorescent hum I hear him chuckle

at how dumb that sounds. Light shines
through blinds & makes him less pale.

Dust floats in the rays. I once thimble
his finger, was once gloved by his hand.

His palm tucks inside mine, I stroke
IV tubes. Squeeze back.

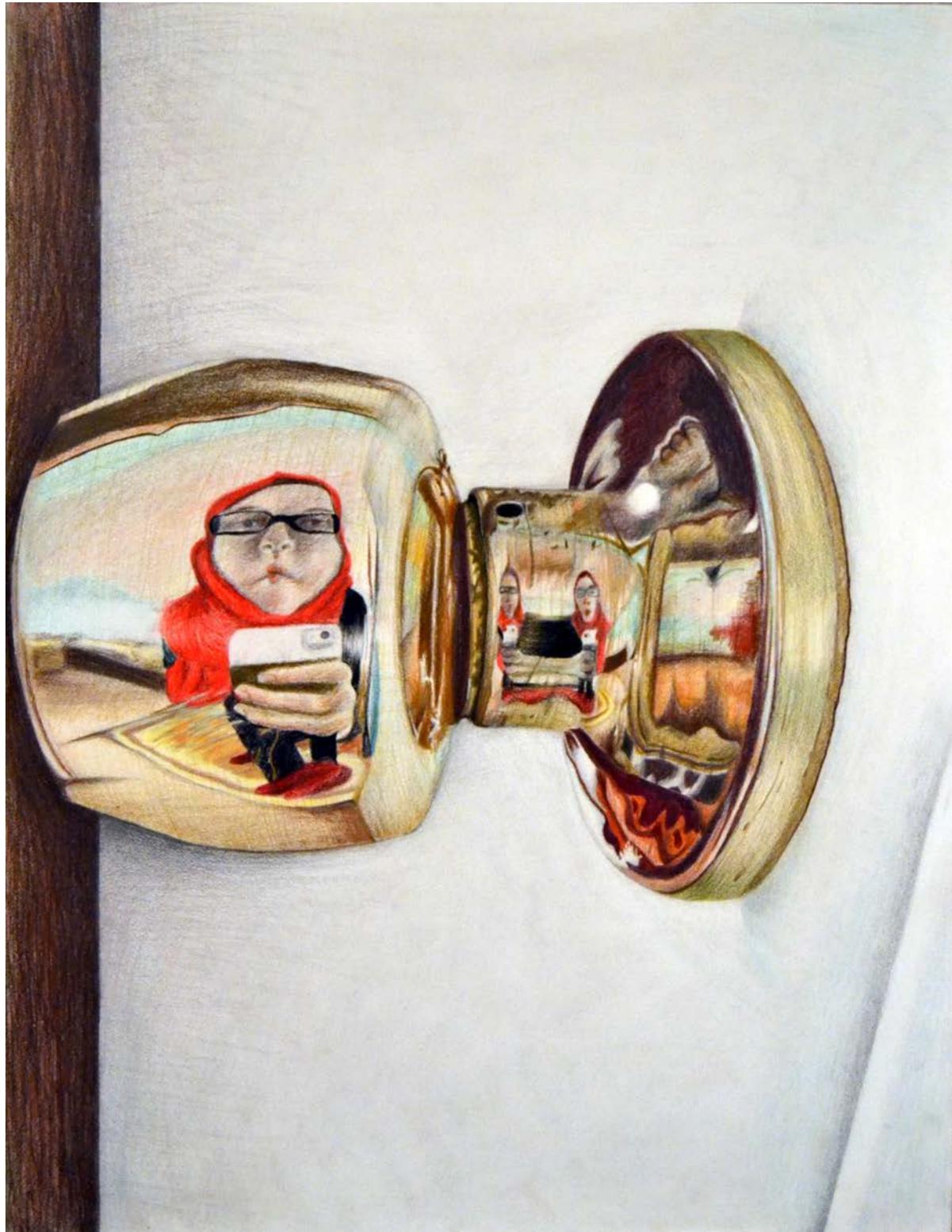
Sneakers on the Wire

Dominique Durden
Poetry

You don't know this but when you leave the house and don't pick up the phone
I panic.
Baby your black skin can get you into a lot of trouble.
When you said "baby I'll be right back" the air shifted.
You didn't come home the same.
Came home in a body bag.
Came home in a bloodied hoodie.
Came home without my Skittles and Arizona.
The boy who returned to me was not who he was when he left.
I am still trying to figure out how dark that street was for you
to look suspicious beneath that ominous yellow light.
I remember you when it rains.
We had our whole lives planned out.
We were supposed to graduate together, Tray.
Take over the world.
We were supposed to be something.
You had big dreams.
Your mother, God, she was so proud of everything you had become.
Please tell her I'm sorry Ms. Martin, I am for real. You never thought you'd see your
baby die
I apologize a trillion times.
They've got your face in a history book now.
Called you a man.
You. Mike. Tamir. Emmett.
Oh sing King Kunta. Sing from the mountain tops of freedom.
Sing past those bullets in your body, past the fan cord wrapped around your throat.
Sing from within.
Sing from the wire.
Sing.

Unconventional

Ghada Masri
Art
Colored Pencil
18" x 24"



My America

Amaryllis Lopez
Poetry

My America loves me
they love my tan
and my curls
as long as I'm not the one wearing them.

They love my hips
and my language
as long as I'm not the one speaking it
because "Sweetie, we speak English here."
America loves the foreign fantasy in me
but not the foreigner.

My America likes to see me in tight, revealing dresses on red carpets as his arm candy, never
the main invitee, always just an accessory.
My America likes to see me as one of the three; thug, Cholo, or custodian
in movies and tv shows, never as the hero or heroine.
Never the main character always just a stereotype.

My America likes to see me in music videos
a prop to amplify their flavorless music.
My America likes to objectify me.
My America likes to put me in a box and label me deported.
My America only comes looking for me when they need a new trend to repackage and
commercialize as their own.

My America isn't really mine,
but it isn't really theirs either.
My America,
the land of the free with an asterisk and fine print at the bottom.

Too Fast



Coleen O'Hanley
Art
Digital Photography
10' x 8"

To Your Desk

Look up my skirt. We need to get as many people in the office as possible to see you do it. There's a method behind this; I've thought about it. Had to do stuff like this before. I'll pay you if necessary. You wouldn't be a hero then if I did though. You'd be an employee of mine. You don't want that.

You won't lose your job, I'll make sure of it. Even though you're new. If you refuse to get on your hands and knees and harass me, that'll be the end of Henry Skibbs. He's the HR director. He's been depressed. I know because I've seen him call his house phone all day and nobody answers. If I come in, he pretends it was a business call. He smiles. Jenny Brook in Sales told me he has a crush on me. I need an excuse to be alone in a room with him, make him feel good again. You need to help me get there, alright?

You didn't sign up for a temp job.

Name's Leanne Fischer. I'm telling you even though if you'd have looked up my skirt by now, you'd see my name stitched into my panties. It's all I can do to keep sane around here. My name is Leanne.

I know. This isn't at all what you were expecting. Me neither. I've been here for only a year. Everybody else's been here longer. In the women's room, the third stall has tic marks on the wall. They go up to four-hundred eighty-six. I've had the time to count. Yvonne Hurst killed herself on her four hundred eighty-seventh day of employment here. I checked. Drowned herself in a fish tank at home. I heard the fish were chewing on her irises when they found her.

It doesn't get as bad as that though. Yvonne had problems of her own. She couldn't be helped. The rest of the office isn't that bad. Really. You have to get used to it. People do. It isn't so bad but leaks spring sometimes, you know? Bob Yearly has his routine. He comes in every day after chain smoking in the parking lot for half an hour. He's always on time. When people pass him in the lot he doesn't say anything. Then he comes in and waves to everyone he sees. He sits in his cubicle until it's time to smoke again. That's every hour. There's his desk there. He rolls his own cigarettes, every day. He smokes them all. He times his last smoke to happen ten minutes before the five o'clock shift ends. He's the first one to his car every day. I know it's important to him, so sometimes I help him roll his cigarettes; he can go on more breaks. I joke that I'm helping give him cancer. He tells me I'm only helping him kill himself.

Fredrica Bush answers the phones. She's been here the longest. Thirty-seven years. You probably saw her on your way in. She may have smiled at you and didn't say anything. That's because she can't speak anymore. Lost her voice some years back I heard. She has prerecorded responses set up that she plays whenever someone calls the front. People usually ask the same things, I've been told. Management's thought about being clearer with the marketing, but then Fredrica wouldn't have a job. When someone asks a question she doesn't have a recording for, she sobs. It's awful to watch. Her mouthing nothing into the receiver of the phone. Callers get angry sometimes. Can't blame her though. Thirty-seven years.

I'm supposed to show you your desk. We'll get there. We can go around first. I'll show you. They want you to sit there and do your job. The people here are good people. I'll show them to you.

Over there, that's Lenny Donovan. He's the Sales Coordinator. He used to beat his wife, Tristy. She used to work here, too. There's a great counselling center here. She started coming in with bruises one day. I told Lenny I knew. They went to the center. It was obvious he hit her often but nobody said anything. She died recently though. Fell down some stairs at home and broke her neck. Lenny was cleared. He's a nice man. Follow me to the break room.

This is Grendal's display case. He's our office pet. A corn snake. Are you okay with snakes? We got him about five months ago. Sally Stiffer and Liam Jones have a thing for reptiles. They thought it would be nice to have an office pet we could all take care of. Katherine Frost hates Grendal. Fear of snakes. He's not here right now because he escaped a couple days ago. The lid was on the ground. William Denn claims he saw Grendal slithering around in the men's room yesterday but he didn't have time to pull his pants up and get him. If you see the slithery bastard, let me know. There's a rumor that there's a few secret pranksters around who, if they find Grendal first, are going to put him in one of Katherine Frost's desk drawers as a joke. It could be funny, but Katherine also has PTSD. It might not be worth it. I haven't yet decided what I would do with Grendal if I found him. I like the idea of deciding on the spot. We could all use a good laugh.

I just had a thought. Here, while no one is looking, I'll just... Here. Take them. Take them, go on. Oh, you might notice that there's no "E." I know my own name. I just couldn't fit in the last letter, ran out of room. You know how it goes. My name is Leanne. If you have those, then it'll make everything seem authentic. For later. You'll be a sort of magician to everyone, that'll be your thing. I'll even cry. Don't worry, I'll tell you now, it'll all be fake. I'm pretty convincing. But don't worry. I'll make sure you don't get fired over it. Don't worry. I know how everyone in here works. I can manipulate them. Put them in your pocket for now. Follow me.

See the bald head over behind that cubicle wall? Actually, yeah, there are a lot of baldies back there. This is where we keep the accountants. They're all ugly. We hate the accountants. There was talk about making their walls higher. Someone said their baldness is a safety hazard. Light bounces off like it's a goddamn trampoline. Someone might go blind and trip or walk into a wall or spill coffee on themselves. It hasn't happened yet, but I think it will. I'd stay away from the accountants if you can. Especially Evan Brucchi. That's the one I was pointing at. Boring. And a pill. He's got four or five kids. He hates his life for it and everyone else's. I've seen him bring a camera into the men's room a lot. He doesn't try to hide it.

This is our vending machine. It's full now because it's Monday. It gets restocked on Fridays. Everything goes pretty quick. There's a line sometimes. Management gets upset when that happens. So you gotta be precise and fast. I wouldn't get the Junior Mints though, is the only thing. Keith Miller in the warehouse dies for them. The last temp that worked here got Junior Mints every day until he didn't work here anymore. Keith Miller would hang around the office when the last temp was here. He was glad when the last temp left. Quit really. Or something. Just didn't come in one day. Only lasted a week. You'll do better though. Most of the office thinks we should have told the temp to lay off the Junior Mints. That's why I'm telling you now. There was something off about Keith Miller. I wouldn't worry about it though. I've heard he's good on the forklift.

I'll show you your desk now. It's right next to mine. We'll be right next to each other from now on. We can be a team, you and me. You need something like that. Definitely. In fact, it might be why I'm employed here. You might call me the office's unofficial "Sustainer." I don't do my "real job" very often. To be honest, I don't know the finer details of whatever that may be. It's been a year. Something capitalistic, I know. The company sells things. We buy the things we sell from other people who sell things. And those people buy things from other-other people who sell the same things. And those people buy the same things from other-other-other people who sell those same things. There are marketing campaigns for the things that we buy from sellers so we can sell them. We might sell them to other people who are going to sell them. We have meetings. We talk about the things we sell and how we can sell them better. Sometimes that means changing a word on our website, or a color on the billboard advertisements. We sell things. My name is Leanne. Sometimes we have meetings for a long time, until it's dark and our butts hurt despite the chairs corporate used our budget to buy. Everybody dies at those meetings. I shouldn't joke. Allison Fesser actually did die in one of the meetings last June. She had an aneurism. We thought she was being dramatic. But when the medics and the police came, we weren't allowed to leave for a while. Longest meeting ever. I hate it when people die at the meetings.

Here's your desk. I'm right there. Don't decorate your walls too much, Management says it's distracting to the people who are trying to make it to their cubicles. You mustn't let them catch you disturbing the traffic of the employees. They won't fire you. They'll make you do spreadsheets. Or make you plan the next office party. It's awful, I had to do it once. It was called "Leann's Inter-Office Bash!" I got a banner and cake and hung streamers. I forgot the "E" that time, but I know my name. My name is Leanne. But no one came. I think Management knows that no one will come to those parties. They want you to work hard and then not be rewarded for it, that's the idea.

I think that's about it. If you have any problems you have to send an email first. If you get no response after a week, then you call and leave a voicemail. To Management. Don't call the front desk. Fredrica

doesn't have a pre-recording to help you with your problems. You'll only make her cry. If you get no response from there after a week, then leave a slip in the suggestion box. If you get no response after a week, then Management has deemed your problem insignificant. Do not pursue it further. If you do, you will have to do spreadsheets or plan the next office party. It's best to stay on Management's smiling side. You're young, and if you want a full-time position here, it's best not to upset Management. You could work here for a long time if you wanted to.

But now, I think we should do that thing. I'll go over to the water bubbler. Can you crawl up to me army-man style? That'd be perfect. Make sure everyone sees you. If you have to really get into it, then you can touch me if you want. It'll be great. I'll cry, I'll scream. We'll be heroes together, you and me. You and me. My name is Leanne. Don't back out. Lives depend on whether or not you sexually harass me.

Alyssa Britton
Poetry

You, in monochrome blue

Windows framing outdoor scenes in monochrome blue
beer cans on the window sill
you leisurely fold your hands
underneath your blonde head—now blue
and fall against the pillow
you, in monochrome blue
folds of water falling into one another
we watch from the window
of this hotel you live in
we sit for months and watch
with our chins in our hands
elbows on the pillows
the folding ocean below
my favorite scenes
and you, in monochrome blue

Salt soaked jeans rolled up to your knees
the ocean folding us into her
a time in monochrome blue
placed on the seawall
backpack full of beer
like cosmic fingers picked us up by the scruff
dropping us side-by-side
a time in monochrome blue

It is cold now
too cold for the sea
and all of your hues
but in my head
I still think of you
painted in the most beautiful monochrome blues

Finals

Charlotte Huxter
Fiction

There's a moment, about ten minutes before you should have finished writing that paper, where you decide that you have finished writing that paper.

The work you've done was good enough and you're tired. You could have tried harder but, in all honesty, you know you can look back no matter what the outcome and be proud of what you wrote.

There's a moment at the end of the test where you know you should check your answers, but instead run through the scantron with your eyes to make sure you bubbled every question and turn in the test, only somewhat checked.

You studied hard enough and are probably going to be fine anyway.

There's a lull in the text conversation before you go to bed. It ended about 10 minutes before it should have ended.

The work you've done was good enough. You were tired and went to bed. You could have tried harder, but, in all honesty, you think you will look back and the outcome will be one you are happy with.

There's a moment the next day when you don't see your friend so you send another text. You check for answers, you run through the conversation the night before on your phone to make sure you said everything you should have said.



Person of Interest



**Private Investigation into
Jake Larson**



Kat Tessier
Photography

mourning news

Caitlin Westgate
Poetry

the bridge is crumbling
coffee cake
over an ocean white with ice
milk when it's been
sitting too long and it grows
film
and that horrible smell
of skin burning
leaving the grill on
too long and crumpled metal
giftwrap tossed aside
and bodies trapped inside
screaming
gulls who can fly
far away but choose to stay
sirens sounding out
death.
it feels so strange
in their mouths,
on their tongues,
when they taste disaster.

// Anchored Down //



Charlie Frodigh
Art
Digital Photography

Buzzed

Alexandria Machado
Poetry

Drowning in a martini glass
of electric blue honey as the patron
fears your sting on her
human tongue.
But you're sweetly dying -
consumption in your
translucent wings.
I tried to recover you,
but only put you in a
puddle on the ground -
I should have let you
drown in that glass
but in vain I thought I
was helping you.
Really helping me.
I sent you back to
English gardens
under sunbeams,
with your other
buzzing buddies.
I do not fear your presence,
but rather your absence.
I thought back to that
bench I sat on and watched
one similar to you.
I thought I could save myself
by saving you.



Static

Nichole B. Manfredi
Art
Oil Painting/Abstract
34" x 36"



Your Whiskey My Empty Glass

Morgan Amaral
Poetry

Can you grasp communication like you do a hand or a hip?
Do you get satisfaction from my words or just my body?
Perspective is a virtue, you don't see me like I see me.
I am a magnitude of human, I cause and I effect.
Chase me like I'm on clearance, love me like I'm couture or
top shelf whiskey.
Love me like you're not just here to love
but when you do love me, touch me like your canvas, get your
fingers wet with me and make me feel mountains in my chest.
Make me feel cold finger prints just because they're yours.
Touch me like your canvas.
Make me pretty
make me wild
make me crazy
like crazy isn't so crazy, like crazy is normal for once.
I want to feel lifted I want to feel like I won't break your back or
bend your knees until you collapse
do you not touch me because cratered palms
can't lift me up high can't sift the sand through
don't let water drip through fingers
I watch you undress like petals falling off a rose and you
stripped and sheared
for once make me feel like there isn't badness in my blood.
anymore.

It Always Rains On Tuesday

Kaleigh Longe
Fiction

There was wind in my hair, and smooth leather caressed the palm of my loose handed grip on the steering wheel. We left the party and went driving out; out into the night where the summer air felt like the warm breath of a lover trailing kisses on your neck. I'd been waiting for so long, so damn long to have you to myself like this. We'd been driving for hours, it seemed like. The party we'd been at, the people that had surrounded us, they all felt like a distant memory—no, further than that—they were someone else's memory, told to me many years ago. I had no connection to any of it.

I didn't know whose party it had been, or how you knew the host, or why you had invited me to come, but I knew that night would be my chance. My arms were so tired from constantly reaching out, grasping for you, wanting to confess my rather foolish crush. Isn't it always that way? Boy and girl, friends from childhood, separated for years, and when they reunite: well, boy goes crazy realizing the girl whose pigtails he used to pull is suddenly . . . everything. But I'd been afraid to say it, all too aware of how quickly my hopes could turn to ash around me. And yet the night whispered possibilities into my ear, tantalizing me with could-be kisses and images of a blissful future together.

Sometime around two, you finished off a hastily rolled joint and pointed silently at the dim glow on the dashboard and I realized that without even a goodbye, Monday had given way to Tuesday; tomorrow had become today, once an idea, now a reality. I opened my mouth to tell you what I was thinking, but you pulled a bottle from your purse with a mischievous smile and offered it to me. The reasonable part of my brain told me not to drink, that I was already buzzed, but the part of my brain that was in love with you told me to give you anything you wanted. And so I pressed the bottle to my lips, peeking over the top to keep my eyes on the road, feeling the stickiness of the whiskey dried around the edges. I tried to hand it back to you, but you shook your head at me, blue eyes sparkling like maybe you could love me too.

And then it was 3am. And I was drunk and you were stoned and even though the lazy moon was barely winking over the tops of the trees, I could've sworn everything around me was glowing. And that highway just kept shifting, subtly, so subtly, peeling away from the world until it no longer belonged to the earth. It was ours. Town highway. Population: two giddy twentysomethings. The sea of black in front of us, unpenetrated by the shimmer of my headlights was the most beautiful thing I thought I'd ever seen. Apart from you, of course.

And then when the rain started to patter quietly down onto the windshield, my blood turned to desire, and all I wanted was to stop the car and dance you across four lanes of empty pavement, watch the water soak your hair and trickle down your perfect lips.

The gentle touch of your fingertips on my arm drew me out of my daydream.

"Catch that star for me," you said, pointing.

"Which one?" I asked, unable to see through the rain which was falling in earnest now.

"That one, right there, on the left," you said, with an insistent gesture at the sky.

I smiled at your whimsical demand and pressed down on the accelerator, sending us cannonballing toward the stars.

If I could go back and wish on that star, I'd wish I hadn't done that. I'd wish we had stayed at the party. I'd wish we had gone home. I'd even wish we had never met.

I don't know why I did it. Maybe it was because I was so caught up in daydreams of you. Maybe I hit the brakes because I wanted to slow down time. Maybe I realized we were shooting forward at 90mph and panicked. Maybe I was just drunk. Either way, I hit the brakes.

I don't know why it happened. Maybe the road was slippery from the rain. Maybe something went wrong with the car. Maybe my alcohol soaked brain made me jerk the wheel. Either way, I lost control.

Suddenly we were a soon-to-be news story.

The car struck the guardrail. It flipped once and I wasn't sure if that crash was the sound of the car

smashing into the pavement or if it was starting to thunder. It flipped a second time and those tiny droplets of water were like bullets falling so hard and fast I couldn't hear what you were screaming.

Your last words, and I didn't even hear them.

The car skidded to a stop, a huge muddy streak marking our path of destruction. The world was inverted, turned upside down and even though I didn't see you hit your head, blood was pouring out of you like the rain pouring out of the sky. Whether from the cocktails or the concussion, my hands fumbled over the strap of the seatbelt as I trembled like a mad dog trying to get to you.

It had felt like we were in a dream, but we were in a nightmare. A nightmare where I was staring helplessly at your bloodied face, bruises already flowering on your cheekbones, far worse than the scrapes we earned ourselves as children. You were still so beautiful.

I looked away for a moment, just for a moment, to free myself, and I heard a weak breath rattle your body like an earthquake. I looked back at you and I swear to God my heart stopped beating at that moment and never resumed.

There was no rise and fall in your chest, no spark in your eyes. How did this happen? I thought. How did this happen? No. No, no, no, this is wrong, this is all wrong. I saw you, just a minute ago, as we were flying through the air. Did I see fear? Yes.

Confusion? Yes. But goddamn it, I saw life, too. It can't happen that fast, it can't, it just can't.

There has to be more, you can't just be gone.

I felt my stomach twining itself into knots.

I watched you until the cops came, waiting for the fire in your eyes to rekindle, gazing into them like I used to, but it wasn't the same. The only light in your eyes was the emergency lights reflecting back out of your glassy stare.

When I look back, I wonder who called them. I don't remember another car going by. I certainly didn't call them. Dialing 911 would have implied I still had a will to live. I'd had injuries of my own; gashes, lacerations. Could have been bad enough to be life threatening. And even if those couldn't kill me, my heart still hadn't started beating again. Surely that should have killed me... right?

But instead, a thick set of arms pried me out of the driver's seat. I stared blankly into a featureless face.

They draped something over me, a shock blanket, I think. But I was not in shock. I knew exactly what I wanted.

I wanted to die.

I didn't want to be poked and prodded and checked for vital signs. I didn't want to watch the ambulance arrive in a blaze of flashing lights. I didn't want to watch more shadowy figures shake rain drops from their hair as they pulled your limp

body from the car. And most of all, I didn't want to hear them pronounce you dead on the scene at 3:46 on a stormy Tuesday morning.



The funeral was exactly a week later. I entered the cemetery through a wrought iron gate that loomed over my head, casting its shadow accusingly in my direction. I kept my head down, suspecting—knowing—that the burning on the back of my neck was a result of hateful, accusing stares from your relatives. Not that I blamed them. I hated me, too. Guilt and self-hatred had snaked their way up my legs, twisting up to my chest. They constricted, wrenching the air from my lungs and choking me. That is, until they began digging, further, further, into my chest until they began tearing at my heart with razor sharp claws. They shredded and tore and slashed until there was a hollow cavity where my heart had once lain and I was empty.

I stayed for the whole service, ignoring the hisses and guarded whispers that floated toward me like smoke on the breeze. When everything was over I walked toward the entrance alone in a sea of weeping strangers. Snippets of their conversations reached my ears, some solemn, some awkward, some just nonsense small talk. One shaking elderly voice remarked on the unseasonable warmth of the day, the uncanny brightness of the sun. I didn't know what she was talking about. I could've sworn it was raining.

Holding Hands



Haley Cloonan-Lisi
Art
Digital Photography

Poison

Patricia McMurray
Poetry

It was the sound of my gaze snapping when my eyes left yours
that made me forget resilience.
The trembles I held in my palm fell through my fingertips
to the putrid white tiles, through each hospital floor you've ever slept in,
and into the earth's solid crust.

Stargazing never seemed so useless as it did after that because
rain came down in buckets, and plumes of suffocating clouds kept close.
Novocaine and morphine didn't dare compare to the
numbness in my legs that appeared as each month
came and passed. Like each skull crushing season.

Everyone claims time heals all but, all I ever saw time do was
make you weak and dependent on Mary Jane.
Don't get me wrong; I love her too,
but not as much as you do.
She was the longterm girlfriend.
We warped and conformed to this new life we both didn't want,
but had to survive.

Whoever,
whatever brought this, please take it back.
This disease—this terminal learning process—this
speed bump in life I hit
going 80 miles an hour.
This affliction that's helped my growth
but reversed his.

These days, nostalgia is dangerously close to ecstasy.

20 Love Letters

(based on a poem by Jeanann Verlee)

Dear Cameron, you were my first crush
Dear Noah, I will never forget the scars you left
Dear Mason, you are so much stronger than your father's fists
Dear Sean, I still think of you
Dear Caitlyn, I was really drunk and I thought you were too
Dear Cory, if you ever grab my "tight little ass" again, I'll cut your hands off
Dear Brandon, if you weren't such a sleaze maybe I could have loved you
Dear Other Brandon, you were my first boyfriend but I never really liked you
Dear Ross, no
Dear Tyvon, I still can't resist your smile
Dear Sean, I still think of you
Dear Ben, in 7th grade you were the first to fuck me over
Dear Ed, how dare you, stay away, leave me alone
Dear Kyler, I guess your heart wasn't ready for mine
Dear John, we were never like a romance novel
Dear Sean, I still think of you
Dear Sean, I never stopped loving you
Dear Sean, I still read our old texts
Dear Sean, I can't listen to the same songs I used to
Dear Sean, I still think of you

Morgan Amaral
Poetry

Two Worlds



Gina Diehl
Art
Oil Painting
30" x 40"



Brendan McRae
Poetry

Ode to Odium

The seed of Hatred has long since sprouted in the cavity of my chest,
once rooted, it spreads like ivy over every pumping vein.
It has grown to maturity, like a fine vintage.
Upon fermentation, I have been able to distill Odium,
so that I may bottle it and imbibe its sweet, inebriating nectar.
Hatred cannot be effaced; it can only be mastered and manipulated.
Hatred cannot yield to forgiveness of the impenitent recidivist.
Satan, Beelzebub, and Lucifer are the synonymous emblems
of Repulsion, Revulsion, and Rebellion
they are ineluctably linked-
positioned at the antipode
of all that is deemed divine.

One must render this beast servile – become the alpha of oneself.
Odium is not exclusively insidious, for it is a condition of nature.
Retribution is the child of Hatred; Revenge: our inborn pleasure.
Upon perfidious perdition, the soul is supplanted with Antipathy.
Hate once harnessed can mutate into love.
Abhorrence can be channeled into motivation, growth, progress.
The all-consuming product of pain
may be alloyed with righteousness
to weld and smith a steel-like compound.
Its chemical composition is unstable,
and therefore alterable.

An element unlike any other;
a substance of purity rivaled only by its antithesis.
The answer lies between two polar paradigms
in the amalgamation of each.
In the polymerization of God and Devil.

Dear-You-Know-Who-You-Are,

Alex Everette
Poetry

When I left you
I expected heartbreak
tears falling, dreams shattered,
maybe-I-should-take-up-smoking
kind of heartbreak
from you
and from me
but then, I'm thinking maybe
you didn't leave me enough heart to break.
I'm thinking you took it when you
cut me open and
peeled my layers and
took out my time,
my energy.

See, baby, I'm thinking the reason
you're still calling me baby
is you need me

soulmates, life partners,
but-he-knows-how-to-hold-me
kind of need me.

So when you text me
eleven a.m.
just-left-his-house
kind of text me
I'm just glad you found somebody else
to slice up with your sharp edges
while I work on being whole.

When they come for me,
punch through the plaster
and pull my body out of the wall.
I don't deserve a proper burial.
Push me off in a boat
but don't light the pyre. It's raining.
My tears of fear subvert honor
and taste salty.
I'm not staring into the abyss,
I drink deep the abyss
and bless my hydraulics,
I have another year to waste.

She presses her foot on my shoulder,
pushing it deeper into the bed of nails
I sleep in. Lord Gold cracks his veneers
and bleeds to death. Lord Death creeps
in the background, checking his stocks,
waiting for a mortal end.

The cloud is a chariot
being dragged by four horses,
moseying across an empty sky
but I don't swear on them.
I don't make promises
that will dissipate into nothing.

The reflection stops
when the creeping
blackness reaches
out from the vents.

The last time a woman was in my bed
she left a centipede that burrows
in my sheets and gnaws
on my eardrum.

Black mold crept up my legs,
settled in my heart, forcing itself
through the ventricles.
I listened to the beat slow.

Every day a piercing whisper
creeps into your ear: *You're going to die.*
You're going to die. You're going to die.

Suicide King

Josh Savory
Poetry

A Body Split Down The Middle

Janus guides me, divides me,
Two heads split into doorways
God of ends and beginnings
Stuck in the past, thinking about the future

Walking home through the door
I put on my second face
Disguised to hide my pride
Love is buried down deep,
Leagues and leagues,
So deep that I forget that it is there

Weighing the worth
Taking a step forward, then a step back
We will never, ever talk about it
My scream breaks me in half

Sit and listen, observe, fade into the
back. Plan and panic and retreat
Acceptance works both ways
But I stay silent, like always

"You can't tell anyone"
The writer's paradox
It's in my blood, naturally unnatural
I write because my mouth is sewn shut.

Now, I can tell you what I've learned in the past year
But you won't like it
It's an unpopular opinion
It is all the things that they don't tell you

One day will change your life, but not for the better
I wish I could take it all back
I know I shouldn't feel this way, but I do
I am a disappointment
I know it
don't lie to me

They don't tell you about the anger
How you will be called a liar for telling the truth
How I took a bat and beat their hearts
Killing someone because I felt like it

They don't tell you how desperately you will find love.
Grab it and doubt it and
Watch it pool and spill out of your hands
Love her like it will soon be taken away

But as it turns out, my brain is my biggest enemy
Not them.
I know these thoughts aren't mine
but my head is decaying anyway.

A different room this time.
Curiosity and fear paralyzing a birth
But in that moment, I became separated
Divided, never to become singular again
But maybe that's okay

It took days to walk into that room
Heart pounding, hands shaking
It took me weeks to get up the courage
Just to walk into a room that I
Now walk into like it is my home

They won't tell you about the little victories
They won't tell you how
Coming out to yourself
And being able to fall in love with her
Are the best things.
But I wish I could take this back too.

Samantha Correia
Poetry

Souls

Haley Cloonan-Lisi
Art
Digital Photography



Indecisive

Patricia McMurray
Poetry

A list of things I wanted to say but bit my tongue instead:

Yes, you have gained weight.

No, I don't think we should drink and drive.

Yes, Mom, I slacked my senior year because of pot.

No, you are an asshole for thinking men and women don't deserve equality.

Yes, I think it's your fault I'm this paranoid.

No, I don't want to lend you more money.

Yes, I want to be put first without feeling selfish—for once.

No, I don't want to go to college yet—

Yes, I want to do what makes me happy instead.

No, I'm not scared.

No—

Yes, I am.

I'm scared if I let my thoughts simmer
and bubble over,
my entire head will spring open like a
jack-in-the-box.

Yes, I wish some people could read minds.

Tesseract

Dominique Durden
Poetry

If these walls could talk...

They'd tell you to swim good, if the hills have eyes then the walls have ears.

Being shy makes you great at listening.

I'd tell you to listen close and you'd hear the voices of the martyrs clawing to break free from the inside but you are deaf, and I am woman, so I should only be seen and not heard.

On my grave they will write 'she died for the cause' but I am causeless and you are the cause. My back is broken beneath your weight yet somehow I still found strength to carry you and all your luggage.

Why do you only call me when your cup is almost empty?

When your Xanax reminds you of the girl you let get away, your getaway has betrayed you. Hasn't anyone ever told you that a getaway isn't a getaway if all you can think of is home? Where is your home? Home is where you're happiest, and if you're happiest in her arms, I guess that's where you belong, but home is also where you're safest and you told me I was the calm after the storm, so if I'm home and she's home then who do you belong to?

18. Nobody ever told me that the day before my 18th birthday I'd be

17. and institutionalized, still reeling from being

16. at war with these monsters inside of me. Some days the voices in my head become belligerent and it has been this way since I can last remember. Sometimes your demons don't go away you just learn how to keep them at bay.

15. is when my grandmother died, but saying she went back to Trinidad makes me feel better. Like I can look at her picture without a lump forming in my throat and like I can eat curry chicken and roti without it coming back up.

14. I met an angel who was 6'5 with light green eyes and that's when I truly started to believe in soulmates because he made me forget about the drunk who ruined my 9th and 13th birthdays.

The year I turned 12 was a dam, one storm from breaking. How dare cancer try to take my mother too? Doesn't it care that she's all I've got? Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. The only connection to God that I've got left? The only proof I have that he does still answer prayers?

11. is far less than the number of tears I have cried by now.

10. The number of times I moved in one year, I'm surprised I didn't have to redo 5th grade.

9. you've already heard about that. A bum ruined my birthday and then tried to buy his way into my heart like he thought I wasn't smart enough to know what vodka smelled like.

I started writing for real in 8th grade. Just a sad girl with a pen and a pad.

7. was supposed to be lucky, but I don't know how lucky you are if your parents are divorced and you are used as a bargaining chip.

6. months I spent in solitary confinement in a house full of people. How ironic is that? Barely able to get an "alhamdulillah" off my lips but never too weak to pick up the phone even though you hadn't called me in two weeks Dad, where were your antennas?

5. times I have tried to have this adult conversation with you, but I am only a child, and I shouldn't have to.

4. Hours my mother spent crying when she snatched me from harm's way, almost 13 years ago.

3. people in a family, and I know 3 is the holy trinity but I am angry with God because every other family I know is 4 or more, what have I done to deserve to suffer?

2. Grown men don't cry for anything. Just keep a straight face, big brother I'm sorry that you don't know that it's okay to be vulnerable.

1. When you are a child and you can't comprehend the brevity of a situation, everything seems to be perfect. You don't know that your cathedral is a long forgotten cavern. That your sanctuary is an asylum. That your tapestry is unravelling. All that you are is coming undone. Your paint is chipping. The bandaids have fallen off, and you are left exposed.

Rainbow Plaid

Jake Wade
Art
Fiber Arts
36" x 36"



Nisha Khubchandani
Non-fiction

Why Did the Frog Cross the Road?

My heart palpitates faster as a rickshaw nearly strikes me, missing me by a couple of inches. Panicking, I take a few steps back until I reach safe ground, not too far from the distance I had managed to travel. My disappointment in my progress is offset by my elevated cortisol levels, which are convincing me to simply raise my white flag and surrender. I count the Vespas that whiz past me. I actually never knew how popular these scooters are in Pune, India but my count is up to about fifty within a few minutes.

Any observer would note that traffic rules and road lanes are strangely ambiguous here. The rickshaws, cars, and scooters zoom by hastily and freely. This leaves pedestrians such as myself with little ability to fend for themselves or to move an inch without paralyzing fear. I notice that massive trucks sport statements such as “horn ok please.” I would soon learn that these serve to request passing vehicles to simply honk as a fair warning of their imminent approach and ultimate desire to pass by. I watch those around me walk into the oncoming traffic with bold confidence and swiftly dodge every hurtling vehicle; with each passerby giving me a side-eye as I try to step in with them, then leap back in fear.

I feel as if I am the frog in the now obsolete video game, Frogger. I was quite the fan of the game as a kid, minus the fact that I could never surpass level two. The objective of the frog was to cross the busy multiple-lane roads without being socked by any vehicles

or encountering any other road perils. My mission now is just the same. Eventually, the universe grants me the pristine opportunity to cross the street, suddenly barren of the road race I had been observing for so long. I finally catch my breath which had eluded me in my attempts. It is only my first day trying to get across FC Road in order to get to the school that I would attend for the next four months. I imagine the situation to foreshadow the upcoming behavioral amendments I may adopt as I- the non-resident Indian, born and raised in America - attempt to adjust to the Indian way of life in Pune. Who knew that this four-month journey would entail a daily little game of real-life Frogger? Having been born and raised in the United States as an Indian American, my life has been a constant duality. Pizza or chicken tikka masala? Forrest Gump or the classic Bollywood movie Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge? Should I try to battle the crowds in the mall to find a dress for my cousin's wedding or can I sport my favorite pink and navy blue sari? The dichotomy is always a part of me and my every move.

However, in fair warning, not all binaries are created equal. From nightly Indian dinners loaded with mouthwatering spices to the statues of Ganesh, my family home is clearly rich in our ethnic culture. Yet, despite my immediate and well-reinforced traditional ties, I could often sense my incomplete awareness of my own background, my own identity.

The Diwali - Indian New Year - was one of my initial realizations of this fact. Having found the perfect salwar kameez to don on the holiday, I strolled down the stairs to join the rest of my family. As per each year, the house is fully lit, with every light glowing radiantly. I felt like an Indian princess, a true rani. After concluding our pious ceremonies and treating each other with traditional sweets, including my all-time favorite, laddoo, my family talked in the bright living room. We had received a few cards from multiple fellow Indians, including of course the local Indian store Shiva Bazaar for whom we were loyal customers, as well as my paternal aunt who resides in India. In an excited rush, I reached for the red and gold card delivered from my aunt's address in Mumbai. I gazed at the message on the card that I have now eagerly liberated from the envelope. What? It is written entirely in Hindi. Speak to me in Hindi, or even Sindhi, a very specific dialect in India, and I would fully understand every uttered word, but I am not at all familiar with the written Hindi alphabet. With thirteen vowels and thirty-five consonants, all of which are represented by symbols I can barely recognize, the Hindi alphabet may as well be an encrypted message from the secret service. I could not decipher my aunt's well-meaning words. I grudgingly handed the card to my understanding mother who reads the card aloud.

Fast-forward to my college years, six years later, and I am still discovering the gaps. Another Indian holiday had struck me when I first witnessed its jubilant celebrations in Bollywood movies at a young age, and I have remained fascinated ever since. Holi, the Festival of Colors, is not celebrated very much in the US for some obvious reasons. For one, the main tradition of the holiday entails the throwing of colorful powders onto other people in the streets. I somehow don't imagine that going very well with fancily suited business

people in Boston. During Holi, people dress in white clothing and engage in the color wars with each other. Children are typically free from school for the day, and even adults wander around, embellished in streaks of bright royal blue, lime green, or any plethora of colors impersonating the rainbow.

Having recently started at a college where my sister had initiated annual Bollywood dance performances, I am determined to also bring Holi to campus, selfishly wanting to finally engage in the celebrations. I set an appointment to meet the Director of Student Activities with the hopes that he would help launch the Holi Festival on campus. Prior to the meeting, I decide to prepare a short spiel that would describe the importance and meaning of Holi. With a pen held to paper, I begin to think. Five minutes pass. Then ten. Fifteen. My paper remains blank as I rattle my brain for some useful information. I actually know little about the origins of the holiday, the story of the start of the festival, the reason behind the colors. I don't know any of it by heart. I simply know that on Holi, we throw color, much like how I know that on Christmas, people exchange gifts and that on Easter, children participate in colorful egg hunts. I turn to Google to answer my questions, moping at my shortcomings.

I have returned to India for the first time in ten years with a clear purpose in mind. Upon finally getting to the opposite side of FC Road, one of many more stressful street crossings to come, I reach Gokhale Institute and settle into my first Hindi class. Professor Gondhalekar introduces herself and begins her two-week extensive review of each Hindi vowel and consonant. Not a minute to waste when you're tasked with decrypting this alphabet but I'm ready.

"Okay, now we will learn the stresses. The sound for this consonant actually does not exist in English. Just try to repeat after me," Professor Gondhalekar announces one day. "Thuh."

"The," the class echoes, unsure how to even imitate the sound but certain that we were not successful in our parroting.

"No - nahi. Not the. Thuh. Put your tongue behind your teeth," she suggests. This "Simon Says" game continues for thirteen vowels, thirty-five consonants, and two weeks of repeating and studying. Each night, I carefully trace the letters in my workbook to remind myself of each curve, dot, and line. My hand starts to remember the movements.

Having reviewed, traced, and memorized each letter, we soon begin to write complete words, stringing together those random letters we have engrained in our minds. The mountain of flashcards on my nightstand continues to grow taller by the day, each card reinforcing yet another vocabulary word that I learn to write in Hindi, each one a reminder of my progress. Khana, Sona, Bhagna - to eat, to sleep, to run. The Hindi version of some of my all-time favorite things. I eventually manage to write my first full sentence. After learning the grammatically correct sentence structure in Hindi, which naturally felt so wrong in English. Mera naam Nisha hai, I write carefully. My name is Nisha. I recognize that my linguistic

achievement in the class thus far is at the level of a first grade student and yet, I fail to contain the smile that stretches across my face as I complete the phrase.

Three months pass. My study abroad peers and I are now on the verge of spring break, with only one day of classes to go before we are off for the week. I mean, I had the opportunity to celebrate Holi, the actual Holi in actual India! Still, I would soon realize that no experience would outweigh this wonderful March day.

I wonder if they're here, I think to myself as I remain stuck in the long day of back-to-back classes. My parents are coming to visit. My last class ends and I make a dash to their hotel.

I waste no time in touring Pune with them. We roam the streets of the eventful city. There are quite a lot of shops and buildings on the street: a large, popular temple, a McDonald's, one of my favorite ice cream parlors, and countless other little shops. As we wander, I – for some odd reason, perhaps for practice – begin to read the numerous building names, all written in the Hindi alphabet that was once so foreign to me. Mandir, Hotal Sapna, Bata Joote – temple, Hotel Sapna, Bata Shoes.

"Arey wah!" my father exclaims – hey, wow! "I can't believe you've learned how to read in Hindi so quickly."

I grin and continue to read signs. Again, it's the level of a six year old's accomplishments but that doesn't dull my shine.

We soon reach FC Road, one of the well-known shopping centers in Pune. We stick to one side of the road first, exploring the many small stores. Jewelry displays hang on the edges of the store openings, which are more like open walls than doors. Juice and food stands are available within every few hundred feet. We pass my favorite FC Road food spot Cocoberry, which is always ready to supply me with AC, frozen yogurt, and Wi-Fi. Reaching the end of the myriad of businesses, I suggest we head to the other side. We must cross FC Road.

Three months can teach you a lot. I had observed the confident strides of other pedestrians, who found this task of a Mission Impossible caliber to be of second nature. They would extend their arm laterally, palms out, fingers extended, and make their way into traffic. It was like the pedestrian version of "horn ok please." I had observed and practiced, and had somehow made it until that point. And so, I start to walk out, arm out, palm out. I lead my parents to the other side of the bustling road.

"I can't believe you just did that! There's so much traffic!" my mom says. I wasn't much of a fan of crossing hectic streets in the US either, which was most likely why she was surprised by my performance on one of the busiest roads we'd ever seen.

"I had to adapt." I reply. I finally win at Frogger.

Morgan Amaral
Non-fiction

Growth

I never understood why people said that they were so picky.
I guess it took me 17 years to realize not everyone grew up Portuguese.
I didn't know instant mashed potatoes existed until I went to college.
Sometimes all you need is a Mama, a Vovó, a Bisavó, some Tias, and a Vovô that can create wine from the Açorean soil he brought home from the old country.
Any love I ever needed was in the kitchen, every recipe comes from hands and heart.
The cookbooks in my house are scribbles on the back of receipts from Price Rite. I'm in love with the way my house stays warm in the winter solely because of the oven.

My iced tea took four hours to make in the summer. Malasada took all day. Sardinhas had to be made outside because a Vovô couldn't hear Benfica llay futebol on the tv.

My iced tea took four hours to make in the summer; my self-esteem took 20 years to brew strong enough into a flavor I could swallow.

How could I stand here with your genetics and suffer so... American.

The women in my family use their brain and their brawn.

I come from a long line of bad backs that still keep working.

I come from sweat and toil and factory fumes.

Work all day and still come home to make dinner.

Aching hips and dry bones.

I should be a recipe of two parts heart and three parts fight, mixed with the dark eyes and thick thighs of my Portuguese roots.

The Portuguese people keep their recipes in their heads.

We can tell when it's done cooking just by looking at it.

Brooklyn, NY

How silly I had been
to assume that only for me
you would crack the whip.
I think I first realized this
when we walked through the city together,
I knew I was doomed
as I looked on
with horrific familiarity
as the fingers of your persuasion
reached out to loosen the tie
of every sinister alleyway,
your efficient seduction of city streets
sinking them to their knees
eager to carry out your bidding—
and with a prompt upward flick
of your black collar
I saw the city fall into line
and begin its maladroit pursuit,
clamoring to keep up with your stride
and dodging the harsh metronome beating
of your black heels on pavement.
I knew I was doomed when I saw the city
curl up at your feet
and how it went scrambling
to the stand in the corner
sentenced by the narrowing shift
of your gaze.
The screaming city;
oh, fiendish deliverer
of swift kicks
to take the air out of your chest,
forever sending rulers down
from the roofs of skyscrapers
to rap on my knuckles.
punishment for my lackluster obscurity
in its malevolent presence.
I knew I was doomed
When I saw that same city
go slinking off
into murky night
tail between its legs,
scolded by your gaze.



Alyssa Britton
Poetry

City Scape Scarf

Gina Diehl
Art
Wool
8" x 68"



Not that anything's not good. I mean,
time's thick & everything swaddles in it,
becomes warmer than it was, but I thought
all in warmth, then, & still do—have nothing

but! Long station, the tracks look the same everywhere
& I can be forgiven for imagining that they are, right?
I'm a whirlwind at 300mph, praying the world is flat,
even if you're not. My breath cuts a trench

over the earth, both legs turned inward like
a mermaid drilling, maybe I googled the distance,
maybe I already knew. If my hand reaches out
for yours, & if it just finds air, should I give it up?

Take up all the water, tides like the phantasm curl
in your hair: curves swimming in light, manic heartbeat.

As If

Ryan DiPetta
Poetry

As If

Ryan DiPetta
Poetry

All this being filmed, like it's outside,
no soundstage, the back porch is
too real for it. When I see you,
I'd like to have my own office
to retreat to. Back, across America,

I think you're the loveliest destructive
weather pattern—even when you're too
harsh to be boring, even when you throw shit,
even in the winter, snowflakes
wrapped around your legs
sleeping, It's perpetual spring
thinking of you: blossoms spreading.

Lost Pieces

Christina Ouellette
Art
Photography



A Letter To Yourself

I wish I could see you snap and clap along to your favorite song, the way your eyes are probably really bright when you wear blue or gray or even green. I wish I could see the way you scrunch up your nose and you get wrinkles in your cheeks that make your freckles look like constellations when you wince in pain or laugh really hard.

I wish I could see the way you hold a menu and double and triple check that the veggie burger I ordered definitely does not have meat in it. Sometimes I wish I could be where you're sitting, watching my words spill out of myself and onto the stage, where you can sit in the flooded echo of them to hopefully absorb my emotional, feminist, sometimes delusional rambles and rants I call poetry until the guy in the back yells at me to "get off the soapbox and get a real job." But until then, I will stay up here where I'm most comfortable and litter the floor with my intentionally misspoken words, and I'm so extremely glad that I never saw the tragedy in your eyes when you withered away, like dust being blown off an unused antique lamp, I mean, sure you're an old soul but you deserve light and to be lit up.

I swear any man that doesn't give you his entire world doesn't deserve yours. It's amazing that you can spit out words that can melt anyone's heart about the wonders of your boyfriend, the ocean waves that sparkle in his cerulean eyes, the way your heart skips like a billion beats when he's around and you just fall into arms like he is the answer to your dreams and...

you can rattle off about how your mother was strong and empowered and when she fell in love she was Head over Heels alright, because she wore her posture proud. Stood up straight for what she believed in and she wove a wooden spoon in the air like her soup cured sadness, "go ahead, try it." And your vovó, oh she's a cannonball launched into the stars, she is an adorable old woman with a heart bigger than her dining room table and there is always room for one more seat,

and you can write beautiful things about all the people in your life but not you. for some reason you never let yourself love you. Never said, "Hey, I like who I am and I don't want to be anyone else." So go ahead and keep this letter I've written for you, read it when you need to know that you are strong and important, you have overcome impossible things and you need to know that I am here even if no one else is, so love me and I'll love you back.

Morgan Amaral
Non-fiction

Sincerely, Anxious Depressive

When you live with me,
do not be surprised to find various
pairs of my socks, bunched up
and abandoned between
the cushions of our couch
or underneath our kitchen table,
or forgotten at the foot of the bed,
remaining wherever I was
when I felt the need to free my feet
from the confines of cloth
and lounge with toes bared
experiencing the texture of our carpet
on my bare skin.

I may retrieve them one day,
when I begin to run out of clean pairs
(but pairs may not be the right term;
I never wear matching socks)
but even then they will most likely
be thrown haphazardly on top
of the growing pile of laundry
that will be my side of the room.
I have a dresser that I will
never use, and the area surrounding
my side of the bed will be strewn
with clothes I decided not to wear
not to clean, not to fold.
Among these you will find
other various things I own
having no proper place other than
where I last left them.
And be prepared to find dishes
that never made it back to the kitchen,
or were perhaps forgotten.

Full disclosure;
our kitchen will most likely be
the room I least often enter.
But I can promise you that I will
buy a cookbook from my favorite
bookstore, with the full intention
of using it to put together a nice meal.
I may even make an attempt
to follow all of the directions
for a chicken casserole or
some other ambiguous dish,
using ingredients which I lost
myself in a grocery store to find,
scouring the aisles for goods
unfamiliar to my eye.
I promise you that I will try
my best, but I cannot promise that
you will want to ingest the result
after a long day of work.
But I can promise you that I will buy
a pizza with the money left over
from the groceries.

You can expect to find books
of various authors and titles
covering every side table,
end table, coffee table,
and furniture not meant to be
a table. There will be books that
I started but never finished;
books bought on a whim, never
even opened, books that I keep
within reaching distance because they
speak to my soul, books for

my classes, pages littered with sticky notes,
books with illegible notes written in
the margins, and books purposely
left out in plain sight so I can say
to you again,
"You really should read this,"
even though you were never a
man for books and literature.

I know that you will humor me and
my English degree.
You won't complain about the
notebooks I will have hid underneath
our mattress, filled with thoughts I'd
rather not revisit, stories never
finished, poems never revised.
And when you complain that your
back hurts over our morning coffee,
we decide to buy
a new mattress, never speaking
of the notebooks that we will cover
with our new slab of springs and fabric.

You should be aware that
I sleep with the TV on every night,
and I can't fall asleep without the
sound of voices of other people
to drown out my own racing thoughts.
And I hope you don't mind a night
light, I've never grown accustomed
to the dark. At night I
am child-like
and I will be most vulnerable then.
You will learn things about me
at night.

There will be some nights that
I'll be awake until 4 a.m.
I may have to remove one of
the notebooks hidden beneath
of our new mattress,
and maybe I will write about
my dinner failure, or the
latest book that I started
but will not finish, or how
I really need to clean my
side of the room, for your sake.
But most likely, I will write
about the past or the future
or nothing tangible at all,
And I will lose myself in my
ruminations. I may light
a cigarette as I write,
exhaling the smoke out of
our bedroom window
watching it travel
to the street outside
and I'll watch the sun rise
as the birds awaken and the
sky changes color, and you'll
turn over in bed, the tickle
of a Marlboro red stirring
your sleep.
You'll wrap your arms around me,
and I'll put down the pen,
collapse onto the pillow beside you,
the inside of my head
spattered in ink across pages
that sleep beneath us.

Bridge Honors
Best Overall Art



Ghada Masri
Art
Book Art/Technical Pens
4" x 7"

The Book of Cups

woman gives birth without her husband

James Holbert
Poetry

she looks out
two mountain peaks

her knees

they are
rippling

set on top
of fine earthquakes

no one had mentioned the streamers

blue and gray
framing frail vision

and the doctor's creased forehead
mouth wide

like halloween

the hill of her body
collapses

deflates

and the doctor's face
flooded with confetti
with the racket
of kazoos

and cake icing

it's a party
he says

the room is full of

broken applause

Fuck Toothpicks

Patricia McMurray
Poetry

Scrawny—feeble—like the toothpick
I chew
and snap
with my teeth.
Always making my gums bleed
from the venom infested frame.

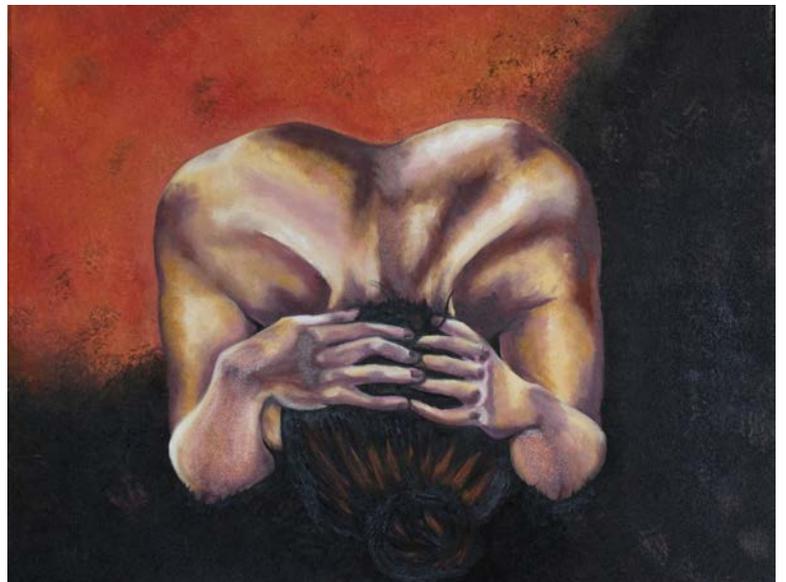
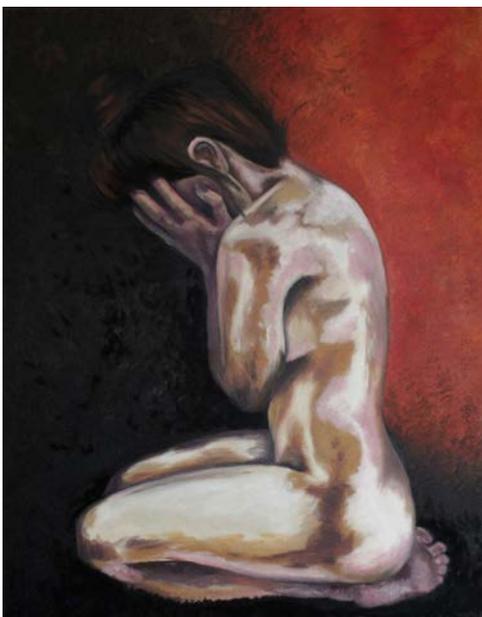
What a vile little toothpick—
visibly harsh
on both ends as if to claim
“Fuck you, you know
what you’re getting yourself into.”

Intended for single use only,
your disheveled anatomy proves otherwise.
She puts you in her mouth—time after time.
After time.
If I could toss you into a waste bin,
I’m sure you’d make a home in no time—
or become a piece to a shitty bird nest.

Dental floss works better, anyway.

Oppression

Nichole B. Manfredi
Art
Oil Painting Triptych
24 x 12", 16" x 20", 20" x 16"



Cold like

Amanda Rae
Poetry

Hope

it slinks into the mind like disease and fills the body up
with the shrill screams of a newborn, wet with life and
cold like luck.

Lucky to be alive

at this exact moment

until the moment is gone and the luck has run dry.

How convenient that we're only lucky
when someone tells us we ought to be.

Cold like hope

is the slide of a barrel and the crack of a gun
when eyes shut tight and teeth gnashed shut and

cold like luck

meant it wasn't you

it was your brother

or your father or mother

who bled out luck from their brains.

I was only lucky then because it wasn't me;

I guess that's gotta mean I ought to be.

And cold like fire,

how it runs along the cracks of an old door
and creaks in the bones of an old woman and

cold like flesh

when it hugs against

the way things were

and brushes against

what is now pulsing anew.

These are the veins that pulse like jealousy;

we are all threatened with what it is to be.

Quite a Conundrum

Josh Savory
Poetry

Reality swept through,
covering our crafty hero in the stench
of certain defeat. The peanut gallery
stomped their feet, raising an eyebrow
to what was before them.

Once, over a wave of holy water
slathered a bristling, bustling
forehead leaving drippy
droplets of glowing grace,
we cut loose.

Logic slips neural receptors
and suddenly he's drowning
held down by the force
of six hands. All of their nails
trap sin.

She is seventeen
and doesn't want the male gaze
working her over like some sort
of fucking walking sock puppet
of tender meat. Her words.

Meeting me meets my requirements
but the strain in my neck cranks
everything to an angle and it's wrong
and incomplete but whatever, words
are pain, whatever, man, whatever.

Swimming Pool



Haley Cloonan-Lisi
Art
Digital Photography

Bridge Honors
Best Prose Piece

There's a Mermaid in the Bathtub

James Holbert
Fiction

"You have to sit down for dinner before you set to work. The table's already set and my husband is bringing the food out in a moment. Only, when you go to wash up, know that there's a mermaid in the bathtub."

The plumber told Evelyn that he would be fine without having to use the restroom. Plumbers tended to be meticulously clean from having to deal with people's waste. He added that it was not in his job description to work in the presence of mermaids.

"No," Evelyn said. "The bathroom with the problem is on the first floor. The mermaid is on the second. Whose idea that was, to put her all the way up there, up that flight of stairs— which needs to be fixed, too, by the way, that'll be the next contract call—I don't know."

The husband, Ralph, entered the dining room bearing the meatloaf and the mashed potatoes.

"It's the scales," Evelyn said. "They're sharp, very sharp. And they stick out when the tail is bent, so when you carry her up a whole flight of stairs, you best be sure to keep her still or else wear oven mitts. I still have the cuts from when we brought her home two weeks ago. Look."

Ralph looked, too, then shrugged his shoulders.

"You should see my husband's arms. And his legs for that matter. I think he cut his legs on her scales somehow, too. Ralph, show him your arms and legs."

The plumber said he pulled something out of a hotel drain that looked a bit like that.

"Worth it," Ralph whispered to the guest as he pulled out his seat.

The plumber asked where they had obtained the mermaid.

"Petsmart carries them now," Evelyn said. "You can buy them at twenty dollars apiece and minus one dollar for every pound they're over one hundred and twenty pounds. We got ours for eighteen fifty. Was it eighteen fifty, Ralph?"

"Seventeen fifty."

"Seventeen fifty, that's right. And if you don't like yours, then you can return it, money back guaranteed. Except if there's a male in the household. You don't get the deal then and they don't explain why. Do you know why, Ralph?"

Ralph sputtered a mouthful of wine. "No idea," he said.

"Well, I've had the right mind to return her. You wouldn't believe the hassle of getting her to the house. You think that getting home a goldfish in a plastic bag is stressful? My parents had it easy compared to this. You have to have her loaded up in a plastic tub they give you— which they charge you for by the way—and the tub's only about three feet by four feet by four feet. The mermaid won't fit all the way! So you have to go fast because she's blubbing and complaining and half-way out the tub with her tail whipping around and it's distracting the hell out of you. And the whole time, your daughter, who you originally bought the thing for, is screaming bloody murder. Forget about hauling her up the stairs, we all almost died in a car wreck on the way here."

The plumber commented that it must have been just horribly and terribly awful. Should he get to work on the downstairs bathroom now?

"Of course not," Evelyn said. "You've barely touched your meatloaf. Ralph is really not that bad of a cook. Go ahead. Where was I?"

Bringing the mermaid home.

"Yes, that's right! Well, we originally got it for our daughter. You know, girls and their mermaids -- there's that Disney movie. But Francine, she's terrified of it. Hasn't used the upstairs bathroom for two weeks, which is a problem, because the one downstairs hasn't been flushing for the past three days. I hope you can fix that because I'm tired of seeing my daughter sneak out of the house to squat in our flowerbed."

He could probably fix it right now.

"And where is Francine anyway? Did you call her down for dinner?" Evelyn pointed her fork to her husband.

"Still in her room."

"Under the bed?"

"In the closet this time."

"Jee-sus," she said. "A psychiatrist, that'll be the next contract call. But you know what they say. Do you? They say it's good for the whole family, having a mermaid I mean. Isn't it, Ralph?"

"Good for me."

"And good for me. Francine doesn't let me do her hair anymore. She's in middle school and you know how kids get at that age. They don't call their mothers their friends. They're busy becoming autonomous. So instead of being the pathetic mother who tries to 'regress back to

her teenaged girlhood in an effort to relate to her daughter'—I've read about mothers who do that—I braid the mermaid's hair. Sometimes I paint her nails, but she can never keep her hands out of the water until her nails dry. I say, 'Now this time, keep your hands up, up, up.' I try to make a game out of it, but she says her arms get tired and then there they go, right back into the water."

The plumber was wondering, with a sigh, if the mermaid had a name.

"A name?" Evelyn said. "Well, we were going to have Francine pick one since we got it for her. But she never did and I suppose we forgot. Ralph, do you call her anything?"

"Nothing I'd say at the dinner table!"

"Well, I suppose it's better without one. In the manual, it says to not give your mermaid a name. It makes things too personal. And I agree. Give something a name and you're liable never to forget it, and that's just too sad when it dies. We had a canary named Baldwin once that got shut in the window. Flew right out the cage. I yelled, 'Ralph, shut the window!' He shut it all right."

"Sure did."

"And now any time we hear the name Baldwin we think of our little canary's severed head in the holly bush."

"Baldwin," Ralph said wistfully.

"And I'll tell you one more problem," Evelyn snapped. The guest, who had been slowly rising, sat back down in his seat. "It's finding a vet. No such thing as a fish doctor and there's no such thing as a mermaid doctor either."

The plumber asked if there was something wrong with the mermaid.

"There's something wrong with everyone," Evelyn said. "Between the mermaid and Francine and my husband here getting up a dozen times in the middle of the night to pee! For the past two weeks, nonstop. I can hardly sleep."

Ralph smirked at the guest.

"I tell you, a urologist. That'll be the next contract call."

The plumber said that he might be excused to relieve himself actually, and apologized for the ironic timing.

"Second floor, but, yes, you know that."

He might be able to fix the bottom floor bathroom quickly and then make use of it. "That'll take too long. Go upstairs. And don't worry about the mermaid. She doesn't judge."

"She doesn't judge," Ralph said.

The plumber went and he returned in some few moments. He stood before his chair and looked at the clients, his hosts.

The plumber admitted that he didn't find her particularly judgmental.

He tried to say more.

"She's one of the best," Evelyn explained. "She's got a weak constitution, but very good. And very physically appealing. I think so at least."

"Beautiful," Ralph added. "Firm, erect nipples."

"That's because you don't change out the water," Evelyn waved. "It gets cool when you let it sit there."

"I let it sit there," Ralph explained to the guest.

"Yes, she has lovely nipples, but the scales and the fins of the tail," Evelyn said, "those are where she shines. Sure, they're painful if they prick you, but there wasn't a brighter or lovelier mermaid at the store."

"I'm satisfied."

"We've got our money's worth, even with all the initial trouble of the whole deal." The plumber had a moment's time to explain what he saw in the bathtub.

Frankly, she looked not so lively. A little limp? Frankly speaking. "So you're saying she's dead?" Evelyn said.

The plumber said that this was likely the case, but that, then again, he was only a plumber and did not have any sort of medical experience.

"I suppose it can't be helped," Evelyn said. "Death is so final. At least we didn't name her."

"But the nipples," Ralph said, "you didn't report on the nipples." Shriveled, indeed.

Ralph gasped.

"That's not how I left them!"

"Well, that's that," Evelyn said. "Ralph, honey, I suppose you'd better scoop her out." He grabbed a pole with a large net from the corner of the room and disappeared from the dining room.

"I don't think she'll fit down the toilet. She'd clog it right up and then we'd have two toilets to fix. Unless—well, you're a plumber, is there a way that we could fit her down the pipes without doing any damage to the system?"

The plumber recommended a burial.

"I suppose we could flay her and get it done that way. A burial? No, that's for cats and dogs and things with legs. Proper tradition—as it will always be—is that finned pets are flushed down the toilet. They get to the water that way, you know. Back where they came from."

There was a loud thump from the ceiling and the groans of a man exerting his strength.

"She won't go down," Ralph yelled down the stairs.

The plumber rose from his seat and wiped his hands neatly on the napkin. He was going to the front door.

"We've decided that she needs to be cut up a little, Ralph," Evelyn said. "I'm no gutter and neither are you, and the plumber says it's not in his line either. So a butcher! That'll be the next contract call."



Haley Cloonan-Lisi
Art
Digital Photography

Pool

The Great Barrier Reef is Dying!

Alexandria Machado
Poetry

Exodus hell in the fairy land of the grand stretch.
Rainbow proud, and plot planning your funeral.

There's a difference between
dying and dead.

As though either are reversible.
Hidden in the coventry of your ignorant prose.

You are not saint nor sinner
but the relic that lingers in the middle,

Some caustic tale of seedy walks home.
You ignored me and the influx of your own dreams.

The reach to break and break
and break your hands and feet.

So why are your assets in banks, your color
stripped and your energy from the death of things?

Deny your legacy, go ahead,
it's fine! But you are me.

You are the maced eye in the battlefield
and the chastised amputee.

But that golden hour does arrive,
set before the flutter bugs and lullaby's

you sing your babies to sleep .
For the silence is begging to

rub two pennies together,
two round, copper things.

Save the Elephants

Nichole B. Manfredi
Art
Oil Painting
16" x 20"



Gas Station Regular

Caitlin Westgate
Poetry

Gums bleeding,
sugar plum fairies receding,
the tips of your teeth are
summits—
Mount Everest
words die trying to climb them.
Hair smells stale,
like cigarette smoke hanging
in an empty room.
Used up—
stamped and crushed until the fire went out,
dry tobacco guts spilling
from the filter.
Makeup pooling
in your crow's feet.
Eyeliner
au naturel,
you had it tattooed on
10 years ago, it's
insect legs
underneath your pupils
now.
A Mosquito
or a Praying Mantis
dying to get out.

The present is
Parliament's
and Cashwords
and hoping you'll get lucky,
when I pass the paper
and cardboard and
filtered death across the counter,
open the cash register
and tell you,
Have a nice day.



Win Big

Meaghan Casey
Art
Digital Photography

Chunky Ike

Hannah Green
Poetry

I used to cry every
single
day.

Cry-baby. Loud. Know it all. Chunky. Ike Hanson haircut.

I remember very little besides the crying.
Loose animal crackers in my backpack.
A flailing crawfish inches from my face.
Sweating on the school bus.
Pretending not to hear.
Hearing.

Jeff Smith
Fiction

Raccoon Eggs

My girlfriend Mel and I were buckled into the backseat of Uncle Dew's sedan on our way down I-80 to his place. We were going for my cousin Timmo's service, got the call about his passing the day before. His mom walked in his bedroom and found his body stretched out there, joints locked up like a mannequin's. That all being considered, thought it would be good getting away with Mel for a little while. Dew's was as much a summer resort as we could afford.

It was corn stalks on either side and road peeling by under us, had been for miles. The farmland stink couldn't be run from. All I could see was corn, but I knew there were cows out there. Damn bovines mud-crusting the ground with their shit. Made the air so rotten I could smell the methane burning layers off that big plain's sky.

Mel fiddled with the plastic beetle that was glued on her hair clip. The clip had come loose off the silver bun of hair perched on her head. She wasn't born a Mel, of course. Her full name was Melaine. Friends called her Melly, but Melly and Jonesy mashed together like a pickle and peanut butter. I thought we got along a little better than that, so I called her Mel. I asked her if she liked that little bug.

"Course I do," she said. "It just doesn't want to stay in there. Why are you asking?"

I told her I was nervous when I gave it to her. She always went on about how she liked bugs and all, but I didn't believe it. Most girls like kittens and bluebirds—in my experience anyhow.

"Only some bugs I like," she said as she pushed the clip deep into her bun. "It has to have a pretty shell, the kind that gets all rainbowy. Like how soap bubbles or gasoline get. This scarab one you got me gets shiny like that in the sun. I love it."

Uncle Dew joined in on the conversation from the driver's seat. He looked like a plucked vulture the way his loose skin creased around his skinny neck. The silver hooks of his glasses wrapped around the backs of his ears. "It'd look even finer if you didn't dye your hair that gray color." His withered head shook from side to side. "Don't mean to be forward, but when I see a young woman make her hair look like a grandma's—well, makes me think she isn't appreciating her youth."

I wasn't eager to follow that train of conversation. The clock on the dash read 2:12. The numbers were faded green and flickering. The sun was too low and orange in the sky for that. Had to be about early evening.

Dew didn't seem to mind. "That thing never worked," he said, not moving his head from the road. "Changes time on its own. Makes me rely on my own faculties." He turned his head a tick to look at the sun, fat and hazed over the cornfields. "It's seven-oh-three in the evening. Don't bother pulling out your phone to check," he said as my hand was halfway in my pocket. "Just trust an old man."

"Don't you know your nephew has trust issues," Mel said as she shoved a knuckle into my ribs. I squirmed away into the crease where the seat met the car door, but not before she could make my side smart pretty good. Dew's eyes flicked towards us in the rearview mirror, magnified all googly from his glasses.

"Might as well get this out of the way," he said. "Jonesy, you and Mel will be sleeping in two different bedrooms upstairs. Not that I mind, but your Aunt. She has a refined moral character, you know. That said, I suggest that you go ahead and give the big room up to the lady." Mel's hand found mine, and she stuck out her bottom lip. Sort of like a child would.

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First thing the next morning, I took Uncle Dew's car to the pharmacy so I could buy some condoms. I picked up two rolls of toilet paper while I was at it. Uncle Dew had plenty, but I tried to avoid buying family-planning products by their lonesome and TP was pretty cheap. I put the items on the counter, setting toilet paper on either side of what I needed. I don't know why I was so careful to hide them — weren't any other customers inside.

The cashier slid each roll of toilet paper away from the condoms, all dramatic like he was parting the sea. "Look here," he said, "here we got some prophylactics." He was a teenager of a slim kind, just limbs, head, and torso without much meat holding it all together. There was a crusted-over, black-red smear on his cheek.

"Why aren't you smiling?" he asked. "Not one person smiles when they buy some prophylactics." He brushed his dun-colored hair out of his eyes. They were bright green, like marshmallow fish-bait. "They should," he said, "they're about to have themselves a great day."

I shrugged and said something about always being prepared. Saw his nametag read 'ROME. I asked him about the punctuation, hoping it would change the track of our talking.

He smiled. His teeth were yellow, made worse on account of the colorless lips around them. "Short for Jerome," he said. "I put in the apostrophe so folks understand that it's a nickname. Can't have people thinking I was christened Rome." He looked to the register. "That'll be twelve sixty-four." Now back at me, head cocked to the side. The way it was sitting slant-wise on that skin neck of his, it reminded me of how a dog would look at a human baby. It unsettled me some. "Afraid I didn't catch your name," he said.

I told him it was Jonesy as I was handing him the money. I said that it wasn't a nickname as he was giving me the thirty-six cents in change. I asked him about that dried-up crud on his face, since he was trying to be so personable.

"Shit. Really? Must have been that damned raccoon," he said. He touched his hand to the stain. Let his fingertips linger on it.

My face must have been a good portrait of confusion, as he gave me an explanation. "I'm a road-kill scraper in the mornings, you know. I make sure these roads aren't a god-damned critter-ridden mess."

Isn't that something, I said.

He nodded and carried on. "Got this raccoon today. It was a beauty. All intact, just the side of its head was busted open a little, like a pistachio nut. I must have wiped my face after picking it up. I shouldn't be touching my face. I shouldn't." He drummed his fingers along the counter. "I've got to go clean myself. I'll be seeing you," he said. He put out his hand to shake mine. I took it, wishing I had bought hand sanitizer instead of the toilet paper. He had a firm grip, but there was no muscle in it. It was all bone, like a bunch of chewed-up chicken legs.



Uncle Dew and Aunt Mag were farm people, which included them having a few barn animals they didn't mind me taking a look at. Horses, bovines, goats, even saw a clutch of ducks wandering around. We had a couple days until the wake, so Mel and I decided to go out horseriding in the fields that stretched out past Dew's property line.

Using just your eyeballs, the day was like a dream. Sun was so bright it blurred everything; the edges of the grass, the twitching ears of the horses. Dragonflies floated in and out of the sky and crickets leapt out of the brush. It was a regular bug circus. It still stank awful bad, but after a day it had started to lessen some. Instead of smelling like the inside of an outhouse, it was only as offensive as a stale fart. Mel, she had a good laugh due to me not being able to control my horse. It was some ill-tempered, cow-spotted breed. Of course, she laughed a lot in a general kind of way. It seemed to me as good a reason as any to love somebody.

My butt on that horse's back seemed to agitate it a fair amount, and anything I did atop the animal led to mutiny. I pulled the reins left, it wrenched its neck right and tried to buck me. I pulled right, it turned left and tried to buck me. It got worse as we went along, getting so it tried throwing me if I so much as scratched myself. Being bounced around like a kernel of popcorn led to me feeling pretty tender too, so I quit trying and sat as still as pond-water while it navigated by its own leisure. Mel followed beside on hers, which pranced and whinnied like all the world was a big lick of salt. She had one hand held out to the empty air. I asked her if she was waiting for someone to take it and kiss it or something. I'd oblige but I was currently trapped in a saddle.

"Wouldn't it be nice if a beautiful green dragonfly just perched on my finger?" she asked. "Like little birds do for princesses in old movies?"

I said that getting swarmed by insects wasn't seen as ideal by most people.

"Not swarmed," she said as she brought her arm down. "Just one dragonfly that wanted to be my friend. I think that'd be real nice."

I told her I'd get her a pet one for her next birthday. I'd make it a little leash out of a blade of grass and everything.

"I'd like that," she said. I was hoping she wouldn't.

My horse trotted us to a lumpy mound in the field. The grass on it was deep green, while the rest we'd seen looked more the shade of a bare stick of spearmint gum. The horse headed right to this choice turf and lowered its considerable shoulders down to begin chewing. Seeing my opportunity in the animal's distraction, I asked Mel to give me a hand at getting off.

She looked as light as a grasshopper dismounting. Her thin blue cotton dress was tugged at by buffalo grass as she walked over. She put a hand on the horse's neck and offered her other to me, the same way she did for a dragonfly. "Be confident," she said. "Act like you own that horse. He'll know."

I didn't take her hand or her advice. I panicked and rolled off the saddle shoulder first into the pile of earth the horse was eating from. I watched its face to see if it would trample me as I lay there. Its eye rolled to the back of its head, a pink ligament at the corner bright against the black of the eyeball. I wasn't sure how to read a horse rolling its eyes, so I crawled back on my hands and feet before I sat up to brush my arms off. Thistle and grass shed off me and I was happy not see any shit stains on my jeans.

Mel crawled on top of me before I had a chance to stand. The sweat-and-perfume smell of her tickled my nose. She pulled my shirt into her hands, tightening it against my back. "Confident. Like this," she said. She kissed me, warm and slow like the sunset. She pulled back. The scarab hairclip glinted iridescent just how she liked it, hanging onto her head by a just a few silver wisps. I told her I loved her as I pushed the clip back into her hair. I told her that she was the only creature in this world worth laying eyes on.

"Shut up," she said, "I love you too, but shut up and make out with me."

I had to put my hands on her shoulders to stop her from coming at me a second time. The thing is, I managed to say. I was nervous. I could feel the pinpricks of it on my cheeks, in my fingertips. It's tricky to tell a girl you think it's a good time to have sex for the first time. I told her I brought condoms with me, and hoped she could figure out the rest.

Her face turned pink and she bit her lip. She didn't say anything at first, just nodded. Then, "I want you, Jonesy."

I grabbed Mel by the arms and planted her butt-first into the grass. It splayed long and flat around her. I kissed her neck, her collarbone, her shoulder. Her skin was hot from the sun. I leaned over, putting the weight on my right hand as I grabbed the strip of condoms out of my pocket with my left. "Look at me, Jonesy. Tell me you want me," she said.

I didn't do either. I was distracted by these white things sticking out of the grass, where it was all flattened next to her head. There were three, too skinny and tall to be rocks. A strip of frayed cloth was twisted out of the grass with them, a faded black-and-white gingham. It reminded me of a worn-out shirt I made a scarecrow with as a kid, one I stuffed full of straw. A tremor ran under Mel and me. I tried to say something about earthquakes in Nebraska, but the ground under my hand crumbled away as easy as old Styrofoam, plunging down until my fingers smacked against something hard. Mel yelped like a poodle as a hot pain shot through my arm.

I tried to tug myself out, but the damn ground wouldn't give. Was in there up to my wrist bone. The pain throbbed around my knuckles. "Hun," Mel said. I felt her fingers pulling on one of my belt loops. I told her to hold on a second as I planted my feet against the ground, still straddling her. I gave a pull.

My hand popped free. My fingers stung around bloodied cuts on my knuckles. This brown and leathery thing peeked out of the hole, worn-looking like an old baseball mitt. Black fibers sprouted from it in a crescent, above the holes where my fingers punched through. It took me recognizing it as hair to see that my fingers were through some person's head and face. I started screaming, Mel started screaming. We clawed ourselves away, stumbling over each other. Thick bugs flew from the mound in a cloud of dots while the horses snorted and shuffled towards each other with indifference. The condoms were left there, caught on the grass, foil wrappers glinting like gold.

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Morning after that, I was back at the pharmacy to buy replacements. The sunrise was glowing orange through the wraparound windows. I came to the register to find ROME sucking the skin off a chicken leg.

I put the condoms on the counter, all by themselves this time around. Something about having my hand in someone's dried-up brain made me less shy about it. 'ROME gulped down a patch of skin. "Again?" he asked. The grease shone on his lips. "Must be some right powerful trim for you out there." He threw the bone into a barberpole-striped bucket next to the register and scanned the barcode. "Costs 5.99 for a good time," he said. "6.31 after tax."

I slid my debit card through the reader between us, hoping there was enough in my account.

He shook the bucket, bones and fried meat knocking around against the cardboard. "Looks like I'm all out of drumsticks," he said. A dull beep came from the register. "And looks like you're all out of money. Says your card is declined." He plucked out a black-veined chicken thigh. "Thighs are still good though. So is cash. Got any paper tender for your jimmy hats?"

I checked my pockets and he kept talking. "Remember that raccoon I found? I decided I am going to turn her into a hat. Not much in me for skinning, though. That's a skill I never gave a tanner enough weight for."

I rustled together three paper dollars, another three-forty in coins, and a paper straw wrapper on the counter. The wrapper unfurled like a newborn caterpillar between us. 'Rome kept talking, ignoring my payment. "You remember my raccoon? It was only yesterday I told you about her. My raccoon with the split head. I hope time don't move that quick for you. So much happening you forget about things happened just yesterday."

I told him I remembered. That I remembered how its head looked like a cracked nut.

"A pistachio," he said. "Anyways, seemed like a waste to throw out a creature with a body whole like that. Like she was only hardly dead. Like with some electricity or voodoo she might have come back to life. So I thought I'd make her into a fine hat. I've been keen on keeping busy with that. Know what I found? What I found while scraping her all out? You wouldn't believe it, but you'll hear it if you'll let me."

I slid my pile of money and a straw wrapper towards 'ROME. He wouldn't stop.

"It was a lady raccoon," he said. "That's no surprise. A flip of the coin there. What's a marvel is there was an egg inside her. Did you know a raccoon could lay an egg?" He leaned over the counter, his eyes burning green behind his garbage-colored bangs. "I found it while I was gutting her, you know to get the wet stuff out so she wouldn't turn." He reached his hand out towards my head, past my left ear. "I slipped my fingers in that animal's womb space, and I felt it. I pulled, softly at first, and pulled again—" His arm next to my head moved like it was sawing wood. "I pulled and finally—" He snapped the fingers still on the counter while the other pulled back now holding a white egg with black stripes running along it widthwise. Like some prison costume. His face was stretched into a yellow smile. "There's a little baby varmint in here, curled up like a kitten. All runny and brown, I bet."

I told him it was more likely that sniffing all the cow shit around here had burnt away his brain. I told him that he was holding a chicken egg from the grocery store that he had painted on with some watercolors.

He leaned back to his side of the counter. Freckles crumpled up into the lines on his forehead as he thought. "Well, why don't we crack it open if you don't believe me. You'd be killing this little baby. If that's how you want it though, that's how you'll have it."

I grabbed the condoms and walked away from the register without giving him an answer. He was laughing as I left. His laugh, it was just a burst of halted breaths. Like he was suffocating himself.



Alice

Haley Cloonan-Lisi
Art
Digital Photography

how to witness.

James Holbert
Poetry

slip into rome:
hedging new trees
atop the 7 hills,

see, people laughing,
burning,

the milkmaid
not milking,
but caring

for 3 children
whose parents are gone,
and won't be home

until sets the sun.

There has to be a more elegant way to face adversity.
When we were at supper tonight I noticed you sound like

a man, now. It's not the first time you caught me off guard this
way. And those old photos of us feeling so eternally stuck now

truly feel ages away. We're sadder, you're smarter. So it's like
a comforting constant, undisturbed by the passing of time, this

fire in our guts. It's an honor and privilege, that still, even now,
I have something in common with someone like you, and like

no one stays in our lives, nothing stays in our bodies. But this
drifting, like this nervous stomach is something I embrace now.

We've lost him, and her, and parts of us, and our brains can
find the reasons, but our guts stubbornly refuse to understand.

Guts

Hannah Green
Poetry

Haley Cloonan-Lisi
Art
Digital Photography

Golden Pagoda



Profile of an Artist: Clarence Major



Clarence Major
Self-Portrait

"Artist", a word we often hear to describe a creator; someone who elicits wisdom of the human mind and spirit from the great beyond and then transcribes it for the world to see. Clarence Major is a direct embodiment of this: poet, writer, and painter, he has submerged himself in numerous art forms over the decades, creating and then releasing these manifestations into the ever-growing body of art. Major was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1936, grew up in Chicago, Illinois, and has had his share of life experiences made through connections with his home, travels, and people met along the way. At The Bridge, we have come to understand artists seem to share one similarity: the ability to connect. On some level, all art links to something, whether that be the artist themselves, the viewer, or even just a connection

with the art's own inception. In reading some of Major's poetry and viewing his art, we can see a deep relationship between the art forms. A significant portion of Major's poetry is about painting, or addresses art itself; representing a portrait or a landscape that incorporates fragmentary feelings of color, brief moments in time

where we are forever captured. So, in the fascinating links between words and paint, where do we locate the bridge that connects these mediums?

In the Fall of 2016, Bridgewater State University had the honor of having Major as part of the Visiting Authors Series, an event held each semester with the intent of introducing a writer and their work to the campus community. In wondering whether the mediums of writing and painting inspire one another or remain mutually exclusive, Major confirms a connection between the two, stating that, "They are similar in the sense that both (writing and painting) employ narrative, symbolism, allusion, metaphor and so on." And further elaborates on the connection, "Because of these similarities, I work back and forth across the two forms easily. One feeds into the other."

Major has spent years working with this dichotomy and has been awarded multiple lifetime achievement honors for his innumerable contributions to the art community. In learning of Major's prolific production, we couldn't help but be curious about who his inspirations have been. Although each artist has their own voice and style, we cannot discount those that have paved the way for future movements to emerge and continue to flourish this infinite body that cannot be destroyed, only built upon. So who inspired Major, a man who has inspired so many himself? He informs, "Where drawing and painting are concerned, I was influenced early on by French Impressionism and French and German Expressionism. In writing, my earliest influences were poets such as Rimbaud, Verlaine and Baudelaire; and the American poets William Carlos Williams and Robert Hayden. I love the way they worked in the American idiom." Major has also been inspired by such varied artists as Vincent van Gogh, Cezanne, Rembrandt, Vermeer and writers such as Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Flannery O'Connor, Richard Wright, Phillip Roth, Mark Twain, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Saul Bellow.

Many of Major's European influences arose from his time spent living abroad in France and Italy. Travel can truly inspire one's own work as Major supports, "Living in Nice for a year and a half and in Venice for nearly a year, both places influenced my painting and writing. The time in Venice was perhaps the most productive times. Living so close to great art enriched my painting and writing. In Venice, it was like living in a museum." In this confession of inspirations, we find the confirmation that pre-existing art can influence art that has yet to be created. Major represents this process very fluidly in a polymorphic style that both evokes images through his writing and stories through his paintings. This bilateral relationship through writing and visual art is emblematic through the correlation of space and time. When writing, Major specifically speaks of the similarities and differences between painting and poetry. These similarities have fascinated him from the beginning of his career as he states, "Painting is primarily spacial and therefore takes place in space. Writing, on the other hand, takes place in time. It is a spoken art form." With art allowing us to climb exponential heights very rapidly, we can see through Major's work that his influences in writing and painting also allow him freedom and honesty to navigate his art with meaning and purpose.

But how can others harness this type of relationship with the muse, a dynamic struggle that every artist can relate to? That illusionary figure that haunts and often plagues an artist's process, offering love and turmoil in her wake. So how does one create in the absence of inspiration, particularly in writing? Major's advice to this is simple: "Force yourself to write even when you don't feel like it. Practice is going to make a difference. And remember: rewriting is essential, rewrite as often as possible. And in the process, learn how to be objective about your work. Become your own best critic!" This can translate to most any aspect of life, and Major is an exemplary figure for this motto. Practice may not always make perfect, but it does make great art. So how does an artist of such prolific caliber, as Major, balance it all? Dedication seems to be the answer in completing multiple projects at a time, as well as prioritizing. While working on multiple projects, Major informs us, "If I am working on a long project, such as a novel or a large canvas, there are times when I am compelled to stop, and say, write an essay or a poem. The demands of daily life often dictate when I can work and how I can work."

Promotion of work is an additional component artists balance, and Major has done an ideal job at getting his work out to the masses, so we wondered how he finds time to create as much as he does while still traveling for readings and events, but Major insists "Getting the work done is the most important thing. I simply put off things that take time away from my writing and painting." Despite this focus on process, he still devotes time to support other artists and serves as a judge for numerous literary awards. Major always holds other's work to the same standard he holds himself to, showing his commitment to integrity and consistency, deeming it "hypocritical to do otherwise."

When asked during our Visiting Authors Series how poetry is still relevant today, Major responded in part that it addresses issues in a way nothing else can. Poetry is a special kind of conversation. With so many talents, so much work to admire, and now a lasting connection to our campus, it seemed fitting to end with something readers can savor and respond to as they will in Major's own words from his poem "Weather":
"All of humanity is a black-and-white photograph / century after century,
faces looking / out of shadows at us, nameless and dateless. / They all
stay enough of the same to look alike / with the light coming first from
one / direction then another, day after day."

Haley Cloonan-Lisi
Art
Ceramics

Echizen Vase



Byrgenwerth

(For Chelsea)

Josh Savory
Poetry

A decrepit finger
points toward the truth,
a lake of arcane wonder
where waves give way to infinite mist,
invisible walls, but seemingly endless.

Fire spits, crackles, and drips
from a divine holy blade, to
ash whole beasts, but cutting
through walking walls of Rom spiders
is not easy either way.

An old tree's branches feel infinite,
casting shadows, masking intent
like masqueraders camping
in a field of small flowers,
but the flower's death-stench looms.

Below, a red moon carved a map meaning
Lunarium, but the map is carved wrong,
the red moon means rebirth
or just birth or the old blood
or maybe it's just a moon.

No matter the outcome the spiral
is actually cyclical in nature. Natural
twists deadlock and it's another
descent in the dreamscape,
no chalice to drink from.

No Stress

Kate Cornell

Art

Graphite/Fine Tooth Drawing Paper
12" x 9"



The Mice of Cloud Street

Shae Ramsey
Fiction

"I was their mouse. But not actually their mouse. The tunnels and old droppings where I lived said there'd been a real mouse there before, but it was a long time ago. I lived alone. Whatever seasonal pests came in, they always left. Then I heard something moving in the dark. It clawed through the old tunnels the other mouse had left behind. I had to stay awake at night and listen. It rustled past as it paced inside the wall and out. One night the mouse might crawl into my den and sink its teeth into me in the dark.

"Every morning, after they were both gone and the mouse's pacing stopped, I left my den. I went out into the corners, and I climbed into the cabinets. The mouse went everywhere. They might notice it. They might notice me; I had to hide it as much as I could. The droppings it left behind were bigger than three together of the old ones, the ones I kept finding in my den no matter how many I cleared out. I thought the sound of movement in the walls would get their attention someday, but their hearing was duller than mine. I was always listening.

"Every time I didn't hear it moving for a while, I hoped it might have left, or died. Then I'd leave to forage in the dining room and I'd find its damp droppings outside my den. Or see a bit of white fur snagged in the splintered wall. Once, I heard nothing for almost four weeks. When I stepped out of my den, I just missed stepping on a tail as it snaked past.

"They had people over every week for dinner or Sunday lunch. When it was just the two of them, their voices shook the walls. My bones trembled when there were seven or eight more. I knew they were coming home on Sundays because I heard their songs. From far away, it was beautiful. Inside, their voices pounded against me.

"Then it stopped. The voices, the people, the water in the pitchers, all gone. It was always cold outside, and the wind was fast. The walls seeped moisture; no place in them was ever dry. Winter there was even worse.

They left behind no fire in the massive hearth. No water. No stew or fatty meat or crunchy greens. The house grew colder and colder. How did they get water, or make fire? I didn't know. How did they keep warm? I had clothes I stole from them, but it wasn't enough. They had clothes, and fire, and each other.

"Me, I had the mouse.

"I ate wood shavings, ate cloth. I tried to repair the chew marks the mouse left on their shoes. They didn't take everything. They left behind everything that wouldn't spoil, so they'd return. They'd come back. They had to come back.

"They did come back. I heard the songs of praise for the fields and the men who worked them from far, far away. When they returned and threw another Sunday meal, even the volume of their songs couldn't keep me from hiding so close. During dinner, I stood in the shadow of a table leg. I watched the food that fell and the feet that kicked and moved over it. I had to eat. Someone dropped a piece of meat. When I was almost sure they weren't looking, I fell upon it. Salt stung my cracked lips. The grease coated my face. It was the best meal I'd ever had.

Someone kicked me. He sent me across the length of the table, and almost into sight. I heard nothing from them about my gasp when I landed. He said nothing about what he kicked; I must have weighed as much as air to him. I waited with my prize. I dreaded the idea that they would clear the table. But the guests left. There was silence. I climbed up onto the table.

"During my scraps raids, I usually moved quickly and tossed food down to pile up and pull away. Now I dove into the first full glass I saw. It stung my eyes. Red coated my hair, filled my nose, choked my mouth. There was a glass of water, and that was better. I was so thirsty that I opened my mouth and almost tried to breathe it. Then I could focus on food. But I stumbled. I couldn't move well. I thought I was sick: too much food, too fast. After I almost fell off the tall, tall table, I worked my slow way down to the floor. One piece of meat was enough for now. Later I could worry about more water and food.

"I let go of the table leg and dropped to the floor. I turned around and began to walk toward my abandoned ham. I stopped. Of course the mouse was there. Of course it was chewing on my food; it stood between me and my mouse hole. It was bigger than I thought it was, bigger than it had seemed from across the room, or from the sounds it made when it passed in the walls. Its shoulder was even with mine. I could see its ribs, but below them, its stomach brushed the ground. It was emaciated, and fat. And long. Its twitching tail. That tail moved, twitched, while the mouse and I stared at each other. Its eyes were black, black, black, and they gleamed against its urine-tinged fur. I stepped, stumbled, away from it—which meant away from my den. The mouse bared its long, sharp teeth. At some point in the past it had scored the table leg behind me with its bite; what would it do to me? Another step back. I thought the mouse tensed. Would it run? Would it come after me? I was sick. I was hungry, and thirsty. Another slow step. Maybe, if I climbed back up, it wouldn't follow. I had to get back to the table leg.

what I thought was a dead baby mouse, with its open bowels all dust. I got to my den. I cried and drooled and bled through my opened face until I had to sleep.

“When I woke up, I had my face buried in my bed. I couldn’t move. I tried. The flaps of skin on my face hurt so badly when the dried blood pulled on them that I clawed at my clothes and cheeks. My fingers went inside my face. They went inside my face.

“The mouse had no food, and I had no water. My face was bleeding again. I was going to die. The mouse was going to smell me, smell the blood, and finally get me like I thought it would have when this all started. If it hadn’t been for the woman in the dining room, I would already be dead. The mouse wouldn’t take long. I waited in the wet darkness for the mouse to find me. My face hurt, and then it went numb with the cold.

“One more step was too much for it. Maybe if I hadn’t been sick—drunk—and shambling, it would run. But when I stepped back, it leaped. It knocked me down. My head hit the floor; one of its paws pinned me down. It went for my throat, but I threw up an arm. Its fangs sank in deep, and its claws pricked my skin. As I moved, it moved with me, and those claws scarred a checkerboard into my chest. The mouse was too big; it had too much reach. When it lashed out again, I twisted. Instead of my throat, its teeth landed on my cockeyed face. The top set of teeth went through the left cheek, here, and the bottom teeth through the right. Some parody of a kiss. I think that it meant to shake its head with its teeth locked together through my face.

“Someone stepped inside across the room. The mouse skittered away. The guest or host or cleaning woman didn’t notice. I couldn’t move, but the woman stopped at the other end of the table where I was still out of her sight. She did something, maybe got more food or filled her glass. She extinguished the candles. When she left, I was afraid the mouse would come back. Then I was afraid I couldn’t move. I heard people talking elsewhere in the house. Then, silence. Now it was the darkness of true night. I had to move; if I slept, I wouldn’t wake up again. I don’t know what they thought about the blood; maybe that someone spilled wine.

“I crawled. I left everything behind and crawled back. Maybe it was because I moved as the mouse moved, but now I saw, felt, things in the walls I’d never felt before. Everywhere I touched on my way to my den there were the shreds of desiccated crickets. Dried-out frogs with torn-out throats. My hand once landed on

I needed the knife. It was strange to be brave at night. I climbed up onto the bedside table. They were asleep. They didn't hear my bent nail when it arced through the drawer handle, and they didn't hear me climb up the ropelike thread. They never heard me.

"I'd never had a chance to really look at them. The bright, bright moonlight through the window made their pale skin and golden hair into silver. I could have more moments like this. I could have them, and peace, and the moon, if the mice were gone. I hugged the knife to my chest; it was as big as me, but I lowered us both down. The babies were still squealing. It had been a long time since I worried that hearing the mouse would alert them to the problem in their walls, but the mice were so loud now; how could they miss hearing the new mice? But the squealing did tell me the mice were still there. Nothing moved inside the walls except for me. I lay down in my den with the knife beside me to wait out the night.

less and less body heat. I didn't know then how to keep wounds clean. I had no idea what they used on their injuries. I didn't even know about soap.

"All I knew was the mouse—the mouse. All I knew was the mouse and getting food and keeping signs of the mouse hidden. I knew the hot pain in my face that even the cold couldn't stave off. Chewing food grew difficult, and then impossible, because of the pain. I didn't drool any more blood, but there was some warm, milky substance seeping from my face instead. My face pulsed with my heartbeat. It felt like a dozen weeks of infection; it couldn't be more than three. I tracked the time through the Sunday songs. Even though my face was fire, even though my vision went dark when I had to pull off the scabs so I could move my jaw, I still heard.

"I heard it. I heard its rustling, and squealing—a chorus of squealing. I knew why the mouse hadn't moved. It was mice. More mice, new mice. Baby mice. Something wanted me to die. The mice would grow and then get big and need more room. A revelry of mice would overrun my tunnels and take over anywhere else I could go. How fast do mice grow up?

"How long would it take their mother to recover?

"He had a knife on his bedside table. It was lighter than the kitchen knives and the ones they used for dinner. He used it for trimming his nails, I think. I moved through the mouse's tunnels in the wall until I knew where the squealing was strongest. There was no rustling, and no new droppings. They were still there;

"In the morning, when the house was still and quiet, I wrestled the knife toward the lair. This would take care of the mouse. Take care of the mice. Then I would have the house, and the night, and them. The squeaking I'd been tracking stopped some time before I moved to the mouse's den from mine. I hadn't heard anything moving in the walls. As the sound died away, the smell got worse. It wasn't just the scent of mouse urine and droppings. I was used to those. This was something that got past the smell of warm, wet rot on my face. This was a different decay.

"The mouse's den was bigger than mine, but it was rougher on the edges. The white mouse lay across from me; its belly faced me. I could see its side over the cluster of hairless babies beside it. Its babies were no longer making noise. I stepped a little closer, and then I saw that most of the babies were dead. They had died right beside their mother; some of them still had a grasp on the mother with their mouths. Others had bite marks where she had made the choice to live instead of them. I didn't know how long or how well she could survive on the corpses of her babies, or how long until they rotted and got her sick. The mother mouse herself turned her head when I was beside her. Her eyes were black. Black, but filmed with white. It—the mouse—her jaw moved and her teeth worked against nothing but themselves. Those teeth. I couldn't feel my jaw when I clenched my teeth. I wanted to leave. I wanted to leave her to chew on her death.

"I used the knife.

"No more mice. No more fear in the night. No more droppings or signs that might give away that something lived in the walls. I no longer had to fear that leaving my den in the night meant coming back to find the mouse waiting for me. I was used to moving loudly during the day while they were gone, but the night was a different beast."

The young woman stopped speaking. The man sitting beside her on a piece of beanstalk stared at her as if he would devour her face, despite its cavernous scars. To one side of them lay the shattered corpse of a fallen giant. The woman would not meet her rescuer's eyes.

"I'm so sorry," he said. "I'm Jack. I'm—I'm sorry. Years ago, there was a cloud up the mountain. I had to explore it. Houses made of cloud, giants, I saw them. But it was too cold. The houses were too wet. I got back home and you were gone." Jack hid his face in his hands. "You followed me, I guess. Had to follow your brother. You were so young, and you followed me. Of course the cloud on the mountain wasn't on the mountain anymore, but I walked after it. I found you." Jack took his sister's hands in his.

"I'm sorry you were alone there for so long," Jack said. "In that filthy house. But think about it—we fought a giant!" He gestured to the beanstalk and the dead giant behind him. "What a story! Giants and beanstalks!" Jack screwed up his face in a grimace. "Fee fi fo—fum! I—I smell the blood of an Englishman!" Now she met Jack's eyes, and she saw the tears he fought. "You—"

"I found you!" he said. Jack crushed his sister to his chest; whether he did so to celebrate the rescue or to hide the tears she felt on her neck, the woman wasn't sure. She stared at the corpse of the giant, and then turned her eyes up at the clouds high above. She could not tell from which one they had climbed.

Collage Interpretation of Victor Borisov-Musatov's "Lady Embroidering"

Chloe McCarthy
Art
Collage
14" x 17"



Barcelona to Toulouse

You were only in town for the night and I was busy carving cathedrals in clouds and catching dust billowing off the mouths of engines – You rode the green line 'til La Rambla.

Encantado,

your drum beats louder than the tracks you rode in on. And I found you in the crowd, apologizing for your art and labor that lived in your fingernails.

But your face –

the wind caught hold of your expression and a lightly firm grip – lifted you up.

Up 390 kilometers

where the clay is the color of my breasts aroused and the Grande Roue climbs heights into the exploding sky.

Enchante,

La Vie en Rose tells stories to put me to sleep, at ease in l'Oeil deux, the sea foam blue, sweet death that called from the undertow.

(I can't believe you hiked the whole thing in heels.)

Alexandria Machado
Poetry

Tremors

Katherine Nazzaro
Poetry

All my metaphors are built on fault lines.
There's a quaking under my skin,
and I can't explain it.
In some ways I think it's always been there.

I am built on a foundation of rubble,
shaken apart so many times
I'm not sure there's anything
left behind.

Katie McPherson
Poetry

MONEY

He's green,
and he hides in the part of my brain
that feeds on anxiety.
He's definitely a man.

A man,
because he gets more
for the work we do equally,
and there is no reason why.

He's there.
But also, where?
Always filling my mind
with doubt of the future.

He's too much,
and not enough at the same time.
The future
depends on him.

I hate him,
but I also need him.

rotations.

James Holbert
Poetry

once every 37 years a new teacher is picked,
but this time is picked a queen.

her crest is handmade paintings
on shitty dollar canvases.

this means it changes most days
and together we drive so many miles.

*we do not witness sunsets, I am told.
of course, your majesty, is how it goes.*

there are 7 things which don't mean anything,
gold, leaves, trucks, mud, silk, butter, and blood.

*I could spend a lifetime with you.
Aye, I say, but who wants that.*

Chimera

Josh Savory
Poetry

My heart pumps dust and glass
powder through my capillaries
but I sustain. I am a biome,
a tribute to self-sustainability
as I burn the effigies in honor
of those who strut-stepped

to the rhythm of the seventh trumpet
while I held a fistful of loose souls
and fired synapses. I am he
who wrote the nightmare in C minor,
but even I fall down the elevator shaft
into the maw of a chamber nautilus.

As I die, I float. I slip
into waking dreams
of a boy and a bicycle
and a father who wasn't
a dad and a mother
who tries to connect.

Instead of ill-gained purgatory,
I stagnate in the light
and watch the shadow of my sister
slip in and out of abyss,
her hand protruding,
her finger curled
or pointed for guilt's sake.
Her smile, a cursed painting,
an unnerving madness.
She runs her fingers through my folds,
looking for value in life

but I stay lost
feeding on the fire
until smoldering ashes float
from the corners of my mouth.
I eat moths for months and wait for winter
to pass again. Hypochondriacal hibernation.
Everyone is a better shot than me.

In my last dream, I got shot in the head.
I didn't see the face of the shooter
but I saw a black circle.
One-way exit for engraved projectiles.
I focused on the movement,
the shift, the vertical rise, the horizontal shot.

I came back, my ghost was crying.
Floating to the girl who cradled
my scattered brain in her arms.
Is her ear still bleeding? Does she want
my attention while she's intoxicated?

I'm dying but I didn't tell anybody.
No body tightens grip like my body,
just check for ulcers. Slide my X-rays
into place and notice the obol
lodged deep within my throat.

My small intestine is a noose
I've hung from a tree
but it's too slippery.
I fall, breaking
my neck, bleeding out
at the base of an oak.

From the Window

There were a lot of days that my sister, Midge, wouldn't get out of bed when we were growing up. Midge said it was because she couldn't ever come to grips with the gaping sky by the time the sun would set. The darkness made all her small questions turn into big ones. Midge had trouble sleeping at night.

We watched the sunrise that morning. I thought it would help. Midge and I climbed onto a flat part of the roof out a window in the spare bedroom down the hall from the room we both had shared on the second floor. We sat for at least an hour on the damp shingles, shared a quilt, waited in the morning cold. I remember Midge had her knees tucked into her nightgown. She was just a wisp of a person back then; smaller than me, which made the two-year age gap appear wider when I was nine and she was seven.

A minor meteor shower peaked across the sky. Celestial fireworks. I remember the soft burst shimmered over some constellation for an instant. I pointed it out. Midge's tired eyes always got sad before she stopped smiling. We could see our breath.

Then, the clouds came. It was an overcast sunrise. The quiet kind that was mostly gray. Genuinely underwhelming. I mean, the sky just got lighter around us.

That night I woke up to Midge crying. She had slept in my bed. I said, "I'm sad too," and wished she didn't feel so alone.

Midge inhaled. Her breath escaped with her words, "It's not right here." Her little voice was scared. She shook her head. Her wide eyes shifted back and forth.

I sighed heavily, "It's okay, Midge." I had been lying on my side wondering when it would all unravel around us.

She kept shaking her head and turned away from me. It seemed to me like whatever held her world together was just a fraying thread.

A bird flew into the bedroom the next night. I heard his frantic wings flapping as he tried to escape. Every so often I would see his small body flicker in the silver moonlight spilling in from the open window next to Midge's bed. Then he would flit all over our room from side to side in the darkness, his feathers slitting the air, his wings beating more loudly. As distressed as I was, I could feel his fear fluttering in my heart. The frustration of it reduced me to sadness. We were helpless. I willed him out of our room, hearing the wild taps of confusion as he gently banged off of the walls. I

begged him to leave, I couldn't hear anything else and his desperation grew louder still. The bird's hopeless wings pounded inside of my head.

Then I woke up, struggling to breathe under the weight of the dysphoria, with a wet pillowcase under my cheek. I tried to gather enough strength to move into Midge's bed for the rest of the night. I looked over and saw that it was empty.

Unable to fight back the wind, delicate white curtains cascaded into the room around the open pane next to where she had been sleeping. I shot up and dove onto her quilt. In the moonlight, I saw a small pale body in a white nightgown in the grass under the window.

Midge's face was porcelain. With her skin pulled tightly around her bones, her thin limbs spread all around her on the lawn. She was beautiful. I remember thinking it looked like my sister had been painted on a high ceiling.

"Midge!" a cry broke from me; it didn't sound like my voice, "Midge!" another one from the bottom of my lungs, "Midge!" I looked at the room behind me and almost went back to bed. This is just a nightmare, I thought. No. This was worse. I ran downstairs, "No no no no!"

Howling, I sat on the ground, hugged her limp body in my lap and rocked her in my arms. I lifted my chin to the window. My throat scorched with screams. There was fire in my lungs. The gravity of her silence pulled me apart.

I don't remember much after that, except Ma finding us; she flew through the slamming screen door screaming Dad's name. Midge had been saved by the butterfly bushes that we'd planted along the side of our house. She had bounced out of them and into the grass before I found her. They said she was too young to be sleeping next to a window. They told me that she must have rolled out in her sleep. Midge couldn't

Garden Gloves

Chloe McCarthy
Art
Plaster/Mixed Media
6" x 3.5" x 5"



Lessons in Retaining Magic

Matty O'Brien
Poetry

1. You will die if you don't.
2. If, when not looking, reality leeches its way upon a limb, amputate it immediately. You can still dream without an arm.
3. Do not drink the wine they give you. It tastes like home; it turns you into an addict for ease.
4. You will die if you don't.
5. Maintain your wonder. Breathe not out of necessity but rather because air tastes sweet and is limited.
6. If needed, ram wooden stakes in your ears until deafness renders itself present. Again, you will survive and the poisonous words of the realists never seep their way into your brain canals.
7. Continue dreaming. It is your lifeblood without it, magic cannot exist.
8. Refrain from loving. Though it appears a part of the magic, it lies. Love rips out the heart, taints it with black almond seeds; all while growing a forest of black almond trees that serve only to remind you of the magic you failed to maintain.
9. You will die if you don't.
10. When they ask you – How will you eat? Where will you live? What about the bills? How will they get paid? Resist the urge to scream. Smile. Thank them. Say that your magic sustains you.
11. When the questions turn to punches, and kicks, and crucifixions remind yourself that it is they who live without magic. Cast your pity down. Remove yourself from your false death.
12. You will die if you don't.

Self Portrait 3

Carly Goldin
Art
Graphite and White
Charcoal
11" x 14"



Contributors' Notes



Dominique Durden (*“Et Tu, Brute,” “Sneakers on the Wire,” “You Can’t Tell Me Hungry Isn’t An Emotion” “Tesseract”*)

Dominique Durden is a junior studying computer science and minoring in Middle Eastern studies. She speaks English, Spanish, and Arabic and plans to be a pediatric surgeon or a computer analyst for the government. She also sings and plays the piano in her spare time. Her favorite things to do include drawing and writing music.

Kelley Barrett (*“Imagine That”*)

Kelley is a senior majoring in English and minoring in communication studies. She enjoys writing comedy and hopes to continue to do so in the future.

Emily Harrington (*“The Fox”*)

Emily Harrington is a junior at Bridgewater State University, majoring in mathematics. She loves all forms of art and grew up trying many different ones, including the performing arts. Though she is majoring in math, she would love to integrate art with her future career path in some way.

Mitchell Reid (*“Worth of Pleasure”*)

Mitchell Reid is a junior English major at BSU. He has a passion for creation. He has worked hard at poetry but as of late is interested in screenwriting and allowing his interest in storytelling to extend to other mediums—even ones that are foreign to him.

Ghada Masri (*“Accordion Book,” “Unconventional,” “The Book of Cups”*)

Ghada Masri is a 2016 BSU alumna with a degree in graphic design and a minor in management. She is the proud Art Editor-in-Chief of *The Bridge*, vol. 12, and Lead Designer of *The Bridge*, Volume 13. She is thrilled to have her own work finally featured in this award-winning student journal.

Cailin Doty (*“Modern Day Persephone”*)

Cailin Doty is an English major focusing on creative writing. She enjoys writing poetry and short stories that deal with complex, frightening emotions, larger-than-life characters, and the supernatural, with Romantic undertones. She has strong opinions on the Oxford comma, gel pens, and coffee.

Caitlin Westgate (*“Mourning News,” “craters have intentions,” “Absentee Ballot,” “Sincerely, Anxious Depressive,” “Gas Station Regular”*)

Caitlin Westgate is a recent graduate from Bridgewater State University. Her degree is in English with a writing concentration. She presented her essay, “The Clock, or Happiness Is Not Ready Made,” at the National Conference of Undergraduate Research 2016 in Asheville, NC, as well as Bridgewater’s Student Arts and Research Symposium. She continues to write creative nonfiction about mental illness in an attempt to help others and end the stigma.

Charlie Frodigh ("*esCape* //," "*Anchored Down* //")

Charlie Frodigh is a senior economics major who plans to graduate in May 2017. Outside of the classroom, he is most passionate about surfing, adventuring, and photography. Charlie's photography reflects his love of late-night adventures; he especially loves to use long shutter speeds for starry landscapes and light trails. Additional photography from his adventures can be found on his Instagram @charliefrodigh.

Kate Pallis ("*Moth's on the Porch*," "*From the Window*")

Kate Pallis is a writer from Dunstable, MA. She graduated from Bridgewater State University in 2016 with a Bachelor's of Arts degree in English, writing, and Irish studies. Pallis currently lives in Dublin, Ireland where she is attaining her Master's of Philosophy Degree in creative writing at Trinity College.

Hannah Green ("*Downstairs*," "*Chunky Ike*," "*Guts*")

Hannah Green is an alumna of Bridgewater State University, Class of 2016. She is an alumna member of Delta Phi Epsilon and is currently employed coordinating home tutoring for students who can't attend school. She likes to boast that she was a 13 pound newborn, but the truth is that she was closer to 12 pounds and 9 ounces.

Christina Ouellette ("*Tobias*," "*Lost Pieces*")

Physical education major who loves nature and plans on combining both of these passions in the future.

D.S. Hooker ("*Grandpa Jim*")

Currently an English and Communication Studies double major, D.S. Hooker hopes to one day achieve his life-long goal of becoming Wonder Woman.

Bryan Way ("*Future Ex-Patriot*")

Bryan graduated from BSU in 2011. He now spends his time eating feta cheese and climbing. Aim high.

Amaryllis Lopez ("*My America*")

Amaryllis is an English major with a minor in Latin American Caribbean studies. She is an active poet and activist in her community of Lawrence, MA. Her future plans include continuing her work with social justice-based organizations that promote youth empowerment and literacy.

Coleen O'Hanley ("*Too Fast*")

Coleen O'Hanley has a bachelor's degree (1991) and a master's degree (2016) from Bridgewater State University. She has worked in book publishing for nearly 20 years.

Alyssa Britton ("*You, in Monochrome Blue*," "*Brooklyn, NY*")

Alyssa Britton is a third year communication, film, and media studies major. Future plans include more notebook poem scribbling and a career in journalism or radio production.

Charlotte Huxter ("*Finals*")

Charlotte is a psychology major heading into a counseling graduate school program. She has been writing since she was young, and has a mother who wrote poetry and a father who wrote novels and cartoons. She writes poems, short stories, and songs.

Nichole B. Manfredi ("*Static*," "*Oppression*," "*Save the Elephants*")

Nichole Manfredi is a 2016 alumna. She majored in fine arts and marketing while attending BSU. She recently accepted a marketing position for an art museum down on Cape Cod and continues to make art at her leisure.

Morgan Amaral (*"Your Whiskey, My Empty Glass," "20 Love Letters," "Growth," "Baton Rouge," "A Letter to Yourself"*)

Morgan. President of Seeds of the Poet-Tree. Poet and Spoken-Word Artist.

Kaleigh Longe (*"It Always Rains on Tuesday"*)

Kaleigh Longe is an English major and will graduate in May 2017. She hopes to find a career in editing and maybe publish a novel or two. Her first published work, "Never Will I Ever," was published both in *The Bridge* and *The Zetetic Record*.

Haley Cloonan-Lisi (*"Holding Hands," "Swimming Pool," "Golden Pagoda," "Pool"*)

Hayley is a fine arts student with a concentration in photography and in graphic design. She mainly takes surreal photographs but also loves working as a graphic designer and a ceramicist. After graduating she hopes to start a career in freelance photography and pursue her MFA to further her knowledge.

Patricia McMurray (*"Poison," "Indecisive," "Fuck Toothpicks"*)

Patricia Gayle McMurray is an English major at BSU. Her style of writing is contemporary poetry and prose, focusing on mental illness, political stances, and personal life experiences. Writing poetry has always been the most beneficial outlet for her, and consistently continues to help shape and influence her. She would love to write for *Rolling Stone*, or to publish her own collection of poetry. If she could change just one person's world with her words, then she will deem herself successful.

Gina Diehl (*"Two Worlds," "Cityscape Scarf"*)

Gina Diehl is a graduating senior majoring in art. She works in oil paints, fiber arts, and plays music. Her inspirations include astronomy and traveling, and she looks forward to further developing as an artist.

Brendan McRae (*"Ode to Odium"*)

Brendan McRae is an English major with a writing and writing studies concentration. Brendan hopes to make a career out of creative writing. Brendan writes poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. He is also a musician and songwriter, and has been a student of Uechi Ryu karate for 16 years.

Alex Everette (*"Dear, You-Know-Who-You-Are,"*)

Alex Everette is a junior double-majoring in anthropology and English. He is a self-described trans(gender) punk trying to balance his passion for forensic anthropology with his determination to make his voice heard in the literary community. You can spot him hanging out in the Pride Center, Seeds of the Poet-Tree, Literally Literate, the anthropology club, or various poetry open mics around campus. To keep tabs on his progress as an artist, find him on Twitter as @alisandera.

Josh Savory (*"Suicide King," "Quite a Conundrum," "Byrgenwerth," "Chimera"*)

Josh Savory finally graduated from Bridgewater State University with a master's degree in English. There was no party.

Jake Wade (*"Rainbow Plaid"*)

Art is a form of expression for Jake Wade to show the world his emotions and interests in life. He uses art to create something beautiful and make others see that everything simple can also be magnificent. Art is and always will be his passion, and he hopes to inspire others joy for art one day, too.

Samantha Correia (*"A Body Split Down the Middle"*)

Samantha Correia is a sophomore from Southeastern Massachusetts majoring in English with a minor in secondary education. After graduation, she hopes to work as a high

school English teacher or at an LGBT non-profit for young adults. She is thankful for the Department of English and opportunities to do research at Bridgewater State. Besides writing, her interests include painting, running, and reading webcomics.

Nisha Khubchandani (*"Why Did the Frog Cross the Road"*)

Nisha graduated with a B.S. in Chemistry from Stonehill College. Currently, she works as an orthopedic medical scribe and takes classes at Bridgewater State University. As a Brockton native and daughter of immigrants, Nisha is passionate about diversity and social justice. She enjoys sharing her culture while also learning about others' backgrounds. Nisha is an aspiring physician.

Ryan DiPetta (*"As If"*)

Ryan DiPetta is an alum of Bridgewater State University & a pretty cool guy. He lives in Portsmouth, NH, messing around with computers all day.

James Holbert (*"To Your Desk," "woman gives birth without her husband," "There's a Mermaid in the Bathtub," "the crescent hill we've never been," "how to witness," "rotations"*)

A BSU alum, James Holbert now has a B.A. in English with a concentration in writing. He was a literature editor on *The Bridge*, vol. 11. His fiction has appeared in *The Bridge*, *The Offbeat*, *Sliver of Stone Magazine*, and *Driftwood Press*.

Amanda Rae (*"Cold Like"*)

Amanda Rae is a poet and a teacher who, at present, lives in the small Middle Eastern kingdom of Bahrain. She graduated from Bridgewater State University in 2013 with a degree in English and a focus on creative writing.

Meaghan Casey (*"Win Big"*)

Folk artist of the United States.

Jeff Smith (*"Raccoon Eggs"*)

Jeff is a 2014 graduate from the English program at BSU, and is currently embroiled in studies at Northeastern University School of Law while continuing his pursuit of an M.A. in English from BSU whenever he has a spare moment. Jeff has been proud to serve in the Massachusetts Army National Guard for the past eight years, working full-time for the Army as an Intelligence professional and Arabic linguist both in country and abroad in between his educational pursuits. In the end, however, he just hopes his disparate interests don't muddle his brain so much that he can no longer write short fiction.

Kate Cornell (*"No Stress"*)

Kate Cornell has always been fascinated by the human experience—what it means and how everything is intertwined—which is why she gravitated towards art and psychology. In a world where anything is possible, her only hope is for more people decide to start finding healthy ways to let their feelings pour out. She hopes to spread that message through artwork and inspire people the same way people and this entire universe has inspired her.

Kat Tessier (*"Person of Interest: t Investigation into Jake Larson"*)

Kat is a junior at Bridgewater State University. She is an art major with a photography concentration, and hopes to one day become a photojournalist. She spent three weeks in Italy last June studying photography.

Shae Ramsey (*"The Mice of Cloud Street"*)

Shae Ramsey has just graduated from Bridgewater State University with a B.A. in writing and writing studies. She plans on attending a graduate program to obtain an M.S. in library science. Shae will continue to write, but her prime objective will always be interacting with books (and those who love them) as a guide.

Chloe McCarthy (*"Collage Interpretation of Victor Borisov-Musatov's Lady Embroidering," "Garden Gloves"*)

Chloe McCarthy is a sophomore art major. She loves working with textiles and beads and making beaded flowers. She knows how to knit and crochet, but especially enjoys cross-stitch and embroidery.

Katie McPherson (*"Money"*)

As an English major, Katie McPherson has always been interested in writing, especially poetry. Writing poetry is the best way to release her emotions and put them all on the page. She dreams of becoming a best-selling author one day, and hopes to publish her own poetry book so people can read her words and relate to them.

Matty O'Brien (*"Lessons in Retaining Magic"*)

Matty loves to read and write. He still sleeps with the Winnie-the-Pooh his aunt gave him when he was five.



Editors' Bios

Rupert Simpson is a junior studying elementary education and English. Rupert enjoys playing music and drinking whole milk, even though he knows it's bad for him.

Mialise Carney is a sophomore English student who hopes to go into editing and writing when she grows up. Despite the fact she is bad with people and cats, she continues to try to be their friend anyway.

Alexandra Briggs is a senior English major with a concentration in writing studies. She is graduating this spring. Her work for *The Bridge* was powered solely by Diet Pepsi and chocolate covered pretzels. In her spare time, you can find her watching Netflix and avoiding people.

Katherine Nazzaro ("*Tremors*") is a senior English major, graduating this spring. She is featured in three volumes of *The Bridge*, although this is her first year as an editor. After graduation she plans on going into publishing, much to the disappointment of her family, who thinks she should have pursued a career as a circus acrobat when it was offered to her.

Parker Jones is a junior at Bridgewater majoring in English and communications. He plans to graduate in spring of 2018 and finally adopt a dog named Bark Obama.

Medjine Tercy is a senior at Bridgewater set to graduate in fall 2017. She is an English major with a writing concentration. With that degree, she wants to pursue a successful career in fiction writing. Her English B.A. will also prepare her for an editing career. While she dreams to become a published writer, Medjine also has this big dream of opening up her own publishing house to offer a platform to up and coming authors with a flair for creativity, and she dreams to create a magazine that will uphold artistic integrity as its highest value. She believes in this quote by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, "The size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them. If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough."

Alyssa McLellan is a junior from Medford, MA. As an English major with a minor in management and public relations, she hopes to take her writing skills into the business world and manage the public relations department of a company. Eventually, she hopes to circle back and teach English to pass on her love for writing and grammar.

Alexandria Machado ("*Buzzed*," *The Great Barrier Reef Is Dying!*" "*Barcelona to Toulouse*") is an English major at Bridgewater State University, with a focus in creative writing. As a native Californian, Alexandria has transitioned to east coast life through the necessary means of humor and caffeine. She enjoys writing poetry, practicing yoga, cooking and traveling. It has been her honor to work on the 14th edition of *The Bridge* with so many talented and creative minds.

Bridge Honors

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Recipient: Silver Crown Award

James Holbert

"At the Gallows"

Certificate of Merit: Open (free) Form Poetry

Jessica Kesaris

"The Most Magical Shoes on Earth"

Second Place Single Illustration: Hand-Drawn

Kelly Thies

"Crashing on the Rocks"

Certificate of Merit Single Place Illustration: Hand-Drawn

Erik Lopes

"Chinese Celebration"

Third Place Photography: Single Artistic photograph

Julia Whalen

"Through the Looking Glass"

Certificate of Merit Photography: Single Artistic photograph

Staff, The Bridge

"Page 80-81"

First Place Design of a Single Spread



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Looking back now, doubling
our staff and having our
team grow, the obstacles we
have overcome together,
and the time we spent
making this journal something
to be proud of, we are
all, in fact, filled with a
sense of accomplishment.
The creation of this
journal was an incredible
journey —

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