

Spring 2013

Zephyr: The Fourteenth Issue

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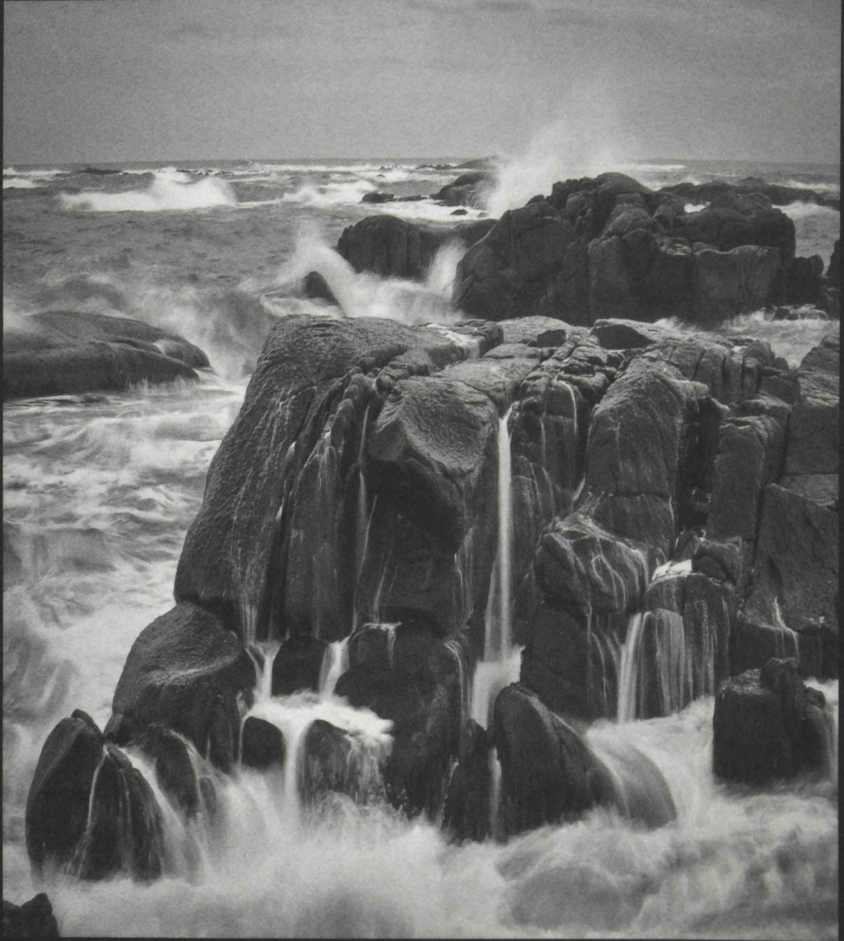
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ZEPHYR
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spring 2013

the university
of new england's
journal of
artistic
expression



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the fourteenth issue · spring 2013

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Welcome, wild North-easter!
Shame it is to see
Odes to every Zephyr;
Ne'er a verse to thee.

CHARLES KINGSLEY

ZEPHYR

THE FOURTEENTH ISSUE / SPRING 2013

the university of new england's journal of artistic expression

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A DEDICATION

This fourteenth issue of *Zephyr* is dedicated to the Dean of Students, Mark Nahorney.

Dean Nahorney has continually proven to be a supporter and lover of the arts. He has contributed immensely in promoting the arts in our community and is always willing to participate alongside students.

We hope that his passion for the arts is one that is transferred to others at UNE in this time where creative expression is essential and necessary for the growth of our university. The editorial board is grateful for Dean Nahorney's enthusiasm and friendship and we hope that he, as well as our readers, will find enjoyment in the following creative works of UNE community members.

Beach Glass

Jack Williams

Thousands of rocks on the beach already belong,
smooth and polished and perfect.

Beach glass glows and catches your eye,
sparkling, even on a sunless day,
with a flush of energy of the mending spirits
coaxing the man-made back to nature,
quietly calling it back home.



Raymond E. Nill

Portrait of Place

Indiana Thompson

There's just enough space along the side of the road for a black van to pull over and park among the scruffy weeds and thorns. A tall, bearded man jumps down from the driver's seat and opens the doors. He reaches in and removes a paint splattered vinyl bag filled with brushes and various accoutrements, a French easel, and a lunch sack, and slings them over his shoulders. With his free hand he grabs a large canvas, already half-filled with splashes of brilliant color. He heads due north along a path that only he seems to know, entering a thickly wooded glade. On the quarter mile trek in, he evades the incessant buzzing of insects by plugging in his earphones, using only his eyes to absorb the subtle shifts of sunlight filtering in through the growth around him. It's an oppressive place, really. The branches reach out to him along the way, catching on his already torn shorts, scratching his legs, leaving a bloody trail as he pushes on.

Finally, the path opens to a pebble-strewn beach. The man eases his load by resting his canvas on top of a large, weather-beaten rock, and pulls out once of his ear buds. He listens for the sound of water crashing over the rocks in the stream, trying to remember exactly where he stood the last time he was here. The light must hit the tumbling water in just the right spot. For my father, it's always about how the light plays over whatever object he's chosen to paint. He comes back to this place, these falls, over and over again. Each time, he chooses to capture a different part of them. Sometimes he wades into the shallow water and paints them head on. Other times, he searches downstream, following the current. Today, he chooses a spot along the bank and works on a scene that portrays sunlight dancing on the water that splashes over the rocks embedded in the shallow pool. He spends hours here, with only the surrounding trees and wildlife for companions. Sometimes he comes home with tales of mink washing themselves in the water or bold butterflies landing on his easel. When his legs get tired after many hours of standing, there's an old tree stump that serves as a chair.

Despite the enormous variations of environment in this beautiful state, my father chooses relentlessly to return to the Cascade Falls to paint. I've thought about this choice, and I can only conclude that he is completely called to capture the spirit of this place in all its seasons. As the years pass, I see the changes in my father's face reflected on his canvases. It is a journey through time that my father and this place make together. Meeting him, you might never guess the secrets of nature that are hidden in his soul. By capturing them in his paintings, he gifts back to us the quiet beauty of this handprint of God.



Nicholas Durand

Housekeeping

Michaela Hoffman

I descended
from the white plane.
The thick winds
of the sunshine state
weighed down my shoulders
like a field-hot burden.

Bellhops, check-in clerks, maintenance men,
and housekeepers
the color of
broomsticks, dusters, cleaning-cart wheels,
trash bags,
instead of bathroom towels
spinning with bleach
in pearly washers.

"Housekeeping."
Three knocks.
"I come back later."

Over five hundred rooms.
Four floors.
We pass a worker kneeling
over a white cable in the hallway
with black tape.

We vacation.
They work
forever
pushing heavy carts
against heavy winds.

How can I smile over vanilla ice-cream
and pool recliners
when I know
laptops and wallets
are locked in the room safe?

How can I toss shopping bags on the comforter
knowing someone must move them
to make the bed?

I can't stand
this heat
is unbearable.
My ice-cream melts down
my hand like bleach
down a drain.

All evidence of my crime
is sterilized

as I board that white plane again.
with my peanut privileges.

Unlike housekeeping,
I can say

I won't come back later.



Nicholas Durand

Untitled

Deanna Baumert

With that beginning note
starts the memory of the heart
seventeen notes later
the strangest pangs will start.
the song brings back a memory
of something that you've lost,
a time that you won't have again
and so you take a pause.
and as you listen to this song
those pangs will pierce your soul,
they'll soon become addicting
and your heart will pay the toll.
but amazing how those blood-red notes
assault your heart like darts,
they course right through your pulsing veins
and infect your beating heart
with feelings known from times gone past,
they're liquid now, they're flowing fast,
the notes pour in, your heart is drowned
in pools of blood-red liquid sound.

A Case for Andre Gibbons

Tyler R. Vunk

Whatever made Andre Gibbons get up from that wet bench was not advertised. There was no passionate resolve or other moving resolution: the young man simply stood up from the snowy seat, took a snort off something stashed in his coat pocket, and started on down the sidewalk, calm as could be, whistling an improvised melody between the wide berth of his front teeth. Of course he had his reasons—no one would be correct to assume otherwise. However, it would be a perverse insult to the young man's character to insinuate that caprice was responsible for either his leaving or his final expression. Yet, in outlining Andre's motivation—why, exactly, he headed off toward that address, only to commit what has been thus far portrayed as an unspeakable act—one cannot simply begin their timeline minutes before the proposed incident took place. To do so would be a gross injustice, as the present moment under consideration is not the penultimate note, but rather the logical response to a climax: the settling dust at the close of the curtain. Therefore, Mr. Gibbon's defense will start at the appearance of the lavender envelopes, and, in a logical fashion, proceed to the night in question—a change in perspective that will be, among other things, quite revealing.

From the moment he awoke on that gritty floor, Andre's search for familiarity began and ended with the Senior Grande wrapper he had come across in his back pocket. There were vague recollections—a doughnut shop parking lot; a long urination all over the rim of some unlucky toilet seat—but, unlike these smudged entries in his travel log, the decision to pair a microwave burrito with a two-dollar liter of rum was certainly not among them. The terrible choice had been the very thing that introduced the young man to that cozy foyer: a marvelous seven-story brownstone, known to most as 17 Karalson Street, and to a select few as home. And as he sat up, rubbing his eyes, cursing the smug authority of the morning sun, Andre brushed himself off, freeing his bare chest of the bouquet of credit card offers, uninviting coupons, and other unknown bits of correspondence that covered him. Above, a wall of broken mailboxes spoke of the crime, and a quick inspection of his bruised knuckles confirmed his participation. Bedlam of this sort was usually comical to the young man, but, for some reason, be it the loss of his missing boot or the broken glass he had used as a pillow, humor did not seem like an appropriate response. Searching for something, anything, as a target for his rage, Andre looked among the heavier selections of paper next to him. A lavender envelope had landed about an inch away from his knee; and with a considerable amount of weight to it, the errant piece of mail seemed like the perfect vessel for his sentiment. He snatched up the lifeless thing, cocked it as far back as his wrist would allow, and, in an effort that sent him back to the floor, the young man flung the annoyance as hard as he could, propelling it like a ninja star, smack dab into a sign that soon read: "KARA SON TERRACE." The sheer force of the landscaper's hurl, coupled with his momentary

mastery of physics, had not only managed to disfigure the shoddy sign, but had, more importantly, caused a chain reaction, starting with the desecration of the envelope, and ending with a mischievous "L" that temporarily branded the young man's eye.

"Cocksuck-ah!" he screamed.

Andre jumped to his feet. Spotting the pest in the corner, he headed off toward the lavender blur. If he hadn't found that fifty-dollar bill poking out of the crushed corner of the envelope, he never would have stuffed the entire fuzzy mess into his pocket. And, had he not stuffed that fuzzy mess into his pocket, he never would have read the enclosed letter during his lunch break. Regardless, he had found the cash; he did read the letter, and he would go back to that same foyer at 17 Karalson Street, religiously, on every other Saturday from then on.

While one would be correct in assuming that a particular talent is required of a person who prospers at premeditated larceny, it would be a mistake to presume that the young man was a natural at the art of thievery. Andre's proficiency at breaching the security of the imbedded case had taken time—the sort of painstaking development that speaks of an inner fortitude: the dedication of victors. Earlier that summer, about two days after his initial fifty-dollar score, he began practicing over and over again, keeping in mind the whole while the lavender envelopes that awaited him. And so, there he would sit: at the foot of his bed—employing a clip taken from a bag of hotdog buns. The landscaper worked away at a children's piggy bank he had stolen from his landlord's seven year-old niece, Wheezie. Three weeks later, after several failed attempts, a barrage of complaints about stale bread, and an impressive graveyard of broken plastic bits, the young man had proudly conquered the complexities of the plastic toy; and, while the take inside—an asthma inhaler with a chewed-on mouthpiece—didn't function as the most ideal motivator, each night after work, Andre elected to nourish his burgeoning skill set instead of enjoying a buzz that could have erased the swelter of those summer evenings. When the last of the fall cleanups had come and gone—the fourteen-hour days of hauling leaves and clearing brush; of moving miles of grass clippings; and grading the surfaces of nearly every new suburban lawn, be it a postage stamp or some other glutinous showcase his boss's business scavenged—there was not a single door in the eight-room boarding house that could pose a challenge to him. Neither the medicine cabinet in the downstairs' bathroom, nor the chintzy Wafer lock on the liquor cabinet were out of his league, both of which, upon their successful openings, encouraged a graduation ceremony sponsored by a half-full bottle of Drambuie and a finely crushed line of Vicodin. Indeed, to the young man, it seemed that postponing his usual after-work sedation had been well worth the rewards he was beginning to reap.

While inarguably liberal with his definition of personal property, the young man was, for all intents and purposes, a person of humility. Although he occasionally dabbled in methamphetamine, and, on difficult days, medicated himself with a syringe, Andre rarely set out to hurt others—it simply wasn't in his nature. The great lengths he had gone to

in order to procure the pilfered letters may seem, to the average observer, to be nothing more than an unscrupulous stubbornness, born from a desperation to supplement a modest income; yet, one must recognize the landscaper's plight during the winter months. Every December, those in Andre's neighborhood with seasonal occupations were preoccupied with securing employment. As the landscaper had never been good with a tape measure, his job opportunities were limited to night positions either dishwashing or working a register, both of which never usually panned out. While it would be easy to blame any single aspect of the young man's unkempt appearance as the source of his problem, the real reason for his lack of winter work was due to the seven-inch scar upon his face. Starting below the right ear and ending at the forehead, Andre's nasty slash had been given to him by a schoolmate who had learned the key to ascendancy early on: go after the biggest one in the grizzliest way imaginable. Even though Andre would be among the tallest in his sixth-grade class, his growth spurt ended soon thereafter, leading to an average-sized teenager with an enormous badge of shame and a very deflated social life.

Ah, but one must return from digression. It is, again, the emotional marrow of the young man that waves off any accusation of malicious behavior. On every other Saturday, hiding behind a dumpster in a nearby alleyway—well after leaving the heated comfort of the little foyer at 17 Karalson Street—Andre would go about opening the lavender envelopes. With just a single tug, he could split apart their creased paper lips, separating those rigid backsides, and revealing the folded offerings inside. Yet, it is here—under intense scrutiny—that one can find a respectable purity. As he routinely peeled away at the rest of each lavender shell, the young man was always quick to ignore the cash that greeted him, and, instead, would immediately fish out the vanilla colored stationary—delicately, by the tips of his fingers—smelling the freshly shucked pages with long, slow draws. The warm tones of a country kitchen, full of cloves and baked apple treats, would make his stomach rumble; and he would take one short sniff, and then another, and another—all three, right in a row. When loading up the tailgate of a pickup truck or suffering through the endless backward strokes of a splintered rake, the comforting scent would gnaw away at him. Most of his days would come and go, filled with nothing but that sweet cachet, goading his sanity to find a safe place where he could enjoy the captured redolence. He often wondered where the letters were kept during those cruel waiting periods: was their potency wasted in the cold plastic of a post office crate, or—even worse—at the bottom of an absorbent mail carrier's bag?

Furthermore, it should be noted that he had neither seen nor even attempted to see, whom, exactly, the lavender envelopes were for. The mailing address, made out to a "Ms. Elizabeth Ann Geoffrey," revealed as much about the intended recipient as Andre cared to learn about her. However, it was true: he knew quite a lot about Ms. Geoffrey—too much, in fact. He knew her dress size was a 6; he knew her favorite food was duck, and that she liked rainy afternoons; he knew her major was Literature; she had a silver BMW, and a fiancé named Oscar that had begun a career in finance; he even knew that it

had been the nineteen year-old's decision to name the family dog Cadence. Yes, Andre had all he could stand of Ms. Geoffrey, and more. What had kept him coming back, week after week, month after month, to that foyer at 17 Karalson Street had absolutely nothing to do with the thought of meeting or speaking with Ms. Elizabeth Ann; the young man had no hidden lascivious agenda, no wanton lust percolating from years of rejection—bruised decades of sequestered frustration left to reside in locked bathrooms; ages of corporeal desire reduced to socks and snapshots of pretty faces and short skirts—his fate had long since been accepted, digested, and medicated. Andre Gibbons was after something far greater than physical pleasure. And while he didn't know what that certain something was, he did understand that it was brought to life each time he read the words on those vanilla sheets. The voice that spoke in his head was soft and smooth, like the velvety blanket of a hot bath; it settled his guts, and soothed the torn patches of his palms. It kept him whole. Even if "Grandmother" hadn't been found at the bottom of each letter, Andre would have assigned the voice with that role. Throughout his life, he could remember watching—figuring out via innocent spying and other social scraps what that type of person was like. And to the best of his induction, the young man decided that a grandmother was more than just an old "used-to-be" mother; she was an open door; a warm embrace after a scraped knee; the deliverer of a spanking when no one else would dare; a hot plate of fried fish with hand-cut potatoes. She was pure, unfiltered, bona fide love.

Two years prior to his discovery of the lavender envelopes, soon after an outbreak of Meningitis had claimed his mother's life, Andre Gibbons inherited an aggressive loneliness—one that few can claim to have ever recovered from. There were no siblings for him to talk to; no cousins; no uncles, nieces; no girlfriends, confidants, or grandmothers—there was no one—not even a father to watch ballgames with, and suffer through awkward takeout dinners loaded with salt. True, Ms. Gibbons, his caregiver, was a kind soul: one of the rare few who do more than hide behind the guise of fundraising committees and campaign promises—she got her hands dirty. At night, she cleaned the toilets and linens at a small truckstop about three miles down the highway, and, in the morning, would make sure that her adopted son had three things: clean clothes, breakfast, and a hug. Each day that he awoke under Ms. Gibbon's roof, regardless of whether or not she had worked a double shift, there would be two strips of bacon, a bowl of steaming oatmeal, and a pile of piping hot biscuits, all of which would wake him up with their wonderful fragrances alone. The tired woman would sit with her son while he ate, smiling as much as she could, watching contently as he inhaled everything put in front of him.

"You know, 'Dre," she'd often say to him, "I just don't know where you put it."

Andre would just grin back at Ms. Gibbons, beaming with a feeling that warmed his chest, and made his cheeks sore. He would pretend not to notice the bottle of gin she held underneath the table, turning away as she snuck periodic sips. Before he went

to school, Ms. Gibbons, his surrogate guide through the briers of society—would be asleep, snoring and drunk, passed out cold on the couch. And, predictable as a dripping faucet, Andre would return the favor each day, pushing his caregiver onto her side, arranging a blanket around her lifeless body, always thinking enough to set an alarm by her head. The exchange was, as far as he was concerned, heavenly. But, as life had come to show the young man, nothing lasts forever. The only person in the world that loved him was dead and buried before he was twenty-four.

On the evening in question, hours before he would be taken into custody, Andre Gibbons went about his normal weekend ritual, patiently sitting through the hour-long bus ride to the Eastern part of the city. He walked in silence, trying as best as he could to avoid eye contact with the chuckling clouds of gagging peacoats that brushed by him, each with its own vigilant scout: a bulky aggressor whose laughter instantly ceased upon sight of the uninvited visitor; it was the retraction of those well-layered shoulders, and the abundance of streetlamps that made the landscaper loyal to his hooded appearance, silent with his words, and diminished in his posture. But, with the falling snow, few, if any revelers seemed to notice him on that night. With haste, the young man soon found himself at 17 Karalson Street. And, once inside the privet-lined walkway, over the fine mason work of the steps below, and past the weight of the copper-plated door, Andre was inside the familiar foyer. He went straight to work. In less than thirty seconds, the landscaper had opened the imbedded metal case, and quickly sorted through the undesirable pieces of Ms. Elizabeth Ann Geoffrey's mail until he found the lavender envelope, easing the fragile thing into his weathered hand. Fluidly rote, Andre returned the flathead into the side pocket of his brown Carthartts, and gently shut Apartment-9A's mailbox, listening carefully as he always did for the locking mechanism to catch. With the envelope in his mouth, the young man felt along the edge of the metal latch, and, having found no scratches, decided to rub the length of the opening anyway, employing the checkered sock he typically used to cushion the screwdriver's blunt attack. He stood in the foyer, licking away at his chapped lips, smelling that wonderful smell, and then stuffed the envelope deep into the front pocket of his canvas jacket, silently closing the copper-plated door behind himself.

Although raw, the chill didn't seem to affect him. Even the snow that crunched beneath the thick rubber soles of the young man's galoshes couldn't sway his attention: he was concerned with little else other than the sheet between his fingers. Andre came out from behind the dumpster, and shuffled along the dusted sidewalk, tilting the handwritten page, doting and assessing, trying to find the perfect amount of light for his reading. The gangs of overhead streetlamps were still humming away, and, with a few visible lines, Andre parked himself alongside a telephone pole, angled the letter, and indulged:

Elizabeth Ann,

Happy holidays! In preparing for this year's trip to the Cape, I am sending my regards early, as you will no doubt see me well after the New Year. I know that the end of your semester is a busy time for you, but, please, do try to call.

I miss you terribly, my dear.

With love,

Grandmother

A wet snowflake fell directly into one of Andre's eyes, interrupting his study, and forcing him to pull the damp page away from his face. After a few bursts of heavy blinking, his vision returned, and a smile took hold of his numb cheeks. He wiped away his runny nose with the back of his free hand, and exhaled a slow puff of warm air, watching as the thick cloud traveled a foot or two only to dissipate into the silence of the empty side street before him. Looking up at the relentless flurries, the young man shrugged his shoulders, and began to fold up the vanilla sheet as best as he could, corralling the snowy mess with the rest of its contents. He zipped up his Jacket pocket, and started his trek down the sidewalk, all the while chuckling to himself like a well-lubricated wino mocking a herd of holiday shoppers in the throes of addiction.

It was nearly three-thirty in the morning when Andre had made it to the bus stop. And as the young man sat, waiting for a ride that wasn't due for another hour, he imagined in silence. The Eastern part of that small New England city had been a blemish for the better part of his life; yet, there it was, drizzled with snow, glistening with the plastic charm of pancake houses and hand sanitizers. Investors had left their marks all over the refined wing: highrises flaunted wide windows; the jewelry shops had no bars; restaurants boasted esoteric names; and there was no mention of flu shots, laundromats, or money wires. All around him, a paradise laughed, to which he returned the gesture. Andre had been there enough times to know—there was nothing underneath that pallid coating that was meant for him; and, even if someone could have convinced him otherwise, he was smart enough to see that the view he had before him was the best he would ever be offered. From the safety of a wet bench, he watched in his mind's eye as the walkways filled; the taxicabs and S.U.V.'s hogged the streets. He covered his mouth, snickering, almost clucking at the sight of freshly waxed lips and legs as they promenaded about; those oversized glasses—a mute sheen on a bee's lens—juggling the complexities of a cell phone and scores of bags—the bloody pelts of a persuasive boutique that made their handlers seem so meek and fragile, just begging to

be rescued, feigning for a well-tailored hero. The police officers driving modern designs; the children complaining for more; the twenty-something's with seventy-five cent t-shirts and eighty-dollar haircuts. None of it—not one brunch; not a cup of gelato; not a single book-signing; none of it—interested him. If he could have a nice place, somewhere above it all—an impermeable spot—that would give him the opportunity to come and go as he pleased, without getting involved in any of that nonsense, he would have taken it. Yet, he knew that such an idea was merely a pipedream—one that would never be worth his while. And as he lifted himself from the snowy bench below, he instinctually removed a small vile from his canvas jacket. Unscrewing the container's top with one hand, and plugging a nostril with the other, the young man, in one hard inward pull, accidentally drew in half of the white powder stored within the brown tube. His eyes watered; his teeth clenched: his heart, beating at a pulse reserved for sprinters and those under gunfire, surged at a rancorous pace. A rhythm, like the steady swell of an infinite undertow—the pressured melody of an increasingly taut compound bow—poured into his ears, coating the hallways of his being in an understanding of simultaneousness: outlines sharpened; patterns surfaced; minutiae were easily commanded. All was clear. Without so much as a cough or a stumble, the perturbed landscaper, holding tight to his listless compartment, knew exactly where he had to go.

Even as he stood outside, looking first at the lavender envelope, and then back at the home in front of him, the return address did not change. A good sign, so it seemed—one that supported his decision. The iron fence proved to be unintimidating, and he finished the easy climb without mishap; but, by the time Andre had gotten himself to the entrance, he could only watch from afar as everything around him fell apart. He shook, and shivered. And as his scarred fist—that same meaty vice of sinew and reinforced bone—struck the finish on the oak door in front of him, the terrifying instrument could scarcely utter a sound. Another light tap was all that would come out of his callused hand; and, so, he listened. He waited. He stared at the door: at the cameras at the edge of the driveway; at the shoveled walk; and the golden peephole. But, there seemed to be nothing willing to stop him. Andre took a pair of shrimp forks out of his side pocket, and, using the advantages afforded by the thin prongs, made quick work of the upper level challenge. The doorknob felt cold to the touch, and, as he turned the frigid brass ball, pushing the door open, the landscaper was quickly disappointed. The curtains that entertained the windows of the first floor were long and boring—mustard colored excuses for suicide; and the wooden floors, each board without a scratch, smelled of industrial pine-scented cleaner. Even the couches, leather antiquities stolen from an earlier decade of quality, showed no signs of being sat in—not a single imprint, nothing. It was as sterile and lonely of a place as he had ever seen. Yet, the young man and his unimpressed passions were quickly righted the moment they set foot into the home's West wing. Every lavender envelope that had been cherished by him—those

representations of studious nights, and sacrifice; unbearable trips through unwelcoming neighborhoods and terrifying risks of freedom—were reduced to nothing more than paltry trinkets. The aroma of a busy kitchen put him onto his knees: tales of French toast, maple syrup, and whipped butter; of roasted chicken, tenderloins, and baked hams; scalloped potatoes, caramel corn, homemade ice cream, and walnut fudge. All of the fragrances that had been hitchhiking on each of those letters were now swarming around him, playing with his sense of urgency, burying him in a familiarity that he conceded to. Andre scanned the room quickly, and closed the door behind him, only to walk into the dark, toward that guiding scent. He fumbled blindly, feeling his way past an ottoman and then the round edges of an end table. And as the floor beneath him began to squeak, the clumsy sounds of his rubber-soled galoshes had never sounded quite so good. The tile floor led him straight there.

Its metal handle was long and sturdy; oversized, like a child's memory of an amusement park, the refrigerator that awaited him was just as he had pictured it. Andre reached out his trembling hand, grabbed hold of the metal door, and pulled with all of his remaining strength. A burst of white light spurted past the broken seal, and the walls of the alchemist's laboratory began to shimmer: designer spatulas and stockpots; ladles and ancient Jello molds; skillets, kettles, and whisks; their reflections skipped about the walls in patterns and dances known only to the finest of diamonds. Ready himself for one final pull, Andre dipped his shoulders forward—those beaten beasts of sun-drenched toil—setting them to their first selfish endeavor in decades; and, just as he was about to make his move, he stopped, swallowed a mouthful of saliva, braced himself, and, with a loud cry, flung the massive door wide open.

Before him, drenched in an electric white light, was a readied feast.

The Pyrex wares, filled to the brim with scrumptious delicacies, were the first to go; one after another, he yanked off their tops, ripping out their tantalizing innards, stuffing his face by the handful, barely chewing in between introductions and dropped containers. Whipped potatoes, and Dijon mustard covered his temples, while snow peas, rabbit, and bits of cranberry sauce colored his lashes and beard. He breathed in deeply, basting in the aroma, enjoying the fit of laughter that followed. And as he cleared out the final item on the second shelf, the landscaper scooped out the entire offering, smearing the pureed radish across his face, rubbing the sacrifice into his jacket and brow, only to finish his decoration by flicking whatever dripped from his hands onto the intricate inlays and glass cabinets that circled around him. Reaching back into the open vault, he vehemently swept his arm through the unguarded temple: casserole dishes and condiment jars—pie plates, sausages, wrapped bits of cheese—caviar tins and caper jars, all of it went straight out onto the tile floor below. He darted back and forth between all corners of the kitchen, throwing limbs of a whittled carcass at the

boundaries of his new territory; and with each snapping bone and taste of stuffing, the young man grew more excited. What remained of a plump turkey soon fell upon the pile of worship, along with the other sacrifices of conquered flesh. Then, in a calculated flash, the landscaper abandoned his place at the metal altar. With palms full of his putrid mixture, he went about bathing the wall nearest to him in expression; making broad strokes with his elbows, grinding his fingernails into the white chalk of the painted sheetrock, slashing wildly with loose thumbs, dotting from a painted forehead, and punctuating with bleeding knuckles, he screeched at the top of his lungs an intelligible phrase, ending in his collapse at the base of his creation. And as he crawled backwards, he fell into the refrigerator door—that keeper of secrets and wild treasures—silencing the brilliant glow within the metal box, watching it disappear as the naked blackness swallowed what remained of the kitchen.

“Mr. Geoffrey?”

Andre turned around, sliding down the length of the refrigerator until he met the cool mess upon the tiles below. A light had been switched on in the next room, and, as the appliances, countertops, and window dressings started to take on their real shapes, a pair of masculine shadows poured into the doorway in front of him, each boasting the unmistakable outline of a handgun.

“Mr. Geoffrey?” repeated the voice, coming closer.

Andre’s heart pounded.

A bearded jaw locked.

Breaths hurt.

Joints cracked.

Snorts were withheld.

Vomit was swallowed.

And then, it was over.

By the end of the next day, Andre Gibbons would find himself dirty, bruised, and beaten, charged with the worst crime he could be given, sentenced to carry out his existence in the places that humanity knows nothing of. Yet, if one were to accept a final plea for innocence, shouldn’t a closing argument come from the subconscious of the accused, rather than the silver tongue of rhetoric? While neither judge nor jury could make use of the senseless destruction upon the wall of the Plaintiffs’ home, nonetheless, an odd calligraphy did exist. And, if one were to have the ability to pick apart the trails of relish and the lines of gnocchi—the consonants of rabbit bones and the complex lettering of cornichons—the words of the accused would have surely set him free:

Dear Grandmother,

In this world where we forget—
 where we put our time inside vanishing ideas,
 know that you mean everything to me.
 And though we have only met

in another's stolen scraps,
I have enjoyed each of our visits.

It is now,
As I ready to give you back to those that
need you most,
that I must speak softly—
once more into the very ears that heard
many infant cries
and tender pleas.

No, I will not ask you to be there,
with each of my steps
upon this crooked path,
to keep me safe,
past today
and beyond the new scars.

I will instead apologize,
Oh, my beloved woman,
I ask your forgiveness,
for I no longer need
to call upon you,
or that which you give.

It will never be,
not even in the faintest of dreams,
my little shadows that fall upon
your floors,
But they will come.
Oh, how they will come.

They will know
all those splendid tastes that you offer,
and the very brilliance of your tact:
A subtle, transformative shine
—one that moves brats into the thrones of kings.
—and paupers toward the fulfilling squalor of love.

With all of my heart,

Andre



Nicholas Durand



Raymond E. Nill

Sacred Ceremony

Rachael Tripp

Happenstance,
or maybe even extreme
celestial quite perfect intervention,
set a lovely scent into
vast air and all over the
ground that never went unnoticed
by two suspended from
gold and blue limbs of love.

She will walk, slow
and quite like
a lady. He will
stand quiet and still,
waiting at the end.

A request made in open,
accompanied with the best of bright red heart's
interest, she took his
as she would take her own,
as his own, he took her.
Brilliant words began to
come quite natural and
truthful at best.

There were
no apologies
needed and not even one
regret when all was said and
done.



Nancy Rankin



George P. Allen

Letting Go

Hillary Cusack

The words kick down the door to my mouth
tramping on tongue and teeth
in haste
to escape
the fire that burns at the back of my throat.

The inferno that was once
a lonely spark in my gallbladder
now belches heat and smoke
as I scream to the cold ocean
"Why?!"

But my word-vomit falls on
wet, lifeless ears,
uncaring about the state of my heart
or any other internal organ.

My fire dies with the wind.
I take my place in the sand,
allow the salt to seep into my bones,
my lungs,
my veins,
and return to the sea through my eyes.

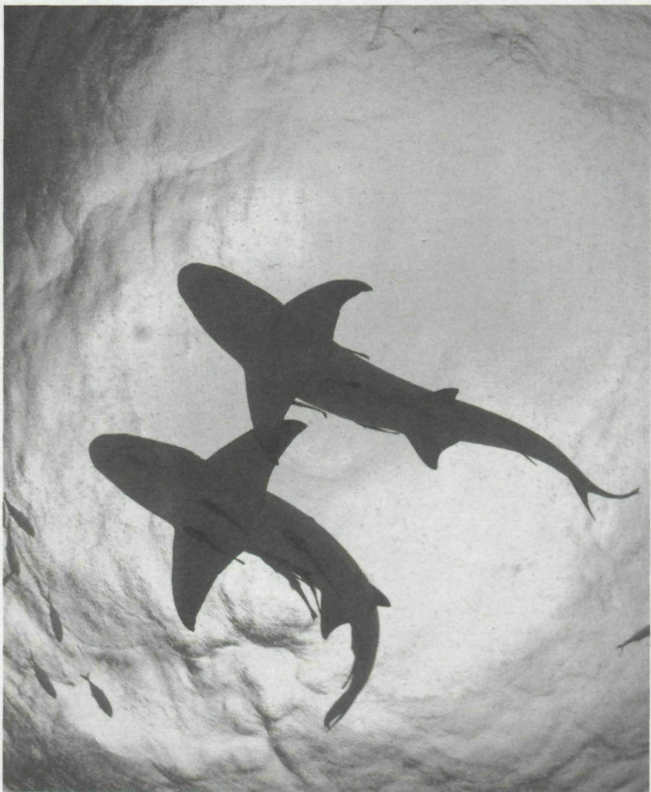
Ladies and Gentlemen, The Cadets!

Sarah Heath

Do you see what I see?
Tens of thousands of people on their feet,
The lights of Lucas Oil shining down,
The other 149 among me, my summer family
All drenched in sweat and starting to cry
At the end of our finals performance.

Do you hear what I hear?
The roar of the crowd,
The heavy breathing
After 12 minutes of
Emptying my soul
Onto that field.

Do you know what I know?
What it's like to be a champion,
To work harder in 90 days
Than most people do in a lifetime,
And to stand tall and proud,
Having nearly reached perfection.



Jillian Morris

Family Court

James Nicholson

for Seamus Heaney

The plaintiff
pricks her thumb,

smudges blood
down dungarees,

eyeing
defendant:

pear-shaped,
sweat glob son

from his father—
same gelatinous

back, same
cul-de-sac

mind circling
like a mule

in blinders,
tethered,

reductive,
whining.

Percussionist

James Nicholson

for Omar Hakim

Syncopated genius
with your double-

stroke rolls like engines,
buzzing metronomic

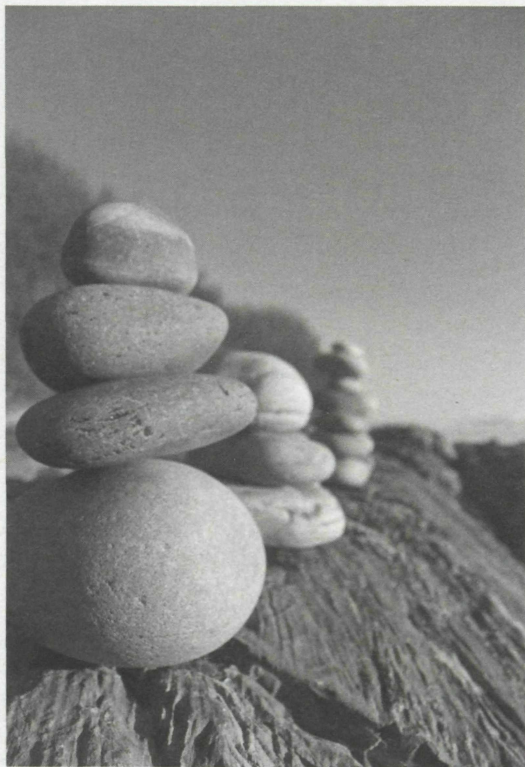
through cre- and de-
crescendo as though

spacing was a tendon,
a rhythmic or blood-

born extension
of thought or feeling;

how do you lengthen
pauses so that time

speeds like an eighth,
instead of a whole?



Nicholas Durand



Nicholas Durand

Hell

Travis Smith

Perhaps I didn't live my life as I'd ought;
When I should have maintained what my Sunday School taught,
I ignored and forgot it, lived my life for myself;
I suppose that's how come I woke up dead in Hell.

I walked scared and alone down the halls made of fire
Into corridors and rooms decked with decadence and ire.
I regretted at first things that I'd done in my life,
That had led me to boundless, perpetual strife,
As I walked past the rapists and killers and thugs,
All the monsters and pagans and users of drugs.
I saw Jews and the Muslims and corrupt politicians,
Lawyers and athletes and a few statisticians.

When I entered the hall filled with tables alight,
I bestowed on myself the most fleeting of frights:
An old hillbilly farmer and a queer-looking man
Eating lunch with a black and the whole Ku Klux Klan.

Democrats with Republicans, Russians and Nazis,
All the actors and artists with the mad paparazzi,
Prostitutes and porn stars and school teachers too,
Eating deep-fried, grease-dripping meals of fast-food.

If these enemies of old could combine thus anew,
Then what strange coexistence could the Heavens accrue?
I was pondering this notion when I swiftly was struck
By an image divulging the most awesome luck:

Hell had been home from beginnings of time
To the swindlers and liars and masters of crime,
But it also held men with immense expertise,
Like the doctors, thinkers, firemen, police.

Scientists and philosophers of the highest regard
Were out courting fine women in Hell's flaming backyard,
And the bubbling jacuzzi was overflowing with kids,

Who had sinned young, apparently, as all the rest did.

In the light of all this, you must conceive my surprise
When I turned to see Jesus right in front of my eyes.
He explained to me, though, why he frequents this site,
And I suppose it makes sense, thinking back with hindsight:

Brimming over with babies and fetuses' souls,
It'd be hard to think or take leisurely strolls;
Jesus said Heaven's way too crowded and loud,
With no one but the babies and that Westboro crowd.

Collaboration

Wesley & Leslie Ricker

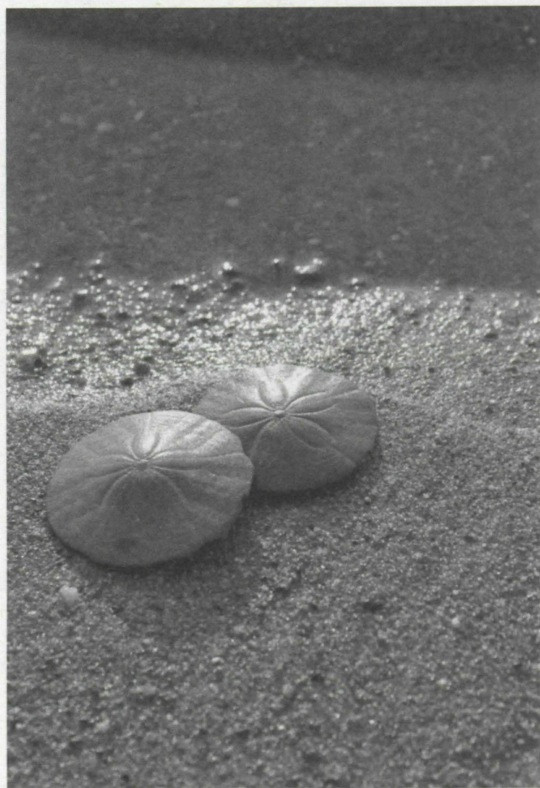
"A gallery of galaxies" he said,
"art in its highest form
sparkling overhead"

we were together
yet apart,
separated at body
connected at heart,
but when it came to art
we were different branches of the family tree
writing in singularity:

"a peace for me, I could not find,
some pieces of me I left behind
in the forest went missing,
shaded, for the sun I was wishing,
while timber-spiked tidal waves
of stone
stood frozen in time alone

crawling through the undergrowth
I came to a clearing of color
where wildflowers
sang a silent symphony,
music for the mind
and for the hours,
epiphany"

the search
for some space
or some self
or the quest for occupation
leads to separation,
creates distance,
yet shared bloodline
with words and rhymes in common
can give birth
to a zest for collaboration
across such distance.



Nicholas Durand



Nicholas Durand

Snow Lays on A Hill

Veste Nesryd

They bide their time together,
Binded tight, molded soft,
They something form a blinding wall
Where snow lays on a hill

They ask no questions, tell no lie
But keep a secret,
Oh!-They try
Where snow lays on a hill

They fall in patterns, inconsistent, randomly
But prettiest of all, most beautiful to me,
Is the snowflake chosen to fall
Where snow lays on a hill

In moonlight not yet bright,
Snowflakes soft and crisp,
Heavy and light,
Alike, will guide the path

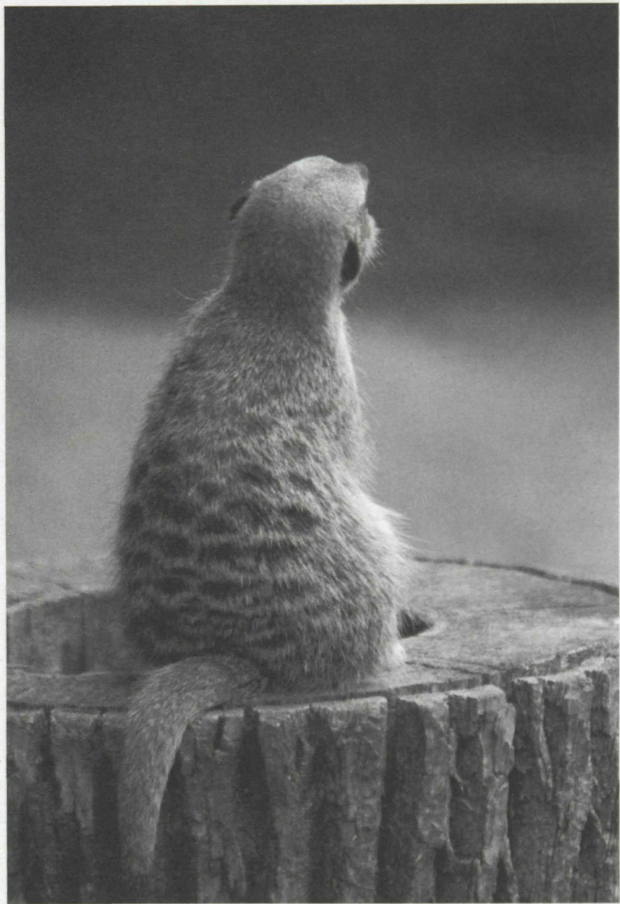
The sun grants some always to be free,
The sun grants some ne'er to be,
The place where needed to fill
Is the choice of the snowflake,

Where snow lays on a hill

The Present Past

Wesley Ricker

Beneath the skin the sins I keep
Between the sheets I dream in sleep
Reliving there what's already gone
Knowing I'll never awake to yesterday's dawn
Moments of mistake become memories that last
Carrying with me always the ever present past
Not for regret
But to remind
Of lessons
Not to be left behind



Thomas A. Cook

Church and Steeple

Jack Williams

"Here is the church,
Here is the steeple,
Open the door, and
Where are the people?"

I.

Drinking the mirroring water
Reflecting snow-capped peaks,
Miles only inches away.
Crispness and clarity
Bathe my eyes and ears and skin,
Permeating my nostrils into the depths of
My heart beating with the heavens,
Echoing off the canyon walls beneath.
Rocking back and forth with the mountain
And back again in an undefinable rhythm
Through me and around me.
I tune out and into the synchronicity
Of the lake and the mountain and my senses,
Within creation ever today,
At this moment ever present eternally,
Ever praying.

II.

Driving too hard,
accelerating and
passing all the others,
they are never really looking,
never seeing the grandeur of the peaks,
never feeling the clarity in the sunshine
nor hearing the wisdom of the thunder,
never noticing the changes
in the landscape or the seasons.
They are always hurrying,
flat and anxious,

never breathing.
There is never enough time.

III.
Clear-cutting the slopes
with eroding mudslides
filling the pristine rivers and
slaughtering our grandchildren
recklessly in greedy denial
as they blast down mountain tops
one by one, methodically
flattening our future and
desecrating the sacred
all around them,

they are destroying the steeple,
heedless of the people
all around them
praying in the church.

Of Air

Leslie Ricker

moon over Venus:

a planet alone representing the stars
the only evening light
with the strength to defy
the lunar sky

two Goddesses reigning
over an urban view
over hotels, train whistles
sirens that issue
from New Earth modems
that utterly fail
to demystify
the ancient ways and whispers
of a graceful ocean
and jewels in the air

moon over Venus:

comes the deep desire
to erect a raging fire
in the snowy forest
on some wild and windy sight
to give winter
a little extra warmth
a little extra light
to worship the coming night
and the true stars marching out,
rank on rank,
to join Venus
in that eternal 'soft parade'
endless embers glowing
to raised eyes showing
a beauty reflected there
of Earth
and of Air



Thomas A. Cook



Patti Genest

Memories of a Dresser

Rachael Tripp

A slightly blurred and slowly fading picture sits atop an old blue-grey dresser, next to a shabby leather box, full of antiqued buttons and prized scraps of material. On the other side, a handful of sun-dried sea lavender your mother picked for me last summer, when it was hazy and perfect, just the way you said you liked it. Above the picture, a mirror encased by a cracked and off-white frame, my beloved Stephan placed perfectly in the corner. I remember the night the picture was taken. We were sitting on a low, unmade bed, delicate smoke filling the closed room. We were surrounded by laughing strangers, and it does not seem to bother us. You held the camera slightly above us, while thoughtfully kissing the side of my face, your eyes closed. Mine open and laughing, grateful for such eloquent gestures.

Trapped

Veste Nesryd

She is warm, tender in the way she lets me swim about. I dunk below her surface, her hands swooshing over me to cover the hole I've created. She stops my progression downward, clenching at me and drawing me back upward playfully with her fingertips. I smile and let out my breaths as I pop through the surface. Wiping my hair out of my eyes and her residue from my face I blink to see my next destination. I swim out a little deeper, my arms darting into her; my feet stirring her about. She caresses my neck and jaw as I move, splashing my lips as I divide through her. I suddenly jolt inwards, diving beneath her plane. I thrust my arms and legs violently, drawing closer to her mushy center. She again pulls me back to her surface; the air gasped into my lungs, a surprise treat for my adventuring. She braces me like a child from a fall as I come back down from the open space above her.

I am floating again; the sun beating upon us both. I decide to stay afloat in this one spot for a few moments. My eyes dart amongst the pine trees, the New Hampshire beach, littered with bark and twigs and people. "It is beautiful here today" I reflect. She must agree as the water warms immediately around me, her affection surrounding me like a lover's embrace. It is relaxing, a safety net of acceptance; the colder outer layers a rejection of my presence. I plunge down again satisfied to lurk around the shallower depths. My feet weave into the sand beneath her, bouncing upon its spongy nature. I walk and walk allowing me to stand in her rather than float. The sand tinges my feet and shins, rustling about on my skin. Some clouds drift over from around the mountainside to the east. The heat from the sun still bears down on me, despite its' invisibility. A storm must be coming in, with its fireworks of thunder and lightning. I decide that I should start for the beach and get out of the water. She doesn't want me to.

The storm alarms her. She begins to rustle about with nowhere to go. She is trapped in her form. She crackles as her strength builds, her fright driving her. Her waves start to rise with each pass, crashing farther and farther upon the beach. I make my way closer to her fringe; the sooner out of the water the better. She crashes a wave into me luring me back, closer to her center. She doesn't want to be alone during the storm; she wants me there with her. I wrangle myself together, frustrated. I just want to get out of the water; I'll surely be back another time when the weather improves. But she will have none of it. Her dissatisfaction in my choice moves towards anger and hate. She questions my loyalty as she smacks me mercilessly. I start to panic as leaving is proving too difficult.

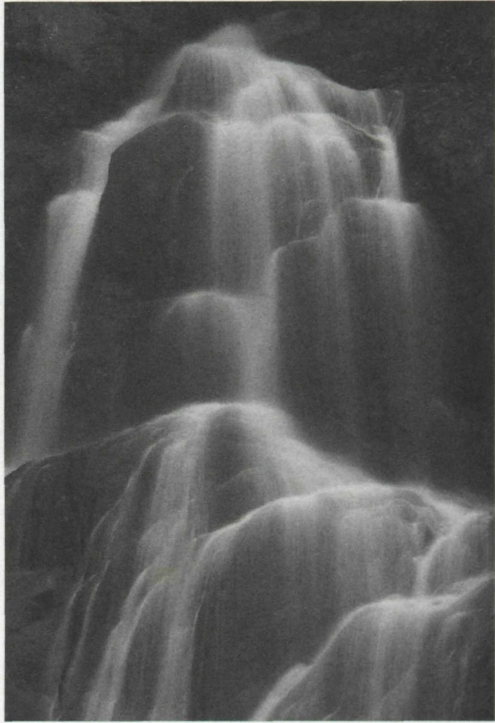
She is smothering, her waves crashing me into rocks. The pain is sharp and focused, determined to eat at me and strip my bodily armor. I wander unconscious in her grasp, powerless to assert my will, powerless to defy impending peril. I strain to look for mercy, my eyes softened to a gaze as I flop afloat. "Make it painless!" I scream as she watches me struggle. She has captured me to the neck, her wet touch weaving through my hair. I struggle to keep my head above the water. She grazes my lips as it halts my breath, toying with my mind. I drift again downward, crashing one last time. Groaning mightily, breath fading away to an unknown place, she finally covers me with

her arms; wet and heavy, pushing me down to sleep. So gentle she is as my eyes close, my lungs burning for a final word, a final caution, a final plea. "Why are you doing this" my mind aches to beg.

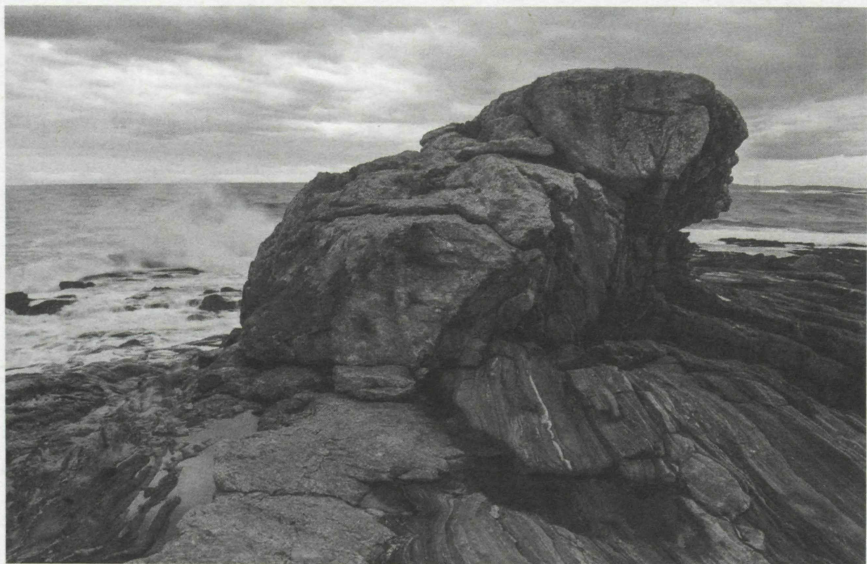
I am asleep now, sodden sand comforting my thump to the bottom; casting below me like a mold welcoming the newest tenant. My body no longer feels the cold pressure of the water. I am the landscape of the ocean floor, to be swum above; to be walked upon; to be nourished from.

I gasp, the shock propelling me up from my pillow. I start to steady my breaths as I am now awake. I finally see what I was blinded to for almost two years. I pick up my cell phone from the desk, knowing I need to at last make that call. I cannot subdue to the pressures anymore. I cannot overlook the negativity during moments of happiness and feelings of content. I am sick of the possessiveness and jealousy; the attempts at ruining my new friendships as they are just blossoming.

The tension rises with every ring passing to no answer. Finally, she answers with a reserved "hey". The last week has lacked the usual jubilation in our conversations as the arguing has gotten worse and worse. I get right to the point.



Mike Fillyaw



Mike Fillyaw

Stargazers

Sarah Heath

To my fellow stargazers,
Who search out the darker places
The beaches, the fields
That city lights can't touch.

Who lay in peace watching
Ursa major and Ursa minor
Draco winding in between
Taking a great journey, to

Hunt with mighty Orion,
Sit with boastful Cassiopeia,
Swim with small Delphinus,
And fly along the Milky way.

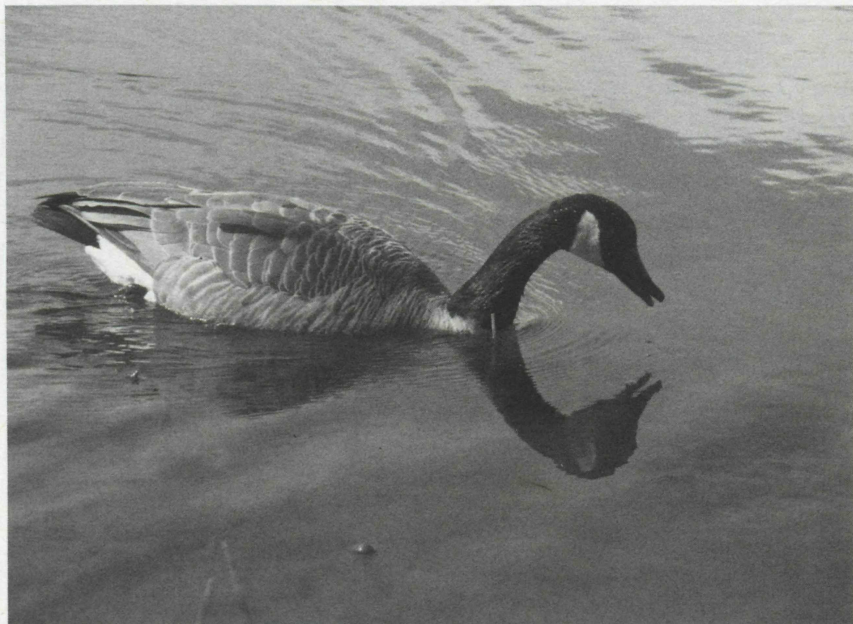
If only everyone could learn
To lift their eyes
From the ground they walk
And see something beautiful above.



Nicholas Durand



Nicholas Durand



Emily Okun

My Father Calls Me Goose

Hillary Cusack

My father calls me goose.

I don't know how it's taken me so long to recognize
this name that's been my own,
a part of me like my spleen.
I could've lived without the knowledge,
I could've lived without the name
but not anymore,
not when my life's book is open for me to read,
ready to explain why I fell for a boy
who called me "ducky"
why I felt childishly satisfied at the end of
duck, duck, duck...
why I've always thought I could fly.

And maybe that's his way of protecting me,
giving me wings with his words
so I can lift up, up, up,
and away from that which keeps him on the ground.
What I'm so afraid to catch, that disease
hiding in his DNA-
but not mine! Not if we're not the same species.

Oh but we are.

My father and I are two beans in a pot,
hard working and careful and more often than not
we're the ones who like a quiet car ride
unless we're IN THE JUNGLE, THE MIGHTY JUNGLE
in which case we'll be silly for a
breathless moment.

My father's the one who filled my head
with books and words and stillness
and math and numbers and logic.
He gave me a post-it note
I've kept for ten years,
"Have a good day, Love Dad"

I couldn't dislodge it from my soul
anymore than I could my love for God or my name.
These too, he gave me.

And so if life has more surprises in store
I'll shake the shackles of my worry loose.
I'll accept what he gives me
with a smile and strength and hope,
because I am my father's goose.

Poetry Sucks

Travis Smith

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
And I use that cliché
Because that's what I do.
I hate everything
But especially you.
My hyperbole use
Is remarkably true.

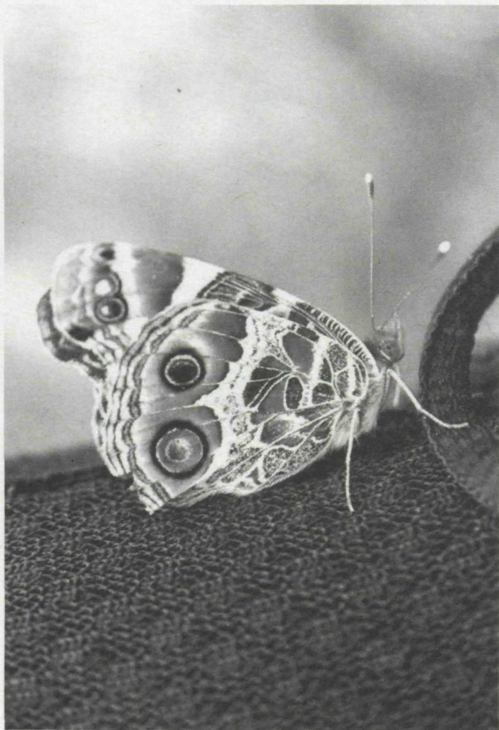
Your art's uninspired,
Your plans are all bland,
Your thoughts lack all virtue,
Only your vices are grand.
Your best nights, all forgotten,
Your beliefs can't be proved,
And the most striking notions
Leave you wholly unmoved.

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
This whole place makes me sick,
But that place does too.
Poetry sucks,
But, hey, so do you,
And I use that cliché
Because it's notably true.

Names all mean nothing,
Time's just untrue,
Memories are useless,
And apologies are too.
Promises break,
Lies come unglued,
Truths are mishandled
And words misconstrued.

Roses are red,
Violets are blue;
Citing clichés
Is all I can do.
Everything sucks,
And pain will ensue,
So I'll just wax poetic
And blame it on you.

You all play your parts
Yet no one is blamed
For the moral decay
And the ethical shame.
The world is a pit,
And nothing will change
When you're all uninspired
And you're all just the same.



Nicholas Durand



Nicholas Durand

Heart Like Fireworks

Deanna Baumert

Fireworks bang to the beat of my heart
they sizzle and fizzle and break all apart
they rocket up burning out on their flight
they die then suddenly spark and ignite
they explode in a shower of the brightest of hues
then jump out in sunbursts a dizzying view,
and then just like that they fade into the night
no more than a smoke cloud but still within sight
still burning away like they did at the start
that burning desire alive in their heart.



Kate Elizabeth LeGrand



Patti Genest

Self Inflicted Amputation or the Greatest Example of Escape Art?

Nicholas Durand

I can't hear anything anymore.

I don't think your powers will be able to fix this one, magician.

Self inflicted amputation or the greatest example of escape art?

I am no longer trapped in your hat.

I don't think your powers will be able to fix this one

The barbed wire you were stringing me along with became the scalpel I needed.

I am no longer trapped in your hat.

Matted, dripping fur is all that's left.

The barbed wire you were stringing me along with became

a noose. A noose that fit easily around my white ears

Matted, dripping fur is all that's left.

I paid a small price to no longer be wretched from your prison.

The noose fit too easily around my white ears and now

I can't hear anything anymore

I paid a small price to no longer be wretched from your prison.

Self inflicted amputation or the greatest example of escape art?



Carol MacLeod



Carol MacLeod

First Frost

Jack Williams

Get the pumpkins off the porch.
Pick all the chard and basil.
Make a bouquet of cosmos and lilies.
Put the cars in the garage.
A hard frost is coming tonight.

This harsh cold snap
is slamming my head
in an exciting transition of denial.
Cold is creeping into my unreadiness
of losing the long life of summer.

Sad and exciting all at once,
it is hard to contemplate winter.
The days are yet lingering,
though leaves are slowly turning,
tawny and red midst the evergreens.

I still want those relaxed festival days.
I still need frivolous summer play.
Where did it all go so quickly away?
Somehow this sudden tamping turn
calls me to face the inevitable.

I am reluctantly resigned
to deal with my denial.
Or am I?

Up early, out walking the dog,
cold and unadjusted to the sudden drop,
it is a brisk bitter slap on my still summer face.
Shivering, yet excited in the new crispness,
Shivering, yet emboldened briefly by the chill.

Clear darkness in the early morning sky,
grass and newly fallen leaves
crunch beneath my feet.

Stars are sprinkling over the frosted landscape,
sparkling like sugar frosting everywhere,
glistening astonishment in the street lights,
breathing the wintry wild in wonderment.

Yet, I am not at all prepared for winter,
conflicted between denial and excitement,
dreaming past the jolts of cold starkness.
Walking fast, I dread the
depressing darkness and
damning hassles of shovels and slush,

Yet I dream of
the wonders of snow
and the peaceful contrasts
of light and dark
and cold and quiet,

Imagining sleds and snowmen and
tromping in a world of skis and snowshoes
on worryless workless days,

And the joyous exhaustion of play,
with the loving fellowship of
snow fights and burning hands,
hot chocolate, hot soup,
and a comforting fire.

I better get back inside.
I am not quite ready yet.
Better get going, it's too cold out here.
I still have some work to do.
I need to work on my attitude.

Maybe there are yet warm days ahead,
And I can squeeze in some more canoeing
And just dream about the coming winter.



Mike Fillyaw

Winter Shore

Leslie Ricker

Bought a Dodge in '73,
mobility,
discovered the winter shore,
moved to the sea
for the first time in '74,
Wells Beach, off-season rentals
called Lindsey Tavern,
square cabins
on cement pads,
but cheap September to June;
June was too soon
and dozens of winters later
it still is

"wind and moon were rising;
tide, one to go its own way,
was running low;
a stubborn seawall held
against the swollen river's flow;
no birds, gull or any other,
occupied water or sky;
cold, cold air was holding
even when spring close by; with every step on winter shore
my personal tide
was running high"

Disappearing Act

Rachael Tripp

Each morning
you consummate the elusive disappearing act.
You carry on with your clever illusions
executing your carefully guarded routine until you are
unsurpassable in your craft.

At night
you walk across the shadowy stage and
take your place to begin
the baleful and haunting performance.
You consume spoonfuls of suffering
And endure an obsolete fate
that does not cease and
that bears no concrete origin
yet palpitates and grasps you in
its tireless pursuit to break you
far beyond any adequate recognition.

But somewhere
betwixt the vigilantly concealed
truth and betrayal,
you do not mind.
Instead you stand appeased and covered in soft gray tones of oblivion.

And for the grand finale,
the ultimate gesture,
you sit amongst exposed ruins and
bruised bones of forged alliances.
The atmosphere is thick with lingering
anticipation and foreboding sadness.

You lay on your back,
a white linen burial shroud floats over
your listless, faded form.

You become transparent in front of the startled, peering eyes.

The only sound,
an immeasurable silence
resonating through the crowd.

Your meticulous work finally pays
in a currency
that is all too lasting.



Carol MacLeod

The Peanut Butter Problem

Ben Fogg

I was only 7, man I was just a fool
My hair all full of cowlicks, my face all full of drool
So how was I supposed to know the outcome of that night?
But boy I swear that I was hooked after just one bite

I've got a peanut butter problem I eat 20 jars a day
And people think I'm nuts, I suppose I am
But I'd have it no other way

My mother thinks I'm crazy, my father thinks I'm mad
But peanut butter is the best food I've ever had
My brother thinks I've lost all the marbles in my head
'Cause I brush my teeth with Peter Pan before I go to bed

I've got a peanut butter problem I eat 20 jars a day
And people think I'm nuts, I suppose I am
But I'd have it no other way

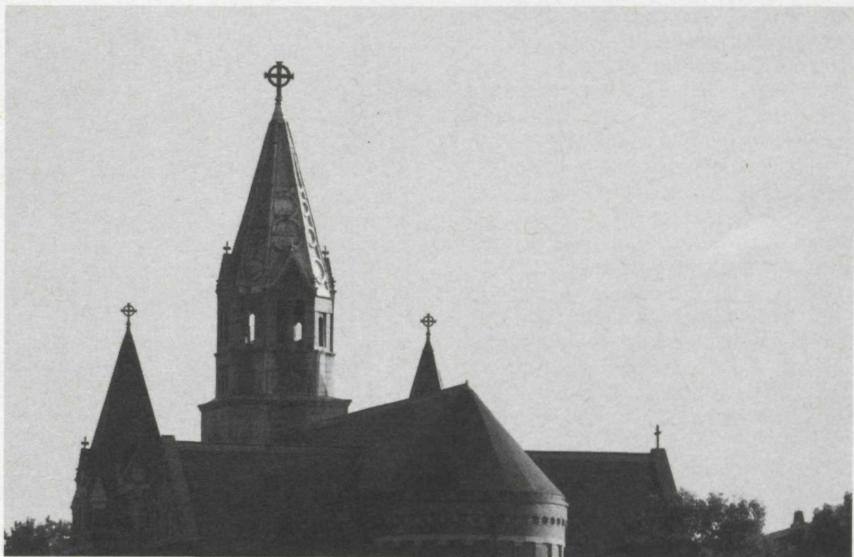
I spread it on my pizza crust and put it on my fries
I use it as an ointment and rub it in my eyes
I mix it in my coffee and squeeze it through my toes
One time I had this awful cold it shot right out my nose!

Crunchy and or creamy I don't really care
Though creamy does work better to shave my facial hair
Creamy and or crunchy, I eat it all you see
If you love peanut butter, you may have a problem just like me

I've got a peanut butter problem I eat 20 jars a day
And people think I'm nuts, I suppose I am
But I'd have it no other way.



Nicholas Durand



Nicholas Durand

Falling

Travis Smith

Should I fall from a ledge, may it be from on high
 So I tumble and twirl as I cut through the sky.
 May my vessels dilate and my heart rate increase
 And my norepinephrine release never cease.
 When my pupils enlarge so I see with great clarity
 The encroaching earth, an observational rarity,
 I will be well aware what I've done to myself,
 Still a young man of respective good health.
 So why'd I subject my own self to this flight,
 Its inevitable end and ephem'ral delight?
 Does even an addict in the clutches of jones
 Go so far as this just to get himself stoned?
 Does still he partake, knowing well the effects?
 Does he garnish the noose to tie 'round his own neck?
 Well I'll fall for a bit, hoping never to land,
 With no obligations, impulsive, unplanned,
 And I won't have a care, not a worry or woe.
 But how will it end? Well, we already know.

If we have just one day, may it be on the longest,
 The solstice of summer when Sun's rays are strongest,
 And the hours that pass, like the clouds rushing by,
 Are each slightly longer like we're falling from high.
 May we fumble and flail with the words that we share
 But still both understand and still smile and not care.
 May our hearts pound in sync with our naiveté
 And our minds meld with ease with no burdens to weigh.
 When my eyes open wide, so I take in the scene,
 I'll know no future or past, only this, in between.
 We'll be feeling so high when we lie hand in hand;
 We'll both secretly wish we could fall and not land,
 For we'll fall for each other, and, both falling in sync,
 We'll have what seems like moments, not a chance to re-think,
 So we'll cling to each other, lock our lips in the wind
 With no time for much else as we quickly descend,
 And, us both in free-fall, there'll be no one below
 Who could catch us or save us or make our fall slow.

So if you wonder why it was simple to leap without needing a shove,
It's because infatuation's more unconditional than true love,
And when you finally hit bottom and forget all that passed you above,
You'll find that falling was far less painful than landing in love.

Revelry

Veste Nesryd

Swing over to my door,
And tap a tiny knock,
For nigh you'll wake my mother,
A ruckus in her frock

Puzzle and ponder she will
To great lengths she'll go
To find the cause of this thrill
To mark a stage for this show

Confused, she'll gleam a stare
Enlightened, she'll stream a glare,
Through a window over there
Oh!-you've done it now, burdens prepared to bear
To your rights she'll crack a tap, quick and loud enough
On the window, that pane of glass,
Wrangling her cuff

To show the time of night, when
You've undertaken such a plight,
To sneak me out, as in memories
Of jaunts and jokes,
Dames and drunken blokes
Blinded in a passage of no light,
In revelries, to join I think we might
On one more starry night.



Raymond E. Nill

You'll Thank Me

Abby K. Laplante

"Alright, get out," Dad said calmly, the car still idling.

Eli seemed to forget English at that moment. "What?"

Dad stepped out of the butter-colored station wagon and walked around to the passenger side backseat door. He opened it and faced Eli. "You didn't listen to me," Dad explained. "When I told you to stop giving the dog your ice cream, I said I would pull the car over and let you out if you didn't stop. Remember?"

Eli, most certainly, did not remember.

"Now, you have to get out because you didn't listen, understand?"

Eli, most certainly, did not understand.

"Now out, scram," Dad said. Eli's red swim trunks left his thighs partially exposed. His skin caused a commotion on the vinyl seat as he hustled out of the car. By the time the child got out, Dad was behind the wheel again, and he smoothly took off down Juniper Lane.

It was not Dad's anger that had startled Eli, it was the lack thereof. He had seen his father angry before, at the grill, the snowblower, the damned Christmas tree that was too tall to place the angel on top of but too wide to pull the step stool up next to. This time Dad was not angry, he was eerily mellow. It was as if the child had been visited by a friendly ghost.

The neighbors at the corner of Juniper and Sherman had seen the ghost, too. The scene was breathlessly quiet. Jackie O'Donnell and her little sister, Julia, who had been playing Badminton on their lawn abandoned their game to watch the incident unfold. The shuttlecock now lay lifeless in the downy grass. On the other side of the street, Mr. Marchese observed through his screen door, gin and tonic in hand. Mrs. Marchese looked up from her dishes, the lemon curtains in her kitchen window lapping the soft breeze.

Eli was certain he heard the birds stop singing.

When he realized he had an audience, he could feel the blood rush to his face. Luckily, the light sunburn in his cheeks concealed his blushing.

A slow stream of melted vanilla ice cream trickled down his hand, creating sticky ravines between his fingers.

The station wagon receded into the near distance. That's when the tears started. As he began his Quixotic quest to the cul-de-sac where he lived, Eli replayed in his mind the unfortunate events that had led to this miscarriage of justice.

In the morning, Eli had gotten the bright idea to fill his blue kiddie pool with Jell-O. The project began around 9:00 and came to an abrupt halt at 10:15. When Mom finished filling the dryer, she looked in the yard and found Eli sitting Indian-style, facing downward and pulling clumps of grass out of the ground. A small, rapidly-drying pile of light green Jell-O withered in the plastic pool. Mom quickly excused Dad from painting the front porch, an important item on his list of summer vacation projects, so he could take Eli to the beach. Dad relented, but not before pointing out that Mom should never have taught the boy how to make Jell-O.

After their day at the beach, Dad and Eli stopped at the Tastee Freeze for some ice cream, which they ate along the way home. Eli thought it would be comedy gold to give the Labrador retriever, Roxy, his ice cream cone, which was soft serve vanilla in a chocolate dip.

"At least I thought it was funny," Eli said as much to himself as the fireflies buzzing around the Reddingtons' butterfly bush. He sniffled.

Dad had warned him from the front seat. "Chocolate can kill a dog, you know."

But the show in the backseat continued. Eli shoved the cone in the pooch's face, marring her ever-affable expression with a white smudge on her black strawberry nose. She recoiled as if she, too, knew better, but the child laughed like a prepubescent hyena.

"If you don't stop torturing that dog, I'm going to pull over and you're going to walk home, understand?" Dad had shouted over the bustle of his opened driver side window.

Eli remembered this critical oral contract between he and his father as he rounded Rainbow Road. Nevertheless, as he consolidated his emotions, his pink embarrassment flamed into crimson rage. Eli hadn't thought to grab his flip flops from the back of the car, which he had thrown there carelessly, before getting kicked out. His bare feet walked across some errant pea stones from Mr. Harris' walkway. "They feel like teeth, tiny little ANIMAL teeth," he spat. It no longer mattered that Mr. Harris, the kindly ear-nose-and-throat doctor, had taught him how to tie a bowline knot at Wilderness Weekend last year. "He's dead to me. Dead."

Although little happened after 6pm in this neighborhood, a boy should not be walking these streets alone, a few gawking faces in windows confirmed. At home, children belong in their house or on the clearly-marked parcel of land that is their lawn or backyard. In the street, they belonged in a car or school bus, or on a bike accompanied by other children on bikes. Dropping him off three blocks from his house, Dad had opened up a dangerous new world to his son. It was as if Eli was an astronaut whose lifeline had been cruelly severed, leaving him to hurdle through space towards certain death.

Eli's left hand was balled into a little fist. His right still held the ice cream cone, which had turned into a mushy brown stump. This cone had started all the trouble. He licked it between angry sobs, seasoning the confection with his bitter tears.

When Eli crossed Rainbow Road to get to Morrison Avenue, he realized there was only one man who could save him now, and it wasn't Superman. It was Morty Douglas.

Eli met Morty back in February. He was home sick with an ear infection. With one ear on his pillow and the other filled with pink liquid, he watched Morty's 11am talk show while Mom prepped a grilled cheese in the kitchen. The host's salt-and-pepper dignity warmed the cathodes with a paternal glow. On this particular show, Morty showed some meddling mother-in-laws the error of their ways. It was a revelation for Eli, wisdom only a near-sleeping child with two muffled ears could understand.

Mom turned the knob on the TV, changing the channel to the Price is Right. "That show is not appropriate for children," she said, delivering the grilled cheese to her sick child.

It was only now clear to Eli why Mom would try to silence this sage voice of reason.

When he got home, Eli would write to Morty about his parents' many offenses. He envisioned Morty receiving the letter on a sun-lit, New York City morn, reclining in his 32nd-floor office as car

horns blasted distantly on the street below. He would read the letter, and a single tear would fall solemnly down his face as he mourned the plight of this Dickensian lad whose cruel, brutish parents had made his life hell. He would lean forward and page his secretary. "Get this young man on my show immediately!" he would demand.

Eli then envisioned himself and his parents on the green-carpeted stage of the Morty Douglas show. He would be seated on an oversized feather pillow, flanked by security on either side of him. His parents would be seated in the middle of the stage.

Morty would stand in the aisle, halfway up the stairs amidst a sea of troubled American faces. "So let me get this straight," he says as he lifts his glasses to rub his temples. "You didn't let him drink from his Chewbacca glass during Easter dinner."

"No!" Mom snaps. "Easter is a family holiday! We use fine china on holidays!" Her fricatives slice the air like flying daggers.

The audience emits a weary groan. They've clearly had enough of Mom and Dad's antics. The camera briefly zooms in on a blonde woman in a mauve turtleneck seated in the front row who looks like she might dart on stage, grab Eli, press him to her bosom and shuttle him off stage to a safe, new life.

"Yes, a family holiday," Morty reiterates. "A time of celebration. A time when family members can be themselves and enjoy the things they enjoy." Morty elucidates like Atticus Finch, and the audience applauds with rapturous approval. "And Dad," he continues, "on the night you were arrested, is it true you would not let young Eli get Jimmies on his ice cream cone?"

The audience gasps, and Dad jumps out of his seat. "Hey, I'm not on trial here!" he shouts.

"No, but maybe you should be!" Morty retorts. And the crowd goes wild.

"Oh come on!" Dad screams over the unruly crowd. "Like there isn't enough sugar in ice cream already?! The boy would never have gone to sleep if I had let him have Jimmies!"

The audience erupts into boos and hisses. Dad storms off stage and, embarrassed, Mom follows quickly behind him.

"Well folks, I've never seen anything quite like this..." Morty says.

Eli finally arrives at home, the sunset sprawling behind him like a pastel parfait. Raspberry. Rose. Maybe a little melted Sherbet. And definitely some lilac around the outer rim. A lemon wedge of a crescent moon has arrived in the night sky.

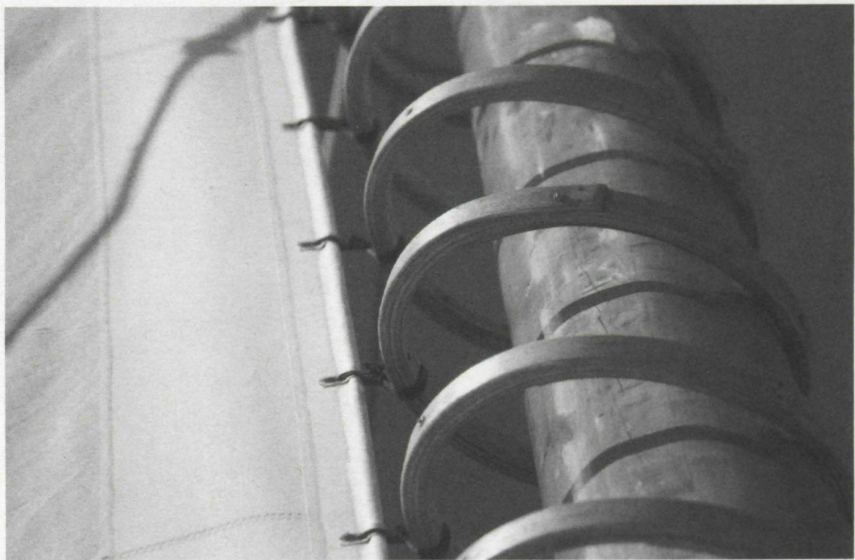
Eli had expected to see Dad running through the sprinkler, hogging it all to himself, but he was nowhere to be found. The child walked through the front door. He could see his mother's shoulder and the back of her head as she reclined on the living room couch. The tips of her hair were unusually perfect, flipped skyward. A cherry bobbed on her Long Island Iced Tea, which she was drinking from Eli's Chewbacca glass. Roxy napped at Mom's feet. Sonorous NPR voices came through the stereo. "How was the beach, sweetie?" she asked without turning around. Her voice was as round and smooth as a bowl of melted butter.

Eli stomped up the stairs as loudly as his second-grade body would allow without saying a word. Her nonchalance was infuriating. Sniffing, Eli wondered what cosmic crime he had committed to end up with parents like these. He threw himself onto the bed and buried his face, burning with fresh tears, in his pillow. His fingers were crusty with dried ice cream.

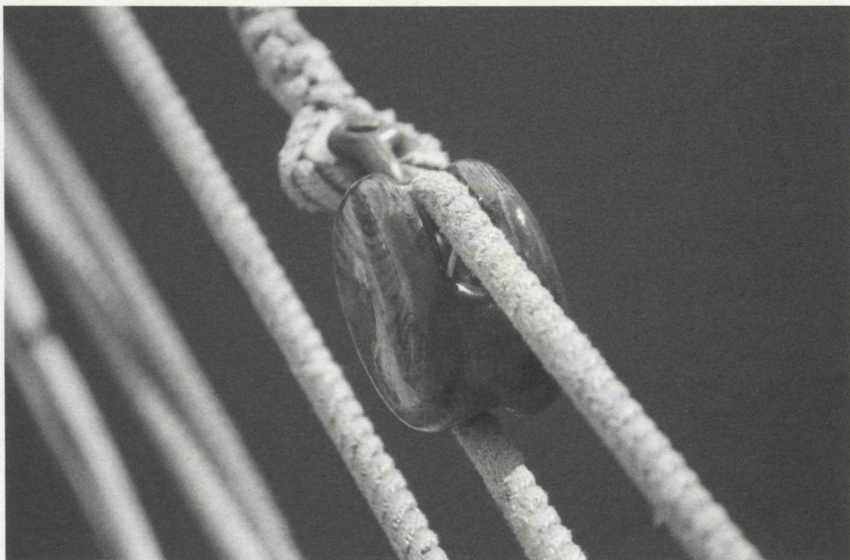
He heard Dad walk through his bedroom door. Since age 15 months, he could identify his father through only his footsteps. "Glad you made it home, Eli," Dad said. "I'm just doing what Moms and Dads need to do. You'll thank me one day. Goodnight." With that, he turned off the light.

The storm cloud in the raging boy's mind showered him with slumber, immense and unstoppable. "Wait until they see what happens tomorrow," Eli muttered into his pillow. Then he shelved his plans to make a plan and succumbed to the inevitable. He was dozing one minute later.

If anyone else had been looking for the boy, they could have found him by following a trail of sand straight into his room.



George P. Allen



George P. Allen

Working Progress

Rachael Tripp

We spend Saturday
together.
It goes well
with exceptions (naturally)

The argument begins
somewhere between
when the sun fades
and the last man
stands.

Sunday will be spent in exile.
apart
and Monday only leaks
arbitrary sentences that
end in sad punctuation.

By afternoon, we are wasted
Daylight
slowing
and by midnight it is cold
and we are laying next to each other
naked.

Tuesday
we wake. The
screaming is relentless so
we sink down even further
under the coverings of
our skin and down pillows.

Casually
we open our deadbeat eyes.
Our bodies aren't touching.
Just eyes.
Open. Wide.
Brilliant blue and focused.

On Wednesday we don't talk until
late.

We discuss the latest tragedies,
smoke lingering lightly overhead.

Thursday the light streams
through the blinds,
reflecting brilliant yellow.
We stir awake and lay crippled,
staring at the ceiling, staring back at us.

No noise
except for deep
and
heavy breaths.

Friday night.
We spend it dancing,
with occasional sips of whiskey.
Our feet stay close to the ground
and we cling
hopelessly lost
to one other.



Kate Elizabeth LeGrand



Kate Elizabeth LeGrand

Infinite

Wesley Ricker

Surrounded by juniper, staring at stars
searching for Jupiter, Saturn, and mars
celestial spots spinning beyond the atmosphere
seem almost touchable through a night so clear
are these glimmers of distant light
 holding the hope for distant life?
or is space just too vast
 to find an understanding we can grasp?
There are no answers
 For questions never asked.

Bitter

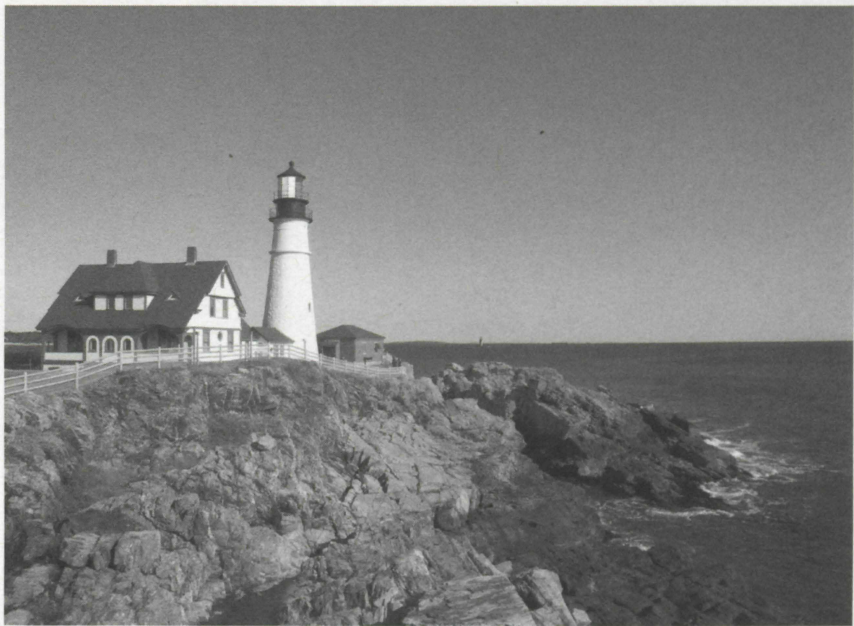
Leslie Ricker

Empty garage
unmade bed
there's a retraining underway,
large lessons and personalities
have turned her head
toward polarization
toward repositioning
toward pulsating rhythms
of a new magnetic sway

a tough sun sets,
the last glow climbs
the smooth maple's bark,
mosquitoes arise,
the hum of grasshoppers dies,
emotion makes summer winter
turns August cold stark

the world is anxious for the dark

"when euphoria is gone
with the goodness
and the glitter
that leftover mouthful
of love
is better bitter"



Vanessa O'Donnell

A Squirrel Darts in Front of the Car and We

Michaela Hoffman

Break
our outer shells,
the toughest, sharpest
part of ourselves:

the upturned nose
and its rationale
behind killing.

Our yolk spills
over the dashboard
like autonomic vomit:
eyes bulge,
blood surges like whitecapped water,
breath stops.

We forget our fur
coats of dominion.

The moment before we swap looks
and the nonhuman has leaped into the grass,
life
has equal weight.

Successions

Jack Williams

Time moved briskly through the seasons,
often as a firmament of clarity and color,
occasionally as an unexpected tempest,
but usually uneventful and unnoticed.

Today, we looked beyond
the still warm caskets

now different
in ways quite present
but unexplained,
perplexed by
the paradoxes,

next in line
with the autumnal harvest
and the uncertainties
of the winter ahead.

At the closing of each day,
our restlessness abates somewhat
as we linger in front of the hearth,
sharing its warmth and
releasing our heads to our hearts.



Jillian Morris

Dragonflies

Jack Williams

We were in the thick of it.
There were hundreds of biplanes
flying in every direction
in the busiest of aerial attacks.
First hovering helos,
then zooming jets,
the aces were darting
in every conceivable direction,
efficiently consuming their unwitting prey.
Small insects unwarily swarming
above the tall-grassy dunes
were undoubtedly doomed.

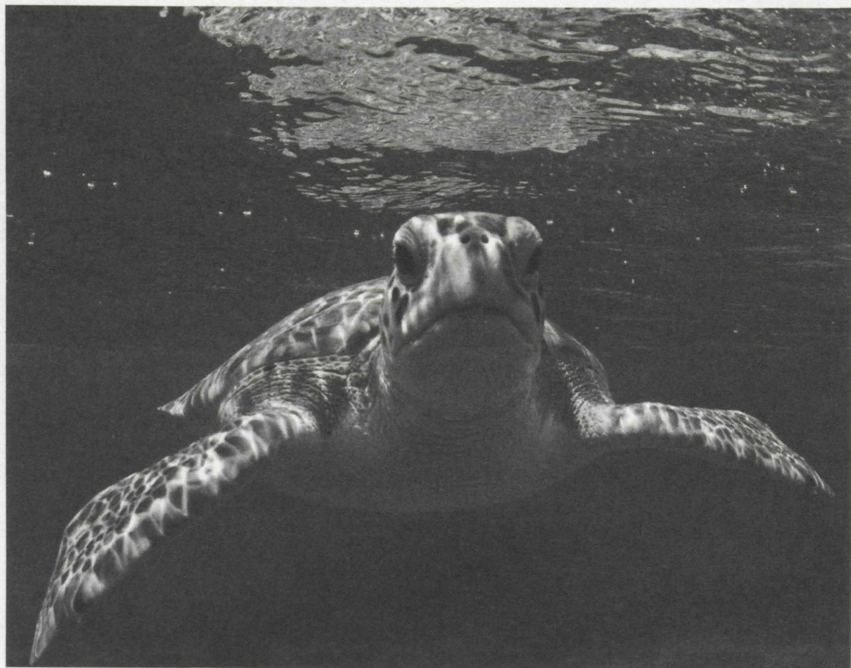
Chasers, darners, hawkers, and emeralds...
who are you really?

You are so mysterious...
big bulging eyes and
a long needle tail,
a four-winged primeval whirlybird
of glistening colors.

With cryptic accusations...
snake doctor or eye poker...
are you really
as sinister as they say?

Or are you the protector,
with courage and contentment
for all those you greet?

It seems to me that
you are just trying
to get by
like the rest of us...
enjoying this
sunny summer day
at the beach
and
snagging
a few bugs
on the fly
for a snack.



Jillian Morris

Perfecting Undertakings

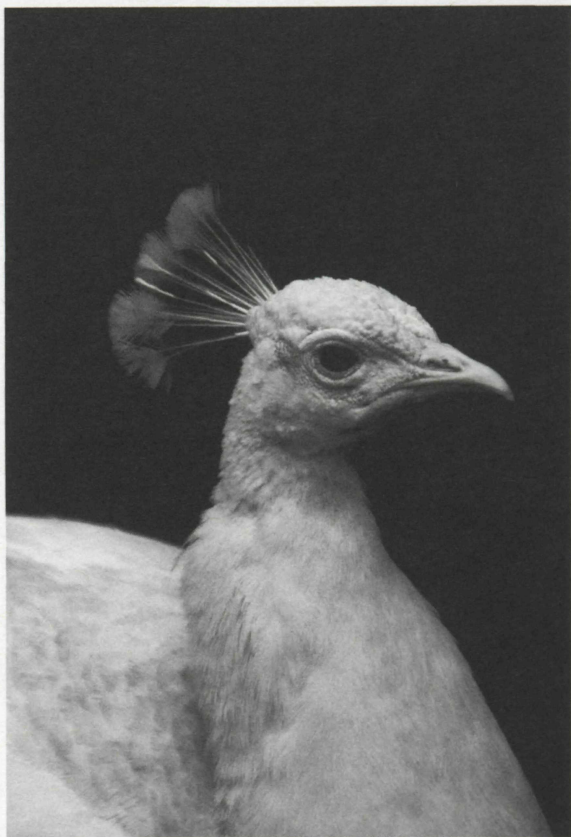
Rachael Tripp

It happened again last night. I washed away all the dirt and imperfection slowly down, down the drain. I stood slightly, awkwardly – my bare feet soothed by cold concrete, watched as water turned all about in the aged and yellow stained sink.

Once I looked in a mirror, it was not me looking back, but rather I saw you. I looked for so long as to not waste such fine and elegant features, that right before my starting eyes, you became perfect.

Later, I found you face-up, laying across a bed composed of millions of tiny drops of adoration. Across to where you are, I carefully slip next to you. My head rests on your chest moving up and then down to its own distinct rhythm.

You roll one of your homemade cigarettes and use the tip of my finger to light it. Exhaling long and heavy, you say out loud you can read our future in the smoke. You tell me it is lingering and perfect, and it is everything we will always need.



Thomas A. Cook



Raymond E. Nill

Untitled

Sarah Heath

You open your eyes to be greeted by a small beam of fresh sunlight. There's frost on the ground, the sky still dark with the remnants of the night. You can hardly believe you're up this early, but you don't control the train's schedule. As your eyes shift focus you see your reflection in the window. You don't recall having that many gray hairs. How cruel of a mirror these windows are, never giving a clear reflection or a clear view of the outside. When you can't stand to look at yourself any longer, you avert your gaze. You look around the train, at all the other people. You wonder what their stories are, wonder if they're as sad and pathetic as you. First you see a young girl, a few seats ahead of you. She's listening to her ipod and staring out the window. As you watch her you see her check Facebook. Kids these days. You almost find yourself jealous that she has some distraction. All you have is your own thoughts and a dumbphone no one ever contacts you on. You look back to see a young couple playing games with their daughter. Your head reels as all of the memories come flooding back.

You and Ginny, happily married. Curled up on the couch reading books, drinking tea. You remember when it all started.

"Hey honey, can we talk about something?"

"Sure, Gin, what's on your mind?"

"You remember when we talked about kids?"

This can't end well, you thought. "Yea... little monsters, right?" Please say yes.

"Well I've been thinking. Doesn't the house feel empty?"

You shrugged in reply, worry growing in your throat.

"I guess it's just been lonely around here."

"I'm here." Why isn't that enough?

"I know..."

There was a long silence between you.

"Benny, you know you'd be a great father. What do you think? Would you consider having a kid?" Her eyes pleaded for an answer.

You just shrugged your shoulders. What was there to say? As if you'd agree right there and then and we'd run to the bedroom to do the deed.

"Ben, talk to me. What are you thinking?"

You opened your mouth but you just couldn't seem to find any words to express how you were feeling. You settled for a slow shake of your head.

"No? Is that a no? You won't even think about it? Ben talk to me!"

You wished you could talk, wished you could explain in a way that she would understand.

"You never talk to me about what you're feeling! It's like I don't even know you anymore, you're like a robot!"

You wondered if perhaps you had become a robot. You didn't even feel sorry for the pain you were causing. You continued to look away in silence, wishing you had the ability and the courage to say what you were thinking.

She stormed up the stairs and you could hear her sobbing. You couldn't stand the thought of it. You two had agreed it would just be you and her. The perfect team. The dynamic duo. There's no way you could ever be a father. Plus you wouldn't want to put another little you into the world, that poor soul. Things continued to go downhill, more and more emotion leaving the relationship. You wouldn't change your mind, so she left. It was best for her, she could easily find someone else who could give her what she wanted. That was years ago. You wonder if she's living the life she dreamed of right this second.

The couple seems to notice you've been staring at their child. They call for her to come sit with them. You look at the father apologetically and turn back to face front. Directly in front of you is an old man. He seems to be staring straight ahead. Maybe he's thinking about life. You wonder what it'd be like to be that old. You already feel old enough. What do old people think about on the train? Perhaps he's sleeping. The train attendant walks by through the aisle, calling out the next stop.

Your mind drifts back to Ginny. She should be sitting here with you. Of course you'd have to move over because she'd want the window seat. She always said she loved to watch the trees whiz by. You think back to when you first met. You were sitting alone on a park bench as usual; you were never really one for "socializing" or "friends". People were mostly just mean. But she came and sat on that bench one day. And the next day, and the next. She always inquired about the book you were reading, listening more intently than anyone had ever listened to you. It seemed she sat closer every day, until one day your bodies were touching. "Do you like me?" she had asked. You nodded sheepishly in response. "Good, cause I like you." You shake your head and try to think about something else. Best not to dwell on the past.

You look at the seat next to you. You see a girl, probably in her late 30's. She seems to have a permanent smile on her face. Suddenly she looks over at you. Her face breaks into a full-fledged smile. You quickly look away, making a sad attempt at smiling back. You wonder if you should talk to her. She's still staring and smiling. Your face gets hot and palms start to sweat. You almost wish she'd turn away and mind her own business but at the same time want desperately to talk to her. You contemplate saying hi or hello, thinking about how to sound friendly and make up for the embarrassing interaction that just happened. She beats you to it.

"Hello."

You go to say hi and change your mind to say hello halfway through. The resulting greeting is "hief". Dear god. You're almost certain your face is the exact color of a

lobster. She giggles but somehow it's not condescending. You start to wish you could just go back to being that invisible man on the train, quietly observing.

"Where you headed?"

"Philly."

"Cool, cool. Gonna get a cheese steak while you're there?"

"Uh, yeah. Maybe... if I have time. I'm going for work stuff." Smooth, Ben.

"Well I know this place that really does have the best cheese steaks. I'll give you the address. You know it's those places that the tourists don't really know about that really have the best food. You really have to explore the city to find those kind of places. Oh! How rude of me, I didn't even introduce myself. Elaine" She holds out her hand across the aisle.

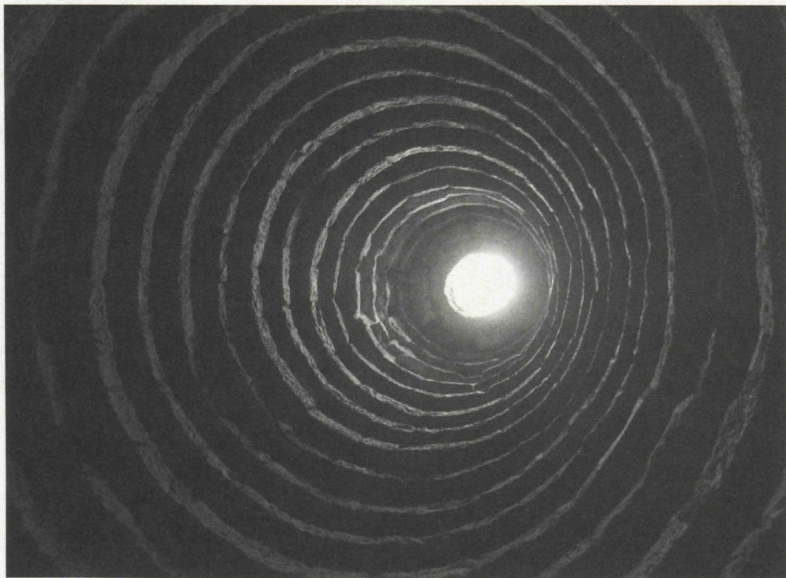
"Oh, no. It's okay. I'm Ben." You bring your hand out to meet hers, hoping she doesn't notice the shaking or how sweaty your hand is. Elaine. What a lovely name. A lovely face, too.

"Benjamin, mind if I come sit with you for a little? Let me know if I'm being a bother, I'll leave you alone." But you don't want her to leave you alone. You don't ever want to be alone, it just kind of happens. You shift to one seat and she plops down in the other. She continues to talk of her plans, why she's traveling, and things of that sort. You nod at even intervals so she thinks you're listening. You watch the way her mouth moves and the way she uses her hands to help her tell her stories. You wonder why she's talking to you at all. Is she interested? You wish. Maybe if you can keep her here long enough you could get her number or something. You keep mulling over the idea in your head. As she's talking she touches your shoulder and you flinch as if you've never been touched before. She must be interested. You continue convincing yourself and working up a plan to ask for her number. A familiar knot forms in your throat as you prepare to ask. You do your best to push it down. You swallow hard and take a deep breath in.

"Could I, um,-"

Suddenly a handsome man comes striding down the aisle with two coffees in his hand, grabbing your attention and cutting your sentence short. One of these hands has a ring on it. He looks at Elaine and smiles a flashy smile. You look down and notice the ring on her hand as well.

"Hey honey! I, uh, brought you a coffee... who's your friend?"



Nancy Rankin

Beautiful

Anonymous

After a few laps around the track
I walk into the locker room.
Twenty
feels as smooth as spandex
lip-locked with sweet curves
I towel off
and the mirror pulls me back to him
like a hungry lover;
his eyes brush over the light muscles
carving out my shoulders
under sweat and soft skin.

After a few laps across the pool
a member of the senior club comes in.
She sits behind my mirror,
and pulls off her bathing suit
like a child does to a band-aid:
a slow
process
without eyes or pleasure.

But I see
the blue webs crossing her feet
and traveling up her legs
in highways.

They are miles of life
coursing beneath her
in a subcutaneous mesh-work.
As she lifts her white sweater overhead,
the arm flesh
draped over bone
sways
like a wing.

For a moment
we see each other
in the mirror

taking in a deepness
beyond our heavy breathing.

Then we turn away
like familiar strangers.

When she's gone
I retreat to my reflection again,
where cars have yet to venture,
and contrail tails
have yet to glide along my wrists.

They will come

when I take time
and create my own
beautiful road-map.



Carol MacLeod

Grey Clouds

Deanna Baumert

Grey clouds
smudged on a canvas of blue
soft as the sand.
a lazy artist
swirling the murk to life
formless but living.
shafts of grey
slide to a mirror surface
feet stepping on each other.
the ocean
undulating to unheard rhythms
a blend of swirls and ripples.
grey clouds
set free in waves and foam
dancing to the shore.

Far Away

Rachael Tripp

In certain places
far away
the atmosphere is thick
with enduring anticipation.

There

he sits with weathered
fragments of old songs
she used to know.

Some other place

far away

she sits listening to
the hum of grand swells
marked with a heavy rhythm,
and ignites the early glow
of a new existence.



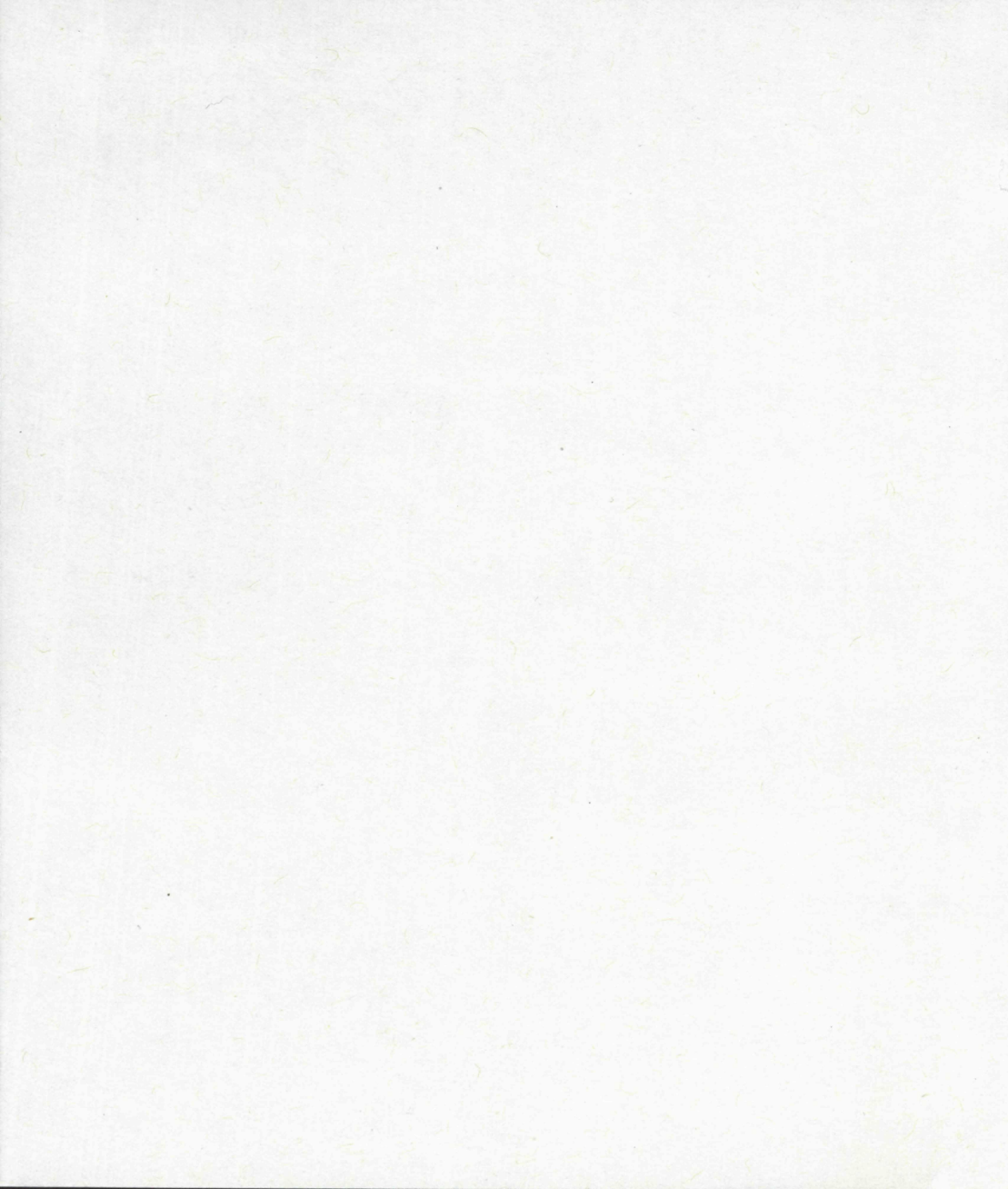
Michelle Pellegrino

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