

2011

Exile Vol. LVII

Caroline Spence
Denison University

Abby Current
Denison University

Meghan Callahan
Denison University

Tristan Eden
Denison University

Ashley Heestand
Denison University

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Spence, Caroline; Current, Abby; Callahan, Meghan; Eden, Tristan; Heestand, Ashley; Persia, Danny; Bullock, Karen; Swensson, Ellie; Whites, Shawn; Roozeboom, Nikki; and Ferguson, Brittani (2011) "Exile Vol. LVII," *Exile*: Vol. 57 : No. 1 , Article 1. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol57/iss1/1>

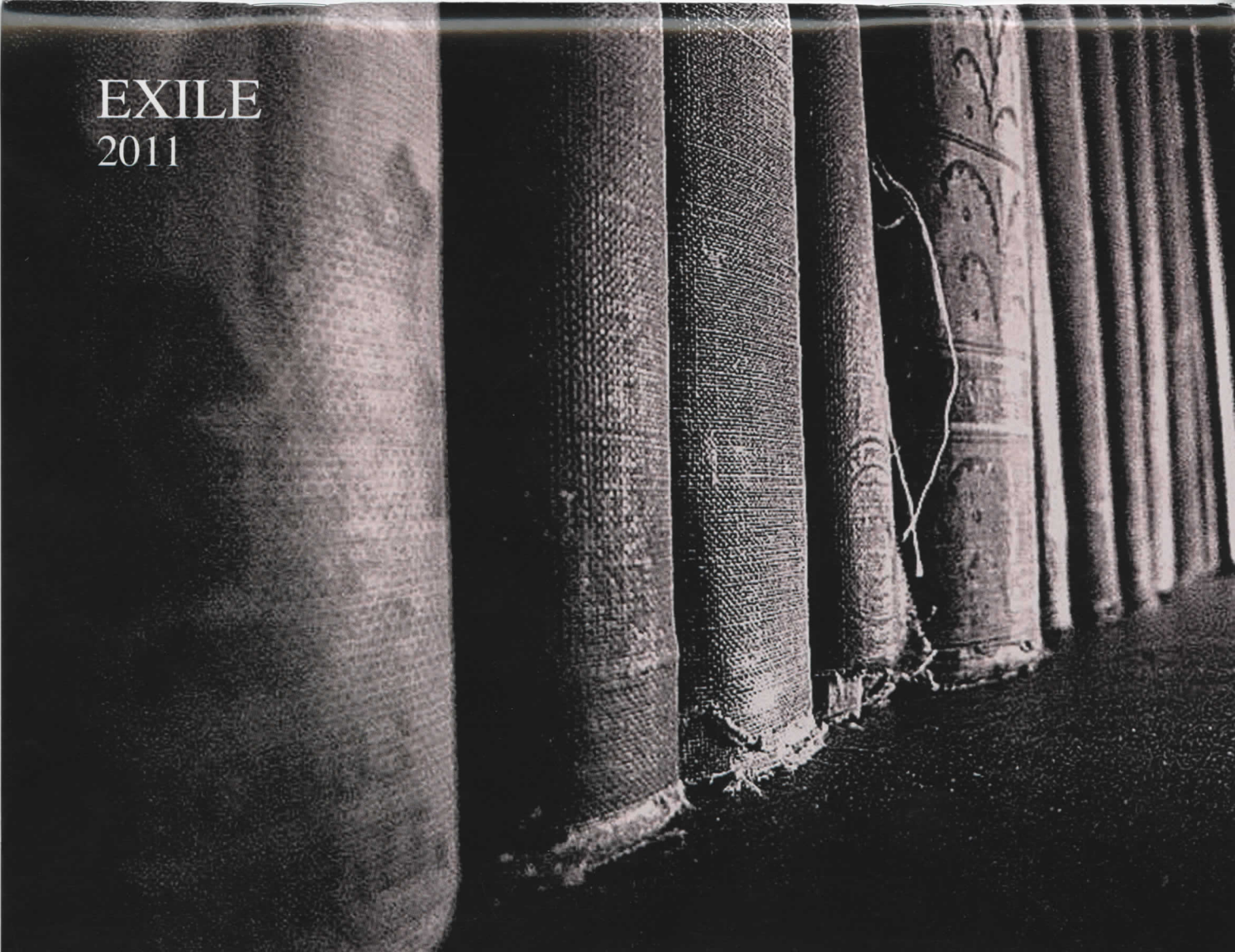
This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Exile by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

Exile Vol. LVII

Authors

Caroline Spence, Abby Current, Meghan Callahan, Tristan Eden, Ashley Heestand, Danny Persia, Karen Bullock, Ellie Swensson, Shawn Whites, Nikki Roozeboom, and Brittani Ferguson

EXILE
2011



MASTHEAD

Editors-in-Chief

Holly Burdorff
Ellie Swensson

Layout/Copy Editing

Holly Burdorff
Brittani Ferguson
Liz Pommeranz

Poetry Editors

Caroline Spence
Brittani Ferguson
Danny Persia
Rathi Ramasamy

Fiction Editors

Chris High
Ellen Rosebrough

Faculty Advisor

Peter Grandbois

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Caroline Spence

To Lose a Brother | 7

Frances in Three Parts | 8

Abby Current

February's Belly | 12

Selkie Woman | 13

Meghan Callahan

Whirl | 15

halloween | 25

cool | 27

Faith | 39

Bookish | *cover*

Tristan Eden

Runaway | 16

Sharkey's Philadelphia | 17

Ashley Heestand

Tragedy, 1979 | 18

Danny Persia

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea | 30

Hymn to Satan | 34

Amanda DiMartini

untitled | 38

Karen Bullock

Gypsies | 41

Ellie Swensson

Phenomenology | 43

Snow | 45

Megan Moran	
untitled	48
untitled	58
Shawn Whites	
The Woman Across the Alley	49
Nikki Roozeboom	
Stain	59
Distant	60
Brittani Ferguson	
That Dusty Italian Dugout	62
Gateway	64
Holly Burdorff	
Transitions	65

CAROLINE SPENCE

To Lose a Brother

I.

Like dirt in a wheelbarrow, heavy on a hill,
 He spills down, and a bird flies up,
 wings whipping by your ears, a buzz of a bee.

Flesh fades into dirt, dirt covers body, body blooms,
 butterflies fly to the bushes in the garden,
 and your sisters and your mother stitch a quilt, twice, to bury.

II.

They saw open wings when they put grandmother's brother down
 But I think our sky is an empty nest
 so stay, dear brother, in the dirt, roots planted, blooming.

I do not have a wheelbarrow to carry you away,
 or enough land, enough dirt to heal your hole in the earth
 and, besides, our mother cannot sew.

Frances in Three Parts

I.

When the phone rings
and I am not expecting a call from my mother
I think she is calling to tell me you are dead.

When people are dead they are not there any more
the way you want them, need them. Diamonds lost
in consignment suit pockets. Embroidered hankies left on a bus.

We learned that six years ago, didn't we?
And we yearn for him still, that stone statue
torn down, city hall caved in. There are just remains now,

heirlooms: A navy blazer, watercolors,
a guitar, a dictionary, a pocket watch,
a headstone on a hill,

and the ghost you live with every day, sneaking up,
making you cry at things that are more happy than sad,
like holidays, and finding old pictures in unexpected places.

Although I've admired them from afar,
I fear for when you leave me with your jewelry,
quilts, knickknacks and canopy bed.

I can sleep in that warmth
and adorn my wrists gladly but I will feel you
down my spine, like a cold glass of tea,

because when people are dead they are not there any more
the way you want them, need them to be, asking
if you need sugar or lemon or something to eat.

II.

I have a picture of you when you were young.
They said you looked like a movie star.
Narrow and slight with elegant limbs,

delicate features, in the middle of your face,
like a country mouse. Your teeth, small town.
Spaced out evenly, not quite like a fence, but almost.

But I didn't know you then, though I dream I did.
I know you now, sweater sets and sun spots,
creased, tidy, widowed and worn.

My favorite woman, silvered and shining.
Eighty and endless, you have to be.
You have to be.

I need you forever perched in your chair,
yelling at your cat. I need you forever,
green beans canned on a shelf.

You are scraps of fabric from a sweeter time.
Tell me about the coal, the garden,
the watermelons from Florida in the truck bed.

Although I've admired them from afar,
I fear for when you leave me with your jewelry,
quilts, knickknacks and canopy bed.

III.

I will think of you as long as there are peaches,
as long as there is yarn or a needle and thread in my hands,
as long as there are stone houses, cobblers, patios,

birthday candles, glasses on a chain,
cross word puzzles, discounts,
ironing boards, blackberry bushes,

or naps in the middle of the afternoon.
Frances, my kindred sister, my grandmother,
my key to the old home,

I adore every knot, stitch, tear, and seam.
I hope I silver like you, without salt and pepper fear,
just grace and playing cards,

never fearing the next season,
only craving the fruits and vegetables
that will taste like new.

In the moment she turns, the fisherman sees her coat,
Sees her swaying, a reef, a sea flower.
He sees the way the water slides from her skin.
Knows what this woman is.
The fisherman steals her long coat, pulls it close to his chest.

ABBY CURRENT

February's Belly

I did not notice the scent of carrots
Until it crept to me like a cat,
Sweet and musky, clean as clear water.
My cheek follows the June smell
Sharpened, deepened against the snow.

Scents have no words of their own.
Metaphors and similes are not theirs;
Bitter and sharp are tastes.

I leave behind me the cool brick building,
Sink through the spring-smelling winter air.
Was that a robin crackling through the trees?
The breeze, friendly and familiar,
A smooth brush of goosebumps on my skin.
Suspicion will grumble on my shoulder.
I won't hear it.
Stop, close my eyes, slow my heartbeat
And smell spring approaching.

Selkie Woman

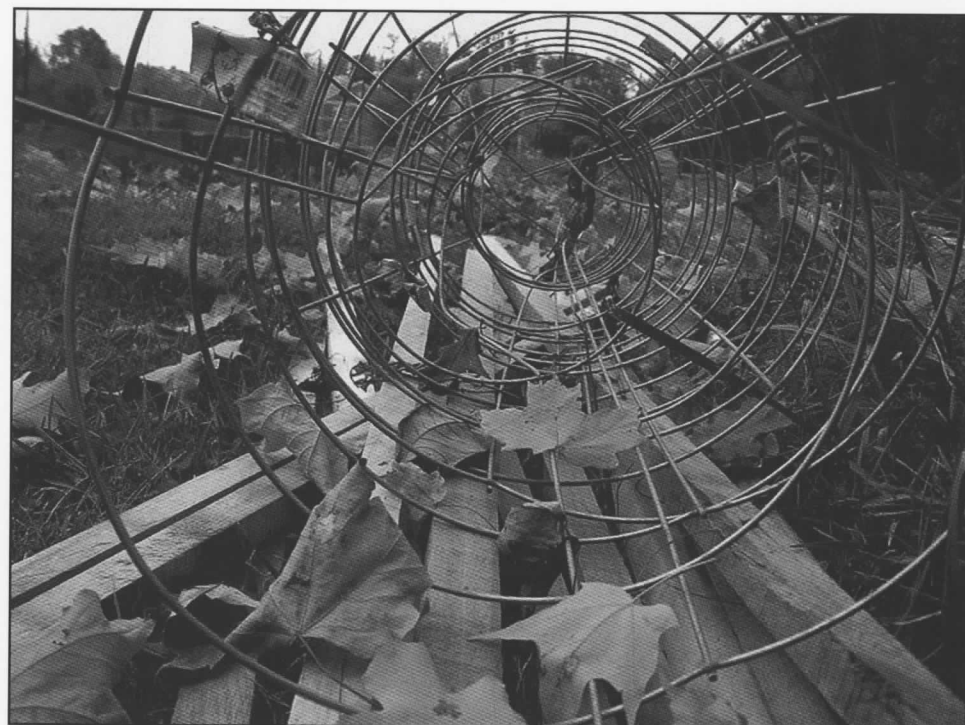
There are women who wind around salty fronds,
Slip their bellies across the sea's sandy tongue.
They wear seal coats, sleek and spotted with black glass patches.
When they tire of dark and pressing weight, they ascend,
Pull away from the soft sea floor,
Rise to smack their heads against a draping sky.
The air is thin. It can't carry their leaping bodies.
So these women crawl onto a rocky shore,
Scraping their elbows raw.
They shed their fine coats, their wide eyes,
Their freckled cheeks.
Pale skin tingles dry in view of the fat moon.

These first cold moments last longer than a lifetime of warm safety.
She spreads out her coat on the rocks and turns her naked back to it,
Toes kneading pebbles and strands of seaweed long dead.
Her blood babbles under her drying skin.
She savors the taste of air flowing through her in a tide.
This woman raises her arms, pressing her palms against the looming sky.

In the moment she turns, the fisherman sees her coat,
Sees her swaying, a reed, a sea flower.
He sees the way the water slides from her skin,
Knows what this woman is.
The fisherman steals her long coat, pulls it close to his chest,

Breathes in its ocean smell and buries it.
There is a pressing force under his collarbone
Moving his hands into the ground, and he is terrified.
Her skin is gone.

And she turns again. She sees him.
She sees a place where her skin once lay open.
Bending she sighs, remembers the fate of women who shed their long seal
coats.
She becomes a woman who once belonged to the sea.



Whirl
Meghan Callahan

TRISTAN EDEN

Runaway

It was raining hard
Like on Twin Peaks
When I parallel parked
Along the slick street.
She got in quick and kissed
My passenger-side cheek.

In the grey interior
She looked like a bird:
Small, wet, and scared,
Covered in fur.

She looked so familiar,
Her black leggings and golden hair.
And of course that sweet
Cigarette smell in the air.

It was still raining hard
When I asked where to go.
She looked past me
Out the window.
I turned the ignition.
“Let’s just go home.”

Sharkey’s Philadelphia

Dank and dripping, this industrial cyst
Overflows with too many siltbreeze liars,
They open restaurants and they start fires.
The city aches and the people are pissed
But nobody moves and nothing is fixed.
Everyone pretends and puts up flyers,
As if their band’s show will truly inspire.
Arrogance chokes, spreading heavy mist,
And laziness fills the pit like dark water.
It is stifling and putrid, fully without hope.
Watery love and the skull music help to cope,
But I am taking my wife and leaving this town—
We will not stay here to have our daughter.
In Australia we will create a new sound.

ASHLEY HEESTAND

Tragedy, 1979

I imagine:

Bodies: sweating, pulsing. Your stomach contracts, your lungs contract, your face contracts. Lick your lips; taste the salt and iron. Breathe in; expand; don't breathe out. Imagine bodies: pushing, falling. You're swept up and swallowed whole, like Jonah in the whale. Close your eyes! Wake up! Escape the ribs and blood and organs and bodies: teeming, swarming, overflowing. The walls crawl closer, like suffocating shadows. An elbow grinds a gap in your spine, in your collarbone, in your mouth. Bones strain and snap, collapse: purple blossoms and red vines and a symphony: buzzing, shouting, screaming, sobbing, rock music. Fleishy fingers grab your arms, your waist, your pants, your neck. Flesh heaves under black cotton t-shirts. Flesh against your flesh: wet, hot, desperate, panting. You shrink.

I read:

All 18,348 tickets were sold in 90 minutes. Almost 204 tickets were sold per minute, more than three every second.

I remember:

Looking at a photograph of my uncle Kevin and my mother as teenagers. They stood side by side behind a dark wooden table. My mother was smaller, two years younger, and she smiled. She had long, straight hair like Marsha Brady, and a face like mine. She says she avoided getting in trouble because my uncle always did. My uncle Kevin was tall and thin. He wore flannel, prescription aviators, a bushy beard. My mom listened to the music I grew up on: Genesis, Kansas, Queen, Lynyrd

Skynyrd, and Bad Company. Kevin listened to Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Yes, Black Sabbath, and The Who.

I imagine:

Connie Burns' funeral. She has two small children, a husband, a sea of people in black ties and skirt suits: friends, family, neighbors, strangers. They wait in line at the calling hours to offer condolences to the family: handshakes from the men, hugs from the women, I'm sorry for your loss. A young girl waits alone. She does not cry. She wears wide black trousers, a gray sweater. She has a large envelope tucked under her arm, wrapped in the comics from the Sunday paper, a red bow taped to the top with too much scotch tape. When she reaches the open casket, she places the gift inside, next to Connie's right hand. "Merry Christmas," she whispers. His hand on his small son's head, Danny Burns watches her; his eyes clear with curiosity. When the girl shakes his hand, he starts to ask, "How did you know Connie?" but she is already gone. She flees the funeral home, runs past flower arrangements and uncomfortable chairs and the boy who hangs coats. Outside, the cold air soothes her flushed face. She gulps it in furiously, and fumbles to get her keys out of her pocket. She unlocks her car and gets inside, sits for a moment, staring out the windshield at the cars that pass by, unaware. As she drives home, she cries.

At the funeral home, the mourners leave. They shake Danny Burns' hand one more time, clap him on the back, get in their cars, and drive away. He sits in silence in an uncomfortable armchair with pink upholstery. His children have gone with their grandparents, and he should have gone too. He couldn't. Yet again, he stands to look at his wife, promising himself that he will go home soon and try to sleep. The package from the girl in the gray sweater sits next to Connie's hand. He lifts it out of the coffin, careful not to bump into what once was her skin. The newspaper crinkles under his fingers, and he reads part of Charlie Brown. He smiles, then tears the paper away slowly, letting it drop on the funeral

home floor. It's a record: Who Are You by The Who.

I read:

that when they found out, the band went silent. They were four grown men, four famous men: Kenny Jones, John Entwistle, Pete Townshend, and Roger Daltrey. Four men posed in the textbook definition of despair; one pulled out a cigarette, but couldn't light it, one collapsed against the wall, one just stared. I read that Roger Daltrey cried. At the concert in Buffalo, New York the next night, he said to the crowd, "We lost a lot of family last night. This show's for them."

I remember:

listening to the Roger Daltrey's voice go crazy as he sang "You Better You Bet" in our car all summer. My mother had bought their greatest hits CD at Target, although The Who was traditionally "Kevin's music."

I remember driving to the job I hated too early in the morning, my windows rolled partway down and Daltrey's voice exploding from mediocre speakers. "When I say I love you, you say you better, you better, you better, you bet!" I sang along.

I imagine:

a teenage girl waiting outside Cincinnati Riverfront Coliseum on the day of the concert. The parking lot fills up by mid-afternoon, with thousands of teenagers and twenty-somethings wearing concert t-shirts under heavy coats and scarves. Wes and Tom got them tickets back in September.

On the day of the concert, they're ready to go by noon. She wears straight jeans and a button down shirt, a headband; her friend Jackie is in a belted dress. It's cold outside, and they both carry winter jackets under their arms. Tom picks them up in his small, rusting sedan. He and Wes sit in the front seat, she and Jackie share the back. They stop at the gas sta-

tion on the way there to buy snacks and cheap beer. The boys carry two six packs each back to the car, then hurry back inside to pick up two more. Their tickets are general admission, festival seating; the earlier they get there, the better seats they get. When they set up camp in the parking lot around 1:00 PM, the crowd is already arriving. A drunk girl in a tight skirt offers to take Wes into the back seat of her car. With a sidelong glance at his girlfriend, he declines. The concert won't start until 8:00.

They drink beer and laugh and introduce themselves to the group of people at the neighboring campsite. Tom and Wes get into a conversation with a skinny kid in a floppy hat. The three of them wander off to smoke weed, and the two girls huddle together under their coats, drinking beer more quickly now that the boys are gone. When Wes comes back, he sits close to them, and slides his hand in the back pocket of the girl's jeans. "Ready for the concert?" he says. She kisses him quickly. "I can't wait." They walk off together. As they push their way through the crowd, he keeps kissing her neck. She shoves him away playfully, then grabs onto his arms, his waist, his belt loops, until she regains balance. He laughs and laughs, wraps his arms around her. She looks over his shoulder at the crowd; it seems to extend forever, marked by clouds of smoke and close clusters that swell larger each second. "We'll never get a good seat," says Wes. She doesn't care, she laughs, and grabs his hand. They sway together a moment, then he lifts her, his hands on her waist. "What can you see up there?" he yells. She laughs, "Absolutely nothing. Nothing but ecstasy."

I read:

that eleven people died that night from compressive asphyxia. Here are the ten names that were released. Not one was over thirty. It was a Monday.

PETER D. BOWES, 18

TEVA RAE LADD, 27

DAVID J. HECK, 19

CONNIE SUE BURNS, 21
JAMES T. WARMOTH, 21
BRYAN J. WAGNER, 17
WALTER H. ADAMS, JR., 22
KAREN L. MORRISON, 15
JACQUELINE L. ECKERLE, 15
STEVE M. PRESTON, 19
PHILLIP K. SNYDER, 20.

I remember:

watching VH1's 100 Most Shocking Music Moments. It's one of those marathons that lasts five hours because it's impossible to cover more than twenty shocking events per hour, plus commercials. You don't want to over-stimulate your audience. Of course, nothing important ever happens until the fifth hour. And of course, you can't stop watching once you start. Luckily, I didn't even turn the television on until the host was wrapping up number fifteen.

And I remember being shocked.

Repeatedly.

Then horrified.

I imagine:

panic. Fear jolts through your body, an impulse that screams to run, run! People mill around, but they are not people; they are bodies, and bodies do not mill; they teem, swarm, pulverize. They overflow. The walls crawl closer. You clench the bench seat in both hands: crush, kill, obliterate. The bodies are alive. Their flesh ripples and dances. Their flesh calls out to your flesh. They flock to you. One sits next to you on the bench, and your body convulses. Pain flashes from your ribs through your knuckles to the tips of your fingers, and your head clears. You watch the children skate by; they laugh and wave. The girl in the pink skating skirt blows you a kiss. You hear her whisper, "My auntie's an a-gora-

phobic."

I read:

that the Who formed in London in 1964: Townshend, Daltrey, Entwistle, and Keith Moon. The Who's first single was "Zoot Suit" in 1964. Their first studio album was *My Generation* in 1965. It reached number five on the UK charts. Moon died from a prescription drug overdose in 1978. He was replaced with Kenny Jones. "You Better You Bet" reached number one on the US charts in 1981. The year I was born, they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. *Rolling Stone* magazine wrote: "Along with The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, The Who complete the holy trinity of British rock."

I remember:

being a child at Christmas time. It's December, 1999. I'm a third grader, nine years old, four foot seven, and fifty-nine pounds. I'm fairly certain that Santa Clause does not exist. He brings me gifts anyway. He's left them under our huge fir tree, and they're the only ones unwrapped, just like always. I pull my reluctant older brother down the stairs at 7:00 AM just to make sure Santa didn't forget.

My family packs up at noon to go to my grandmother's house. I wear an entirely new outfit, my winter coat, purple gloves. We pile in the car, and I pull out my new Walkman. It's clunky, gray, and only plays cassette tapes. I only have cassette tapes. I slide in Britney's *...Baby One More Time*. My favorite song is "(You Drive Me) Crazy."

When we get to my grandmother's, I wait impatiently for presents while the adults chatter about events and people I know nothing about. As far as I can tell, everything they talk about happened before I was born. My brother and I play cards on the floor in the family room; he wins. I decide I want to draw pictures instead.

Finally, my uncle Kevin comes in the room to tell us that it's time for dessert, then we'll finally get to open our presents. His t-shirt pro

claims "The Who." The H in "The" converges with the H in "Who," and an arrow shoots out of the O. The who? I wonder. The what? Who? I don't get it.

I imagine:

Roger Daltrey, crying. He's in shock. He can't believe he just played a two hour set, while people were right outside, dying. They'd told him to keep the encore short, to keep the fucking encore short. Then they'd delivered the news to the band. At first, he can't imagine playing again, and certainly not tomorrow night, not in Buffalo. But Pete says if they don't play tomorrow night, they'll never play again. He's right, Pete's always right. God, he can't believe he's crying. But how could he not cry? Jesus, he's a murderer. He murdered eleven innocent people with his music. But that's absurd. It's all too much to grasp. Eleven strangers, eleven strangers from Ohio, are dead, and somehow it's his fault. Together, these four men who stand together, silent and mourning, are guilty. But of what? Of popularity? Of great music? Jesus, they're dead. And they died so horribly, crushed to death in a crowd. Maybe they called for help; maybe they reached up to grab skirts and pant legs. "Please, please, help me." No one expects to die at a rock concert. It's supposed to be fun.

I read:

that there weren't enough doors. There wasn't enough security. There weren't enough laws. There wasn't enough order. There wasn't enough assigned seating. There wasn't enough time. There wasn't enough patience. There was a sound check. There was pandemonium.

I remember:

that it might have been my uncle.

MEGHAN CALLAHAN

halloween

i remember what you said that night
you were drunk
surprise surprise
eyes
usually so gentle green growing things
hazy with the cheap scotch and too many budweisers
bruise between them where you'd smashed the last can
against your forehead
knock some sense into your skull next time
your eyes were green
jaded

and your sentences were slurred by captain morgan
and all his closest friends
underscored by the harsh unreal sweetness of coke

"i love you"
you said with a crooked smile
jack-o-lantern face
candle lit inside your mouth guttering

and the harshness of my cigarette smoke
kept my heart chained down
to my tar-caked lungs
the acrid tang of reality

trick or treat?

you laughed too loudly

and i never really believed
in Halloween.

cool

the heat was like a living thing
clawing up our insides
licking our throats with its own tongue of flame
teasing our faces with silver-sharp claws
toying with the sweat that beaded
and dripped off our skin
raindrops without any peace

this is hell, you said
and laid back into the drooping grass
it did not have the strength to stand
shriveled and brown, submissive

be quiet, i snapped
irritated by the deep rasp of your voice
meeting the buzzing cacophony of heat waves
rubbing against one another
in greeting

you turned to look at me
eyes wide with surprise
at the sharpness of my voice
cutting like a knife through the still air
and i felt then that i'd wounded you
burned you with my fury

unmerciful like the sun on our heads
but i could not take back the harshness of my words
and it seemed i could not even
offer sorrow through the sticky heat

you stood up
a dark shadow against baking blue sky
you walked across the grass in long, slow steps
moving through the thickness of the day
you bent down by your front door
and i couldn't see exactly what it was
you were doing among the brick...

and then coolness like heaven
was all over my skin
puckering it into goosebumps
i had to gasp for breath
and the pressure of the hose continued
as you sprayed me down
and then, quite calmly, turned the water on yourself
until both of our clothes clung like second skins
revealing the gentle curve of your shoulder
the slope of your chest
and the drops on the pavement began
to sizzle and crackle as they evaporated
called back into the sky

you dropped the hose into the gutter
still spluttering freezing water into our sneakers
and plopped, wetly, beside me

i'm sorry, i said
shivering a little now
with the chill mixing strangely with sun
apology teased out of me
by the hose's hard touch

you turned lazily toward me

and there were droplets of water falling from your hair
and your nose and your chin
and your fingertips, too, as you took my hand
and your lips, when they murmured gently across my palm
in forgiveness
were cool

LEOPOLDO MARIA PANERO, translated by DANNY PERSIA

20.000 Leguas de viaje submarino

Como un hilo o aguja que casi no se siente
como un débil cristal herido por el fuego
como un lago en que ahora es dulce sumergirse
oh esta paz que de pronto cruza mis dientes
este abrazo de las profundidades
luz lejana que me llega a través de la inmensa lonja de
 la catedral desierta
quién pudiera quebrar estos barrotes como espigas
dejad me descansar en este silencioso rostro que nada
 exige
dejadme esperar el iceberg que cruza callado el mar sin
 luna
dejad que mi beso resbale sobre su cuerpo helado
cuando alcance la orilla en que sólo la espera es posible
oh dejadme besar este humo que se deshace
este mundo que me acoge sin preguntarme nada este
mundo de titíes disecados
morir en brazos de la niebla
morir sí, aquí, donde todo es nieve o silencio
que mi pecho ardiente expire tras de un beso a lo que
 es sólo aire
más allá el viento es una guitarra poderosa pero él no
 nos llama
dejadme entonces besar este astro apagado traspasar el
espejo y llegar así adonde ni siquiera el suspiro es

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

Like a thread or needle barely felt,
like a weak crystal injured by fire,
like a lake of sweet submersion,
oh, this peace that suddenly drifts across my teeth,
this embrace of the depths,
this far-off light that reaches me through the vast fish market of
 the deserted cathedral,
who could break these bars like spikes,
let me rest in this silent face that demands
 nothing
let me await the quiet iceberg that drifts across
 the moonless sea
let my kiss slip onto your freezing body
when it reaches the shore on which one could only imagine waiting.
Oh, let me kiss the smoke dissolving
this world that embraces me, without asking anything of this
world of tiny stuffed marmosets,
let me die in the arms of the fog,
die, yes, here, where all is snow or silence,
so that my burning chest expires after a kiss to what
 is only air--
in the distance the wind is a powerful guitar, but it does not
 call us
so let me kiss this dull star pierce the
 mirror and reach where not even the sigh is

posible
donde sólo unos labios inmóviles
ya no dicen o sueñan
y recorrer así este inmenso Museo de Cera deteniéndome
por ejemplo en las plumas recién nacidas
o en el instante en que la luz deslumbra a la crisálida
y algo más tarde la luna y los susurros
y examinar después los labios que fulgen
cuando dos cuerpos se unen formando una estrella
y cerrar por fin los ojos cuando la mariposa próxima a
caer sobre la
tierra sorda quiere en vano volver sus alas hacia lo verde
que ahora la desconoce

*~Leopoldo María Panero
Así se fundó Carnaby Street, 1970*

possible
where motionless lips
no longer say or dream,
and let me wander through this vast Wax Museum contemplating,
for example, the newly born feathers
or the instant when light dazzles the chrysalis,
and later on the moon and the whispers,
and examine the gleaming lips
when two bodies unite, forming a star,
and finally close my eyes when the butterfly, about
to fall on the
deaf ground, wishes in vain to turn its wings to the green,
no longer remembered

*~Translated by Danny Persia
Thus Carnaby Street Was Founded*

silencioso y cruel en que
como el suicidio, sueño
sin ángeles ni mujeres
desnudo de todo
salvo de tu nombre
 de tus besos en mi ano
y tus caricias en mi cabeza calva
rociaremos con vino, orina y sangre
 las iglesias
regalo de los magos
y debajo del crucifijo
aullaremos.

~Leopoldo María Panero
Poemas del Manicomio de Mondragón, 1999

silent and cruel
as suicide-- I dream
without angels, without women,
naked of all
but your name,
 your kisses on my anus,
your caresses on my bare head--
we'll sprinkle the churches with
 wine, urine, blood,
gift of the conjurers,
and beneath the crucifix
we shall howl.

~ Translated by Danny Persia
Poems from the Mondragón Asylum, 1999



untitled
Amanda DiMartini

MEGHAN CALLAHAN

Faith

The fluorescent lights were harsh and jarring, beating like false suns with the all-too chemical hum of industry. It was so bright in the room it burned my eyes; there were no clouds here to dim the intensity, and I longed vaguely for the relief of rain.

There was not so much as a speck of grime anywhere, and I remember wondering if the reason that hospitals were kept so clean was in an effort to scrub out the dry scent of fear. The business men in their plain gray suites must not have realized that disinfectant and old bleach stank of terror already. Years later, I would keep my house half-shrouded in dust, and people would wonder, and people would ask, but I could not make them understand that the acrid feel of cleanliness gave me nightmares.

The waves were small, near non-existent that day, as the poisons dripped slowly into my veins, tiny swells of hot, freezing pain. I kept my hairless head pulled inside my sweater, and counted mica flecks in the tiles on the floor, telling myself over and over that if I ended on an even number this would be the last time, that I would get better...

And he did not come.

Everyday, everyday that I had sat under the cold administrations of the needle, he had been there with me, burning blue eyes and angel bones of his back beneath the thin cotton of his shirts. We did not speak; I did not know his name. But often we smiled, and once or twice when I had started crying, he had reached across the aisle and taken my hand. We must have been a strange sight, cold fingers intertwined, twin IV drips of toxins running up our sleeves, gaunt frames bent towards one another in a gesture of prayer.

Someone asked where the boy was, and the nurse, lurking with her clipboard in the corner, shook her head. The look she gave, half-pity, half-sorrow, over the lipstick smudge of her mouth, was more than I could stomach. Other words followed then, but they were meaningless noise, like wind chimes, and I returned to my counting.

It was years later before I would cry for him.

I did not cry when the tests came back negative, and I left the rectangle prison of the hospital for the last time.

I did not cry the first day I brushed my hair again, an unruly short tuft on my head, like grass.

I did not cry at my graduation, not even after the party, when only the drooping roses and I remained.

I did not cry when I moved from home with everything I owned in small brown boxes, sealed in and quiet.

And I did not cry when the man with the slow voice and warm dark eyes asked me to be his wife.

It was fourteen and a half years later, when I was being wheeled into the hospital once more, that I saw him again. I drew in breath to push, and there he was. His smile was the same, the sky-blueness of his eyes like the mirrors I remembered, and his hair had grown in. It was golden.

And I wept then, not for the pain, but because he gave me strength to bear my daughter, strength to look into her small face and feel that the world I gave her was not all hell, strength to see there was a heaven beyond the circles of emptiness we knew. When he turned to go, the angel bones on his back were gone.

Two long wings sprouted along his spine instead, curving in perfect white clarity, beaming with the cleanliness that was not agony and the purity that did not know sorrow.

And I cried.

And that day, I named my daughter Faith.

KAREN BULLOCK

Gypsies

The smoke curls, obscuring your face--
you could be anyone in this dim
graffitied haven, any man.

I breathe deep and listen for the
crackling bubbles, the ground
murmuring on the pads of my toes.

I catch him in a stare and silently
smirk, return the admiration in
his eyes while I'm on your arm.

This is the black market of love,
the tainted twin called lust, the
alcoholic aunt of affection. I pull back
my spindly fingers that have been
creeping away from your touch,
reprimand and remind the rebels.

You have a vision in the night of
my fanciful transgressions--your mind
has tapped into my frequency,
picked up the signals in the chilled
midnight air, and my heart shudders,
quakes as only the guilty heart can quake.

As I trace my lips with a teasing tongue,
I watch his pupils dilate as you suck
down the bitter smoke, watch your
lungs turn black with suspicion in
the humid evening. The air is
saturated with longing, and I can feel
your hope spark and catch fire that
it is you I am reaching for in this heat.

A tapping foot, another deep breath
drawn in, and your cloudy vapor puffs
out in circles, framing my intentions
clearly in the lamplight, rings vanishing
at my fingertips. My limbs are lit with
secrecy, deceit flowing through each
artery, pumping the lifeblood of sordid
adventure from my heart outwards.

His forbidden-fruit lips meet mine
in my mind, but your hand still grips
my forearm lightly, a leash on my
siren song calling to his skin.

This fantasy will remain only that
for tonight, and I will wake guilt-free
with the dawn, but these deeper
desires will inevitably surface again.
A dream here, a poem there, and
in my mind's eye I return to his arms,
encircling me like smoke rings.

ELLIE SWENSSON

Phenomenology

A lot of ink has been spilt
Ink like blood, like life stain
About why love ticks, why it turns-
Clicks,
knocking our bones.

What *I want* from you
Is the burning;
The
slow
burning,
the muted brilliance
We could not sustain.

Dust and ashes --
From what,
to what
We all return.

I am your unattainable;

You are my always.

“Can you feel that?” She asked *watching*

Me
drag.

“That’s the damage.”

Self improvement is indulgent,
Conceit and counterfeit

to your *flesh*,

but this self *destruction*...

Shone in the harshest of light,
I awe your scars.

Snow

I had never seen a frozen lake,
Solid and secure,
And so you took me.
Took me
Back to your home full

Of love, brimming
With the eclectic prints of care
You still wear so well.
You held my hand
As I watched each snowflake grace your lashes;

Blinked softly
As I wiped them from your cheek
And fell, sudden and silent,
Into each line --
Each original line --

Of your bones.
We walked
Skipping the cracks
Because of our subtle superstitions.
I spun you,

Kissed those cheeks I admire,
Kissed
The forehead that holds so many graces;
The gravity keeping us,
Close and peaceful;

The wind sweeping your curls away.
So much potential there
In the blankness.
All of it before us:
Unfolded, smooth, captured

By January's greed.
And I understood then
Why Mother Nature did it;
Why She would stop the inland tides
And hold them for Spring's ransom.

"You should see it at sunrise,"
You said. I could feel your smile
More than see it
In that late dark of a winter night.
This is why I could love you

I thought.
Even in this beauty, in this moment
Of stillness, fulfillment,
You were always inspired with the creation,
Pulled to the newness.

Stepping slightly into the soft light of the street lamp,
You held my hand firmly,
And I knew the only way to keep you
Was to free you to bloom.



untitled
Megan Moran

SHAWN WHITES

(excerpt from) **The Woman Across the Alley**

Allen leaned on the windowpane and watched as she played the guitar and sang melodically in a French whisper. Her window was on the second floor of the peach stucco building, directly across the alleyway, open to the salty ocean air. She smiled while reading the notes in front, her black hair disheveled and her olive skin glowing in the setting sun.

When the shadows of the sun hid her figure, he pulled back the brown curtains of the window and turned on the television to find images of trolleys and Golden Gate Hill, the place he called home. He missed the restaurant in Sausalito where he proposed to his wife, where they drank Chateau Laroque on their anniversaries, and he missed the Vista Point Lookout where the two of them watched the tiny diamonds of car headlights glow on the bridge above the bay.

He turned the picture off.

When it came time for dinner, he set two plates on the table and dropped the needle on the vinyl of Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde*, an album that played on repeat during his honeymoon here in Nice, France. Shortly after that honeymoon, he bought the apartment. It was naked without Amy, and as Dylan's scratchy voice echoed off the apartment walls, he glanced at the untouched plate of food to his left and sang quietly to the empty air.

And then the night came, and he woke, gasping for air with a sharp pain in his ribs like tiny knives stabbing from the inside trying to get out. He violently clenched the damp sheets underneath him and looked at his fingers, remembering the image that had forced him to wake—his body pinned against the seat from the dented steering wheel, Amy's limp body

lying in the seat next to him, her eyes black, blue, covered with blood, and her legs snapped underneath her like two half-broken tree limbs barely attached to the trunk. He had used all his strength to stretch those fingers to grab Amy's lifeless hand, and he couldn't reach it.

He made his way to the restroom and put both hands on the sink and leaned over and watched as drops of cold sweat dripped from his hair and into the sink. When he splashed water on his face, he noticed his features in the mirror—the dark purple circles around his brown eyes and the goose bumps on the pallor of his skin. He ventured back to his room and opened the window and drifted off to the faded sounds of late-night French conversations and the thunder from a storm many miles away.

* * *

The next day Allen walked the old brick streets nearby until he came to La Musique Guitare. Through its windows he saw many small Spanish guitars hanging on the walls and the woman from across the alley behind the cashier's counter. The sight of her compelled him to venture inside, and he didn't know why. He had never heard her words but in song, and she was a stranger, but she had an aura of familiarity about her that he could not pinpoint. Inside he went straight to the guitars hanging on the wall and pulled one down and strummed it lightly with his thumb as it lay in his lap. After several minutes he heard the quiet words of a female's voice.

"Puis-je vous aider?" she asked. "Can I help you?"

He turned and looked up at the woman's eyes. In them he could see his wife's eyes, the same shade of lively emerald green, the iris a deep, distinct brown, the way she used to look at him when he laid his head next to hers on the pillow.

"Je parle un peu francais," he replied with a stagger in his voice. "I speak little French."

The woman giggled. "My apologies. Do you want to purchase the guitar?"

"It's beautiful, but I don't need another guitar," he said as he put it back on the wall. It was his first encounter with the woman from across the alley. He shook his head to himself and held his hand to his heart as he felt his chest tighten, and took a deep breath before he left the store hastily without another look at her.

* * *

Ever since that day it seemed as though he could not go anywhere without running into her. From the patio of Restaurant Le Galion, he saw her sitting in the sand, reading before the sun-sparkled ocean water.

He could not fully make out her face at his distance; all he could see was her tan skin against the golden sand. The longer he stared the more he began to see his wife. He reached into his wallet and found a Polaroid of Amy that he took on a beach in Southern California. Her damp black hair covered half of her smiling face, and she wore a white-tank top that hung down to her thighs. He held out the picture at arms length and positioned it so that it was right next to the woman sitting on the beach. Bringing it back to his lips, he kissed it and put it back into his pocket. He sat there until she was the only one still sitting in the sand, and then he walked out with his shoes in his hands.

He sat down in the sand close enough to her so that she'd see him and listened to the waves thunder upon the shore. From the corner of his eye he saw her look up from the pages of her book.

"You can really lose track of time out here...get caught up in the beauty of the sea," he said.

The woman placed her book in the sand and moved her towel closer to him. "I would say. Do you come to this place often?" she asked, taking off her sunglasses.

"Not this place. But there is a beach back home much like this."

"You are not from around here, are you? I have just recently been seeing you."

His arms shuck and his eyelids quivered as he stood up and walked

away. "I must be going," he said, glancing over his shoulder.

There was a moment before he heard the sound of her feet kicking up sand. "Wait!"

What is your name?"

He stopped and turned slowly to her, trying not to look in her eyes. "Allen."

"And I am Sylvie, Allen. Maybe I will meet you again?"

"Yes, maybe," he said with a forced smile, and he continued on his way.

On his walk back home, the sun was low and hidden behind the pastel buildings with no streetlights to illuminate the path, and he thought about Amy, about the woman from across the alley, about his attraction to both. When the thoughts entered his head, though, he told himself that this woman was not just another woman, she was Amy. The beach, the music, and her appearance were all too familiar. Nonetheless, whenever he thought about the woman from across the alley, he felt dizzy and nauseous.

When he got back to the apartment he went to his bed. The unoccupied pillow next to him, the empty white space, made him clench his eyelids together tightly in order to fight back the moisture. He brought his knees to his chest and wrapped his arms around his legs and rocked back and forth on the sheets.

Just then, though, he heard Sylvie singing from across the alley. Her voice started to rise, as though she was trying to be heard. He put his hands over his ears and tried to forget the sound, but he knew he couldn't keep from listening. He went to his window and brushed the curtain to the side and peeked out with one eye and watched. For a moment there was silence; he looked back down to the empty pillow, and then he ran to the kitchen and grabbed a napkin and a sharpie. He scribbled hastily: To the most beautiful girl I've ever seen, eyes bannered black with shades of green. Try these chords, G, G minor, D, B minor, and see where it takes

you." Paper in hand, he went back to the window and opened the curtain. She wasn't there, but he heard telephone ring. She spoke to someone in French, and though he couldn't see her in the shadows of her apartment, he listened. Before long he watched from above as she came running out the front door and got into a car. As she drove off, he ran down the stairs and into her building. At room 211, he slipped the napkin underneath the door and ran down the steps and back to his apartment.

* * *

The next day, Allen sat at a bar. The bartender, with his sweat-soaked white shirt and thick black mustache, stood behind the bar with his arms crossed and puffed on a cigar as he watched Allen. He sat there a long while listening to the problems of other men before he went to the restroom. When he came out, the first thing that he saw was Sylvie sitting at a booth by herself. He stood motionless until she brought her eyes up and smiled. He sat down at the bar without acknowledging her.

"Did you write this?" she asked quietly with a grin as she lay down the napkin on the bar.

"Well . . ." he looked down at the paper and wondered if he had made a mistake, if he should have been thinking about her at all. "No . . . I did not," he said lowly without bringing his eyes up.

The woman laughed and put her hand down on his arm. "I see you watch me through the window... are you sure you didn't write this?" she insisted.

"What makes you think it was me?"

Allen brushed the hair from his face and looked at the woman's eyes. The muscles of her face had tightened. He thought about the empty pillow, about the beach, about the accident, and about being alone.

"Okay, I confess," he replied.

"I was sure of it," she said as she wrapped her lips around the straw of her plastic cup.

He felt his face turning red and his heart began to beat faster than before. At that moment he wanted to touch her, hug her, and take care of her like he should have taken care of Amy.

"Can I buy you a drink, right now?" he asked, while shuffling his hands in his pockets for money.

Sylvie tilted her head to the side and put her hand on his leg, "Thank you but no thank you. I do not drink when I have to work in the mornings." She stood up and put her hands on his shoulders from behind, and whispered to him, "I have written a song. Using your chords. Come to my apartment tomorrow and I will play. You know where I live. Then, I may drink with you Allen."

* * *

In the aisles of the Supermarche he searched up and down the aisles until finally he caught sight of a bottle with faded iron gates across the sand-colored label, Chateau Laroque.

When he got to the door of her apartment he took a deep breath and knocked. She opened immediately, as if she was right behind the door eagerly awaiting his arrival.

"Bonjour, Allen. Come," she said as she motioned him through the doorway.

"Bonjour, Sylvie," he nodded.

It was the first time he said it aloud, and it sounded foreign. Sylvie, he repeated in his head. There were many paintings on the walls, many of them where of ocean waves and musicians. He walked over to the small-bodied wooden guitar that leaned up against the windowpane. He slid his hand gently down its neck and onto the frail pinewood of the sinuous body that was torn where the strumming of a pick had scratched through, and imagined that it was a woman's body.

Across the alleyway was his window, and he envisioned himself sitting there, like a voyeur, watching her.

"You are my only audience member," she said.

"Doesn't anyone else hear you play?"

She glanced out the window and down into the alley, avoiding his eyes. "No, I am scared of audiences," she said as she brushed her hair back behind her ear.

He curled his lips and realized that she had noticed him there, every time, even when he tried to hide behind the curtain. "Look at that," he said, pointing out at the cloudless lavender, auburn, and blue sky. "It's like someone painted the sky with a brush."

Sylvie grabbed his hand. "You're right. If we hurry we can catch the last of the sunset. Let's go."

She dragged him through the room and grabbed the bottle of wine. "Thanks for this," she said with a smile.

As soon as they got to the sand, Sylvie sat down and slipped the bottle up about half way out of the bag. Allen pulled an opener from his pocket and Sylvie handed the bottle over to him. The last time he had opened a bottle of Chateau Laroque was the night that Amy had died. The sweet grape smell lifted from the bottle and up into his nostrils. It smelt like Amy's breath when he leaned in to kiss her the night of the accident. He took a long swig and held the liquid in his mouth and moved his tongue in circles before he sat the bottle in the sand.

He passed it over to Sylvie, as he did many times for Amy.

"For you," he said.

Sylvie took a drink out of the bottle and he watched as she closed her eyes, lifted her cheeks, and bit her bottom lip.

"Zut alors!" she cried.

"It's been a long time since you've had it, hasn't it?" he asked.

"No, no. I've never had this. What is it?" she asked while she analyzed the label. "I don't want to be rude, Allen, but it is far too sweet for my liking."

He shook his head. "What do you mean, you don't like it?"

He grabbed the bottle out of her hands, took another drink, and stared directly into the fiery glow of the sun, which was too low now to

blind his eyes, and tried to understand how someone so similar to his wife could not like her favorite wine. He wondered if he had expected too much.

"I prefer white wine, but I will most certainly drink with you," she said while she placed her hand on his leg. "I did not mean to offend you... can I have another drink?"

He handed it over to her. "It's just that this is my favorite wine, that's all."

After awhile he put it past him, and they continued to pass the bottle as they talked about their time here in Nice. Allen found out that she was a student at a music institute and that she was originally from Paris. She told him that music was the one thing that stayed constant in her life, that everything else kept changing too fast, and that she couldn't stay with one thing long enough to make it worth anything. But she wanted that to change. Often while talking, she'd touch the bare skin of his arm and his lower thigh where his shorts stopped, and when she did, the hairs on his body would rise.

"You said that you had a song for me, I'd like to hear it," he said to her.

"That's right. It's getting cold anyway. Let's get going."

On the walk back home she reached down and grabbed his hand, locking her fingers into his without either of them saying anything. He looked at her and smiled, and as they walked down the street, he didn't take notice of the couples walking towards them. All he could picture was Sylvie singing in a tongue he did not understand.

Inside her apartment, he walked over to her guitar and started to strum the chords of a song that he had once written. Sylvie interrupted him, wrapping her arms around his stomach from behind as she placed her head on his back. He closed his eyes and remembered what it felt like to be held, to feel the familiar touch of a woman.

Sylvie began to unbutton the first few buttons of his shirt. "How about I play for you later?" she whispered. "Come with me."

She led him by hand to her bedroom and pointed to her bed. "Stay here."

He fell down upon her bed, closed his eyes and imagined what would happen next. First she could come in with the guitar. Or maybe she was tired. When he opened his eyes he looked at the empty pillow next to him, but before the image of Amy appeared in his mind as it so often did, Sylvie jumped down beside him and put her head on the pillow. She brushed back the hair from her eyes and smiled.

His hand trembled as he put his palm flat on her warm naked thigh, moving it farther up her leg. Almost immediately he felt her fingers as they flowed through the roots of his hair, and she pressed her lips to his. The first thing he caught was the smell of grape wine on her breath. He did not hesitate, though, and grabbed her waist, closer, and rested his mouth on hers for until they both needed air. They were cold and unfamiliar, but they were moist, and the slick touch of them numbed his body.

In that moment, he felt as if he were in the bed next to Amy in the minutes before they made love, and so he pulled her shirt up off of her and she did the same for him. It was much like the time he used to have with Amy, the way he rolled underneath the sheets and touched the bareback skin.

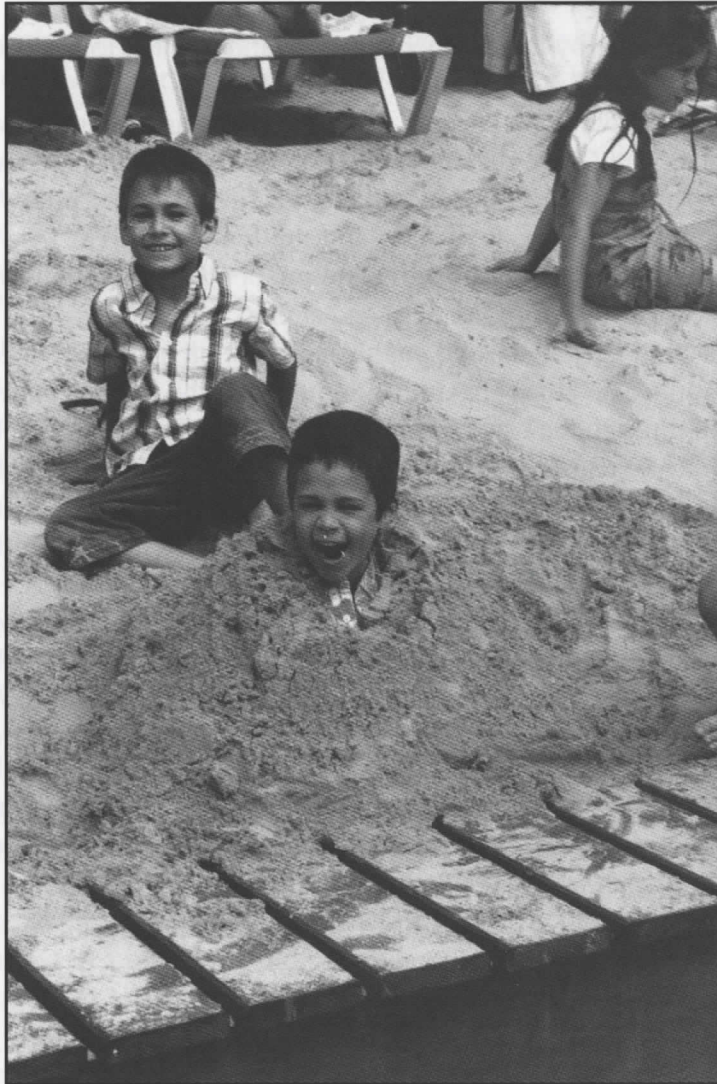
But the longer they continued the more he began to think beyond Sylvie's lips, her smooth skin, and her green eyes. It was the smell of the wine that reminded him that she didn't even like the wine; he had drunk most of it. He leaned back and looked at her as her pupils dilated.

She panted in and out.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

He felt himself shaking, and the stabbing pain, like knives, came back to him.

"What is my favorite color?" he asked her.



untitled
Megan Moran

NIKKI ROOZEBOOM

Stain

Almost three, my nephew took the Crayola
In brick red and scrawled his masterpiece
On the pristine eggshell walls—
A Pollock mural, or a seismogram off-kilter.
Lysol, Windex, WD-40 all resisted
As his mother chided and scrubbed.

Six weeks in, and I scrubbed at the linens
With my fists, the soapy foam dyed
Rust-color. Probably a chromosomal
Abnormality, the OB/GYN had said,
Not my fault—the chromosomes'.
The bleach stung at my nails and eyes.

Distant

We played jacks
on the railroad ties
outside of town,
pried the raisins
from cookies,

from oatmeal
that smelled
like sepia hues.
Every day lasted
as far as the breeze
would carry it,

would carry us.
Now, when I tell
you of my nightmares
about tornadoes,
you'll hear it only
once.

There are days
when every knock
is you, with hard eyes
and no more birds
or dreams

or afternoons
to speak of.

BRITTANI FERGUSON

That Dusty Italian Dugout

The smell of dirt kicked
Up into dust, filling the air.
Wooden benches lined
The dugout, white paint
Peeling off the edges.

His beard felt harsh
Against my cheek, his
Fingers calloused.

I remember the concrete
Against my back, the dirt
In the air, lining my throat.
The sound of his zipper,
Metal teeth sliding apart,
His hand on my wrist,
Rough and demanding,
Coarse hair against my fingers.

I don't remember his face,
But I can feel him sometimes,
Heavy on top of me,
Breath in my ear and
Hot on my neck, whispering
Reassurances and
Begging me not to tell.

I can still see the outline
Of that dusty Italian dugout,
Cockroaches hiding in the
Grooves of the cement blocks
And mosquitoes hovering
next to my skin.

BRITTANI FERGUSON

Gateway

I once heard the dead live in the
Starlight, that path in the sky where
Light travels to Earth, like a gateway.

I like to think of you there, resting
Amongst the stars and waiting for us
To join. I see the light and I can hear
Your voice softly fall from the sky.

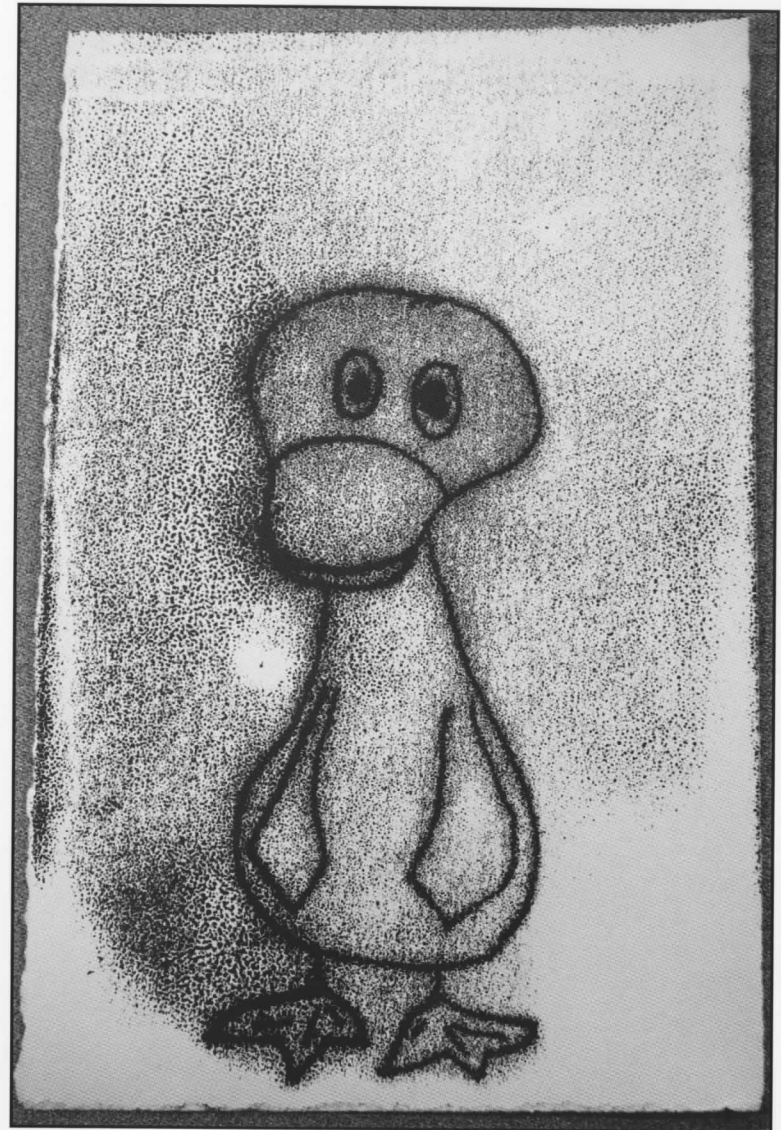
Here, the leaves sit in piles, carried
Off by the cool nighttime breeze.

I like to pretend your laughter floats
On the wind, drifting lazily over black
Waters and echoing on some distant
Shore for someone else to hear.

Course hair against my fingers.

I don't remember his face,
But I can feel him sometimes,
Heavy on top of me,
Breath in my ear and
Hot on my neck, whispering
Reassurances and
Begging me not to fall.

I can still see the outline
Of that dusty Italian dugout,
Cockroaches hiding in the
Grooves of the cement blocks
And mosquitoes hovering
Next to my skin.



transitions
Holly Burdorff