

Studio One

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Studio One

2018

Volume 43

College of St. Benedict | St. John's University

www.csbsju.edu

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From the Editors

Studio One is a literary and visual arts magazine published each spring by the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University. Its mission is to give new and/or established writers a forum in which to present their works. The magazine's focus is poetry, short fiction, essays, and all forms of reproducible visual art works. Submissions are open to all students on either St. John's or St. Benedict's campuses and to the general public regardless of regional, national, or international location.

In 1976, a student named Clare Rossini had the foresight to create a new magazine for publishing the artistic works of authors and artists living in the surrounding area. As Rossini wrote, "Art is the life current of the community. It is a source of pleasure and pride for us; it unites us with our human predecessors and successors. Art is no luxury; it is a vital human activity. By publishing *Studio One*, we wish to support the members of our Minnesota community dedicated to that activity and to make their art available to those for whom it was made." While *Studio One's* reach has extended greatly since its founding in 1976, the current Editors-in-Chief have striven to publish a selection that still supports the mission written by Clare 43 years ago. Without Clare's efforts, we would not be presenting the 2018 edition of *Studio One*.

Studio One would also like to give thanks to our staff advisors, Matt Callahan and Rachel Marston, along with all the faculty of the CSB/SJU English Departments, Mark Conway of the Literary Arts Institute, Greg Harren and Sentinel Printing, all our contributors, and all those who submitted their work.

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Poetry and Artwork

Reading Wind

Words and paper
rustle on restless
wind. My fingers
crimp edges, grip
folds between
sentences. Phrases
ripped from my hands
bloat in a wild blur
against a pale
blue sky, where
I lose focus
once again and stare
at the restless horizon.

-Richard Dinges, Jr.
Walton, NE



Quiet
-Bridget Davis
College of Saint Benedict '18

Billy Plays the Blues

Blue light reflects from metal,
floods the corners of the room
above the stage with three dynamic
youngsters and one old sage,
wrinkled and balding, well past
his seventieth year, but aging
well; he's full of strength and joie de vivre,
urging on his protégés.

Blue light is stabbed and strobing,
flickering from the surface
of the golden saxophone,
reflecting from the drums
as Billy's flailing arms drive on the tempo,
polyrhythmic and true.
A whirlwind of energy silhouetted
against the rhapsody of blue.

-Paul Ilechko
Lambertville, NJ



Proxy
-Sandeep Kumar Mishra
Churu, India

75th BIRTHDAY

My dog knows how to operate
my old lounge chair—
knows if she rubs her furry side along
the arm lever, the foot rest pops up.
She knows that whatever I was about to do
will be put off and I will sit here
with my notebook and pen to enjoy the chair.

I see my knobby feet in front of me;
the TV hums between channels
and the book I put aside is on the floor.
I explain to my dog my philosophy,
rubbing her back, while she chews thoughtfully
on her paw. The house creaks, acorns
fall with little pops on the roof. Being alone is fine,

if you're not alone alone.

-Janet McCann
College Station, TX



Et Promissionem
-Davina Schaez
Long Prairie, MN

This Morning

I see two goldfinches lit by the rising sun
at the top of a tamarack tree
fly off together to another sunlit limb.
This morning I read an article
about the mating ritual of sandhill cranes,
the dance they do, the poses they strike,
a procreative work of art.
This morning I open the bedroom door to wake you,
though I don't know what name to call you—
Goldfinch Darling or Sweet Crane Dancer,
so I call you by the name your mother gave you,
with a whisper to wake you gently.
Having no sweet song to rouse you from sleep,
I simply ask you to join me for another day.

-Larry Schug
Avon, MN



i could spend hours
listening to you talk;

with your words so sweet,
that roll so smooth
off that whiskey tongue,
and leave me drunk
every time.

but i wonder, how something
so sweet and so warm,
could make me feel
so sour and so cold,
the next day.

b.e.

Whiskey Tongue
-Brian Ellingboe
Robbinsdale, MN

Hospice Visitor

Woman parts the curtain and steps through.
Widowed lady: after burying two husbands,
she'll have parted such curtains many times.

Dido in polyester. "No stranger to sorrow,
I discovered how to reach the sorrowing."
She moves in where angels fear to tread.

Who better acquainted with that Lazarus
stench from the cistern of an open mouth,
the bedsores, the eternity between breaths?

Who so remembers her own flurried hands
trembling through a drawer for his papers,
as strangers stood patiently in the doorway?

Who—less lately walking the lonesome vale
nobody else can walk for you—could give
another weeping woman at bedside, the lay

of that subdued and twilit dell; say where
the uplands are that sunlight touches, where
frailty turns to strength, as the broken bone

is firmer for its healing, as the broken heart
learns compassion? No oncologist or EMT.
To bear a cross you need a carpenter's back.

-Russell Rowland
Meredith, NH



Mirror

-Yuxuan Wang

College of Saint Benedict '18

Sparrow Poem #1

Sparrows make me think of Chairman Mao, how something so tiny can bring a country down simply by its absence. I treasure the sparrows in my yard all year, since they're the only birds that don't leave me when winter comes.

I wonder if they know the reason I tolerate them chasing away the other finches goldfinches and weavers, the tiny speckled wrens because I admire their place in history, or because of their year-round fealty or if they even think of me at all. My spring and summer is spent

watching the little birds mate in chirps and flutters in the tree branches and lay claim to the birdhouses hanging from my trees, I cluck at them from the kitchen window, refill the feeders when they're empty, I think of all of the things Mao missed in his condemnation of sparrows of what it must have been like that first summer without them.

-Holly Day
Minneapolis, MN



Growing Still
-Grace Gnahn
College of Saint Benedict '18

Lucy

scientists have found a star
made entirely of diamond
fifty light years away:
the burnt-out core of a white dwarf
the most valuable engagement ring in existence
I wonder if in the future
we will mine the sun
for precious gems
and I stare up at the endless sea of the nighttime sky
and wonder what they will be
rubies from red giants
cat's eyes in *Leo*
a fortune in mystery
scattered through the cosmos

BPM 37093 is what they name the star
scientists lack creativity—
they must have used up all the
gods of Greece and Rome
perhaps they should turn to Egypt and Norway
instead of numbers and letters
I think *Sigrun* would be a good name
for a star of precious stone
or maybe *Amon-Ra*
the shining sun

they nickname the star “Lucy”
after the Beatles song
the influence of culture
dripping into the jewel studded cosmos
there is an asteroid named “3325 TARDIS”
and I laugh when I hear that
the power of stories is painted on the stars—
the constellations are spun from myths
and now we name the universe
not with Greek or Latin
or languages of the dead
but with fiction

-Steph Haeg
College of Saint Benedict ‘18

When My History is an Elective

*your land's omnipotent defiler**

told you your languages sounded
dirty on their tongues;
that your women (the women that
fed you with nothing but
harmonized melodies of hope
and spirit) were merely vessels
of reproduction; that your men
(your father, brothers, and sons)
were but cattle waiting
—no needing to be herded in and tamed.
you are forced into a void of pale faces
and white noise, closed doors and histories
of hyperboles, hiding in a dwelling of nothingness,
trapped in a land you never will call home.

-Sydney Robinson
College of Saint Benedict '17



Mate
-Sandeep Kumar Mishra
Churu, India

CHOICES

When it comes to choosing
from more than one pain,
tears emerge from secret places,
the belief in oneself is eroded
by the smallest differences.
They all seem to come from
the same place, carrying similar
lonelinesses. The mind and heart
suffer attacks of an elaborate grief
that is beyond all choosing,
all available rules of choice
and exclusion. The tears
come forth again, against
your wish, even as you feel
weak and alone, while the world
moves on its ancient road
of forgetting all that is close
to you, including those
much-diffused tears of a while ago.
Alien eyes suspect the story behind
your residual tears, even as you
turn away, remember—
more than ever before—your
own stories of loss and insult,
how you were excluded in story
after story by someone else's
grief over choices
and the consequent pain of loss.

-Bibhu Padhi
Odisha, India

Workers

This straight-back wooden chair,
carved from oak
by calloused hands of New Mexican leather,
ornate in its simplicity,
is an entity with a job to do,
un obrero común.
perfectly doing the work
for which it was created.
When the wall clock chimes the hour—
twelve little songs
carried by twelve solo voices into cielo azul,
I swallow the last sip of tea
from a cup molded from earth
by skilled hands, made of the same mud,
prepare for another day of work.
I carry my burdens,
sing my songs,
hold goodness within
not much different, it seems,
than a common wooden chair,
the bells of a working clock,
an ordinary vessel of clay.

-Larry Schug
Avon, MN



Road to Parque | Quetzaltenango, Guatemala - Parque Central is a resting space for young and old, residents and tourists, pigeons and street dogs. Mangoes, bubble machines, and handmade jewelry are sold beside the couples kissing on the benches and the activists shouting their truth. Some nights we even found ourselves walking along candlelit processions and floats of Jesus Cristo raised on the backs of congregations. However, Saturday mornings were much more tranquilo. At 6:30, breakfast would be served to anyone who needed a meal. While watching the street sweepers clean up the remains of Friday night, a few students and I would join our host families in sharing conversation and finding connection with strangers. These mornings permitted a stillness in the chaos of a foreign land and a sacred space to create a strengthened community. I ended up walking down this street countless times. However, my favorite moments were always following these men and their dog...never knowing where they were coming from, but knowing that we were all headed to the same place to be together.”

-Hannah Kosel
College of Saint Benedict '18

This House

The trees grow close to the old house, reach out with blossom-stippled limbs as if trying to remember. There are bodies buried beneath the layers of stucco and drywall, a skeleton built up of skeletons stolen from a forest long ago.

If you plant a tree limb in the dirt and care for it, feed it, water it protect it from wind and errant children's toys, it will put out tiny roots and then bigger ones, and then one day, it will become a tree.

I'd like to image that someday, when we are long gone, and this house has been reduced to its original pine-timber frame, those rough-hewn boards will put out tiny roots, too, find some way back into the soil.

-Holly Day
Minneapolis, MN

Elegy for Stan

1

Your eyes, for that moment
when with effort you lifted your head

from the pocket of sweat it had made
in pillow

and turned them toward my bent
down face,

your eyes were the eyes of a bull
who cocks its horns

at the cape of a matador,
as if it knows it is merely a man

in an elaborate costume
who invites and waits and turns.

2

They were the eyes
of our father, perhaps in anger,

drunkenness or in fear--all
of which were the same, though not.

His brown eyes yours,
and so I saw him one more time.

3

Fear I think in his and yours
before you'd charged the red cape.

Or more of a questioning: Why?
And I bent to your ear

and whispered you'd been a good
brother and I loved you.

4

Did I say I forgive you? I think I
did before I'd said the rest.

It was the more important,
though you may not have understood

what for. But I did then, as do I now
and I recall it all again.

5

Death was a matador
in morphine induced tights and vest

and pillbox-like hat from the Forties
who invites, waits and turns.

Bewildered--wild-eyed,
you charged the tousled cape bravely.

You gored the matador.

-Chet Corey
Bloomington, MN

Black Widow™ Lipstick

Neutral tint, unbouqueted

For jolly nights.

(Grinning chump at dinner table.)

Blended with venom,

99.9% pledged

Wedlock-repelling trait.

(A slack-phosphorescent lamp.)

Before swerving your vital principles,

Close in on fangs, tenderly growl

Into the nerve of monogamy.

-Christopher Barnes
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, UK



Blue
-Bridget Davis
College of Saint Benedict '18

Questions Without Answers

They say that the bullies grow up
But do they remember
The power they held?
The way the words formed us
Chiseling away at our self esteems
The way they would chase us
Calling us names
The way we would cry
And the teachers would tell us
To grow thicker skins
Do they remember how they were punished
By visits to kindly principals
Who asked them if they would do it again
And gave them a treat when they said no
And we were forced to say
“I forgive you”
Every
Single
Time
Do the bullies know they haunt us
That their names are now tainted
How their words were made of stones
Do they know they were bullies?
Or are they the heroes
In the sagas of their childhoods?
What role do we play,
The crying, odd children
With wrong hair, wrong skin,
Wrong smiles, wrong love,

In the tales they spin for their own children?
And will they remember
When their child comes home crying
Will they remember us?
Or will they fight bullying
And never think
Of the consequences of their own actions.
They say that bullies grow up.
I just want to know
If they remember.

-Steph Haeg
College of Saint Benedict '18

FROST SCRATCHES

Through the swamp cooler vents
tiny sounds like frost's fingers
scratch beneath the cover
to rip it from its tie downs
and enter boldly cold
like a busted-down door
while dog barks next door
senses the intrusion
and tries to warn in watchdog mode
until an investigation searches
out windows and listens beneath
the closed vents of the cooler
and silence prickles through air
like water slowly freezing
inward from its shores.

-Diane Webster
Delta, CO



One Step Back, Two Steps Forward
-Grace Gnahn
College of Saint Benedict '18

WALLS KEEP IN/OUT

Without cracks the wall
thwarts intrusion
like raindrops beading
over a car's oil leak
thick on parking lot pavement
repelling without
as from within...
like a snow-globe village
with figures
cupping hands around eyes
to savor sights
reflected on the outside.

-Diane Webster
Delta, CO

The Forest

I'll plant my roots here in the forest's heart
At sunset and sing and sing until my
Voice gives out, watching for signs in the dark
Of storms that roll in from the western sky
I'll let my tears fall hot against cold rain,
Let myself feel the solitude, alone
And let the water wash away the pain.
I'll hear the thunder of the past atone.
When morning's light rises above the hill,
I'll bask in gold light like morning glories
And rise from the ashes of dreams that fill
My heart no more, but now are just stories.
I'll leave my tears behind in that forest
And whisper my woes to the trees that I trust.

-Maggie Pomerence
College of Saint Benedict '20



Traces of History
-Sandeep Kumar Mishra
Churu, India

Even so it's the darkness, loosened
circling down as the only meal
you dead can swallow –a single gulp

and you are nourished the way the drowned
still cling to a rope that's not yet an arm
–miners learn this, they train

where there are corners, taught to feel
for an opening in the rock out all alone
that will become the night after night

–you have a chance! your shadow
is already near the surface, draining this mountain
for its ashes once they're finished , eat

–everything here is evening and you
sinking on and on into the Earth
more than emptiness and fingertips.

-Simon Perchik
East Hampton, NY

Catherine

It was the screaming
took him whole,
that second day,
Abraham, my godly man,
his faith shot all to pieces...

The wounded were strung
across the wheat field.
As death crept near,
the human cries grew bestial,
the horses' cries near human.

On the third day we screamed together
through the cannons dueling for the earth.
But he continued after, screaming
through silence as I held him,
screaming at the empty air.

The Fourth was the worst.
All day he watched them bury
the Rebels in wide trenches, some hands
and eyes still uncovered in the moon,
while the still living begged for death.

After they took him, I wrote
for compensation:
"32 acres grass, 27 acres wheat,
16 dead horses. My husband, Abraham
Troastle, taken to an asylum."

I can still hear him screaming.

-Sean Lause
Bluffton, OH



My Shadow
-Sandeep Kumar Mishra
Churu, India

AFTER MUCH PAIN

“After great pain, a formal feeling comes”
Emily Dickinson

After much pain, a feeling alone is there—
alien, far from all that you have known
from books and pictures, scientists’
discoveries, wisdom’s commentaries.

The mind finally feels distant, the body
is drawn away from its basic functions, feels
too amply satisfied to remember itself
or other bodies, other worlds, not its own.

Body and mind are entwined by a thread of
compassion for the heart’s much-dislocated
spaces and years, happenings of hopes and tears
that could never be what they were meant to be,

while the passive earth looks on and withdraws
into itself, as if it was thinking of something
gone wrong somewhere in the wild universe—
something it had never witnessed or understood.

The time is late morning now, and there are
invitations from near and faraway places, each to be
attended to, taken notice of, each to be believed
as something where no pain could ever be, no tears.

Every small thing is overly busy recollecting itself
in the very middle of a whirlpool of disbelief, even as
the same feeling quietly relaxes, recalls each pain and
insult, each piece of advice, each earlier body.



Fairies Under Water
-Yuxuan Wang
College of Saint Benedict '18

Ugly

Ugly is the thing that
presents your sorrows in a row,
that thunders through the clouds
and makes the bright a dark.

Ugly cannot toe the line
or quiet the ungrateful soul,
but it leaps across with forceful nature
and shrieks the complaints aloud.

Ugly bears the right of arms
to sink the confidence ship
and flounders every living soul
that dares to go amiss.

Ugly will take the form of any
person, place, or thing
and tear the normal inside out
to beat the frame anew.

-Sarah Neve
College of Saint Benedict '21

“I love you too”

He mumbled inaudibly as he rolled away from her
The right side of the bed left cold,
Prickling goosebumps on sweaty skin
Cotton sheets disguising nakedness, flushed embarrassment
She was alone,
Inside and out

“I love you too”

Her best friend giggled lovingly,
Wiping drunk tears and snot
From numb cheeks,
Swaying to music that
Wasn't even playing

“I love you too”

The last thing Grandma said,
Before the light dimmed behind her eyes.
An arrangement of skin and bones,
Laid out artfully on the hospital bed
A hollow whistle coming from empty lungs,
The sound of death

“I love you too”

She said to the mirror, but didn't believe it
With grayed blurry vision, black veiny cheeks
A scattering of scratches burned hot
On the left side of her chest,
Where it felt like she was dying

“I love you too”

-Mollie Girgen
College of Saint Benedict '18



Sunlit

-Bridget Davis

College of Saint Benedict '18

Angels

Angels are no stranger than the whiskered face of a sea otter, eyes large and warm. Or the frost-white face of a walrus, tusks like ice sickles sagging down the eaves of rooflines. Angels are as close as Mt. Everest to cloud. As close to Mt. Fuji as a Sumi-e master's brushstroke. As close as ink on the horsehair bristle of his brush. Closer than windowpane to windowlight--that morning hour's first light looking in on our naked selves with sea otter eyes--with that frost-white walrus face of God up against window glass look! And so how is it that we should arise and go, knowing that our eyes are the windows that angels are looking into and that their gaze is the gaze of love and light.

-Chet Corey
Bloomington, MN

Confederacy of Dunces #8

My sister, Sally, fell in love with her minister. She would invite him to lunch at expensive restaurants and pick up the tab. She told him her innermost secrets, as one would do with a minister skilled in pastoral counseling, or a sensitive lover. During one luncheon she was revealing herself, making herself spiritually naked, turning herself inside out, and her pastor leaned over the table. On the tines of his fork was an escargot. He said, *You know, I only listen to about twenty percent of what you tell me.*

Sally was shocked. She felt destroyed. How could he be so cruel? She ran from the restaurant, left him with the bill. But in the subway she wondered what he was really saying. Maybe what he meant was that he was separating the wheat from the chaff, that he was only attending to the most essential parts of her.

She got off the train, went upstairs and down again, reversed the direction of her travel. She liked the fact that no one around her in the car knew of her reversal. No one knew even one percent of her. She was estranged from every other human being, except her pastor, who had discerned the most important part of her, disregarded the unimportant, the trivial, and accepted her for who she was.

She entered the restaurant, expecting him to be gone, but he was seated exactly as she had left him. He was still sipping white wine. On the table was a fresh bottle. He was a man of God, immune to anger, immune to misunderstanding. God had granted him immunity. She was not immune to anything, not anger, not food or plant allergies.

No wonder he only listened to twenty percent of what she said. To listen to more would encumber him, would drown him in wheat dust.

I had my own relationship problems, also related to a train. I got fat again to get some time off from my girlfriend. She's doesn't like me when I'm chubby. *I'm not a chubby-chaser*, she tells me, her voice lean with contempt. *Call me when you're....* she doesn't know how to

finish the sentence. It would be a lot easier if I simply waved a Twinkie and she understood my sign language and went away for a while, leaving me to enjoy the peace and quiet I crave.

This time it's different. I'm on a train near Spuyten Duyvil, and I feel it. I know we're moving way too fast. I've been on this train before and we've never moved this fast. I know there's a curve ahead. I'm glad I'm reading a used paperback, not an expensive tablet. I put the book up to my forehead, four thick inches of swollen pulp, as the car leaves the tracks. It's all the protection I have against the hard, metallic world.

It's the eighth time I'm reading *A Confederacy of Dunces*. The spine is duct taped, the pages grimy. As we lurch toward the river, I wish that John Kennedy Toole were still alive. I wish he had not taken his life in a car parked along the New Jersey Turnpike. I see my death coming. I've never created anything worth dying for, or living for. I'm just going through the motions.

I'm in a hospital bed. I'm not badly injured, but after the crash I temporarily lost the power to speak, so it seemed to the medical staff that I was worse off than I really was. My girlfriend hears about the crash. Her concern about me getting fat vanishes. She comes into the hospital room in tears. She wants me back. She doesn't care if I weigh 300 pounds. She doesn't care if I'm as fat as the Dunce in *Confederacy of Dunces*. She asks me how she could be so stupid. She tells me that people have died, people are in the ICU, that we have to love and appreciate each other, we have to take care of each other, that love is all we need. She's been reduced to platitudes by the second-hand drama of my Bronx tragedy.

I smile weakly. She attributes my weakness to the crash. She strokes my forehead. She brings her chair close and spoons vanilla ice cream into my mouth.

-Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois
Edgewater, CO

The Wagner-Berger Prize for Excellence in Creative Writing

In 1987, Patricia and Leonard Porcello endowed this prize to honor Patricia's parents, Louis and Mary Wagner-Berger, and to support college women who are interested in writing short stories and novels. It is designed to encourage and reward excellence in creative writing at the College of Saint Benedict.

The Wagner-Berger Prize for fiction is the first scholarship of its kind at the College of Saint Benedict. It is a scholarship awarded annually to the CSB student who submits the most original, previously unpublished short story. All submissions are judged by a committee of English Department members, and the winner receives an award of \$1,000. Studio One is honored to publish this year's winning piece by CSB senior Ryan McCanna.

Quiet Johnny

The black walnut trees on Mr. Josiah's farm stood misshapen, branches sagging with dark, blotchy fruit, twisting down, down towards the yellowed grass. Husk flies crawled over the rotting fruit.

The chicken coop squatted between the trees and the farmer's house, white paint peeling away from its own stench. The coop had a door for people on the one side facing the house, and a door to the brooding hatch on the orchard side, making it perfect for a boy to nab a chicken. Or to hide. Henry opened the door to the brooding hatch and wriggled in first. He swatted at the flies around his head, waiting as Silas, Milton, and Leroy followed. They made double-sure the coast was clear. They were so busy being secret they didn't notice three new holes ripped through the wooden planks along the wall, bullet-sized, splintery, and fresh.

They were on the lookout for Mr. Josiah and his rifle because he'd sure shoot any thief in the chicken coop, boy or fox. A fox was good meat this year, what with the harvest being killed by that midsummer frost, and a boy, well, a boy was one less empty belly.

They were also on the lookout for his pretty little girl, Missy, who liked to chase squirrels up the trees and race the songbirds that flew into her yard. Henry liked to watch her run and run, always smiling. But Missy and Mr. Josiah weren't around. Henry figured they must have gone into town.

Inside the coop, the four boys noticed that Old Red was perched on the highest beam. He was usually a devil bird that chased them around the yard in the spring and gave them a good laugh. Now, Old Red was frozen up there. He stared at the four boys, keeping his floppy red crown and long black tail perfectly still. Watching them. Measuring them.

Henry, skinny and knobby like an apple core and dressed in green, sneered at the king. "We ain't gonna steal your ladies," he said with his chin. "We's just gonna steal all the eggs! This one and this one and this one and all these going in my belly!"

Silas was dressed in red and smiled at everything Henry said.

Carrying today's stick, he pointed it at the rooster's eyes, and then drew a line in the air following the rooster's gaze. To his surprise, Old Red was looking past them, into the far corner of the shack where the wooden planks didn't quite meet and the sunlight cut the floor into golden slices, thin as Missy's hair. Quiet Johnny's corner. Where Mr. Josiah's odd son, Quiet Johnny would sit all day, flattening the hay with his wide bottom. Petting anything fluffy and slow enough to get caught. Kittens, chicks, squirrels. He had big shoulders but Quiet Johnny's hands were the quickest.

He never told his father about the boys in the chicken coop, even though Mr. Josiah needed money from selling the eggs. Needed it badly. With their mother dead from influenza last winter, every penny was for food or whiskey. When there was more whiskey in the house than food, Quiet Johnny made sure Missy ate before him, but that was about all the good he could do. Quiet Johnny got confused and angry sometimes, especially when he was alone, or when he was with his father which was a lot like being alone. Mr. Josiah put Johnny in the coop when the boy got too odd or confused or angry.

But Quiet Johnny wasn't there.

"Say Milton!" Silas leaned on his stick. "Where's Quiet Johnny?"

"No idea," Milton said. Milton put Ladybird the chicken back in her cubby. He found one egg today, and he tried to be careful as he put it in his pocket, but the shell was so soft his thumb pushed through, and the yolk ran out over his fingers. He winced imagining what his mother would do when he came back, again, with empty hands. Mr. Josiah almost sold Ladybird to Milton's mother once, but she was too skinny. Milton sure would've liked the meat today, though, even just a few bites. He wiped his hands on his trousers and turned back to the other boys. "Any of you check if he's stuck up the willow tree or something?"

Henry threw a rock at Old Red but missed horribly. "We don't climb the willow tree anymore, that's where the girls play. What about the log pile?"

Milton stood up. "They burned that, on Saturday." Milton

brushed his hands on the chest of his thin, black hand-me-down wool coat that he couldn't move too good in anymore, on account he had grown another inch since May.

"How long Quiet Johnny been gone?" Henry asked them. He was looking through the gaps in the wooden planks on the wall, searching for pretty Missy in her usual spots. "When's the last you seen him?"

"Not since before sundown," Milton said. "He didn't come out to dig for fish bones in Desert Creek last night."

"We'd better find that dumb billy goat before he crack his head open again," Leroy said.

"I think we better ask his Pa," Silas said, standing in Quiet Johnny's corner, his back turned to the rooster and the boys.

"Well, what is it now?" Leroy asked, walking over with his hands on his belt "buckle" which was really just a knot of rope but it reminded him to push his chest out and make his shoulders look as big as they could. Leroy's clothes were made from burlap, scratchy and pale.

"Let's have a see," Henry shoved past Leroy and peered around Silas' shoulder.

Silas was standing there with his head heavy on his neck like a grown man. He pointed his stick and moved a few pieces of hay. He'd found four little colorful mounds, four little bodies there, no bigger than his hand.

"Well them's just birds the barn cat was munchin on!" Henry shook his head. "What we starin at bird bodies for?"

"It wasn't no cat," Milton said. "Look, no feathers pulled out. Just the beaks. One by one, just the beak."

"What kind of cat eats bird beak?" Leroy asked.

The three boys rolled their eyes. "Now why you gotta go and ask dumb questions, Little Leroy?" Henry said. "Milton just said it wasn't no cat."

Leroy wasn't the littlest there, but he was smaller than his all his brothers, and the other boys never let him forget it. Leroy didn't care much for being called "little" by Henry, who was actually the

littlest and also the loudest. He curled up his nose. "I ain't the dumb one, Quiet Johnny's the dumb one, he's the one pulled off their beaks! Now why did he go and do a thing like that?"

"Yellow feathers, that there's a meadowlark," Silas said, pointing and squinting. "And that one's a yellow finch, that's a yellow warbler. This one might be yellow-belly wren..."

"Songbirds," Henry said. He didn't move. The other three looked at him. He wasn't really looking at anything. "Fast. Faster than bunnies and mice and squirrels all together."

Leroy leaned towards Henry and whispered "Did you know Johnny could catch song birdies?" but everyone could hear him.

Henry looked at Silas.

"No," Silas said. Silas gave the little birds a quick turn over, thinking. Four little birds, and Quiet Johnny had two big hands. How did Quiet Johnny catch such little things without bending a feather? Why did he want to catch songbirds? Why'd he kill them?

"Birds ain't things he likes to cuddle with," Leroy said, echoing Silas' thoughts. "And why'd he come to the coop to finish em off in front of the other birds?"

Old Red started crowing to his girls.

Henry crawled out the secret hatch they came in, and with that they were off to check Quiet Johnny's hidey holes. Leroy carried the little bird bodies in his big pockets. He wanted to ask Quiet Johnny how he did it. Henry wanted to try and catch Missy, if he could, to ask her where her brother was, ask her about her day, if she liked fish bone necklaces and other things girls wanted to be asked.

Quiet Johnny wasn't near the old log pile, because that was gone. He wasn't in the dark corner of the hay loft with the barn cats, or behind the shed where his father hung the chickens upside down. They'd searched the farm end to end in under an hour. They'd found nothing. There was nothing left to do but ask Mr. Josiah, so they turned back to go to his house with tight eyes, tight fists.

Their thoughts were racing, and so were their words.

"Did he chase the birds or did he surprise 'em?" Milton asked.

Silas tapped his stick stylishly against the dirt like a cane. "He

must've stood still and caught them, fast as a bullet."

"People can't go as fast as bullets," Milton said.

"Guess he can."

Leroy turned to Henry. "I bet he made a trap, I bet he used his teeth." Henry said nothing.

They passed through the rest of the orchard in silence.

The house was there, leaning and creaking in the wind like a rocking chair. It was short and brown against the flat gray sky, with an unstained wraparound porch, and the planks didn't quite meet in the corners but there wasn't any sunlight left to try to fill the gaps.

Henry didn't wait for someone to be brave. He pushed Silas forward. Silas swallowed, climbed the lopsided porch steps, knocked on the rickety storm door, and quickly backed away to stand by Henry. Milton kept his eyes on the rifle lying on the porch swing, like a snake frozen in its sleep. They were not surprised when Mr. Josiah stumbled into the door and shouted at them to leave his goddamn private property.

"We're looking for Quiet Johnny, sir," Silas said. Mr. Josiah looked past him.

Leroy stepped up, hands out like a beggar holding the four little birds. "He went and did this, Mr. Josiah? We think."

Mr. Josiah scratched his head real hard. He growled and nearly dug the beard right off his cheeks.

"We just wanna talk to him. Just for a minute," Milton said, standing behind Leroy. Mr. Josiah sniffed into the back of his hand. His cheeks were wet.

The wind pushed hard on one side of the house and it let out a loud creak. The four boys didn't move. Mr. Josiah was in the doorway, Henry and Silas on the bottom step, and the brothers Milton and Leroy stood behind them.

The step creaked underneath Henry. He winced, because now he had to speak. "If Quiet Johnny's sick," Henry asked, "can his little sister come out and play? Can Missy play today?"

"If Quiet Johnny would talk, he'd say he wanted Missy to come out and play today," Leroy said. "Please, Mr. Josiah?"

Mr. Josiah snarled at Leroy. “Little boy Leroy, you besst be on your way, you git far away now, I don’t want you, any of you’s on my property!” His words slurred into the back of his fist. “Dirty mutts! And git those dirty things out of my face. I don’t want your bird fever!” He smacked Leroy’s hand and the birds had one last flight that ended with a bounce and a roll on the dry, packed dirt.

Silas turned to Henry and said into his ear “His words are swimmin’, we best be off.”

“Are you snickering at me? Boy, you best not be talkin smart at me. Think you’re shiny and smart. I will belt you!”

But Mr. Josiah didn’t go for his belt, he went for the rifle on the splintered porch swing.

Silas and Henry jumped back, careful not to look at the man. No one looked him in the eye. Silas kept his stick pointed towards the ground. “Okay then, thank you kindly, sir,” Silas said.

All the boys but Henry had enough sense to start walking away from the porch. “But,” Leroy whined quietly, “where is he? Why’d he do it?”

“Where’s Quiet Johnny, Mr. Josiah?” Henry asked without moving his feet. “And... where’s Missy?”

The boys froze.

Mr. Josiah’s chin sunk into his chest. His shoulders followed, curling down, and the rifle in his hand turned into nothing more than a walking stick. His shirt was dribbled on, whiskey stains on the front, but his shoulders... On his shoulders and all the way down his back was ruddy, brown, dried blood. It had dripped slowly, slowly.

Mr. Josiah leaned his forehead into the porch railing. “I chased him...chased him down, I put that dog down...” He shook his head. The boys listened closely. “She had a feather in her...hair. He made a game. His game...his damned game, she hollered and his big damn hands couldn’t...and he... she was so pretty...You bet your asses I chased him down and...she was all I—all gone, everything! I had to. He wa’n’t *right*. Ran like hell, fast. Grabbing at the trees. Thought he could hide in the...chickens...I got him. Damned thing wailed and moaned, holding those damn—” he pointed at the little dead birds.

Then he pointed back into the orchard with his rifle. He took a few quick breaths and spat, “He wa’n’t *right*.”

The boys ran off in the direction Mr. Josiah pointed, back through the orchard, where they hadn’t wanted to go. Leroy took a few extra seconds to lean down, grab the little bodies and put them back in his pockets. He needed to ask Quiet Johnny why he did it. How he did it. If Quiet Johnny could catch a pretty bird like that, he could do anything. He might not be such a dummy, and if Johnny wasn’t a dummy...

The boys dashed through the low-hanging branches until they reached the river and Silas dug in his heels and hollered for everyone to wait. He pointed his stick at the house and drew a line in the air to make sure they were in the right spot. Satisfied, he looked around the river bank and threw his stick aimlessly.

It landed on a pile of freshly turned dirt under the bare branches of the willow tree. The pile of dirt was shallow and small.

On an unspoken signal, they all decided the same thing. They rushed over and started digging. Their hands were spades. Henry dug like a badger, throwing dirt back and back. Leroy scratched and pulled at the dirt with curled fingers. They were rabid, and they did not stop to think. Their thoughts were so big their heads would burst if they stopped now. Old Red sang a long way off, but no one payed him any mind.

They dug until their sleeves were covered in ruddy stains. That’s when the first blow flies started crawling out. Henry screamed when one crawled up his wrist and he took to shaking his arms like mad. But it was a small swarm, and it didn’t scare Leroy. He dug further down until he hit wood. Leroy wiped all the dirt and worms away.

Silas and Milton were able to drag the little wooden box up and out of the hole but no further. Silas’ hands rested on his red knees. Henry sat next to him and hugged his own elbows.

It was Leroy who finally reached over and gently pried open the lid. Henry stooped over Silas’ shoulder. Milton leaned over Leroy’s.

It was dead, it was very dead and it smelled something awful, but it was pretty. It was pretty little Missy, not Quiet Johnny. Pretty up until her nose and her mouth. Her nose was badly broken and the little bone above her buck tooth smile was caved in. Her hair was still blonde and clean, but the front of her dress was all bloody. Milton closed the lid.

“Missy? Pretty pretty little Missy?” Henry’s lip quivered. “I don’t... Did Mister—?”

Leroy plucked one yellow feather for keeps before tucking the songbirds in there with her, and Milton quickly pushed and pushed the box back into the hole. Leroy silently gave the feather to Henry.

Milton glared at the feather, which was prettier than Old Red’s tail feathers. Why should Henry be the only one to get a feather? It was a very pretty feather. He prayed the gift would make Henry quit his belly aching. He didn’t. Henry started crying.

“Don’t,” Milton said. “Don’t start with that—”

“But Quiet Johnny! Where’s Quiet Johnny?”

Silas pointed his finger at another big fat blow fly crawling on the ground. He kept his finger pointed directly at it as it lifted its wings and buzzed right by Milton’s head and kept flying, until it joined the blow fly army that was swarming over a kill. The brittle, black, savage things feasted on something about twenty feet away, by the dried-out part of Desert Creek that slithered though Mr. Josiah’s property.

Leroy was not afraid. His burlap shirt and pants were thick enough that he did not feel the little legs pricking his arms. He began his approach, leaving the other boys huddled under the willow tree.

“No,” Henry wailed. “No, no, no, no...” Silas held Henry’s head against his shoulder.

“What is it?” Milton called. “Is it him?”

Leroy stood, too little to stand over his brothers but tall enough to look down on the body by the bank of the dried-up creek. Leroy looked back at his friends. He lifted his finger and put it in the middle of his forehead. “Bullet through the brain pan,” Leroy said.

“Johnny! Johnny!” Henry started to wail. Silas patted Henry’s forehead.

“No, no, he loved Missy, he wouldn’t—” But Milton couldn’t say that because he didn’t know all Johnny couldn’t do. Johnny could catch songbirds without bending a feather, but he couldn’t say his own name. Milton couldn’t look at his brother who was staring at the grave, or Henry, who was crying on Silas’ shoulder.

When Henry’s tears ran out, they tried to move the body but they’d lived off roots and yokes sucked out of small brown eggs. They didn’t have the strength. Instead, they sat between the tree and the creek, keeping watch until the sun set and a cold rain started to fall. It ran right off the dirt and chased the blow flies away, but couldn’t quite carry off the body. Far off, Old Red sang without seeing the sun because he was a devil bird.

Finally, when the rain almost blinded them, and their teeth chattered so hard they couldn’t talk, they turned to home.

Milton and Leroy couldn’t meet eyes at the dinner table, where their mother had stolen and slaughtered Old Ladybird for supper. The boys slept in the same bed, far apart.

Silas took Henry to his house without bothering to tell Henry’s folks because Henry often spent the night when they played for too long, and besides, Henry lived on the other side of town. Silas’ house also usually had food. Seeing them all wet from the rain, Silas’ mother ladled a bit of hot broth for them. Silas tried to tug on her sleeve and ask her why people had to die, and if Johnny went to heaven, and when Silas died would she bury him by the willow tree or leave him out on the dirt for the blow flies, but soon Henry and Silas didn’t talk because their mouths were full.

Henry was sad he’d never look through the planks of the chicken coop and see pretty Missy smile and run with the birds. He was sad that Johnny would never tell how he caught the birds, but even if he was alive he probably wouldn’t say it anyway. That made Henry sad in a different way. Henry fell asleep in Silas’ narrow bed near the fireplace, holding a bright yellow feather which he bent in his sleep.

-Ryan McCanna
College of Saint Benedict ‘18

Contributors

Christopher Barnes's first collection *Lovebites* is published by Chanticleer. Each year he reads at Poetry Scotland's Callender Poetry Weekend. He also writes art criticism which has been published in Peel and Combustus magazines.

Chet Corey was born and raised in Minneapolis. Chet Corey's poems have appeared in literary and religious journals since the mid-1960s, including *Benedictines Magazine*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Louisville Review*, *National Catholic Reporter*, *Review for Religious*, *South Dakota Review*, and *Windhover* (U. of Mary-Hardin Baylor). Most recently poems have appeared in or are forthcoming in *Coe Review*, *Right Hand Pointing* and *Stoneboat*. Chet and his wife Kathy live alongside Bush Lake in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Bridget Davis is a senior from Andover, Minnesota pursuing a BA in English and a BA in art at the College of Saint Benedict. She is also an artist who works in a variety of media, as well as an aspiring writer.

Holly Day has taught writing classes at the Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, since 2000. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Big Muddy*, *The Cape Rock*, *New Ohio Review*, and *Gargoyle*, and her published books include *Walking Twin Cities*, *Music Theory for Dummies*, *Ugly Girl*, and *The Yellow Dot of a Daisy*. She has been a featured presenter at Write On, Door County (WI), North Coast Redwoods Writers' Conference (CA), and the Spirit Lake Poetry Series (MN). Her newest poetry collections, *A Perfect Day for Semaphore* (Finishing Line Press) and *I'm in a Place Where Reason Went Missing* (Main Street Rag Publishing Co.) will be out mid-2018.

Richard Dinges, Jr. has an MA in literary studies from University of Iowa, and manages information security risk at an insurance company. *Gravel Magazine*, *Hurricane Review*, *Neologism Poetry Journal*, *Avatar Review*, and *Pennine Ink* most recently accepted his poems for their publications.

Brian Keith Ellingboe - Just the average 20 something artist from Minneapolis, Minnesota, hoping to turn pain into beauty through his work.

Grace Gnahn is a senior at CSB/SJU and will be graduating in May of 2018 with a bachelor's degree in communication. She currently has a full time position as an Assistant House Supervisor of a group home for J and J Holmes. Aside from work and academics, she lives a life that is filled with music and art. Grace enjoys traveling around our country to attend music & art festivals. Photography is currently her biggest passion and she plans to make this a bigger part of her life after graduating.

Stephanie Haeg is a senior history and creative writing major at the College of St. Benedict from Sauk Centre, MN.

Paul Ilechko is the author of the chapbook "Bartok in Winter" (Flutter Press, 2018). His work has appeared in a variety of journals, including *Stickman Review*, *Mocking Heart Review*, *Gravel*, *Dash*, *Slag Review*, *Oberon*, *Dime Show Review*, *Saint Katherine Review* and *Autumn Sky Poetry Daily*. He lives in Lambertville, NJ, with his girlfriend and a cat.

Hannah Kosel is a 2018 graduate of the College of Saint Benedict. One of Hannah's greatest experiences as a student was living in Guatemala for a semester. However, with every exciting experience came an equally challenging experience. With an interest in photography and storytelling, Hannah uses photos from her time

abroad to portray the most honest picture of the realities of immersing oneself in an entirely new culture. Building upon her studies of public health, Hannah will continue to engage with issues of homelessness and food justice after graduation and is eager to continue incorporating photography into this work!

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois has had over fourteen-hundred of his poems and fictions appear in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. He has been nominated for numerous prizes, and was awarded the 2017 Booranga Writers' Centre (Australia) Prize for Fiction. His novel, *Two-Headed Dog*, based on his work as a clinical psychologist in a state hospital, is available for [Kindle](#) and [Nook](#), or as a [print edition](#). To read more of his work, Google Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois. He lives in Denver, Colorado, USA.

Sean Lause is a professor of English at Rhodes State College in Lima, Ohio. His poems have appeared in *The Minnesota Review*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *The Pedestal*, *Atlanta Review*, *Sanskrit*, *Illuminations* and *Poetry International*. He has published two books of poetry, *Bestiary of Souls* (FutureCycle Press, 2013) and the upcoming *Wakeful Fathers and Dreaming Sons* (Orchard Street Press).

Janet McCann's work has been published in *Kansas Quarterly*, *Parnassus*, *Nimrod*, *Sou'wester*, *America*, *Christian Century*, *Christianity and Literature*, *New York Quarterly*, *Tendrill*, and others. A 1989 NEA Creative Writing Fellowship winner, she taught at Texas A & M University from 1969-2016, is now Professor Emerita. Most recent poetry collection: *The Crone at the Casino* (Lamar University Press, 2014).

Ryan McCanna is a senior English and Theater double major and Hispanic Studies minor. She hails from St. Louis Park, Minnesota where her teachers and family encouraged her to pursue writing. In particular, the wonderful Mrs. Stephens, Mrs. Baldwin, Mr. Wilkes, Sra. Anderson and the Richardson family. She studied abroad in Viña del Mar, Chile during her first semester junior year and her second semester she wrote this story in Professor Callahan's Creative Writing class. She'd like to thank her family and professors Callahan, Marston, Harkins, Opitz, and theater professor Johnston for their encouragement and honest feedback throughout her college career.

Sandeep Kumar Mishra is a writer, poet, artist and lecturer in English Literature. He is the art instructor at Kishlaya Outsider Art Academy. He has edited a collection of poems by various poets - *Pearls* (2002) and written a professional guidebook -*How to be* (2016) and a collection of poems and art-*Feel My Heart* (2016).

Sarah Neve grew up in the small town of Minnetrista, Minnesota, with her three younger brothers. She currently attends the College of St. Benedict as a first year and is majoring in Creative Writing with a Music minor. She plans to become an author in the future through novels and possibly poetry. Sarah's hobbies include drawing and slowly transitioning to a sustainable and environmentally-friendly lifestyle.

Bibhu Padhi - A Pushcart Prize nominee, Bibhu Padhi has published eleven books of poems. His poems have appeared in distinguished magazines and anthologies throughout the English-speaking world. In USA they have been published, among others, in *The Atlantic Review*, *The American Scholar*, *Colorado Review*, *Commonweal*, *Confrontation*, *New Letters*, *Poet Lore*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry*, *Southwest Review*, *Tulane Review* and *TriQuarterly*. He lives with his family in Bhubaneswar, India.

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *Forge*, *Poetry*, *Osiris*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *The Osiris Poems* published by box of chalk, 2017. For more information, including free e-books, his essay titled “Magic, Illusion and Other Realities” please visit his website at www.simonperchik.com.

Maggie Pomeranke is gender non-binary double major in French and English, with a Creative Writing concentration from New Berlin, Wisconsin. They have been writing since they were very young, but really immersed themselves in the art during the last part of their high school career. They enjoy playing flute and piccolo, reading and listening to music as well as being a part of the swim and dive team at Saint Ben’s. Maggie enjoys writing many different genres as well as poetry and is a member of Pseudonym, and often shares their writing there.

Sydney-Elizabeth Robinson is a rising poet from Las Vegas, Nevada. She is a third year, English major at the College of Saint Benedict. Her creative works focus on minority identity, women’s empowerment, and LGBTQ+ issues. You can read more of her work at <https://srxbinson.wixsite.com/sydd>.

Russell Rowland, a New Hampshire poet, has appeared in many small journals. A Best of the Net nominee and seven-time Pushcart Prize nominee, he is a winner of Old Red Kimono’s Paris Lake Poetry Contest, and twice winner of the Plainsongs Award and of Descant’s Baskerville Publishers Poetry Prize. Chapbooks “Train of All Cabooses” and “Mountain Blue” are available from Finishing Line Press.

Davina Schaetz is a CSB 2012 alumna and a Business Systems Consultant in the Enterprise Information Technology division at Wells Fargo, who is enthralled with capturing the aesthetics of nature in its grandeur. She utilizes her proficiency in creating

innovative technological solutions for the transferability of dynamizing the imagination. For instance, repurposing known landscapes by capturing vantage points through new, visionary perspectives for all to enjoy. Davina resides in the Minneapolis, Minnesota area driven by her resolution to translate dreams fostered by her lifetime collection of books into tangible, real life adventures.

Larry Schug is retired from a life of various kinds of physical labor, including 34 years as Groundskeeper and Recycling coordinator at the College of St. Benedict. He currently volunteers as a tutor in the CSB/SJU Writing Centers and in various ways at Outdoor U. at St. John's. He's published eight books of poems, the most recent being *A Blanket of Raven Feathers* with North Star Press.

Yuxuan Wang - "Mirror": This picture was taken on the Lofoten Islands in Norway. It was picturesque, the beauty of these islands was simple, pure and breathtaking. It was hard to describe with words, so I chose to capture it with my camera. Five minutes after I took this picture, a boat came across on the little river, and the water surface was never a perfect mirror for the sky and mountain again. "Fairies Under Water": These jellyfish in the picture are moon jellyfish from Aquarium of the Bay in San Francisco. The colorful lights in the water made the tank look like a place that only appeared in dreams. When the jellyfish swam up and down along with the water wave, like the fairies who lived in the wonderland.

Diane Webster grew up in Eastern Oregon before she moved to Colorado. She enjoys drives in the mountains to view all the wildlife and scenery and takes amateur photographs. Writing poetry provides a creative outlet exciting in images and phrases Diane thrives in. Her work has appeared in *The Hurricane Review*, *Eunoia Review*, *Illya's Honey*, and other literary magazines.

Submission Guidelines

Submission Address

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Deadline: January 31 for spring publication. Reading and judging period is between late November and February. Results will be sent by May.

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