



Winter 2008

## The Forum: Winter 2008

Jessica Mongeon  
*University of North Dakota*

Noah Root  
*University of North Dakota*

Hannah Halvorson  
*University of North Dakota*

Jan Sher  
*University of North Dakota*

Liza Jones  
*University of North Dakota*

*See next page for additional authors*

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**Authors**

Jessica Mongeon, Noah Root, Hannah Halvorson, Jan Sher, Liza Jones, Erin Barta, Charles McCrary, Alex Oswald, Josh Borby, and Philip Ragan

# the Forum

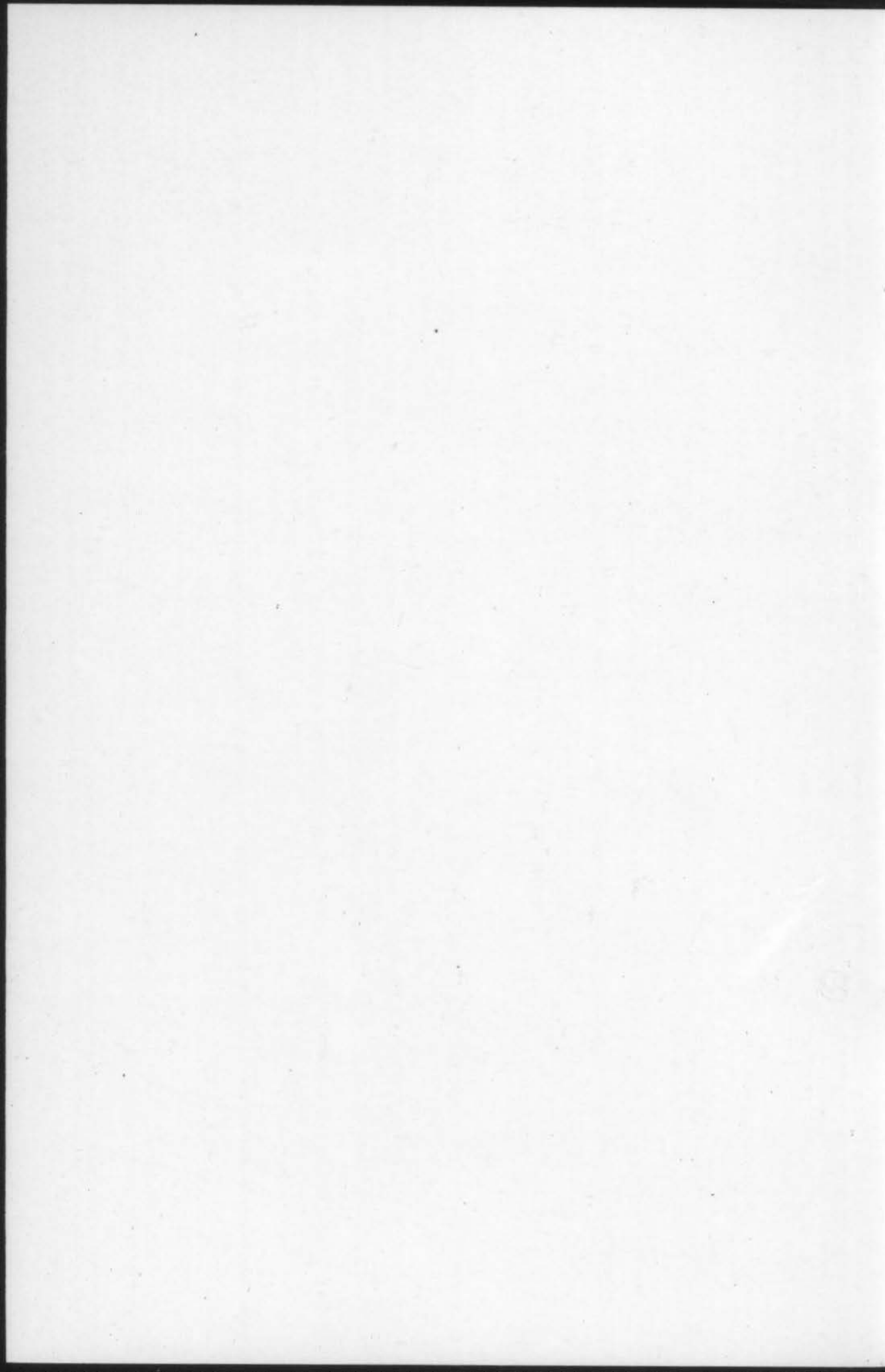
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## Contents

Jessica Mongeon	
<i>Flag Day</i>	Cover
Noah Root	
<i>Among Wood and Bricks</i>	3
Hannah Halvorson	
<i>Routine</i>	4
Jan Sher	
<i>Extraordinary View into Leinster House, Dublin, Ireland</i>	5
Hannah Halvorson	
<i>Unmade</i>	6
Liza Jones	
<i>Adam</i>	7
Erin Barta	
<i>The Beauty of Pinstripes</i>	8
Charles McCrary	
<i>Untitled</i>	12
Hannah Halvorson	
<i>Afternoon</i>	13
Alex Oswald	
<i>Valley of the Clouds</i>	14
Hannah Halvorson	
<i>I Can Hear the Ocean</i>	15
Josh Brorby	
<i>A Whimsical Account of Yesterday's Wand'rings</i>	16
Philip Ragan	
<i>Frog on a Petal</i>	17
Hannah Halvorson	
<i>Sunlight</i>	18

Thomas Hartman



*Among Wood and Bricks*  
Noah Root  
Digital Photograph



## Hannah Halvorson

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### *Routine*

I rode the city bus to work every morning, and every morning she was there. She had only an old, tattered blanket, which she wrapped tightly to her. The blanket had probably once belonged to an aunt or a grandmother. The fabric was old, the colors faded and dull. She clung to that blanket as one might cling to their last moments of life, a desperate hope trembling throughout their body, certain to make that last breath count.

I sat behind her every morning, and every morning she would look straight ahead. Many days, the blanket would fall off of her shoulder, and I would see the pale, almost translucent skin, illuminated by the neon lights of the city signs outside the window. My fingers ached to tap that glowing shoulder, to disrupt the magnificence in that radiant glow.

I questioned her every morning, and every morning she was unaware. I wondered at her name. I longed to know her story. I was curious about her ridiculously thin blanket. Would she be nice and kind, or rude and short? I wished she would turn around and talk to me. I wanted to get her attention, but I sat on my hands instead, to prevent them from reaching out.

I watched her every morning, and every morning she was oblivious. I counted the strands of her yellow hair, which sprouted out of her head like a thick field of weeds. It was stiff and dirty. I counted each strand, but like stars in the sky, I never finished. I watched the rise and fall of her shoulders as she breathed in the toxic, polluted air around us. I matched my breathing to hers, and felt connected.

I talked to her in my mind every morning, and every morning she heard nothing. I told her my name was Joel, that I worked at the Dobson & Dobson Law Firm, that I was twenty-seven years old. I told her about my agoraphobic sister in Philadelphia, and my uncle who collected clocks. I told her that I dreamed in black and white, and that I was afraid of deep water. I told her secrets I could never tell anyone else, and I felt I could trust her not to tell. For her ears heard nothing. So she might repeat nothing as well.

I left the bus every morning, and every morning she stayed. As I walked past her in the aisle, I would never look at her face. I couldn't bring myself to turn in her direction. I knew only the back of her head, and I was content with continuing on as such.

I hopped on to the city bus the next morning and sat in my usual seat. I looked ahead of me for the dandelion hair and radiant shoulders, but saw instead a large, greasy, balding head atop a thick, red neck.





*Extraordinary View into Leinster House, Dublin, Ireland*  
Jan Sher  
Digital Photography



*Unmade*  
Hannah Halvorson  
Digital Photography

## Liza Jones

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### *Adam*

Open my ribcage,  
crawl inside.  
Wrap my skin  
around your shoulders,  
curled in my stomach  
you are at home.  
I cannot birth you  
as God did, but I  
gave birth to who you became.

When I picture God  
pulling out Adam's rib  
it is always clean,  
pristine, white, dry,  
an immaculate fossil  
buried inside of him.  
But to have your rib ripped out,  
there is no delicate way to remove a rib,  
that is not an immaculate scene.  
Adam's agony  
extends beyond the skin thin pages,  
Eve becomes a constant reminder  
of what he has lost.

Let me be that reminder.  
Come play hide-n-seek  
inside of me.  
Come find your lost rib.  
Only I can make you whole.



## Erin Barta

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### *The Beauty of Pinstripes*

Five years ago I was sitting alongside my brother on an old couch in our living room, watching the New York Yankees battle the Boston Red Sox for the Pennant. Hours into the game we remained, displaying the light of optimism within us that all children possess. "It's not over yet," I said aloud, mostly to myself. After eight innings of urging myself to reach for hope over fear, the Yankees, five outs away from losing the game, came back from a 5-2 deficit to tie the Red Sox (Weinberg). Only extreme loyalty and perhaps a little misguided enthusiasm could have kept me awake for hours watching a ball game as if life and death hinged on the outcome. Yet there I sat. In the bottom of the eleventh inning, a Yankee in pinstripes stood up to the plate and hit a home run off the first pitch. I sat there beside my older brother on that old couch, grin plastered across my face, watching as countless pinstripe-clad players charged the field in triumph.

When we think about our lives, a single night seems somewhat insignificant, but not that night. That glorious night, full of jubilation, will forever stick out in my memories and is quite possibly more consequential than I even realize. I believe the New York Yankees are the greatest baseball team to have ever played, not because of their physical play, but because even at my tender age of thirteen they compelled me to have faith beyond reason, hope in the seemingly impossible, and a belief that miracles do happen.

There is literally a cornucopia of valid reasons why an individual could disagree with my belief on this matter. Furthermore, any reasons they would possess supporting their argument would most likely be completely logical, rooted in truth, and compel the average, sane person to agree with them. Objectively, at this moment in time, the Yankees "ain't doing so good." For starters, this is the first season since 1993 the Yankees have failed to make it into the playoffs. They ended their last season in Yankee Stadium, "the house that Ruth built", with a record of 89-73, barely breaking .500 (American). And even when they are playing well, it has been my experience that most non-fans hate them anyways. They are begrudgingly acknowledged by all baseball fans as the highest paid team in the league. To most 'anti-fans' the Yankees represent a paycheck, a ruthless policy of buying talent and success, rather than creating it. Knowing this, to wear anything with the Yankees logo on it in predominantly Twins-supporting geo-



graphical areas is an open act of defiance, a way of sticking it to the man, and a guarantee of hearing the name George Steinbrenner muttered in ominous tones by angry passers-by.

All logical, intelligent reasons point towards hating the Yankees as the most reasonable choice, but in this matter I say, "To hell with logic!" When I see the classic navy and white of their uniforms I think of a dynasty with an immortal legacy (victors of twenty-six world series). I think of the highest degree of excellence. I think of cliché childhood memories of playing catch with my father over conversation of just why exactly the Yankees rule. Most of all, I think of Yankee Stadium. That game five years ago was the most passionate I have ever felt towards this beloved team, and I will forever consider myself a fan. It is this inherent loyalty that inspired a pilgrimage by two siblings to the holy land of Yankee Stadium.

Disobeying parents and defying our financial payroll, my brother and I took multiple jobs and raised the money necessary to travel from North Dakota to New York City, never doubting whether it was worth it, or saying to ourselves, "It's just a game." At one point prior to this journey, during the hellish summer job cycle of busing tables, taking orders, and correcting newspapers, my father says to me, "You don't even watch them anymore." He wasn't wrong, yet my individual truth wasn't shaken. Watching the Yankees now isn't necessary for me to remember watching them play in the World Series when I was the ages of six, eight, nine, and ten – and winning. Whereas some people are fans of teams or players (i.e. my father is a huge Mickey Mantle fan), I, on the other hand, am simply a fan of this team, despite roster, condition, or era. I see the beauty of pinstripes.

Upon walking up the stairs from the gritty subway below, the first glimpse I saw of above-ground New York City was the mammoth side of soon-to-be torn down Yankee Stadium filling the skyline. A heavy downpour immediately drenched our entire bodies, laden with all of our travel possessions. After a delayed connecting flight, we fought against time to arrive for the first pitch. After a frenzied rush of motion, we entered the stadium roughly thirty minutes later, euphoric hysteria filling our entire beings, just in time to stand and watch our \$160 seats gather water as we waited out this two hour rain delay. "C'mon, this isn't why we came," I said, finally growing tired of our unfortunate circumstances and running towards our beautiful plastic blue seats, perfectly nestled along left field. Gaining attention from people seeking drier protection from the overhang of the stadium, I yelled facetiously back towards my hesitant brother, "Don't be a huge girl!" Immediately cheers from nearby half-drunk, anxious fans erupted and urged my brother to not 'be a girl' as I had jokingly said, and to instead join me in hugging in the rain.

What followed was one of the rare, perfect nights of my life. From the perspective of truth and fact, that night was spent being cold and wet, it continued three hours later than anticipated, and to top it off, the Yankees lost. Blaise Pascal said, "We know the truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart." My perception of the evening, however, is one of perfection. I sat for

hours and had the opportunity to explore a place that I had seen countless times over the television, and see players that I had watched throughout my childhood enter my reality and play a sport I revered, all the while thinking of the countless legends who had been here before me. Names like Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle, Lou Gehrig, and Yogi Berra, all conquerors of the human spirit, flooded my mind: I thought of how when Babe Ruth died, his funeral was held here; how when Lou Gehrig became sick, this stadium became his fortress of solitude; and how three of baseball's seventeen perfect games were pitched here. I was standing in a monument to history, and neither rain nor parent disapproval could taint within my intrinsic belief that it was truly worth it.

Willing suspension of widely accepted truth is how I would label this belief of mine. When I ask myself, "How can this be true," I always recognize that it isn't. I could be the only individual within a thousand mile radius to find truth in this belief, which statistically speaking, would make my truth decidedly false. Instead, I eschew this logic and instead believe that the things we choose to believe in life can be just as or even more important than the things we prove to ourselves.

At this moment across the world, thousands of individuals are putting their sole efforts towards getting individuals elected into the presidency whom they believe will be the best person for the job. Soldiers are sitting across the Middle East risking their lives in a war some believe is worth fighting for. A cancer patient is lying in a hospital bed, fighting for their life, not because they can prove they will live, but because they believe they can survive. None of these beliefs can be proven, yet these people are making these choices anyway; they are taking a leap of faith, declaring to the world that some truths do not need to be proven.

Science is all around us. Concrete, absolute, provable facts surround us, but life is not just about these concrete things. Our lives are filled with hopes, emotions, fears, dreams, and ideas that may only ever have one single person believing them to be true: ourselves. So now I pose this question: without the unprovable, such as love, in life, without these leaps of faith, what would our lives be like? What would be the point? I believe whether it's taking a lifetime to prove a math theorem, researching for years to show that pollution negatively affects the environment, or believing as a child that someday you can be whatever you want to be, the beliefs we hold deep within ourselves possess truth, as long as we believe them. So now the next time someone asks me, "Why do you believe the Yankees are the greatest team ever?" I'm going to breathe deeply, channel my inner mother, and say, "Because I said so."

This is my truth, and somewhere across the country some girl in Boston is shaking her head in disbelief, thinking of all of her experiences spent cherishing the Red Sox with her loved ones, and saying to herself, "The Red Sox are the greatest team ever." She is right, but so am I, and as long as we each believe in the truth of our intrinsic thoughts, they both can remain true.

In retrospect, it's not even about the Yankees anymore. I have unques-

tioningly loved something with my heart and soul, and this precedent of faith has been an integral part in the growth of my character. Someday maybe, just maybe, when I have kids, I'll brainwash them into thinking the Yankees are truthfully the greatest thing since sliced-bread, because without them, my childhood would have been different. My relationship with my brother would be different. My openness and eager belief towards the non-provable would be different. I would be different.

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## Charles McCrary

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### *Untitled*

Wind blows by all day long.  
Plastic bags could have been recycled;  
They blow through the street.  
People hurry along.  
They think that they have pressing matters  
And people to meet.  
If a plastic bag had a mind,  
It would think it had a choice.  
It would be horrified to find  
It does not have a voice.  
I thought I heard God today.  
Maybe it was just the wind.



Hannah Halvorson



*Afternoon*  
Hannah Halvorson  
Digital Photography



*Valley of the Clouds*  
Alex Oswald  
Digital Photography

## Hannah Halvorson

---

### *I Can Hear the Ocean*

I rest my head upon the soft, flat surface,  
Warm and dry,  
Like a sandy beach by the Pacific.  
My head lolls up and down on its side,  
like a boat on the waves of the calm ocean.  
I can hear the air moving in and out,  
Inhale... exhale...  
like wind pushing against the boat's sail.  
I can feel the slow, steady beat,  
like waves lapping against its side,  
rapping out a heart's slow tempo.  
I can hear the low rumblings of hunger,  
like a whale's call below me.

I love to lay my head upon your stomach  
On these still, summer days.



## Josh Brorby

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### *A Whimsical Account of Yesterday's Wand'rings*

I don't have to go to the office today so I sit around on my couch and watch TV for a while and read some chapters in the novel I borrowed from the library. It's a novel about some poor schmuck who gets kicked out of school and made fun of by hookers and beat up by a pimp. One of his best friends gets himself defenestrated and makes a mess all over the sidewalk. It's a real riot.

For dinner I go to a friend of a friend's for some grilled hamburgers with cheese. A friend of my friend of a friend is there and he sure knows how talk a guy's ear off. His name's Jerry and he tosses out names like they were bones and we were starving dogs.

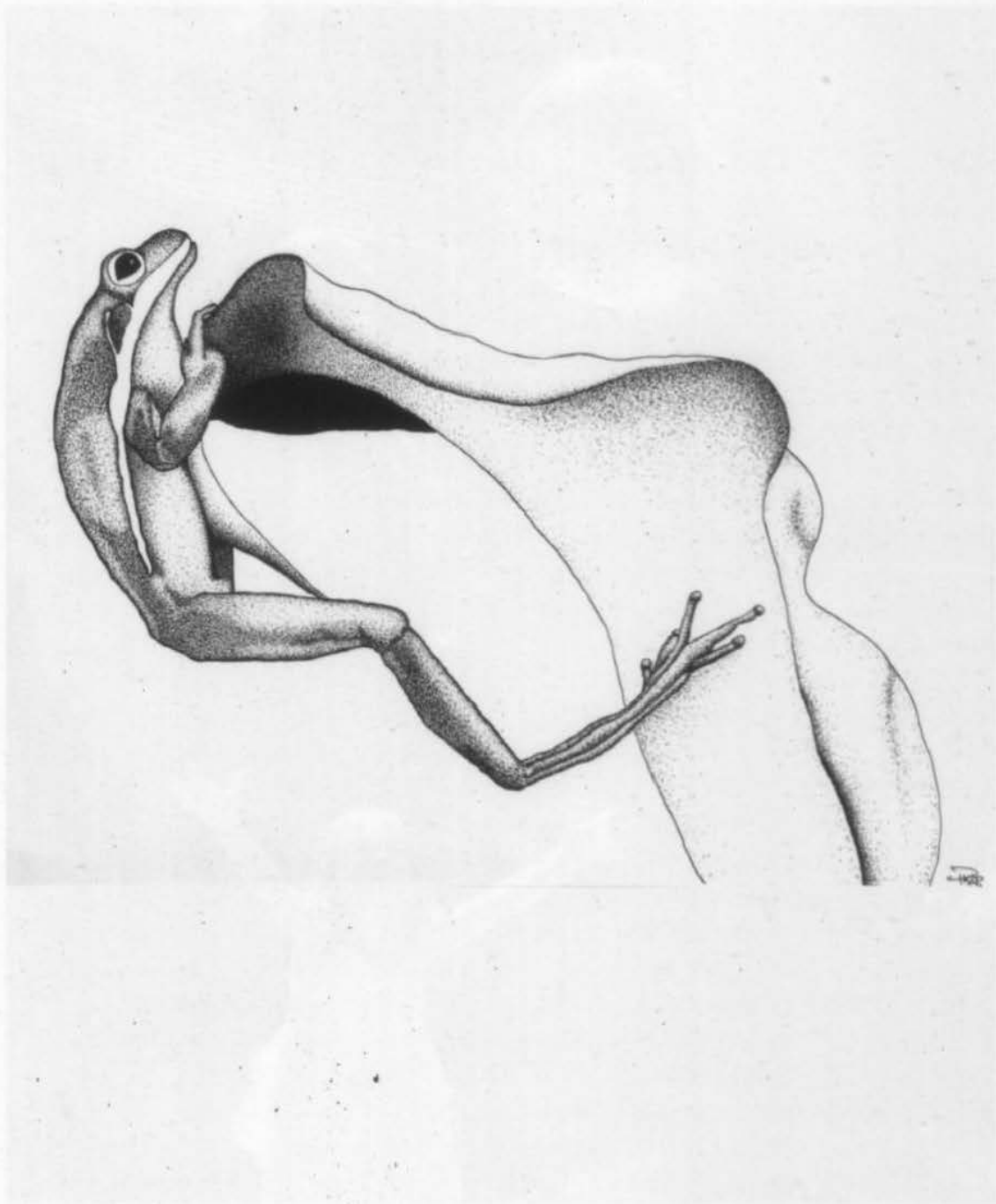
"Do you know a guy by the name of Lescroart?" he asks me between mouthfuls of meat and ketchup. My honest reply of no doesn't sate him so he asks, "Are you sure you haven't met him? Guy Lescroart? He's an honest fellow who lives down on 5th and Main, has a respectable radio repair shop a few blocks from here." I feign interest and take another bite of my burger. It's overcooked.

The television blares behind me and Jerry roars above it, "You see that guy there on the TV screen? I once met him at a community banquet. Robert Harrison. Helluva nice guy, wouldn't you believe it?" The dinner drags on so as soon as I finish I try to find an escape route. It proves near impossible to make my exit with Jerry speaking. I can't get a goodbye in edgewise.

On the way home as I walk the city streets I see a black cat pawing at a sleeping bum in an alley. The bum's got a swollen left eye and a bloody right hand. He clutches a bottle of off-brand scotch with a death grip and blood runs along the smooth edges of the glass. I get on a bus and see a mother crying over her baby. She asks me if I have any money. She needs it to feed herself, she says. She needs it because she's used all her money paying the rent and the heating bill and feeding and caring for her child. I pass her in silence and somewhere down deep I wish I would have given her something to get by on. I wish I *could* have given her something to get by on.

At home I wash the grime of the day off my face in the bathroom sink. I look in the mirror above my sink and show my teeth. They're yellow but I don't brush because brushing means whiter teeth and when I smile I don't want to give the illusion that I'm happy. The world is a mean place and when I open my mouth to the world I want it to know that I'm mean too.





*Frog on a Petal*  
Philip Ragan  
Ink on paper



*Sunlight*  
Hannah Halvorson  
Digital Photography

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