

Vantage Point

Volume 1 | Issue 1

Article 1

2016

Fall 2015

Vantage Point

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Recommended Citation

Point, Vantage (2016) "Fall 2015," *Vantage Point*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.

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VANTAGE POINT
VOLUME XVI
Issue 1 | Fall 2015

Dear Reader —

Margaret Atwood once wrote: “A word after a word after a word is power.” We hope you enjoy the powerful, moving, and evocative work collected here. We are very grateful to our writers, editors, and advisors for their enthusiasm and dedication. As you peruse the pages of this volume, let Vantage Point be your invitation to join the ongoing conversation art and literature create between us.

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Vantage Point always accepts submissions during the academic year. Send us your work at:

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We release two issues per academic year, the first in the fall and the second in the spring.

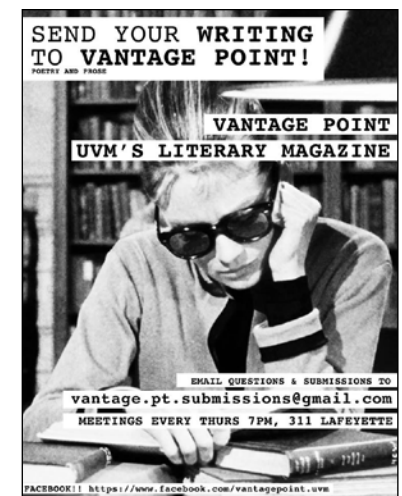
VISUAL ART should be tagged with a title and medium. Artist statements are welcome and encouraged, but may not be published with the piece. Images should be sent as .TIFF or .JPEG files in high resolution. Smartphone images will not be accepted.

LITERARY WORKS should be under 700 words and have a title and author name in their file name. Revisions are only accepted if they are substantial. You may send up to six (6) submissions. All mediums are welcome for submission.

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The Art of You

Arielle Hurwitz

Feed me poetry in hot spoonfuls as you kiss my busted lip: I want to fill you.

Lay my head against your wet and red
I want its smell and sounds to fill me too.
Once we're full of us and still itching,
I want you to strip me.

Cover me only with feathers and soil,
let the space between us grip me.
I want you to wrap my thighs with gauze,
give me stars to chew on so all I taste
is light and awe.

Tell me everything that never matters to them,
the things that seem to only matter to us-
to the souls that withhold,
the bodies that don't settle,
that can only live by kicking up dust.
The ruddiness in your summertime cheeks
emulates the art I breathe.
The truth that is grasping in your eyes is
written in the language of my sighs-
and sometimes I think I can see my doodles arise,
as I connect the dots of the freckles on your skin.

One day, I will paint you,
splatter you with glue and paper mache you-
turn you into my final piece,
my everlasting wondrous need,
my longest kept secret.
Make you fill me as I have filled you,
I will bleed with the poetry of you.
And whenever I am wounded

you will soothe my sunken creases,
the art you are will spark the art
that needs to be created.
We knew the bodies
would never last,
too much chaos and movement,
too much time we'd have to pass,
so please just let me have your fingers,
the ones I wrapped in rings of poetry,
feed them to me in hot spoonfuls,
give it to me then let go of me.

Recycle all that art that I breathed on to you,
let it come back inside me
full of nuance and renewed.
Then take away your body,
take away your fate,
leave me with images,
with a you I can create.
Your heart beat is too poignant,
summertime always makes me cry,
so please,
turn yourself to art,
make that your goodbye.

Untitled

Claudia Garber

Three wet olives squeezed together
at the bottom of the glass abyss
so far from where they began,
their friends gone.
Hollow.
You reach two fingers in.
No luck.
Jerk the glass jar to no prevail.
The scent of vinegar and sweat mingling inside the bottle
seeps out into the air.
A glass carcass of what
was once full.
Full of plump
black
wet
olives.
Now, all that is left,
like three pebbles wedged in between the stones
at the floor of a pond.
You cannot coax them out.
The excess juice runs down your fingers
tinged with the murk of pond water.
Maroon,
salty
tears.
Three olives
like mushrooms embedded in the roots of a tree
smooth round anchors.
You pry out a knife
pierce the thick flesh—cool and deep
one two
three

olives
out of the looking glass
forced onto the plate.
The juice still trickling
out of the jar.
Across the highway between wrist and elbow.
Fugitives.
Guilty.

In My Dream You Still Smile

Ali Wood

It happens even before the sun wakes up,
that dizzymaking brain fuzz shuddering throughout
before my lungs can remember how to breathe.
My arms and legs numb and limp at my sides,
struggling to heave me out of sweat-stained sheets.
I don't bother for coffee – what I need is the color yellow.
Raincoat, honeybee, school bus.
Baby crib, buttercup, dog snow.
Something to shake my bones, and
my hands cannot wrestle the car keys from trembling so hard,
a skeleton man dance I never laughed at.

In the humming rattle of the motor
I cannot see where I am going,
only the haze-tinged outline of lullabies and tight fists
of babies who don't know how to sleep,
fingers that squeeze and claw for some cast-out rope
molding and gnawed-on from overuse
to pull them out of shadow and back into sleep.
Sweet sleep, of mom's skin that smells so much of lavender.
This part I forget.

At some point the car parks at the edge of the sand.
It is pale and moon-cool beneath my bare feet and whispers
back
memories I didn't remember were mine.
Of peach picking, juice rolling down dimpled chins
and into the space between crossed legs.
Of rusty wind chimes in the backyard rolling their smooth
notes
on the back of summer air's tide as a woman
with curly hair and blue jeans whistles

and works between rows of fragrant tomato plants.
Of things that have gone.

Here and now my mind is still and just still enough
as the nightmare seeps out the crown of my head,
drips down my spine,
and pools into the sea's waiting, outstretched palms.
I pick up a conch shell and want to hug it,
hold it close to my ears, and for a moment
hear it echo your name.

Girl

Lucas Hall

What are the curves?—The moon is a sphere
the sun draws a glowing ellipse—curves at the supple bronze of your back
sheensilk darkrose ribbons of hair.—We thought Earth was flat
as we sailed its bends.—Between a white sheet and white down comforter
Crooked tangles of copper skin—easy breasts, starry body
A nursery—My index finger traces calmly down, whispering to your little golden tender bicep
Down the supra-clavicular to the radial dorsal antebachial to the lateral antebachial—to the
palm, the hand I hold
 then press and grip.
We catstretch, fingers—held up like dawn's first rosered rays
Wasn't the pane frigid?—Wasn't the sky azure?
Did you hear that jet up high?—The droning sound of space, moaning
in dewy fields in Spring—Gaze, that indigo saltsack, untied and laid out
Look at your eyes—settled stars, faintly burning.
I see them a—and as you gently scratch my thigh.
And what is that wishing sound that's made—as our swooning skins caress?

Work Ethic

Carolyn Pedro

Sweaty Portuguese men, the regulars
hands, cracked and callused,
glued to their scratch tickets
inhabiting the store front
acting like they own the place

liquor lined ledges
floors caked in sticky syrups
cigarette ash and broken glass

Intoxicated men with children of their own
watching me bend over
to restock the shelves
that fuel their addictions

trash ridden gardens
that are far from eden
budding with used condoms
amongst the dying daffodils

old men paying young teens for
a quick blowjob out back by
the unlit employee parking lot
dim with a haze masked moon

A petrifying gap
from car to entrance,
my walk is brisk
overshadowed by the heavy thumping
of my anxious heart
wondering if these menacing shadows
will one day swallow me whole

“we do what we must to survive,”
“it’s important to have a work ethic.”
my father says.

waiting to fall and ripple

Anonymous

transitions
were never
difficult
for me, but
I thought
living away
from all I ever
knew
would stir the
stillness of my
placid pond
sea of mind.
but no,
I’m rather
still, still, but still,
I feel the weakness
of autumn leaves
above the stillness,
waiting to fall
and ripple.

july third

Anonymous

with the
bombs overhead
and shaking in our
 chests,
she played guitar,
her voice quivering
in the full moon
light,
we painted sunsets
with her guitar strings
and my quiet
listening, attentive
fascination with
the songs bursting
at our seams
in that summer
july third night.

Haunted

Michael Finley

There is nothing more foreboding than a forest in the dark. It is an ominous place amidst the brambles and broken branches, over crunching leaves and stones smoothed by waters now run dry in long dead riverbeds. There is a world there like the nightmares that inhabit the sleeping mind. If you're quiet and careful enough to not disturb this spectral realm then you may chance upon the phantom of the north, the ghost that haunts the hollow trees.

The Great Grey Owl, harbinger of doom, haunts the rolling hills of the New England countryside. A silent death, it stalks its unsuspecting prey with binocular accuracy. Nothing hides from the yellowed gaze of the Great Grey Owl. Its hollow feathers, layered for precision, allow its wing beats to be nothing more than a vaporous breeze, an unheard swoop in the night. When it grasps its prey in its cold hard talons it swallows them whole. In one fell gulp, a swing of the guttural scythe leaves its victims defenseless. They are dead in seconds.

Its shallow facial disk, as faded white as a fogged-up full moon, is enclosed in a cowl bespeckled in white, grey and black. Light downy feathers crown its head, and then give way to others that are long and of varying shades of grey that drape its body like a wispy cloak. Its cry like a mechanical cackle and its hoot a muffled question asked at death and left unanswered. This is the largest of all the owls, dreadful king of the midnight woods. Very few terrors trouble the Great Grey Owl.

Yet, it wears a look of misery. Its eyes and somber face bear a resemblance to a weary old man, worn down by the knowledge of his life. So much weight appears to weigh on those feathered shoulders that one cannot help but to feel sorry for the bird of prey. It seems that it has fallen prey to the problem of omniscience. In its sad eyes, the legend of the wise owl seems all too awfully true. It knows too much.

Cas Buk Roubatu

Josh Holz

Termites cuddling in wood
don't want to see you
skid and whip stones,
but you must refuse grip.

Contour flints and glints as
I light your housing,
although never a patio
of some slug's abode.
Your eyes flare at the thought:
"Who cares about home?"

not us!

young men write
reply:none
love letters
to their loves
and artists
highways away

as if
some maiden needs rescuing
in her cocoon of drywall?
as if
artists trade vigor to be
crucified by their bed frames?

Pull backs and ticks
make us think the world is ours.
(You know it's not.)
But you are here now with me.

Screw it, Cas.
Let's recline as
white dashes dodge a rubber samba.
Hurl me through the asphalt veins
the world deludes themselves on.
Toss me to metallic hums and
transcend Home.

ride, Cas Buk Roubatu
it's all in our mirrors now

Your Funeral

Ali Wood

Broken and bleeding,
calloused hands raised in prayer
making a small church with no steeple,
wind rushing into the cracks
of battered fingers.

No people.

No one to hear my voice rising above the pews and clawing
its way through the stale air and angel dust,
leaving scratches in the varnished wood.

No one to hold my hair back from my face and
catch my vomit breath in a brown paper bag
when I reach for you and there's nothing to hold onto,
just a crumpled velvet dress spilling black rivulets into my lap.

Last month we were sitting beneath the clouds,
your hands woven into the grass and in my hair
tying a braid that fell down my back like the way yours did
in that ripped, tarnished photo of you and the horse.

Tufts of hay and clay on your shirt and
nowhere to go until the rusty bell chimed you home
for supper and sugary tea that hurt your teeth.

I mention this and you laugh –
so strange how muscles remember how to be young again,
how to dance the rhythm of girls in headbands and boots
who know how to hold each others' hearts.

I'm walking down the aisle,
and I know this is falling –
this hallowed moment where I'm touching the writing on the
back of the photo:
the date, the year, the names,
and bits of you imprinted in the carbon letters

pressed deep into my skin, and
I don't want to be here at all.
I want to go back to that night when the sky exploded
and you couldn't stop laughing.

For You, John Cooper Clarke

Andrea Cory

(Imitation of John Cooper Clarke's poem "I Wanna Be Yours".)

I wanna be the fan on your bedside table,
moving the air around you when you turn me on.
The soft breeze blowing across the side of your cheek
as you drift off into a gentle slumber.

The honey in your tea,
adding that extra sweetness when the leaves aren't enough.
Stirring it swiftly, breaking down,
melting into hot water.

The cough drop that soothes your aching voice,
After a month long cold.
Dripping down your throat,
cooling your insides, cherry flavored and delicious.

I wanna be the extra blanket you keep at the end of your bed.
Wrap me around your body in the dead of winter.
Hold me close to you,
Warm you from your fingers to toes, make you sweat.

I wanna be the deepest sleep you've ever had.
A sleep lasting almost 400 years.
Dream of me endlessly, crave me when you're tired.

Savages of the North

Andrea Cory

"Go kill that frog!" he commanded as we found a brown lumpy toad beneath the forest leaves and stabbed it forcefully with a stick.

We called ourselves, "savages of the north." We explored lush green forests and swam naked in the lake. My cousin Drew was our leader, and my brother Iain and I were his loyal followers. We built huts on the rocky beach out of tree branches and beach towels—crawling beneath the yellow terrycloth roof for our group meetings. We had to hide our secrets from our parents, who stood at the end of the beach laughing at our infancy. They never knew what we talked about in our tent, but they took pictures and continually informed us how cute we looked.

Our leader instructed us on our goals for the day—which animals to capture and how to improve the sturdiness of the fort. We marked ourselves with old coal from former bonfires. Inscribing lines beneath our eyes and stripes that extended from our forehead to our chins. Drew wore a feathered hat, insisting this would help us identify his status should we ever forget. We wreaked havoc in the forest, stomping on beetles and ripping worm's bodies in half. Our leader screaming with excitement as each new victim fell into our grasp. The targets were then laid down in tiny graves marked with small stones and sticks. My brother Iain and I insisted they would be better off in bug heaven, to make us feel better about the merciless killing of these small creatures. Drew stood by laughing at our "weakness," asserting that sympathy was for those who couldn't handle the violent wars within the forest.

As the summer went on our graveyards continued to accumulate bodies. We killed anything Drew told us to, not thinking twice about questioning the authority of our chief. It

wasn't until Drew insisted that Iain kill a baby brown rabbit that I began to suspect there was something wrong with the hobby we had practiced for so long. One morning while Iain and I fixed up the graveyard, and we said our goodbye to a black beetle Drew came out with a butter knife.

"I stole this from the cabin," he informed us, "It'll slice through things better than a stick, I can't wait to use it."

Iain and I looked at each other, not knowing what to expect, but trusted our chief and his decisions. The three of us walked through the forest in search of something to use our new weapon on. We saw an ant colony, but Drew shook his head. "That isn't good enough." We continued on our hunt, until Drew's mouth formed into a half moon smile.

"There!" Drew yelled as he pointed to a small creature underneath a pile of leaves.

Iain and I looked at each other in panic. The creature that Drew had identified was a small rabbit hopping along the forest floor. Drew handed Iain the butter knife. "I want you to do it," he said. The small creature began to twitch and squirm as Iain tried to kill it with the dull knife. I couldn't look; there was something about killing this small animal that brought up some type of remorse we hadn't experienced when we were killing amphibians and bugs. Tears rolled down Iain's cheeks as the bunny continued to struggle while he stabbed it. Blood gleamed against the metal of the knife, and Drew looked on with enjoyment.

I looked at Drew in horror and let out a scream that I was sure would alert the parents. Aunt Kay came running into the forest, yelling our names in order to locate where the screaming had come from. Iain stood next to the bunny, the knife on the ground and Drew and I in the middle of the path. She grabbed Drew immediately; something within her knew that this was his doing, and she shook her head in disapproval. I didn't see Drew for a couple of days after that.

The day following the incident Iain and I searched

for more bird feathers on the beach, in order to improve the appearance of Drew's chief hat. My mother came out to the beach and sat next to us, watching us search near the tree line for feathers. She waited a couple of minutes before telling us that Aunt Kay and Drew had left the cabin for the summer. He was being punished. I looked back at my mother in shock, "But Mom Drew was our chief! Now what are we going to do?" My mom told us she knew we were sad, but we weren't allowed to kill animals, and Drew needed to go "talk to someone."

As Iain and I climbed into the car to go back to Minneapolis that September I took one last look at the forest that had once been our playground. The forest no longer filled me with curiosity, as it had done back in June. The forest was now toxic—the reason Drew had to leave, and the place the little bunny had died. We had been Drew's puppets, but had gladly partaken in his game. I wondered whom Drew would have to talk to and what they would talk about. The game had been taken "too far," and as a result all the parents said that Drew had "issues." I sat in the backseat staring out the window, the forest outlining the highway now turning into flashes of green and brown. The images of the summer flitted through my mind—I winced, as if doing so would make them go away. Our car jolted to a stop, my seat belt pressing deep into my skin as I lunged forward. A small doe crossed in front of our car, her beige fur sticking up in all directions, her black eyes staring at me in fear from the highway. "Sorry for the sudden stop guys." My mother said from the driver's seat. The deer picked up the pace and ran into the forest. I wondered how long it would take to kill her with a butter knife.

Julianne

Caroline Dababneh

She named your sister “dandelion wind” and then two years later, she named you “rough edges.”

She fed you chia pudding and family guilt, bell peppers and your own fist, sat you around the menorah and talked about Christmas.

She dressed you in flannel shirts that didn’t match your corduroys, the corduroys that had seen a long day or two in the garden,

and she treated me like I was her third.

I remember that dress she was waiting to wear, two sizes too small,

and the next month when she wore it out to eat with your father, complete with the all-natural make up she used to make a living

selling at Whole Foods, and he didn’t notice. She dyed her hair with henna, and always smelled like somebody you wanted to trust.

When she thanked me for saving you, I thought long and hard about heroines, and heaved as if it was the first breath after

floating to the surface. All she did was put her hand on my back and whisper, “darling, dear, thank you. Thank you for my son.”

The Burden of Lungs

Caroline Dababneh

Some days I feel an entire marching band inside my chest.

The accents in their songs come when I breathe heavily and they drag my courage out to step on it, perfectly in line with each other, like my heart is a football field of new turf.

Some days I walk the streets and when I turn my head, I could swear the sky turns a different color. Ahead, I see lilacs and powder blues like cotton candy, while behind are furious tangerines and crimsons like the heavens were angry and are just beginning to settle down.

I spent the month of May lying through my teeth, June trying to finish strong and keep going.

July and August were a daze of avoiding eye contact, tightening fists, and grating teeth, feeling the sweat of the season drip down my temples like soft serve ice cream.

I spent September with someone who pronounced my name the way my mother does,

and we sat

on darkened hills at night. When it rained, we braced ourselves for the downpour of

being alive together;

let it tumble down our rain coats and boots and blend into the soil until we forgot what we called ourselves.

I spent October listening through headphones that had no sound coming out, and didn’t

notice

until someone tried to address me. I drank cups of coffee at midnight and slept through the sun creeping

pieces of the dawn through my blinds, making a pattern of lines on the bedspread,

urging me to wake up.
Some days I still think about the burden of lungs and I wonder
what makes our eyes change – what makes them see damp leaves where
there are
crisp ones to hurdle
into, tangerines and crimsons where there is an endless sea of lilac and
powder cotton
candy.

Fire and Rain

Caroline Dababneh

Rain pounding on the windshield makes
a watercolor painting of the streetlights,
while my grandmother,
two hundred ninety-five miles south of here,
dumps a bag of ravioli into a scalding pot.

Tough as boiling water and reckless
with her cooking instruments, when I was
eighteen, she made tomato sauce from scratch,
and as quickly as I slurped it off the wooden
spoon in her hand, she was taken to the Burn Unit
of Mass General Hospital. I remember her looking
smaller than usual in the bed, thought I had never
seen somebody I loved look so frail, so helpless,
and as temporary as raindrops. If I squint,
I can see her now, getting smaller and smaller
like the signs in my rearview mirror,
as we race home to warm kitchens and worn blankets.

We learn through trial and error:
it needs a pinch more salt,
watch your hands, that's hot,
slow down – it's pouring, and we still
have a long ways to go.

Scattering Seeds

Caroline Dababneh

I have been climbing mountains in the evenings
to feel closer to the moon, and I have been
scattering seeds into the soil in the hopes that
I will sprout with them, and I have been
restless like a newborn trying to escape from
behind crib bars, able to cry but not much else.

*I don't know what it's coming to,
but I'm looking through the glass darkly.*

I keep waiting for the moment when the sun
will burst through and rip down the walls
of my weariness, and I will not want to close
the shades over it and roll over in my bed,
but instead stretch my arms up over my head,
allow my toes to meet the floor, harsh and cold
as memory, and greet the day like an old friend
who has just dropped their bag in my doorway.

*I don't know what it's coming to,
but I'm looking through the glass darkly.*

Until then, maybe I will still shield my eyes from the sun,
and maybe my blinds will stay closed, but in the evenings,
I will watch the stars and imagine the purple night sky
is filled with a million little whirring airplanes flying
to places greater and more expansive than the pit
of my stomach, places I will scatter more seeds one day.

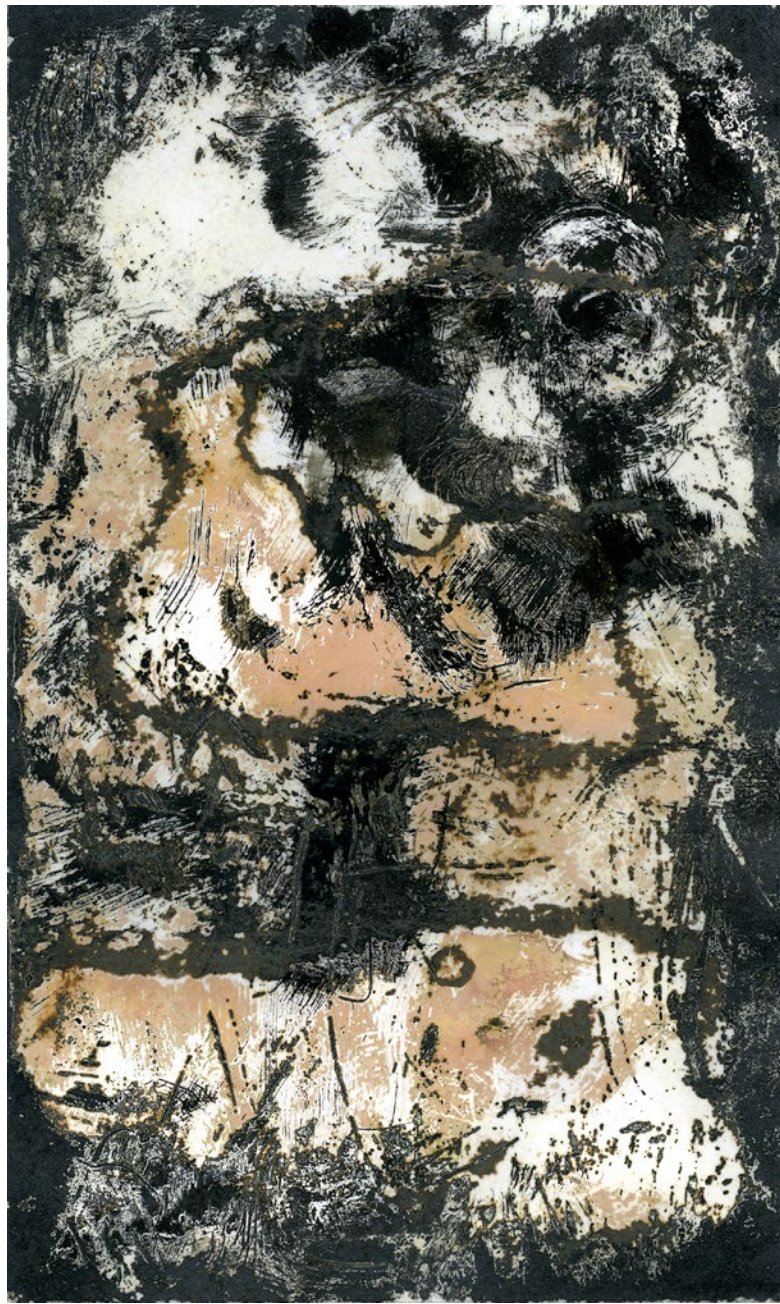
*I don't know what it's coming to,
but I'm looking through the glass darkly.*

(Italicized lyrics taken from Annie Lennox's "Through the Glass Darkly.")





Peanut Butter 1
Stephen Chevalier



Peanut Butter 2
Stephen Chevalier



Lofty
Emily Johnston



Denim
Emily Grace Arriviello



untitled

Ashlin Ballif

Published by ScholarWorks @ UVM, 2016



Banquet

Zackary Adams

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*Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue.
Vantage Point wouldn't be possible without you!*

