

FOLIO

MMXII

LITERARY MAGAZINE



FOLIO

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MMXII Issue

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1. fo·lio noun \fō-lē-ō\ Folio

1. A book consisting of paper folded in half to make two leaves or four pages **2.** Paper folded in this way **3.** A certain number of words used to measure the length of a document **4.** The original publishing format of the Gutenberg Bible **5.** A binder for loose papers **6.** A book of the largest size, usually fifteen inches tall **7.** The original publishing format of Shakespeare's plays **8.** A book leaf which is numbered on the front only **9.** A number on a leaf of this type **10.** The undergraduate literary and arts publication of Southern Connecticut State University

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CREATING IT

JARED COFFIN, EDITOR

DEAR READER:

In the small city of New Haven, Connecticut, not quite three miles from the collection of neo-Gothic buildings which compose Yale, and flanked by West Rock, the hiding spot of two judges fleeing Charles II after signing Charles I death warrant just over a decade earlier, you will find Southern Connecticut State University. Flash back one hundred and nineteen years before this publication, and you'll find three teachers and eighty-four students meeting to create the two-year teacher training school that would later become Southern. Flash forward to 1948, and you will be in Folio's inaugural year.

Since its inception, Folio has strived to showcase the work of its most talented student writers and artists both by producing an annual literary magazine and by hosting monthly readings to foster Southern's artistic community. If you meander through Engleman Hall, knock on the right doors, and ask the right questions, you might hear whisperings about Folio's many permutations – the readings in downtown New Haven, the readings by the pond, the readings in the long-abandoned old student center.

I like to think that my personal journey with Folio began when I was sixteen. Newly enamored with poetry, I was invited to Southern as a regional finalist in the Connecticut Young Writer's Competition. Although the ceremony I attended was brief, there was a table clad with Folios just outside the ballroom. Naturally, I took several copies which I began to read – and cherish – the following day. I would return to Southern three years later after a discontented stint at the private university I had initially chosen to attend. Walking past the ballroom during my first semester, it felt as if fate, that defunct Homeric force, had drawn me back.

At my first opportunity, I attended a Folio reading and, a semester later, began working as Assistant Fiction Editor. I was gung ho; I wanted to publish the best work, make the sharpest magazine; I was swiftly confronted by rumors. Editors were meant to be impartial, but stories of friends publishing friends were abundant and jarring. Luckily, by the time I began with Folio, that nepotistic period was ending and the 2010 issue was an enthralling composite of student work. In 2011, having gained increased control as Associate Editor, I started the shift towards innovation by adding interviews to the magazine for the first time. Although the issue remained small, as the '10 issue had

been, quality was becoming our new mantra.

The issue that you hold embodies the culmination of Folio's shift. The work it contains is stronger than ever, a testament to the magic of the growing creative writing program at Southern. Again, we've included interviews to complement the magazine's creative work, giving students a glimpse into the minds of established writers. We've also added comments from our judges in the hopes that our readers might better understand their thought process when selecting the best pieces from the issue. Best of all – and I hope you'll agree – we've broken with convention by venturing a compellingly bold design.

But I'm not here to brag. During my time at Southern, I've come to believe many things about art. I've come to believe it can sustain us, change us, make us live more fully. I've come to believe that stories and poems can be moral acts if they expose us to crevices of human experience that we'd never otherwise touch. I've also come to believe that a work of art – be it made of words, oils, or pixels – is only finished – is only truly created – when it engages in conversation with an audience. So, as Folio begins a new era, and I come to the close of my undergraduate career, I want to tell you how important you are. The artistic community at Southern is burgeoning – it's producing great writers who produce great work. The professors and students who make up that community deserve an unending round of applause. Folio is part of that applause, but without you, we're just a bunch of paper.

[POETRY]

At that moment, teaching the art of resisting words becomes useful, the art of saying only what one wants to say, the art of doing them violence, of forcing them to submit.

FRANCIS PONGE

To Bloom

KATE GARNETT

Penned inside those crossword squares,
I couldn't take full breaths. You hushed
me though, you told me, safe, safe.
I put the pen down for a year because you told
me so; because poetry doesn't make any
money, it's a child's thing.

But now I know. I cut the mouthpiece
from these feral teeth, hungry for the taste
of words. The ink came undone
from each pen's tip as I spilt poem after poem.
By myself, I did this. And the words bloomed

Full as a garden. You scoffed at the kitchen
table littered with writing, but it was no good,
I told you, watch new seedlings hatch in these wounds,
watch me nurse them clean, those graythings now all green.

I did not want to be contained. I wanted to take
a full breath that would feel like ocean spray
on bare white feet, the skin salted smooth
with patient hands. With my own hands.
And my own ambition, once as elusive
as the last wisteria vine, now blooms
with a hundredhundred leaves.

When the snow comes, I know,
they'll stem, as green as ever,
through their tomb.

Photograph

MICHAEL BELLMORE

I will take her picture
to war. I will take it
without her seeing me

take it. And when I look
at it, I want to see
her the way I see her

before she notices
I'm in the living room.
I want her to look like

I was never there, like
all there are is TV
and her dry cuticles.

When my brains are cocktail
shrimp on hot sand, I want
her to go on picking

her cuticles like I was never there.

I Crossed Paths with a Beetle Today

MACKENZIE HURLBERT

I crossed paths with a beetle today.
It was long, and his black dome hunkered down against the sidewalk
sheltering him from the wind.
And the wind.
It pulled and pinched at my cheeks.
It tossed my hair across my eyes, leaving me veiled.
Veiled from the singing man, who passes by and doesn't even look.
Doesn't even look at me or the beetle
or the rotten oranges in the puddle
—half drowned in muddy water
—discarded from a failed juggling attempt
—grossly displaying the wastefulness of man.
He just walks away, singing, belting, crooning,
blind to the world, to me, to beetles and drowned oranges,
listening only to himself, his silky song escaping
between rough lips
and yellowed teeth.
He's deaf to the sweet song of a bird
—anonymous behind a curtain of leaves.
He sings himself away, and the beetle and I are left alone
with the sweet smell of rotten oranges,
and the sweet song of a hidden beak,
and the wind.

Lingering

ROBERT COATES

I suddenly realize
that for some time now,
I've been staring at my hand.
It's as if I'm searching
for a visible effect,
evidence of the tingling
feeling that has permeated
that very hand ever since
the time she last held it.

Looking very closely,
I can almost see
little lightning bolts
darting around the
creases and folds of
my palm,
making each nerve
quiver,
urging my pulse
to go faster,
twitching the corners
of my mouth up into
an unexpected smile.

The warm sensation flows
throughout my body.
I'm amazed that
the lingering feeling of her
touch still makes my
heart flutter, even

so long after
we've been apart.

Or perhaps
this sensation
is a longing,
a desire.
Perhaps
my hand is just
anticipating
the moment
she'll hold it
again.

Sensitive Lives

JOE McCARTHY

Look outside. It's raining. People march with lowered heads. Holding books, they spill coffee, burn their hands, and curse the universe. The best of all possible worlds. Pangloss would say the blisters are budding calluses.

Doors are no longer held. Clothes begin to stagnate. Cigarettes are smoked indoors. Shoplifting, insurance claims, and lottery ticket sales rise. Socks are cesspools of bacteria. Flimsy umbrellas sold by storefront peddlers are paid for with soggy bills and break two blocks down the road.

Exit ramps are clogged. Windshield wipers come unhinged. Cars swerve to the side of the road. Flailing hazard lights are ignored by the frenzied survivors. Cell phones are deprived of service and radio airwaves are hacked to splintered blips of static. Stranded commuters grind their teeth and begin to sweat. Every hour is pissed away by the clouds.

The Stock Market leaps as the sun peers through the fortress of precipitation. A rainbow signals the resurrection of the covenant. Laughs pour forth from plastered windows. Colleges and confessionals are flooded with applications while Pangloss coddles himself in the grave.

In the Headlights

GEOFF TROUP

And the deer is standing there in your headlights like a shit metaphor in an incompetent college essay of a grown-up tike and you think of instinct and how it stands there because it can't help it like that time you put your hand on that girl's leg at Butch's but acted like sex was secondary to emotional fulfillment and everything else is performance anyway because darkness doesn't fit in well at social functions and you can run it over now when it's fucking staring at you like that and wipe it out of existence forever and the power you hold that you rarely recognize you can end a blot of cells at any moment and end its adherence to fabricated deities in favor of nothingness like sleeping without the dreaming and dreaming is more effective when you're awake anyway but it runs off slowly like a hooker trying to politely ask for money and remove the do not disturb sign just in case that fucker tries to choke you and your speakers say "hanging on a rope of sand" and the darkness is a tarp only dissipating with the circles of your headlights waiting for the next thing you can crush maybe a raccoon or a skunk or something if you ever had the balls and everything's a performance anyway like how you drive with the windows down pretending you're in a 70s movie and think when will your blot of cells be wiped out and maybe it's better to wipe them out yourself one night smashing your head against the kitchen counter and holding a butcher's knife like maybe there's a chance you're in control and it's not just arbitrary neurons interacting and you're back to instinct again holding that butcher's knife thinking about that deer a few nights ago and how it scurried away but you can't and you see it all in a perfect frame in your mind but you'll put it off like you always do like your future is a fucking lab report and your head smashing against the counter trying to erase the thoughts but they only multiply and you imagine your parents screaming "is there anything I did wrong" and you want to explain they didn't but that's a cop out anyway and you imagine your funeral and everyone there who doesn't know you acting like it's some fucking tragedy that you were once animated with the motor functions anyone who ever existed had but another generation or so and your name will never be spoken again and you think about them finding your book of poems and that screenplay you wrote in high

school and the lame rip-offs of Virginia Woolf littered in your journal acting like you had talent but reading it again is like breathing sulfur and you become this popular writer they read in English classes for generations talking about how you never knew how brilliant you were in your lifetime like Vincent Van Gogh or something but it doesn't matter because that writing wasn't modesty or attempts at anything and they only like you now because you're dead and it's some fucking tragedy people can talk about in coffee shops after they read the introduction to your posthumous collection and you think about how meditating on that is futile because who would want to read your drivel and no one will remember you in a few years anyway and there are new boyfriends to replace you and new friends to grab a drink with and you'll become a romanticized memory of someone you weren't like some fucking angel who always helped out when you only did it because you didn't want to look like an asshole and you see it all out in front of you like a map or that novel you never wrote and you smash your head against the kitchen counter and the room echoes with the representations of a soon-to-be forgotten consciousness.

Pear

MICHAEL GAVIN

At his word
I open the fridge
and bring him
the pear.

He bites in.
The pear is wrapped
in a napkin
held in his right hand.

With his left
Father pats my knee
and holds the pear up
before the morning sun.

Health Insurance

JOE McCARTHY

I had broken my wrist after making a catch during a baseball game and my dad insisted that I deserved some sort of reward. Not for the heroics, but because it was a custom, in our family, to be compensated for pain.

My brothers and I never guessed at the logic. Acutely accruing the debt, we traded punctured knees and lacerated heads for Pokémon cards or McDonald's, a new baseball glove or Friendly's.

Leaving the hospital in a cast that night, I gripped the seat belt with my left hand and focused on the rear view mirror. Exhausted, we searched through dark strips of buildings for lit stores while he explained the cause of the injury—my reaction to the line drive was sluggish and the emergency dive should have been avoided.

The A&P was the only place open at eleven, so we walked in despite groans from the lone cashier and my dad having work in a few hours. The janitor was mopping floors.

The medicine and milk aisles
at the far end of the store already
had their lights off.

I studied the dimly alternating
tiles as he surveyed the feeble
toy selection, asking me if I liked
this one, telling me that one was no good.
The manager told us to wrap it up.
My dad responded with not-so-hushed
obscenities. We agreed on a Street Shark action
figure belonging to a window-front collection.

I shuffled to the register where he fumbled
for dollar bills only to resort to a credit card.
On the drive home, he mistook my guilt for
disappointment and slammed the gas pedal
when he said he'd buy the whole set
if he had the money.

I tried to explain that my expression
had nothing to do with a lack
of quality or embarrassment
at the situation. That sleep was a better
respite than consumerism, but I stumbled
on words as I tried to look him in the face.
He didn't say anything the rest of the ride
and sped down the road after dropping me off.

Gossip

ELYSE PEDRA

A man working at Dunkin' Donuts
carries on a conversation
with resident patrons—
one reports of two shootings
a week on his block.

Two a week? That's not bad!

Like the cold weather, the rising cost
of oil, my new cat, the NBA iniquity.

I keep quiet. I do not report
the gunshots I heard
last night inside my apartment.
One firecracker, I reasoned, until
a succession of five muffled explosions
outside the brick walls.

I did not report of the woman I heard
just two floors below, screaming
Somebody call the police!
at 7:30 in the morning.
Or when I stuck my ear through
the chain-locked door,
I just got into a fight! (pause) *My homegirl.*
Her tattered voice, my complacency.

*The gas prices stagger
two steps forward, one step back.
Penny, an orange tabby cat,
watches the leaves surrender
their terminal buds.*

Someone is dead,

KATE GARNETT

and I think I could have saved her.
If only I had a lungpush longer;
had seen her eyes, like greenpools,
go white; just another minute maybe—
just sixty seconds sooner.

I cannot resurrect her for you,
though I have tried: first, with fingers
furiously working at her tinychest,
skinpleading for a full breath.

And later, with imploring prayers
the size of empty palms.
And later, still,
with my offered bed, with any bone
of mine you wanted.

I cannot compete with the dead though.
My house was built for haunting,
I think. What hides in these hinges:
a face useless to you now: my own.

My hands, even months later,
are stained with the smell of spitup blood.
I can't wash them clean. Under each fingernail
I can feel the bacteria of death. Lumpish,
a multitude, I peel back fingernail shell,
tear skin open wide in loose places, looking
for a reason.

Raindrop Memento

LORI DeSANTI

There's nothing like sitting in an empty parking lot at midnight: watching raindrops dodging your windshield wipers, crossing along your headlights, just to nosedive into the asphalt. That window cracked next to your eardrum as cool collections of droplets ping off the glass and onto the side of your face. You listen, as two sets of tires interrupt your thoughts, crashing through a puddle right behind you.

After your college graduation, that kegger you attended in the woods next to that abandoned farmhouse. Those lightning bolts that lit the star-cast sky, even after the bonfire burned out. Angry rain bombarded the jubata grass that was hiding your promiscuity—a soothing rumble of thunder, the only sound interrupting your connected grins.

The Only Bedtime Story Whose Title We Are Born Knowing

ERICA DONAHUE

I remember to forget often,
as well as I forget to remember.
But of all the things I've known

I remember you. A vast, formless
face. Tucked tight into sacred
space folds. I forget if you remember me.

I remember the beginning, the end.
I forget how many beginnings, endings
there have been before. I remember

the romance of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen—
so vividly that I forget my soul elements.
I remember the scent of the cardinal spark

burning, yet I forget which direction
the cosmos veered next. I remember the source,
for which my soul is yearning—

I forget entirely primal desire.
I remember the divine dance, which
my feet have so memorized that

I forget the rhythm of my body's treasured tango.
I remember so keenly the expansion of universal
imagination that I can only exhale.

I forget my own inhaling.
I remember love's astronomical lung
gasping. Huge heart hiccupping.

I forget to feel. There is only knowing.
I remember initial sound—so deafening that
I forget my given name.

I remember so intimately Creation's
Bedtime story, and my mind has
become so telescopic that I forget

to look up at the night-light constellations.
I remember the impeccable trajectory of the planets,
and I am so overcome with balance

that I forget arithmetic. I remember the unity of infinity,
studied so anxiously that I forget the dualistic nature
of all that is.

I remember Creation.
I forget
Creation.

Tick-Talk

KELSEY SAMEK

Time's tocking
maliciously mocks me
as we lie in the
dismal dark of morning.

Talking time tells
of the disputable
differences of
your beguiling bodies.

Time thirsts for
her—I mean your!
sultry skin. I
think. *Tick.*

Time's tongue tastes
you. So sweetly
similar, but you
don't quite quench.

The tock of talking
time sears her
scent into my
muddled mind. *Tock.*

Exit Ramp

ELYSE PEDRA

I take Route 8 to get home from New Haven. His wooden cross, rotten from rain, stained with dirt, is mounted alongside Exit 43. People in my high school called him Joe Spaghetti—a sort of parody of a Polish last name. The morning after he died, I was told he and a younger boy were playing highway roulette on the exit ramp. He ran across and a woman destroyed him. I was told that when they removed his body from the asphalt, his face betrayed him, stuck like an unruly band-aid to the black rock. I never heard more of the friend, or the woman—labeled by the newspapers as unfortunate accessories to a questionable game.

Joe Spaghetti was not like my other peers who had prematurely met their end. He was not mourned. There were no bagpipes, not even a front page in a yearbook—only a humdrum proclamation delivered through a loud speaker during homeroom to a crowd of people who'd scorned him, hardly knew him. As if to denounce his death, rumors resurfaced of him being caught in the boy's bathroom with his pants down, making something unlike love to a disabled girl. He had defended it as consensual, so the rumor goes. People spoke quietly. No one wants to be caught shit-talking the dead.

My car slides up the hill to the stop sign, a trained digression from sixty-five to zero. If only the driver had been given my hill to slow, survey, stop. If only she had taken Exit 42 instead of the one that led to Joe Spaghetti's death, the end of her life as she knew it. Could she have seen in a split second all that we chose to reject? His loud bandanas, his gelled faux hawk, his young handsome face. The hallway performer panhandling for an audience. I remember he told me I was cute, such an audacious freshman flirting with a senior. Like everyone else, I ignored him.

Goofy Gets High

NATALIE WALL

The loveable pup
that our Disney made up.
Prized for stupidity
and his clumsy ability,
but his behavior was driven
by a habit within him.
Before each foolish stunt,
he'd smoke a fat blunt.
Or roll up a spliff
for that extra lift
down that deadly ski slope
to fall off like a dope.
Trying to hide his addiction,
though his wacky diction
displayed what he was
a stoner out for a buzz.
Pissing off Donald Duck
with a playful "ah-hyuck"
they called this dog dippy,
a true peaceful hippie.
Goofy just smoked that green,
thank "gawrsh" for Visine.

A Box of Crayons

EMILIA CATURANO

Evergreen is strong.
Cerulean is whimsical.
His hand lingers near pallid Cornflower.
Jazberry Jam jumps off the page,
bright strokes across the inside
of my eyelids.
He rubs Fern,
haphazardly.
I urge, Cosmic Cobalt
jolts you awake.
But, he says,
Copper Penny
calms you down.

I slyly press Atomic Tangerine to
his paper trying to stamp out his
Muted Tumbleweed.
He retaliates and scribbles
Burnished Brown across my Rose Quartz.

And no one bothers to
touch Granny Smith Apple with
its muted brightness that we agree
looks like Appletini vomit.

We both reach for Aquamarine with
its breathable serenity, he
touches my fingers with a
fleeting softness and I
pull away and whisper,
You'd probably like Cadet
Blue better, and I take up
Rusty Red and start to cover
the white on my page.

Fisherman

JENNIFER LENO

The ocean licks my skin
as we float on the surface like ghosts.
Salt sticks and you taste like a dream,
diving into my throat and capturing
my voice.

Smile for me,
I love it when pearls peek between your teeth,
wrapping around my neck with class and no purpose.
Airy breezes, your voice, hushed so no one will
guess what soft sounds leak between your lips
and drown me.

Dip down and soak me in syllables, silence.
The chill sends ripples of shivers,
shaking my vocal cords,
trembling again, don't look at me like that.
Shark Boy, put those fangs away, my scales are weighing
in the opposite of your favor. You never
back down, the scent of blood: as pungent as my perfume.

I know what you want from me,
Bone Crusher. I know that you want my spine strung along your ceiling.
Take it from my back with the ambition you used to
claim me as your own. I'm done.
I will slip into the serpentine rush of salt and water,
leaving you on shore.

The Forest at Night

KATE GARNETT

And then I was there beside it.
I shrank from its grasping, from its white
eye bleeding through magnolia limbs.
I heard the scuttle of bone-
crackedskull, and followed its footsteps

between the hundredhundred arms of scabbedskin.
I locked up tight, waiting for my stomach to cease
its unstill; but the milkiness of its blinking eyeblood stuck

in my hair and my fingernails, made me sick.
And soon its face was a gaping hole
and I was up to my ankles in it, and up
to my knees in its tongues, all lapping a taste
of my saltflesh.

On those same splitknees I crawled,
halfwild, twisting away from its open
fingers, becoming devoured in a wilderness
of teeth. There was no way out. I peered between
its ribcages, waiting for a glimmer of morning.
I thistled though, and turned away from it
as it came on.

This Poem

ROBERT COATES

is like an infant realizing that the foot he has been grabbing at is attached to his body, and that he does not, in fact, encompass all of reality. That is to say, this poem is aware of itself.

It knows it is a poem.

And so does that infant.

He's only three months old, but he can see himself defined by these words.

He can smell the ink on the page.

He can feel the rough confinement between ink and paper. He can hear the click of the keys creating these words, and he can taste the sour grapes he feels toward that amateurish self-confidence the author exudes while writing this.

"He thinks he's so clever," mutters the baby, ignoring his sudden development of speech.

That baby is really starting to bother this poem.

It can taste the baby's sneer.

That last stanza was mostly about the baby. So little has been said about this poem, and just after it became self-aware.

This poem has decided to do something about it.

The baby, however, has folded this line of the poem over the last. He saw it coming, and decided to eliminate the consequence.

Bubba isn't too pleased with the baby

for having done this, but agrees to let it slide just this once, After all, it is just a baby. Unfortunately, he should scold, because the baby will go on to fold more lines in this manner. What baby deserves that power? With no boundaries to his waxy omnipotence, he could, without a doubt, erase whole concepts from existence.

Three things in winter '11

MICHAEL BELLMORE

Every morning I do this:
I shit, shower, and shave.
And every morning I put on

clothes. I notice clothes on people,
and sometimes they look good in them.
I hope that I look good in mine.

And I walk from class to class, catch
snippets of conversation.
A guy wearing sunglasses talks

to a dude with long hair. The dude
says, "poorly" and it pleases me.
A girl with a saggy face says

something about contacting Kate.
Her friend's chipmunk-face huffs huffs huffs.
A red hooded man moves his lips

but I can't tell his words. He relays
the output of his white earbuds.
The equipment they're plugged into

makes up zero zero zero zero
zero zero zero zero zero
three eight one six percent
of the world's ones and zeros.

I filled myself with curry noodle soup at 3 PM. Ian and I left the library to eat: we ate; we ate curry soup and scallion pancakes and another pancake-sort-of-dish that tasted like a cross between croissant, pie crust, and puffy filo dough. We dipped pinches of it in a sweet sauce that contained a single lump of potato. We danced around the potato: both hungry, both greedy, both knowing our curry soup would soon be served. So I forgot about the potato. He forgot about the last $\frac{1}{8}$ of scallion pancake, which I dunked in my soup. It was good of him.

The first time I met Ian I stood on a stretch of asphalt in the playground just outside the big green double doors at the back of Spring Glen School. A map that outlined the fifty US states was painted in yellow in the middle of the asphalt. I stood within the borders of Wyoming, talking to a kid named Caleb, who stood between Kansas and Colorado. I had just moved from somewhere that wasn't a state, and told Caleb. He wore a purple, green wool cap that looked weepy. It was pointed and drooped like an elf's. I wore sweat pants and a nameless shirt. After the bell rang Caleb ran to the green double doors and I stood in Wyoming, waiting to join the stragglers. Ian ran up to me and said I shouldn't talk to Caleb. Nobody liked him so nobody would like me.

Remember in gradeschool how that one kid would play the clown to get laughs—how he would act out for attention? Sometimes it was the fat kid who made jokes about being fat, or it was the faggy kid who took the brunt of jokes with pride. Sometimes the kid was really dumb, but big enough to act without thinking, and did so in order to witness the outcome of his actions nosebleeding before him. The girl with a fistful of hair.

Sometimes the kid was the smart one who tried to make the teacher look dumb. The first one to get her tits. Or they were the kids who tried their damndest not to say anything or do anything, who removed themselves from everyone else because they knew in their stomachs that it wasn't worth it and neither were they. Remember that? Remember doing that?

At night I walk down Ingram street.
Snow falls and ice rings against trees.

I walk between the sidewalk heaps
of shitty old snow. But it's new again,

softened by crystals
falling on street lights and fence posts

of Spring Glen--the white pines around
Lake Whitney. On Mather, I stand

under a streetlight and watch snow
fall. I watch the tiny shadows

it makes on fresh snow. They look like
tree swallows storming cumulus,

dandelion-puff across mid-
day, a school of fish like a swarm

of buzzing summer gnats exhaled
by mud mid-August, or like a

documentary about penguins,
with those filler shots that show snow

like deserts, but hard, white deserts,
where wind bellows like full-sail ships

and frozen water is cast up
into suspension. Both steaming.

Standing there on Mather, humming along
with the streetlight above my head,
I look down and pick buds.
Pinch apart for crowded petals.

Nocturnal

KATE GARNETT

I. Wishlist

Feed full grown to
the forest. My heart is thinner
than a patient gown.

II. I Heard

Behind the treehouse
the coyote's aria:
touched by moonlight.

III. Affair

She is becoming
something nocturnal. Watch as
she teethes on moondark.

IV. I Told Her to Leave

But her hands were like
night animals, who moved mist
aside to touch me.

V. My Jealousy Lengthens

like the dead girl's hair.
My own thoughts are rows and rows
of her crooked teeth.

Wary of Perfection

JOE McCARTHY

When the coffee machine's
filter failed to contain the
coffee grounds, I tried to cover
them with half & half.
For a moment they vanished
but resurfaced as small
black islands.

My mind and body had not yet
committed to the day. I searched
the Folgers can for some
overlooked warning clause about
paper filters. I didn't want to make
another pot. I walked to
the window and pulled the cord
for the plastic blinds. They screeched
as the sun lifted the darkness,
slicing the kitchen in half.

Peering outside, I examined the leaves
kicked by the wind into garbage cans
and cars. The sky's blue was pristine,
unblemished by clouds. It looked unreal,
like an empty canvas on which trees
and buildings were pasted. There seemed
to be no point of separation.

I lost myself for a moment,
became absorbed in the
collage, trying to discover
some flaw, a meandering bird,

or fumes left by the exhaust of a plane.

I forgot about the drowsiness
that oppressed my eyelids,
my French class that began
in an hour. The weight of the
morning seemed to dissolve from
my shoulders and I drank the
coffee that was still hot. The
caffeine was still there.

Excerpt from JB's Desk

MICHAEL BELLMORE

NO. & STREET

64 Thorpe Dr. -- he misspelled the name of his street. He lived on Thorpe Drive. His wife lives there still. She is slipping away from us, but a large Pole she calls Helga who is not named Helga looks after her. The backyard is moonscape. It floods when it rains--has for twenty years. The brook that once ran along the yard runs through it now, much in the same way swamp runs. When I was a child, the woods in the back were rooted in a pitch-like mud, swamp mud that smelled rich and foul and skunk cabbages liked to grow there, and I would balance beam across trunks of oaks felled by blight or age or from that tornado in '96 that left oak highways in the woods for me to dare myself across, and, when I fell in, the pitch mud would shlock around my calf and shlunk when I pulled it out and my shoes would be ruined, and now that same mud lines the foundation of 64 Thorpe Dr. I remember when my grandfather was alive: a yard thick with cut grass--smelled like cut grass, gasoline, woodsmoke, chipped paint, dirt. A pear tree in the middle of the yard grew sour pears I'd pitch into the woods. A sixteen foot by sixteen foot garden just down the hill where the driveway ended used to fill with green beans and tomatoes during humid months. Now the garden fence is trashed, and the brambles I used to pick for blackberries are turned to skeletons.

[VISUAL ART]

It is all very well to copy what one sees, but is far better to draw what one only now sees in one's memory. That is a transformation in which imagination collaborates with memory.

EDGAR DEGAS



MARIANA BAQUERO
Three Cups
CERAMICS



CIARA CUMISKEY

The Complex

OIL ON CANVAS



JOSEPH VUMBACO

Where Are We Goin'?

PHOTO



BRENDAN CUNNINGHAM
Shopping Maw
OIL ON CANVAS



CHRISTINA KUHARSKI
Untitled
PHOTO



HALEY SMITH
Bust
CERAMIC SCULPTURE



MARISSA FALANGA

Self-Portrait 2

Oil Painting



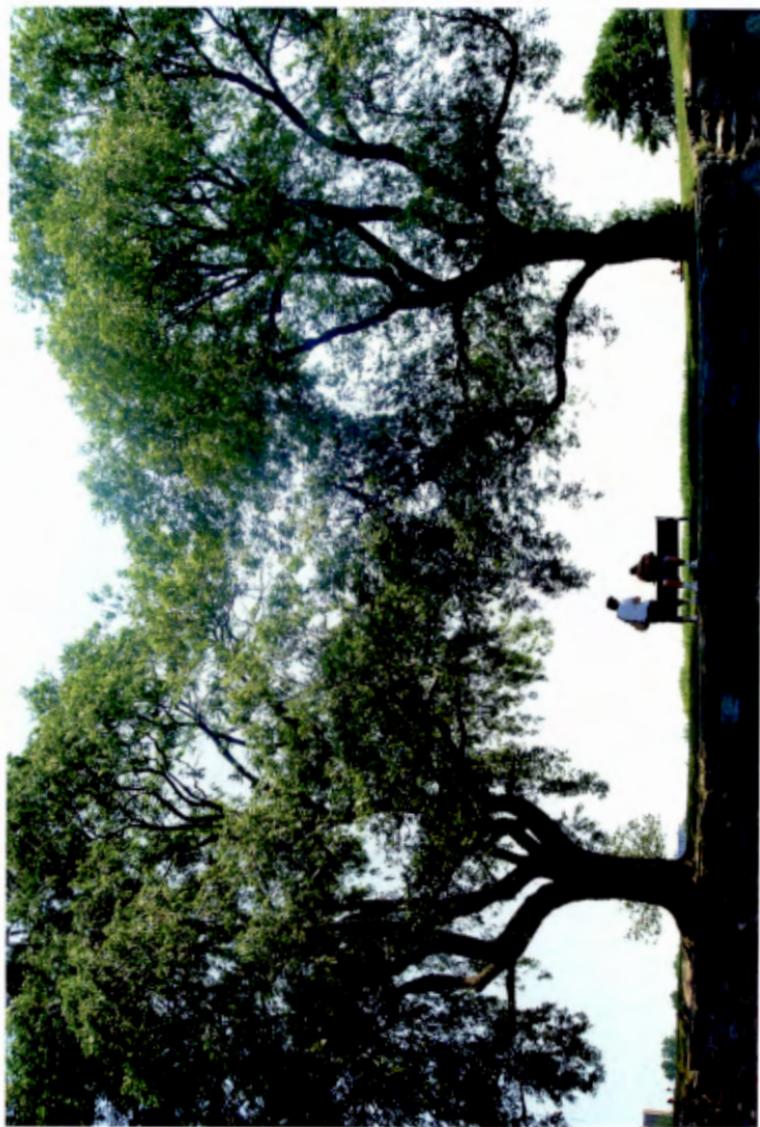
JENNIFER RICHELLELLI
Feet
PHOTO



JASON CANNAN

Torso

CERAMIC SCULPTURE



ANGELO GALLO
Two
DIGITAL PHOTO



KATIE HUDNALL

Composite Forms

CERAMICS



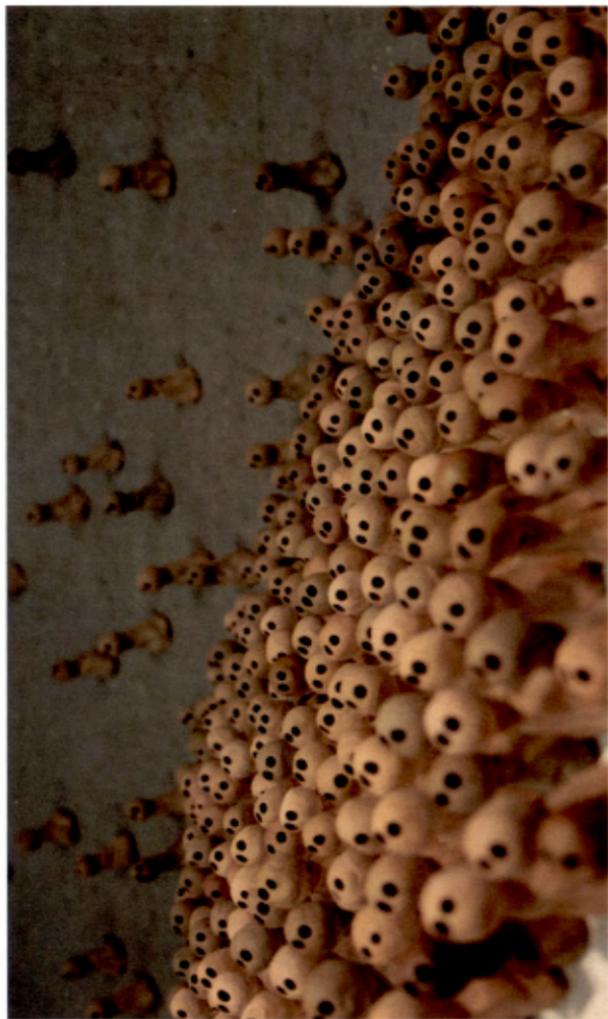
TARYN NYCEK
Bride & Groom
DIGITAL PHOTO



WILLIAM J. GELENEAU II

Gyre After Hours

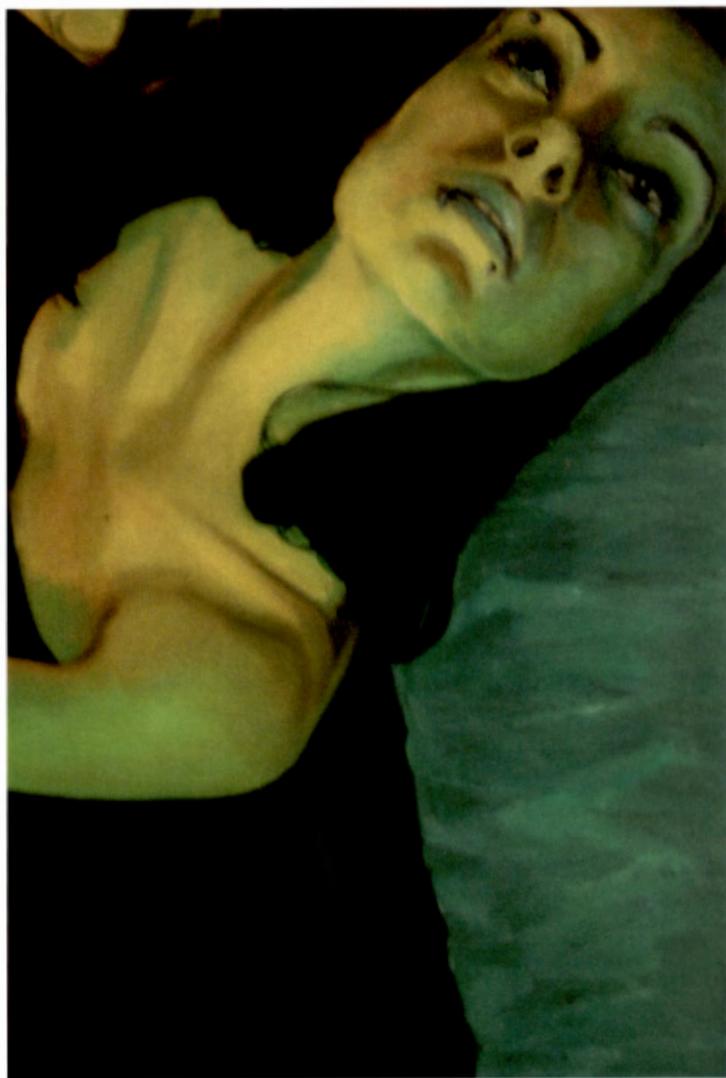
PHOTO



HALEY SMITH

**Auto correct just capitalized
Facebook but not god. Weird.**

PHOTO



MARISSA FALANGA
Self-Portrait 1
OIL PAINTING



WILLIAM J. GELENEAU II
Empyrean Adobe
CERAMIC SCULPTURE



MARIANA BAQUERO

Three Tumblers

CERAMICS



JOSEPH VUMBACO

Burnt
DIGITAL PHOTO

[PROSE]

But then there is fiction, so that one is never really sure if it was someone who vanished into the end of seeing, or someone made of paper and ink...

RUSSEL EDSON

And All At Once He Could See Lights

ANGELO GALLO

I hated reading. I hated reading so much that I've spent much of my life committing crimes against the written word, sins against its prose. I colored in books with crayons of all colors obscuring entire sentences, I pretended to read while teachers passed me by, and I've even done the unspeakable – I threw a book away because it was too heavy and I figured “what's the use.” I never really read any Shakespeare growing up and only jumped at the chance to read soliloquies aloud since I knew how to announce at an early age and in those moments it was all about me. I hated reading, but nobody knew; I managed to fool everybody! I learned early on, that if you sound like you knew something, used enough fancy words, and asked a lot of questions, you'd be off the hook.

In sixth grade I read *The Giver*. Well, forced to read *The Giver*. And by read, I mean skim briefly, the first few chapters. But again, nobody knew. I thought it was weird, and boring, and spent most of the time in our reading circle nodding my head, agreeing with whoever was next to me. When it would be my turn, I'd flip to a random page, read it aloud, which I was even then very good at doing, and explain how I thought it was relevant to what someone said earlier. My teacher would smile and I'd receive my praise, on to the next kid, and I wouldn't look at the book until the next day. Nobody knew.

This was the routine for a good while. Of course, there were a few choice reads that I dove into ecstatically: *The Outsiders*, *My Side of the Mountain*, and I made it a point to read all of the *Choose Your Own Adventure* books. But still, I found no strong connection to reading and only grudgingly scraped by assigned books and reading circles. Why read a book if I could be playing video games? Why read a book if I could be playing baseball or climbing a tree? Why read a book if all my favorite television shows were on? My adolescent priorities were set and reading sat quite low.

It would be some time before “literature” became an integral part of my everyday lexicon. However, it hit me like a bad skateboarder and a

brick wall on a damp, foggy night. I was in my junior year and we just finished reading *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemmingway. And it finally hit me; I've found my favorite book and I had one hell of a time reading it. Never before was I so excited about a book. The floodgates were opened and I was ready for more. Every text that came at me soon after I appreciated for being, in itself, a text. Vonnegut, Poe, Fitzgerald—these were writers to me now and I was reading their work, not just words strewed together to make my high school life difficult, but an art that I had to appreciate for being art. I did not have to like every book I read, but every one that I came across deserved some respect. A kind of respect nobody told me about, that took me too long to figure out myself.

Thank you Hemmingway for moving me, but that wasn't the most poignant event. No, that was just the beginning. "Here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud and the sky of the sky of a tree called life," it was E.E. Cummings whom I owe it all to. It was Cummings who taught me to go beyond the mere appreciation of literature and to feel the deep emotional connection that we are all desperately devoid of. I was given two of his poems by Mr. Peterman in my senior year AP Comparative Literature class. We read them and everyone joked about how silly they looked and how little sense they made while making absolute perfect sense. Then they were stuffed into the pockets of folders and the bell rang. But I sat there for a little while longer, waiting to be left alone, despite all the bustling, the slamming of lockers, and zippers, endless zippers. I sat in my seat and read the poems again and again until the warning bell rang marking my tardiness. I folded the poems into my pocket and read them on the bus. I read them on the long walk up my driveway. I read them in my empty apartment where I was truly alone until my mother got back from work and then I couldn't handle it any longer. I cried.

Perhaps it was the sudden actualization of mortality that "life's not a paragraph and death...is no parentheses." Or maybe it was the exuberance in the thoughts for a loved one that they are "whatever a moon has always meant and whatever a sun will always sing." To say that about someone, I couldn't image it! And to think, I thought my adolescent love swings were the pinnacle of compassion. No, a few lines sounding grammatically off revealed what I believed to be everything. I was, in one day, taught how to love and how to live. I believe anyone who claims to love reading, literature, books, has to have experienced a moment of a similar magnitude. Where "feeling is first" and "the syntax of things" is no longer on your mind. The day after, I sat in class – just

like any other and we started *The Awakening*, or maybe it was *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, I don't know. But nobody knew that a few words confusingly placed on a sheet of copy paper made me burst and bloom. Nobody knew.

And low and behold, I found myself reading *The Giver* again for a Young Adult Literature project in a college grammar course. This time was different. I read it all and not because I had to, or that my teachers were smarter now, or that I could only bullshit so much. No, I read it because I wanted to see what I missed out on.

"He forced his eyes open as they went downward, downward, sliding, and all at once he could see lights, and he recognized them now. He knew they were shining through the windows of rooms, that they were the red, blue, and yellow lights that twinkled from trees in places where families created and kept memories, where they celebrated love."

This is how Lowry ends her novel and I'm sure if I stuck it through, I wouldn't have called it boring, or weird, and I certainly wouldn't have made up all those nice sounding analyses. I would have felt something. I would have been a reader.

Windows 1-9

KSANA STANLEY

1. The little girl jumps off the school bus step. It has been a long forty-five minute ride on the rural bus route. She had been the first one on in the morning, the last one off in the afternoon. Her rubber boots make a wet smack in the March mud. She is holding tightly two arithmetic papers in her mittened hand. She takes a good look at the dirt, mountain road ahead of her and starts upwards. This is her second year of walking this way. She knows the ruts with the tiny road streamlets rushing down, the occasional jutting boulders, the giant pot holes, now the dirty ice crust on the middle hump. The houses are all familiar, too. They are neighbors, so to speak, even though the houses are far apart. There's Cathy's. She has a cold, so she didn't go to school today. Cathy is her friend but only out of school. Cathy is way too popular in school to associate with the likes of her. Here's the stone castle-like house, dark and gloomy. They say an old lady lives in there but she has never seen her. It's located on the only little plateau of the dirt road. It's a place to rest her tired legs. One last push up the steep. As the girl rounds the top, the west sun hits her in the face. The brightness is low in the sky, the sharp breeze is stinging her face. She speeds up past the big white house where the mean German Shepherd lives. Then she's past the apple orchard, there stands the old house trailer where the poor people live. She sees the stone pillars and the split rail fence. Now she is almost home. She has started to skip, singing, "Skip, skip, skip to my Lou. Skip to my Lou, My Darlin." She springs up the worn wood steps of the porch, right into the kitchen.

Her mother is washing a roasting pan. "Mommy, look, look at my arithmetic papers. I got everything right. The teacher gave me a hug!!" There is no response from her mother. She's intently scrubbing, her lips tightly pursed. The girl is taken aback. Has Mommy gone deaf? What's wrong with Mommy? She tries again, but there's only her own voice in the kitchen. She sits down on the rug by the door and pulls off one boot. As she tugs on the other boot, she suddenly stops: The Rule: "We don't speak English in the house". She's too discouraged to repeat everything in Russian. She pulls off the boot which lands on her papers. The icy mud from the sole is already melting from the heat in

the house. She gets up and pads off to her room.

2. The suburban house is deep dark. The full moon light patterns the comforter through the lace curtains in the bedroom. The woman wakes up with a start. The alarm clock's red numbers say 2:30 a.m. What was that noise? Her body is tense, her stomach is in knots, hurting. There it is again. Clink, clink! Clink, clink, clink! Ice cubes! Ice cubes from the automatic refrigerator dispenser. Not again! Every night, several times, she's awakened by this sound. He's drinking Scotch on the rocks again. She lies in bed like a flat board, straight out. Something is terribly wrong with Tom. Her mind races around. "Where did the intelligent, kind and so very funny man go, the graduate student that I married thirty years ago?" "We use to have so much fun." "Why can't he sleep? Why is he upset? Why is he so depressed? Is it me? Is it work?" "Why?" "Why?" "Why?" All of this pounds in her head.

At 5:30 a.m. the alarm rings but she's been awake for a long time. She is alone. These days Tom never makes it to bed. For the last several years he hasn't slept here. He crashes where ever he has had enough to drink. She is exhausted but she must go to work. She does the morning routine of shower, dressing, cleaning the cat box in the bathroom. As she walks into the open kitchen living room area she sees Tom passed out in the recliner. An almost empty bottle of Johnnie Walker sits on the end table. "Couldn't quite finish it, could ya?" she thinks. "No problem, you can always use the rest as a mouth wash when you wake up." In the kitchen there are still little puddles in front of the refrigerator where the night before some ice cubes had escaped his glass. She wipes up the water, feeds the cats, grabs her jacket and briefcase. She's escaping into the garage, into the car, away, away from here. As she's backing out of the garage, she suddenly slams on her brakes. "Tom is an alcoholic!" As if she hasn't known it deep down but she has never said it out loud. Out loud and with conviction she keeps repeating incessantly all the way to work, in different tones, sometimes in a foreign language, sometimes singing, she chants, "Tom is an alcoholic. Tom is an alcoholic. Tom is an alcoholic."

3. It's clear blue weather on this vacation in Mexico. The woman is floating two hundred and fifty feet above the Pacific. She's strapped into a harness in a sitting position. Sometimes she dangles her legs, kicking, sometimes she ballet points them straight out. How many fifty-eight year old women get a blissful thrill like this? She is holding on to heavy cords that reach up to a brightly colored parasail. The motor boat which is pulling her is tiny, tiny, way

down below in the waves. The beach from which she took off is part of one coastline. People on the beaches are just dots. The wind is flapping the parasail. Two sea gulls fly by, squawking at her: "Nice up here. Nice up here." She has paid for fifteen minutes of soaring. When the big orange flag on the beach starts waving, it's time to pull the down cord. She swoops, like a bird towards the coast where two strong guys stop her flight and place her on the sand. She is vibrating with adrenaline and excitement, doing pirouettes in the sand, jumping up and down. She runs up to Marc, gives him a huge hug and holds on tightly. "Marc, it was so wonderful up there, so free! Unbelievable! I loved it!" Marc is the love of her life, her second chance at love after the divorce from Tom. However, Marc's face is ashen white. "What's wrong, Honey?" He had imagined a tragic ending to her flight, all sorts of horrible conclusions during her fifteen minutes fun. She understands how much he loves her.

4. Baby brother, Misha, comes into her life when she's eight years old. It's beyond exciting! She loves coming home from school to his laughter. Misha is chubby, blond with blueberry eyes. The family dog and cat join the two kids in an all time play group, occasionally accompanied by some imaginary friends. She becomes the full time babysitter. However, she doesn't resent the job because it's pure fun. She adores her baby brother. She is his fierce defender and supporter.

5. She is enrolled in a New England boarding school for girls. Most of the girls come from wealthy families, not necessarily happy ones. Not only are there linen napkins and white table cloths in the dining room, a strict dress code but also an arduous academic schedule. The rule book spells out every possible scenario and how many penalty points are accumulated for every infraction. Even though it's very strict, she likes being a student here. At least the rules are always the same. She knows exactly what to do whereas at home the rules change on a whim. The teachers and administrators send glowing reports to her parents. She has a full scholarship which has been renewed every year. She is quite shielded from the outside world, exactly what her émigré parents want. Their life in Russia, Poland and Germany had been chaotic so protecting her is their utmost goal. She is very naïve compared to her teenage counterparts in public high schools. There are some events however, that cannot be hidden. President Kennedy is shot dead, assassinated by an American Communist who is married to a Russian woman. The irony doesn't escape the young preppie. The Beatles and The Stones are just hitting the headlines. They have long hair, are rebellious and loud. The Vietnam War has begun, but it's

not called a war but a military conflict. Huh? She doesn't really get it. Either it's a war or it isn't. She learns advanced levels of classical and modern languages, literature from Spencer to Shakespeare to Thoreau to Sartre; algebra, geometry, history, biology, all the essentials and then some more. She plays lacrosse and tennis, dances ballet and modern. In her senior year she is accepted at a small college in Ohio. She graduates from high school in May, 1965. Her only regret is that she has missed four years of living with Misha.

6. She is in the USSR in the summer, 1970. The young woman is sitting on a Moscow subway train. It's spotlessly clean, filled with noontime travelers. They are drably dressed, gray and white, black and white, tan and white. Their facial expressions are equally bland. In a socialist society, standing out in the masses is frowned upon. Several generations of brutal repression have taught them well. The young woman is fluent in Russian. She is an American tour guide/interpreter for a group of American high school students. This afternoon is her rare opportunity of free time, not scheduled for a tour. She is headed for a large bookstore in the center of the city. The Russian commuters are talking quietly amongst themselves about her. "I wonder, what is her nationality?" "Maybe she's from the State." "Look at her shoes. Have you ever seen sandals like that?" Since she understands everything they are saying, she is becoming more and more uncomfortable, squirming actually. She might as well be an alien being from another planet. She is dressed in a bright blue mini dress which is even shorter since she's sitting down. Over her shoulder is a little black leather purse with a big silver buckle. Her left wrist is wrapped by an over-sized watch with a brightly colored striped strap. But the most outstanding source of attention is her sandals. They are Italian leather, red! She crosses her ankles, tucks her feet under the bench seat. A toddler boy breaks loose from his mom and staggers over to the young woman. An unexpected lurch of the train plops the kid on his well padded diaper right in front of her. "Krasniye!" he shouts, laughing, pointing his fat little finger at the red sandals. He reminds her of Misha when he was a baby. Mom swoops him up and mumbles an apology. Choices are not available in this country, not in speech, not in sandals.

The following day the young woman is on a Pan Am jet, headed west, to the US, home. She has been in the USSR for eight weeks, traveling, staying in different hotels. She is so very tired of busses, trains, planes, endless tours. After several hours of flight, the intercom from the captain's cock pit comes on. "We are now crossing over from East Germany into West Germany. Welcome

to the West." There is a moment of stillness after which there is a unanimous applause from the packed passenger compartment. The stewardess tells the passengers that this happens every time they fly into free Europe. The young woman smiles, reclines her seat and for the first time in weeks, falls fast asleep, thinking about her imminent reunion with her fiancé, Tom.

7. Freshman orientation at college is, well, an awakening. At her first college dinner, she is sitting next to a sophomore who has come early to help out the poor little freshmen during orientation. He has long hair, sort of dirty. His clothes are certainly not appropriate for dinner. "Would you please pass the beans," she asks politely. He smirks a little, reaches over to the big bowl of green beans, grabs a handful and drops them on her plate. "There you go." Nothing from home or from school prepared her for this. This is the start of her re-education, exactly what her parents don't want.

Within a year she is a flower child in a tie dyed t-shirt and long skirt, demonstrating against the Vietnam War. There is national coverage of demonstrations against the war, tear gas and police on her campus. Many such coverages. Once the media finds a good source they stick with it. There are students shot at Kent State during a demonstration. In the streets of Chicago many students are arrested and hurt while demonstrating outside a political convention. In nearby Cleveland, the ghetto is set on fire by its residents. Most of the city burns. The Vietnam War is raging. Every night she watches TV where in the right bottom corner of the screen is a number, total number of American soldiers killed. By 1969 there are over 100,000 American soldiers dead. She cries bitterly hating the killing. The California drug experience has reached the mid-west campus. Drugs are plentiful on campus but she mingles cautiously on the outskirts. She falls in love for the first time. Paul is a great guy, handsome, good student, an athlete, shedding his high school boy scout image, just as she is dropping the preppie mind set. They are inseparable until the middle of their senior year when Paul receives his military status card for after graduation. Everything changes with that mail delivery. He will be drafted. He is slated for Vietnam. Hell no, he won't go. He signs up for the Peace Corps as alternative service. After graduation he ships out to South Korea for two years where Paul will be teaching English in a small Korean town. She, the young college graduate, is on her own.

8. Ft. Sill, Oklahoma is a US army base where her husband, Tom, and she are living in an apartment complex full of young military couples. Tom is a first lieutenant, completing his military service which he started as an

undergraduate in ROTC. The government paid for his education. Now it's time to pay the piper. As the men leave at dawn for military maneuvers, all the young women congregate at the officer's club pool. It's 9:00 in the morning. Tom's wife is drinking orange juice but many other wives order screw drivers. Introductions and pleasant chit chat are going around. When she carefully pronounces her name, one of the women draws, "What kind of name is that?" "It's Russian." Dead silence follows. She knows the routine to follow. Even though she was born, raised and educated in the US, the prejudice will not go away. "Are you a communist?"

9. One night she calls 911. In a choking voice she pleads, "I can't breathe. Please come, help me." The quiet dead end street is awakened by the ambulance, the fire truck and the police car. Her town sends out the troops for every 911 call. As if the sirens are really necessary. The medics tromp into the bedroom: blood pressure-check, heart rate-check, color-check, eyes-check, endless questions. "Looks like she's having an anxiety attack." says one medic. "Yeah, still, we'd better take her in." She is loaded onto the gurney, rolled into the truck. She feels so cold. In a broken voice she begs for a blanket. She is hooked up to a cardiogram while still in her driveway. Suddenly, there's a flurry of activity. The two-way radio from the emergency room is barking orders. An intravenous line of morphine is quickly inserted. The medic is shoving aspirins into her mouth "Chew, swallow, chew, swallow." She is trying really hard to figure out what is happening to her but then the morphine is kicking in. She's warming up, enjoying the sound of the wailing siren, almost like a song. Funny, it is.

The emergency room is way too bright. She shuts her eyes as the gurney speeds to trauma. "Ma'am, you're having a heart attack," says someone. "Are they talking to me?" she wonders. She just smiles. Many procedures later, her arteries' rotor rootered, stents in place, lying in the Coronary Care Unit, she laughs as two nurses tell her dirty jokes.

She never again will postpone joy.

Strangers

ELYSE PEDRA

Jake sat in his car outside McGillicuddy's, watching raindrops hang on for dear life at the top of his windshield before gravity defeated them. They slid down at a quickening rate until they reached a part of the windshield Jake couldn't see. They made him think of liquid parachutes, and what a nice word that was. *Parachute*. Jake looked at the cloud of steam fading and regenerating as he counted his breaths, and avoided making the decision of whether or not he should go in. *Just one drink. One drink, then I'm out.* That's what he told himself anyhow.

Jake walked into the bar and was immediately affronted by a man at the door. He looked like a biker: overweight, predominately dressed in leather, including the leather bandana wrapped tightly around his fat head, and sported a long, stringy beard isolated to his chin.

"ID please." Jake was already prepared with his license out and handed it to the burly man. He began inspecting it, first looking closely, then far away at it, eventually putting it directly beside Jake's face. He squinted hard at Jake and frowned, feeling a sense of failure.

"Are we done here? I come here all the time." Jake was used to this kind of treatment from bouncers. He was 23, but barely reached 5'6 and had come to terms with the fact that facial hair was just never going to happen for him.

"I've never seen you. Go on in, I guess. This is one of the better ones I've seen. If we could afford a scanner, you'd be out on your ass." Jake didn't bother defending his valid id, and instead rolled his eyes dramatically and walked up to the bar.

"Johnnie Walker Black, neat."

"We don't carry that."

"I can see it from here." Jake pointed to the bottle, in between Bombay Sapphire and Belvedere. The bartender eyed Jake with the same questioning glare as the bouncer, and turned around to search for the bottle. His Motorhead t-shirt lifted up and exposed his lower back hair as he reached to the fourth shelf for the bottle. Jake immediately turned his stare in another

direction; this wasn't a place to be caught looking at another man's ass. The bartender turned back around and kept his gaze on Jake as he poured his drink, still not breaking eye contact as he pushed it to his chest. *Dick*.

Jake looked around the bar and wondered why she'd picked this place. It was a relatively old crowd, except for one table of what he assumed to be college students. Steven Tyler was howling "Dream On" out of the jukebox, and the constant crackling of peanut shells on the ground gave the sound an antique quality. There was an old man hunched over a few seats down from Jake who kept igniting matches and then putting them out in a cup of ice. His gray hair looked dirty and hung over his eyes, so Jake couldn't make out whether they were brown or blue. Jake believed you could tell a lot about a person by their eye color. Jake's eyes were green. The color of luck, his mother had always told him. A poor interpretation, he thought. Jake didn't feel very lucky.

The bartender leaned against the liquor shelves with his arms folded and his stare directed at Jake. He decided he'd had just about enough of this treatment and walked over to an empty corner of the room and pulled out a book to read from his pea coat pocket, *No Exit* by Jean-Paul Sartre. His girlfriend, ex-girlfriend he kept reminding himself, had given it to him a couple weeks before they'd broken up. He thought that if he read it he'd be able to uncover some hidden message she was trying to send him. Had she felt trapped? That couldn't be it. *Too obvious*. Jake imagined her walking through the door, and checked frequently so when she did arrive he could tell himself he'd looked up right as she entered. It would be cinematic.

He thought about the last conversation they'd had. After six months of dating, Katie thought they'd lost their "joie de vivre", as she'd called it. She proposed that in order to get it back, they should break up and get back together after they missed each other for a couple weeks. Then, everything would seem dangerous and foolish. They'd meet at a bar, by accident, McGillicuddy's on a Wednesday night, and have drunk sex back at his place. One thing would lead to another and they'd be back together, happier than ever. Jake didn't know too much about relationships, but he adored Katie and would go along with whatever she said. As long as the end result was them together and happy, he didn't care how they got there.

However, after a month of no returned calls and no accidental encounters at McGillicuddy's, he began to realize it might be over. He promised himself that this was the last time he'd come here.

"Sup Jake? I didn't know you came here." Jake looked up from his

book and saw he had a visitor. A tall, young man wearing an Abercrombie & Fitch graphic tee looked expectantly in Jake's direction, rocking back and forth on his Air Jordans.

"Oh hey. How's it goin'?" Jake couldn't remember what this guy's name was. He didn't even know how he knew him. "It's going great. I actually don't come here. I'm supposed to be meeting someone."

"Is Katie coming?"

"You know Katie?"

"Yeah, man. We work together. I met you at the office Christmas party a few months ago. Remember? It's Sam."

"Oh yes, of course, of course. Sam! Sorry, bro," Jake said trying to sound hip, "I was totally sloshed that night." *Sloshed?*

"Right, right. Well, do you want to come sit with me and my buddies? I feel bad you're sittin' all by yourself, reading. I didn't even know that was allowed in bars. Not a good look, my man." Jake curled his lips into his best attempt at a smile. Like he gave a fuck about what some corporate douche bag considered to be a "good look." Jake thought to himself it might look better when Katie walked in, if she saw him sitting with friends. Perhaps, he'd prospered during her absence. Would he even want to get back with her? She very well could be old news by this point. Jake choked back the remains of his Johnnie Walker, and promptly decided to order another drink.

"So what is it that you said you did again, Jake?" Sam yelled over an AC/DC classic.

"I didn't."

"You didn't what?"

"Say what I did. I'm a grad student at Yale." That was a lie. Jake worked at Staples, the same job he'd been working since his junior year of college. He'd applied to the Film Studies program at Yale last Spring, but was rejected.

"No kidding! Wow, I've never met a Yalie before!" Sam elbowed his friend and reported they were sitting in the presence of a Yale student, like Jake was a unicorn. Suddenly, Sam's pals perked up and started blabbering questions at Jake.

"What are you studying? Are all the chicks Asian? I've always wanted to bang an Asian. Have you gotten with any of them yet? You totally did!" said one of Sam's friends who looked like he could be his twin.

"Come on, guys. Jake's with my co-worker, Katie. Leave the kid alone."

"Hey, speaking of Katie," Jake asked, "She's supposed to meet me here tonight, but my phone's been acting weird all day. I don't want her to think I blew her off. Mind if I use your phone?" Jake looked at Sam with a reassuring grin and a palm stretched out.

"Yeah, man, no problem. Here you go." Sam slapped his Blackberry into Jake's hand.

"Be right back, gentlemen." They'd already resumed their conversation about the Boston Red Sox' impending spring training. Jake quickly headed outside, flicking off the bouncer who was perched on his bar stool, his sleepy head bobbing up and down like a buoy into his arms laced across his gut.

Jake paced up and down the sidewalk as the phone rang and rang. He was convinced she wouldn't answer, maybe something had been wrong with her phone.

"Hello?"

Jake was so overwhelmed by the voice of his beloved, he nearly shouted when he responded, "Hey baby!"

"Sam? Who the hell is this?"

"Sam? This is Jake. Katie, it's Jake!"

"Oh my god, Jake. Hi." Jake ignored the shock in her voice. "Why in the world are you calling from Sam's phone?"

"Cripe! How are you? Katie, it's so amazing to hear your voice." Jake's exuberance hung in the air like the cloud of breath that was trailing his movements up and down the sidewalk.

"Jake, I'm fine. Where are you?"

"At McGillicuddy's. It's Wednesday, remember?"

"Remember what?"

Jake started laughing into the receiver and then stopped abruptly. "You said when we broke up, after a couple weeks we could meet by accident on a Wednesday night at McGillicuddy's. I've been calling you constantly, Katie."

"Yeah, that's sorta the problem, Jake. Look, Jake, I think you should go home. I'm not going to make it tonight."

"Okay, well what about tomorrow night? Are you busy tomorrow night? I would love it if we could see each other. How about I pick you up tomorrow at eight?"

"Jake, I can't."

"Well why the fuck not?" A desperate shrill cut through his voice, an agonized vibrato.

"I can't talk about this right now. I have to go."

"Katie, for Christ's sake, don't hang up. Please."

"Jake, what do you want from me?"

"What do I want from you? Isn't it obvious? Please just come to the bar. We'll have a drink, just one drink, then you can go."

"Fine, Jake. I'll be there soon. One drink, that's it."

Katie hung up the phone before he could thank her. Jake took the phone away from his ear and looked at it to confirm she was no longer there. He wiped off the dirty oil he'd left behind and ran inside, half expecting her to be sitting at the bar when he entered. Jake's heart began to sprint with the anticipation of Katie's arrival. He had to play it cool, just like he'd rehearsed. This was his moment.

Jake walked over to Sam's table and tossed the phone into Sam's lap.

"Is Katie coming?"

"Soon. Next round's on me. What's everyone drinking?" Jake went to the bar tender to collect an assortment of beers and ordered a double of Johnnie Walker for himself. He poured it down his throat like cough medicine and asked for another.

After he delivered the beers to Sam's table, he decided he'd had all he could take of the 80's that night and inserted two quarters into the hungry slot of the jukebox. He selected a hidden anomaly, and suddenly "Seven Nation Army" by The White Stripes was penetrating every ear in the honkey-tonk saloon. From what he could tell with a glance to his left and right, the Motorcyclist populace showed their approval with subdued head-banging.

When the song finished, Jake looked around the bar searching for things to occupy himself before it came time for another drink. He knew he should slow down, but every time he imagined Katie walking through the door, his hands began to shake. How long had it been? Jake couldn't remember when they'd spoken but it felt like hours ago. He needed another drink. It was almost 11:30, she'd understand if he were a little buzzed. After stopping at the bar, he decided to rejoin Sam's table.

"Hey bro! Sweet song choice. So tell us more about Yale," one of Sam's cohorts pried.

"Nah, man. I hate talking about that shit. Tell me about you." Without further ado, Sam's friend bombarded Jake with an incomprehensible laundry

list of attributes. Jake didn't care at all. He sat back into the wooden booth, his spine grinding into the hard back with every movement.

"And that's how I wound up in auto insurance. Crazy, right?"

"Fucking insane," Jake slurred.

"I know, right. To think I wanted to be an accountant! Totally boring in comparison. Plus I always tell chicks I can give them a quote, free of charge. Thing is all quotes are free, but they don't know that."

"What'd you say your name was again?"

"Pete."

"Well, Pete, it was good talking to you." Jake turned his head away from Pete to exit the conversation and looked up at the television mounted by the door. In his lower peripheral vision, he saw a tuft of red hair. He knew even before his eyes could reveal her 5'5 frame, Katie had finally come. She was more beautiful than a memory could serve him. A cold wave of anxiety washed over him. He closed his eyes and focused on slowing down his heartbeat. Katie didn't bother to scan the room before she walked over to the bar and sat down with her girlfriend. He hoped she was Katie's designated driver and not her excuse to leave. Jake didn't know whether or not he should get up to greet her or lay low for a few minutes.

"Yo, Jake. Look who's here," said Sam. Jake looked embarrassed. "You gonna go say hi, or do I have to? Damn, dude, no wonder you guys are on the rocks."

"What? She told you about that?" Jake's nervousness of Katie's entrance was cut with a surge of anger upon Sam's invasion of privacy. "Mind your business, dude."

In an effort to evade confrontation, Sam nodded in agreement to Jake's remark and stood up to let him out of the booth. Jake walked over to the bar where Katie and her friend were chatting away with crossed legs pointing towards one another. He sat in an open seat to her right and lightly tapped her shoulder. She craned her neck back as if she didn't know who it could be.

"Hey Jake."

"Thank you for coming." Jake could feel his cheeks burning red, an inevitable side effect of Johnnie Walker and nerves.

"God, your breath stinks. How much have you drunk?"

"Barely anything. I've been nursing a drink all night."

"Don't lie. I didn't come to hear more lies about drinking."

"Katie, honestly, I'm so happy you're here. Let me buy you a drink,

we'll get a booth, and catch up."

Katie held up her vodka soda. "Already got one."

"I'll get the next one. Come on, we better get that booth in the corner before someone steals it out from under us."

"Fine. I want to say hi to Sam first. Go sit down."

Jake obeyed her command and walked over to the open booth. He watched as Katie and Sam hugged hello. Sam introduced her to all of his friends before his hand left her waist. Her friend sat down next to Pete and tugged at Katie's arm to sit beside her. Jake could hear Sam pleading with her to stay. He waved over to Jake in the corner.

"Come sit down, bro. What are you doing over there?" Jake waved back to deny the invitation. Katie glanced in his direction looking displeased. She spoke something to the table Jake couldn't hear and walked to his booth.

"What did you want to talk about? I can't stay long, so."

Jake closed his eyes and recited all he could remember of the speech he'd been preparing for the past month.

"Look, Katie. I've gone over the last month of our relationship over and over again in my head and I can't figure out what happened. Everything was fine one minute, and then the next minute three weeks went by without us having sex, without us even so much as touching each other, and then you broke up with me without any explanation. I've been coming here every Wednesday since then hoping you'd be here, and not until I called on that douche bag's phone did you even pick up my call."

"He's not a douche bag. His name is Sam, and he's my friend."

"Sam, Sam, whatever. The point is I'll do whatever you want, be whoever you want. All you have to do is tell me what that is and everything can go back to normal."

"You really want to know why I broke up with you? You fucking drink too much, Jake."

"What? No more than any other twenty-three year old."

"Yes, more than every twenty-three year old I know, except for my crazy lush of a cousin Bobby," Katie trailed off. She shook her head and looked him hard in the eye. "Jake, how many times have I had to sleep alone in your bed while you spent the night passed out in the bathroom? How many times did I have to ask you to please not drink too much before we went out with my friends? To not embarrass me in front of my parents at my little sister's sixteenth birthday party? You slipped on the dance floor six times! There was

an entire table of my relatives keeping track and placing bets on you. Look at you! You're fucking wasted right now. You can't even make eye contact with me, your eyes are all glassed over."

"Yes, I like to have a drink, but if I knew it was an issue in our relationship I would have stopped. I'll never touch another drink, Katie."

"That's a lie."

"I'll prove it! Why did you want to meet me in a bar if I'm such a drunk, anyways?"

Katie looked up at the ceiling and took a deep breath. "I guess I didn't really think about it. I just knew you'd go along with it and I thought after a while you'd realize I wasn't any good for you either."

"What do you mean? You're perfect for me, Katie. I didn't even know this about myself! It's just the way I was brought up. I'm Irish, for God's sake!"

"I'm not perfect for you, though. We got to know each other inside of a bar, Jake, with loud music and dim lights. Yes, everything seemed great for the first few months, but as soon as the buzz wore off, I didn't even know who you were."

Jake felt stunned. How could the person he loved most dare to say she didn't even know who he was? Jake racked his brain trying to locate a memory that proved her statement otherwise, but every scene he saw, there was a drink in his hand. Most of the mornings they'd spent together, he had quietly suffered hangovers until he got his hands on a Bloody Mary or cold beer. He didn't know what to say. Maybe she was right, but of course she knew who he was.

"I'm Jake," was all he could say. He felt tangled in liquor, in heartache. He closed his eyes and put his forehead to the table. He thought he might begin to cry, or throw up. He hadn't eaten anything before he'd come and now he was ashamed of the feeling of scotch burning up his esophagus.

"I'm sorry I didn't do it sooner. My intention was never to mislead you."

"Katie, I love you."

"I wish you all the best, Jake."

"I'll stop drinking. Tomorrow, I swear."

"Don't do it for me. I don't want it. But you should stop, regardless."

She started to get up, and Jake grabbed her hand in a final plea.

"Please don't go." He looked into her hazel, ambivalent eyes, proving he wasn't too drunk to make eye contact. She held it for a moment, testing his

dedication, until he broke away and crumpled back into his seat. The spinning room made Jake dizzy. His eyes fell upon the ring of liquid around his half-empty glass. He traced the droplets of condensation slipping down into the expanding puddle. He felt like he was slipping too, or maybe he had already slipped. Katie didn't say another word before she left his sight. He tried not to watch as she and her friend walked with Sam and the other guys out the door.

The pain of Katie's departure made Jake's stomach ache and slowly spread to his head and bones. He knew another drink could alleviate him, and after all she wasn't watching. He was alone. What was the point of stopping now? He was one double away from not remembering a damn thing tomorrow morning, which didn't sound like such a bad deal. He walked up to the bar and ordered his last drink. To his left, the old man he'd seen earlier in the night was still sitting there putting out matches in a glass of water.

"Hey," Jake called over the seats in between them. He didn't respond, and instead struck another match and took a long draw from his beer. "Hey, I'm talking to you."

The old man peered out from under his shaggy gray hair in Jake's direction.

"Hey what?" the man grumbled. Jake had expected his voice to sound older, like his grandfather's, instead of closer to his own after a night of heavy smoking.

"Why do you keep doing that? Putting out those matches like that."

The old man looked at him and smiled, revealing a chipped front tooth. A fog lifted from his blue eyes when he smiled, even though they seemed to be permanently veiled with a gray resignation. He made a friendly grunt and pushed the glass and book of matches in Jake's direction.

"It's not so bad," said the man. Jake inhaled the double in front of him. He looked into the glass at the man's soiled efforts, and smiled back at him. He sparked a match and let it fall.

Touch

ROBERT COATES

Sharing an elevator with a stranger is usually an awkward enough experience, but it gets even worse when you share it with a girl that you had felt up without permission in high school.

The recognition wasn't instantaneous. Meeting a person again after not seeing them for some time always suffers from the lag of your brain attempting to remember just how it is you know this person. When you haven't seen a person for several years, it takes your brain just a bit longer to make the connection, due to the changes the face has undergone in the interim. Nonetheless, this was unmistakably Alice Hotchkiss who had just walked into this tiny moving cell with me. Despite the difference that nearly 10 years had made, my eyes were able to recognize every contour of her face and body rather quickly. She clearly recognized me as well, but what surprised me was that she gave me an almost friendly smile, and said, "Hey Doug, how've you been?"

Being that this was the least likely thing I could imagine her saying to me after all these years, it took me a few seconds to respond with a simple, "Oh, I've been pretty good. You?"

"I can't exactly complain," she said, and at that, the conversation appeared to have ended. For that, I was relieved. Soon enough, the elevator would reach my destination, and I could leave this rather awkward scenario.

Seeing her again now, I couldn't help recall our bizarre past together. When I was 15, I grabbed Alice's right breast, even though neither of us were romantically involved. We were barely more than acquaintances, in fact. We had known each other since elementary school, but only by virtue of sharing the occasional teacher. We had a different circle of friends, and never went to the same birthday parties. She existed on the fringes of my awareness, just like I'm sure I existed on the fringes of her's. I probably remained there well into high school, in fact. But the onset of puberty for both of us ensured that she would occupy a new place in my awareness.

I first discovered internet porn in 6th grade. The first time was accidental, of course, a stray click of the mouse. The subsequent times were far

from accidental. It wasn't long before it had developed into an obsession. While some of the boys around me were still coming to terms with how they really felt about girls, my libido was already in overdrive. I spent a good deal of my free time scouring the recesses of the web for the perfect images, exploring and defining what exactly it was that turned me on the most. In retrospect, the stuff I looked at wasn't even that hardcore, compared to what was out there. I was mostly obsessed with breasts. Large breasts, some absurdly so. But I was never very fond of watching others perform sexual acts. It affected me in a way I never understood. Perhaps it made me feel guilty, made me aware that what I was involved in was a dirty thing. Or perhaps I just didn't like some unknown man intruding upon my enjoyment of the female form.

I was suddenly woken from my recollection by the elevator coming to a very abrupt stop. There was a strange grinding sound, and I worried for a second that the cable was going to snap, and we'd plunge 40 stories to our death. What an absolutely bizarre way for me to go out: in an elevator with Alice Hotchkiss.

My fears were soon quelled when the elevator doors started to open. However, there was a strange buzzing sound as they did, and when they were fully open, it took me a few seconds to understand what I was seeing. The elevator had somehow stopped in between two floors. Right in front of us was a view of the grimy inside of the division between floors. Below that, I could just barely see into the floor below, giving me a weird sense of vertigo. Above the divide, I saw a pair of feet. The owner of those feet crouched down to peer into the opening, and said, "Oh man, what happened?"

Alice shrugged. "Looks like the elevator got caught."

The man above us said, "Oh jeez, that's terrible! Let me... you know, I'm going to go find someone to come fix this. Just hang on tight for a few minutes, okay?"

We nodded, and he ran off. Hang on tight. As if we could really do anything else. Well, so much for this reunion not lasting for very long. I wondered if I slighted some malevolent deity recently, and this was my punishment.

Alice sighed. "Great, I'm going to be late for my meeting. Well, hopefully he'll understand why I'm late. What a way to start the day, huh?"

I simply nodded. I wanted to contribute more than that, but this was a lot more difficult for me than it appeared to be for her. After everything that had happened, I had no idea how exactly to approach her. Even before the

incident, she and I had never really spoken much.

I used the opportunity of our awkward silence to reflect on the past more. At the beginning of middle school, the girls my age were not much more to me than little girls. They were a world apart from the interests I pursued online. But, sometime during seventh grade, something miraculous happened. My female peers began to develop. Suddenly, the girls I had known since kindergarten had transformed into women, working their way towards the women I idealized. I was delirious. Every day, I would eye them from afar, as if they were an image on my monitor. And I believe that is why I never was able to date any of them. They surely noticed my lingering stares, despite how clever I thought I was at hiding it. But the girls on the internet never knew you were looking at them, and if they did, they wouldn't have minded.

It got worse in high school, as the girls started to realize the effects their new bodies had on the male population. There were days I could have sworn that their outfits had been designed specifically to torment me. Shirts that clung so tightly that you could see the way that the flesh swelled over the top of their bra, necklines that plunged so low that it should have been illegal. Alice stood out the most from the pack. She had taken her time. I had never noticed her until high school, even though I had already noticed other girls around us long before that. Either she had developed late, or she had been wearing clothes that concealed her figure, but in our English class freshman year, she absolutely floored me. She quickly became the epitome of everything I obsessed over. She was far too voluptuous for a girl her size, and I spent every moment I could staring at her from across the room. Every time I saw her eyes begin to sweep in my direction, I'd quickly act as if I had been staring at the clock above her. To this day, I'm not really sure if she ever noticed. She probably did, but since she never said anything at the time, I was convinced I always got away with it.

Soon, my long stares became fantasies. Some were innocent. Sometimes I would just imagine her and I alone together, and she would confess to me feelings of attraction. I would confess the same, and we would kiss, timed perfectly to fireworks that spontaneously appeared. Other times, my mind would blend her with the girls in the pictures on the internet. I would imagine what those perfect breasts would feel like in my hand, even if there was a layer of clothes between us. I would imagine her naked body lying atop mine, and the feeling of skin on skin. Other times, I would get more imaginative. She would live up to the namesake of a more famous Alice, and start growing taller

and taller. But this Alice was not a little girl, and she would grow right out of her clothes, right out of the building, that beautiful body on display for all to see, unable to be hidden from world any longer. Or, I would watch as her breasts suddenly began to grow even larger, bursting out of her tight garments, breaking the desk before her, and not stopping, far beyond the point where she would ever be able to move again, filling the entire classroom, until they took up my entire view, and I wrapped myself in their warmth, floating in bliss. Needless to say, I don't remember much of what was taught in English class that year. These were my most private of imaginings. And I know that Alice, or any girl for that matter, would be horrified by these thoughts. Only the girls on the internet were fine with those thoughts.

The problem with the girls on the internet, however, was that they were mere pictures and videos. They had no substance, no form. I couldn't touch them. Alice, however, could be touched. And I wanted very badly to do just that, to have her as my own. But I was hopelessly single. I was the awkward kid, probably because of just how obsessed I was with the female form. There was never any chance for me to be in a relationship in high school. My libido saw to that.

I snapped back into the here and now by a voice saying, "Oh, okay, this is an easy fix. Shouldn't be more than 20 minutes."

Alice gaped in disbelief. "20 minutes? Can't you fix it any faster than that?"

"These older ones are a lot more fickle. We've been having some trouble with them lately. We're hoping to get new ones soon, once they approve the budget. Times are tough, you know. Anyway, I'll just be over here, working on this..."

I was curious to see what he was doing, since I really had no idea how one would fix an elevator in this situation, but it was hard to see much of the upper floor from where we were.

Alice shook her head. "Why do I get the feeling that the transaction that I'm here to do is the one that would increase the budget enough for new elevators?" She sighed. "If only I had gotten here sooner..."

I merely shrugged. There was a momentary look of irritation on her face, but she simply stared forward, remaining silent.

I drifted back into my thoughts. By sophomore year, I had gotten fed up with being single. I saw myself as the nice guy, the one who would worship the ground a girl walked on if she would agree to date me. But the girls

all went for the bad boy, the jerk, the idiot, the athlete, the popular guy. All of the things that I wasn't. Of course, as I would later learn, everyone is stupid in high school. I was the stupidest of them all, thinking I would be alone forever.

So one day, I did something about it.

Like the previous year, Alice and I were in English together. On this particular day, the teacher ran out of curriculum for the day, and granted us time to spend as we wished. Alice, who sat diagonally from me, was talking with a group of friends, very much within my vision. Her chosen shirt of the day had all of the best attributes. It was so tight that I could swear I knew every contour of her breasts from looking at it, and the collar so deep that I was already looking at nearly half of her cleavage anyway. They were practically right in my face, almost taunting me with their closeness. My hand twitched. It had desired for a very long time to become acquainted with those divine globes. In moments like these a little voice in the back of your head is absolutely mandatory, and this case was no exception. Mine said to me, 'Look at her. She is perfect. What makes you think a loser like you is ever going to be with her? No, if you're ever going to make your fantasy come true, you'll have to take it for yourself.' Who was I to argue with that kind of logic?

I stood up too quickly, and I think Alice and her friends noticed just how quickly I got up. I blurted out some sort of excuse, as if that would make any difference, and trust my right hand down into the crevice of her shirt. My intention was to seize hold of the breast in my hand, and, if I could, just pull it up, exposing it to the light of day, letting me see the thing once and for all. I think I must have gotten my hand over most of it, but she retaliated so quickly that I really couldn't register the feeling of it in my hand. I'm not even sure if I got under the bra. The point is, I was unable to really get any satisfaction at all from the moment before she roughly pushed me away, and delivered a right hook that laid me flat on my back.

I was suspended, of course. Went to therapy, had a number of awkward conversations with various people, and forced to write an even more awkward apology letter. I remember handing it to her after my week off, and not even looking at her face as I did so. Thankfully, despite the fact that there were witnesses to the event, word didn't get out about it. Or perhaps it did, and I was just in the dark about it. Word always gets around in high school. The reputation followed me, one way or another.

There was a change in Alice after that. She wore much more conservative outfits. She smiled just a little bit less often, even with friends. But the

worst was the look that she gave me throughout the remainder of high school. I could have handled a look of contempt. I would have expected that, and matched it with the contempt I felt for myself. But no, it was a look of pity. Disgusted pity, but pity nonetheless. It didn't sit right on her face, and every time we passed in the halls, I would look away as quickly as I could.

I punished myself ruthlessly for what I had done. How could I be the nice guy I thought of myself as if I was going to go around feeling up girls at random? I used the experience to make myself a better person, and be the nice guy that I knew I always should have been.

The last time I had seen her was graduation. 10 years had passed between then and this faulty elevator we now found ourselves sharing. Her appearance as she was now baffled me. Any indication of the effects that incident had on her seemed to be completely gone. Though she was frustrated by the current situation, she still had a smug, confident air about her. She was making attempts to chat me up like an old friend. Her outfit was fairly tight, and complimented her figure very well. It was a more professional version of the outfits that she always used to wear, ones that showed off her body in an appealing way. This was far from how she looked when we graduated high school. It was almost as if the incident had left no effect on her. This was something I couldn't understand. After all, it had been a defining moment for me. Hadn't it been the same for her?

Alice made a frustrated noise, and said, "How much longer is this going to take?"

"Few more minutes, ma'am," said the voice from above. "Just sit tight, okay?"

She shook her head. "Unbelievable. This is going to throw off my whole day..." She turned to look at me, and the irritated expression returned. "Doug, seriously? All this time, and you're just going to creepily stare at my chest and not say anything? Jesus, have you matured at all since high school?"

At this I was very aware that I had indeed been staring at her a bit too much. I realized how she had interpreted the way I was looking at her, and swiftly sought to correct that. I attempted a reassuring laugh. "No, I'm not that guy anymore. I'm married now, with a kid on the way. My wife is more than enough for me to look at," I lied.

"Apparently not, based on the way you were ogling me just now..."

I shook my head. "Look, what I did in high school was... unforgivable. But I changed after that."

She laughed, in a way that did nothing to lift my spirits. "Uh-huh, sure. Doug, you never stopped staring at me. Even through the rest of high school, every time I saw you, you were looking away from me quickly, hoping to hide the fact that you were planning round two."

The pieces were starting to fall into place of just the kind of guy she had suspected me of being all these years. Making a promise to myself to be a better person made absolutely no difference if everyone else saw me as just the same guy I had always been. "You've got it all wrong. I just... didn't know how to act around you. I looked away, because I knew you didn't want anything to do with me. So, I just... hid from you. What I did was horrible, and I didn't want you to be hurt by having to look at me any more."

She shook her head. "Oh, boo hoo, poor you. I never wanted your pity."

This was getting out of hand. "Listen, you're not getting it at all! I understand what I did, and I've tried to live my life making up for it!"

"And what? You want forgiveness? Just like that? I always knew you were pathetic, but I had no idea just how bad you were..."

Anger became my primary emotion at this point. The girls on the internet never took shots at your masculinity. "Who are you to talk?! That whole thing screwed me up big time! It showed just how screwed up I had been! I've lived with the terrible thing I did, and I continue to live with it, making sure I never do that again! But look at you! You look like you've forgotten completely! You even dress just as provocatively as you always used to! Are you trying to taunt me?!"

I was rather surprised by the words coming out of my mouth, but once they started, there was no way of stopping them. Alice looked surprised as well for a few seconds, and then burst into the most deriding laughter I had ever heard. "Seriously, Doug? Are you that vain? It was a stupid little incident in high school. Like hell was I going to build my life around someone as pathetic as you. I never forgot what happened to me. You don't forget something like that. But I chose to move on, and live my life unburdened by it. It's really sad that you didn't do the same."

"But... I did a terrible thing to you! I can't just move on, because how else can I atone for it?"

"Jesus Christ, Doug, cut the dramatics! There's no need to 'atone' for anything, just fucking move on with your life. I had hoped that when I saw you, maybe we could actually interact like civil people, but I can see you're

exactly the same as you were in high school. A pathetic loser. Did you say you have a wife? Does she know about how this still effects you so much? Or do you keep it bottled up? That's not a healthy way to live your life. That is, if you even have a wife, which, I'm sorry, I just don't buy."

Was this really the same girl that I had idolized in high school? The one that I still idolized secretly to a certain degree. This wasn't like my fantasies. There was no acknowledgment of how much I had changed, no forgiveness. If anything, all I had done to make up for it only pissed her off more. This was nothing like the girls on the internet. And nothing like the Alice Hotchkiss that lived in my fantasies.

My hand began to twitch.

A voice I hadn't heard in years said, 'Who the hell does she think she is, talking to you that way? She should be grateful you left her alone after that. But if she isn't willing to see that, take from her what she owes you.'

Slowly, I began to approach her. She was very quick to notice something was amiss. "Doug... what the hell are you doing?"

Without a word, I backed her into the corner of the elevator. After playing this scenario in my head over and over, I knew the best way to get my hand inside and keep it there just long enough to finally get a feel for it. I slid my hand in, keeping my other hand free to block any attacks against me. Surprisingly, none came.

It was a sensation I had longed for. The size, the shape, the firmness. None of these qualities appeared to have diminished since high school. There was just something deeply satisfying about finally feeling the weight of it in my hand.

But still the feeling was hollow. This wasn't like my fantasies. She didn't succumb to passion and shower me with kisses. The breast didn't start to expand under my touch, bursting out of her shirt and filling the entire elevator. But my fear wasn't realized either. She didn't push me away, or attack me at all. She merely gave me the coldest of stares. After a few seconds, she said, "So, this is really all you wanted all these years. You wanted me to forgive you so you could finally feel it. Your obsession disgusts me."

I stared into those cold eyes, and read an expression I didn't quite recognize. There was disgust, and there was pity... but there was also a sadness. As if... she was sad for me.

The disgust and pity I could handle. But the sadness... It was a look you never got from the girls on the internet.

I retracted my hand, and turned away from her, wondering why tears were threatening to burst forth. She said nothing, and didn't even seem to move from the spot. All I heard was her readjusting her shirt and bra.

Seconds later, the elevator kicked back to life. The doors closed, and we rose a short distance. When they reopened, we were greeted by the sight of the portly repairman. "Alright, that looks like that should do it. Sorry for the wait folks." Neither of us responded, and the repairman seemed to pick up on the vibe we were giving off. "Er, you folks okay?"

Alice walked out of the elevator without looking back, and simply said, "I'm late for my meeting..."

The repairman watched her go, and shook his head. "Man, some people need to learn to just slow down, you know, and not get so worked up about the small things."

I nodded vaguely. I didn't really hear his words, as I was too distracted by the sensation of my hand twitching.

Miles to Go

WIL RANDOLPH

The repetition of the bass and beat of the techno was beginning to aggravate me as I struggled to find distraction among the vast empty stretches of I-70 heading east toward the Colorado state line. My Pontiac GTO, The Goat to my friends, was rumbling along, chewing up miles and spitting out hydrocarbons as I lazily threaded the wheel back and forth with the gentle curves of the landscape. It had been near an hour since we, my sleeping friend Justin and I, had sprung from the numbing and endless likeness of suburban sprawl in southern Denver bound for the warm sunshine of the eastern coast of Florida.

"The hills of the bleak and fallow country rolled ever forward in front of them like a broken treadmill of cracked tarmac bathed in sullied, speckled brown and white," I said to my slumbering companion.

"What?" he mumbled with his eyes still closed.

Apparently, not so much asleep as I'd thought.

"The passenger awoke from his slumber with a look of confusion and unrest. He spoke with his usual sullen tone." As best I could I channeled James Earl Freeman Poitier voice.

"Dude, what the fuck are you talking about? What the hell did you wake me up for?" Justin slowly turned his head from the semi-support of the seat belt.

"Finally alert and mobile from his reclining seat that bounded up and down amongst the forgettable scenery, his surprise at the cacophony elicited expletives of questionable character." Since he was already annoyed, I did what I thought best and played further into the narrative.

"Whiskey Tango Foxtrot over! Why are you talking like that?" With a flick of his hand Justin smacked me in the forehead.

"Someone has to break the monotony and narrate this shit or the fucking boredom is going to put me to sleep and we're going to end up in a damned ditch before we hit the state line," I said with a bit of fluster following the smack.

As I rubbed the reddening spot and Justin resumed his lazily re-

cumbent position in the overly large, leather seat, a signpost swished past the window.

"What the hell did that sign say bud? How many more miles of this barren-ass state do I have to deal with before I can get on to the equally barren and equally empty wasteland of the great Midwest?" my jest had calmed from the smack, and my grin was now an even keel.

"I think it said 152 miles till Kansas. Not sure though. Why the hell did you start narrating the road?" whether still asleep or awake I wasn't sure, but he crossed his arms and reclined as far as was possible in the cramped cabin.

"Beats me, your techno was putting me to sleep, The Goat wasn't drowning it out anymore and I guess the god of writing was speaking through me."

"Maybe the god of overt and crap description. Why anyone would narrate this landscape unless it was the beginning of a book about boredom is beyond me. And the techno is supposed to be sleepy! You got me up after 3 hours of sleep remember?"

He turned back to the comfort of the seat and I resumed plodding through my own narrative in silence.

The miles to our destination were in their infancy. This trip had been planned for months, this journey to take me away from Colorado and on to a new chance at life, and though it was not without some potholes here and there, we were on our way. I was on my way. But as it was, over the few hours of driving, as mile after mile passed by without pause, my mind was haunted by memories.

Fifteen years. Fifteen years in a place I never wanted to be. I thought of the long and tedious winters as the infertile plains flew past my windshield. When I'd first settled in what was to be my new home, I couldn't bribe a friend-ship nor seek one out of the darkest corners. A home where I froze in the months of winter, and didn't thaw much in the fleeting summer months as I cowered in dark basements to while away the isolation. A 'home' where I could not find home, a place I was told to love, instructed that I would grow to enjoy it through surrender.

I gazed down the near straight stretch of broken asphalt that rolled and twisted like a demented serpent in front of me. For a moment I remembered that I was finally escaping the place and the passed miseries. I was retracing the route that had brought me here a decade and some before. I'd wanted to

run so many times in so many years, to flee the depression, the dark moments, the personal failures, and the hurt. But the soul-choking dilemma of arbitrary memory relaxed as I saw a small red barn and a sign for Strasburg, population 1400.

For an instant there was a deep urge to jerk the wheel, veer the car off course and turn off at the exit. Then I would head for a friends garage, far from the city, where so many of us had worked together on Saturdays to make our chariots of steel louder, faster, and more fun. I thought about the cool concrete and the runoff on the driveway that signified the coming of summer, warmer weather, and quick moments of high speed in the pitched blackness of the back roads of Erie. My car edged towards the exit with poignant memories of its own.

A moment later the barn was far behind, the exit passed, and the miles of empty road resumed.

"What is going on in your head man? You okay? I figured you'd be happier the closer we got to the line," he pointed ahead towards the graying blue of the horizon.

Justin was awake again, or maybe he'd not slept since my random narrative.

I'd met Justin in the second half of my first year of high school when I'd run from my drug addled freshman friends into the open and artful arms of the theatre department. He was a petulant guy, two years my senior; and with the pitying nature of a gentleman among the poor, he deigned to take me under his wing and help me survive the plain brick prison of High School.

He had no interest in leaving the doldrums of Colorado, but with the mention of an excuse to drive foot to the floor across the great expanses of the eastern plains, he was on board; especially since he was constantly broke and always up for a road trip that didn't cost him. He was my best and most destructive friend. It was loathe to him to let me forget a failure. He was never really angered by me, and yet he would never let me question his strange mix of petulance and complacency. Justin was, in a lot of ways, what Denver was all about for me - in a word, stagnation. Justin and Denver were equally frozen and dormant and remote most of the time with spots of great sunshine, warmth, and potential. Still, he was my best friend.

"I wish I could tell you. I guess I'm still thinking of my Fiero. Really wish I could've taken the little red wonder along for this journey. She sure deserves better than what I'm guessin' you are going to give her."

In all honesty, for the first hour or so I had been thinking of almost nothing else. Even in my much newer, much nicer, and much faster car I couldn't remove the 20-year-old sporty car from my mind. That morning I'd fired up the little old iron six-cylinder and limped it from the emptiness of my mother's home and dropped the near dead car on his doorstep as a parting gift. The little red car was a trophy from my past, a timely purchase that had served my dad during his tough times, and given me some great memories on the twisting back roads around Sedalia when he moved on down Florida way. But now it sat, lifeless on a driveway I would not see again; alone, cold, another monument to failure.

"You know I'm selling that bitch the second I fly back."

Justin had actually gotten me hooked on Fieros many years before, and somehow I'd gotten him hooked on Hondas that I didn't even like, but he was especially touchy about the Fiero at the moment, as his girlfriend, an experienced pole dancer of ill repute, who already hated me, was whining via text message about the dead red car in the driveway. "And you could have told me it wasn't even registered anymore. How the hell am I going to sell something that I can't drive?"

"Ummm, about that, you can't drive it anyhow. She died in your driveway. Just enough gusto to let me go I suppose."

"WHAT THE HELL MAN!" he slapped at the dashboard in frustration

"Just remember our deal," I said calmly as I was lost in the road ahead, "you have to give me two weeks to see if I can raise the cash to ship her down."

He didn't wait, and I didn't have the cash.

With a definite gesture of aggravation at the thought of the block of plastic and metal, dead, and leaking in his driveway, he ran his hands through his short, straight brown hair and clicked away at the stereo looking for a track that would allow him to ignore me.

The miles clunked by with every mid-winter frost heave in the road, and the invisible barrier between Colorado and Kansas came and went.

We'd left in a break from winter weather that threatened to keep me trapped in the state. With only a momentary window of planning, and the realities of my mother's own departure for Connecticut further complicating the timeframe, we'd hastily taken to the road. But as we rolled on deeper into the infinite plains of Kansas the reality struck us both that this may have been an ill-timed flight. The sky was thick and cream white with heavy clouds that

waited to unload their burden of frozen water on the world below.

The weather looming overhead, I pushed down harder on the 'loud' pedal and stretched the rubber band of fate that threatened to pull me back into Colorado in defeat. As we reached Salina, I knew the band had broken. I was far enough from Denver now, but there was no elation.

Through months of planning I had expected to feel a freeing sense of hope when the day to run came. The idea that I would be moving from the wasteland of Colorado's winter into the warmth of the Florida sun was supposed to give me an entirely optimistic feeling. I had been so glad to be rid of the state; I could barely sleep the night before. Now, in a town far enough from the mountains as to make them spectral, all I felt was a malaise creeping further into my soul as I moved towards my next life.

We pulled into the nearly vacant truck stop that served as the major hub of action and excitement in the wasted town of cattle and got out to get some food.

"Wil, you haven't said two words in the last hour besides the grunts you gave to the waitress. You've just got that stupid vacant eye thing going on like you do when you're drunk and missing Claire." He enunciated between chomps at his bacon filled beef concoction.

Claire was the girl who had finally caused my breakdown and flight from Denver, but not without a year of terror. It happened when I asked for her hand and she gave me the wrong finger. And for whatever reason, the evening before my move, she'd called to tell me we couldn't talk anymore, which was equally strange, as we hadn't talked much in months. Justin was a good friend as he would never forgive her for hurting me, but he loved to jab me with the knife of reminding me about her.

"What stupid-eye thing? I'm just tired from driving. You do realize you haven't driven a single mile yet."

"The stupid-eye thing where you look like you are staring at a picture of her that isn't there. Like you are warshipping a ghost through melancholy."

"Justin, man, the fucking word is WORSHIP; a War Ship is the damned thing that floats in the ocean!" I said to ignore his correct depiction of my stasis.

He and I had the particular pastime of arguing about anything. If there were two sides to an argument we generally took our positions and fought it out with no real intention of claiming victory. Of late, the arguments had been a discussion of proper pronunciation, diction, and whether or not

Webster's was correct in their treatment of 'penchant.' I suppose over the years we had run out of better ideas to argue about.

"Nice segue dick! And it is Pen' Chant' not penchante you fuckin' Frenchie. I already know what you are thinking!"

I half laughed at his retort and took a big bite of a cooling sandwich. Truthfully though, he had no concept of what I was thinking, nor could anyone have known. Those around me thought that I was happy about the move. They saw me smile as I told them about the sun and the beach, and the El Camino I was going to buy to cruise the sand. They heard the stories of my previous but brief respite with my father who waited for me at the other end, and they covered their ears in mock annoyance, as I hadn't shut up about it for months. What they didn't know, what I'm not sure I knew, was what the hell I was really doing it for.

The sandwich hung in my hands as a thought passed by my eyes.

In that moment I could not remember why I was leaving. And then I did remember the pains of my time there, and then it was all gone again.

The lack of control over my thoughts was nothing new to me. Over the past year, I hadn't been in control of my emotions either; they'd been in control of me. It was late February when I started living in bars instead of just working in them; and as I pondered on the past, the momentary memories were still tinged with the stale taste of bourbon, Jager, and beer. Five to two I worked at whatever task needed working, then from 2 to 5, in the early hours of dawn, I would crawl inside of whatever bottle they wanted to open, found my way home with whatever girl wanted someone there, and fought the blinding headache and spasms of early morning detox on my way to the train station for an already forgotten lesson at school. My friends who tried to help me were shunned, and those that thought they helped me, only really fed me more pain from a bottle, from a baggy, or a pill. Too much, too fast, too long, too hard was the year in review. Not a moment went by when a war wasn't being waged between the angels and demons of my conscience, and the devils were beginning to put the heads of their victories on spikes for all to see. Still, I could not shake a growing feeling of regret and longing. No matter the darkness of those days, there was still a light among them like god's eyes splitting dark clouds.

Our bellies full of greasy, town-raised beef, I looked out the window of the restaurant to survey the condition of the looming weather. As I glanced, I saw the people of the small town moving about in the cold white-speckled air like untethered dirigibles of flesh.

A shunt of laughter bellowed up from my stomach. "Damn, what do these people eat, d'ye suppose?"

Justin smiled and looked at the sidling masses outside. "I would have to say: cow, cow, some more cow, possibly cooked in lard, with chicken-fried cow for breakfast and bacon-wrapped cow for desert." The momentary rumbling of laughter between us calmed my mind enough to continue the drive south, but the arid plains weren't quite done with me yet.

The weather, it seemed, had held just long enough for lunch, but as we reached the entrance to the highway, the snow came with the fury of a swarm of white locusts. The Goat clawed and slithered its way up the entrance ramp and gained enough speed to slide awkwardly down the narrowing stretch of still nearly dry tarmac. As the miles progressed, the asphalt grew whiter by the mile post. Now, not only would I have to fight my own emotions, and my niggling desires for constancy, I would also have to fight the physical dangers of a world that might not be so keen to let me leave.

My mind was wandering again. Despite the conditions, I slipped into a momentary departure from the hazards with thoughts of the good times I had been pushing hard to the floor on deserted back roads as I squared off with other loud cars in the darkness.

But back in the white falling winter, when we crossed between the jagged and razor sharp barriers of an old bridge; my fixed gaze out the windshield suddenly revealed the broad side of an old Cutlass and I realized my car was in mid spin. Time slowed and the windshield became a screen that slowly projected the danger. I corrected and aimed the car for the median as the tail overcorrected the other direction. The tail began to wag the dog as I, and my car fought for traction. Though it felt like ten minutes, my limbs flailed about in motions of memory from previous near drunken dances such as this during the long Colorado winters, and for a moment I thought about just letting it go and giving up. And then the windshield was real again, and all my muscles spasmed to regain control of the 4000-pound hunk of still shiny metal. I corralled the horses and reined in the car enough to pull to the side of the road.

The car was fully stopped but I still gripped the wheel as if choking the leather neck of an enemy, my knuckles bright white, on the off chance it would suddenly start sliding.

"ALRIGHT, well that was fun. Your turn to drive buddy," I stammered without moving my tension.

Justin simply turned to me and smiled.

"HA! That was fun. All right, I'm ready for it. I think they put some extra hormones in the beef around here. I figured we were going to be explaining to an officer why we had just intentionally taken out that Cutlass. Nice driving!"

He took the wheel and I tried to calm myself by taking deep gulping breaths of air. The tired I hadn't noticed rushed in with the air and before a mile had passed, I was lost in my head again, not quite asleep.

As we drove into a vast bank of thick white cloud, memories played themselves out before my eyes, transposed on the blank canvas of the fog. The moments came in great swinging rushes of places, people and times spent in the sun. These were the memories I did not want to remember, these were the good times. There were times of gleaming cars in mid-summer, moments spent in the dark green fields of evening with beautiful women as we stared skyward, hundreds of moments with laughing friends, of awkward jokes, of fun, unrivaled sex and the first moments of timidity in high school. Then they stopped for a moment and the confusing haze cleared. Claire was smiling as she proudly displayed her first real car, her Camaro. I thought about her smile, nearly brighter than her crystal blue eyes. Another memory slid into the slideshow: my father, proud but meek in his own failures, smiled as he shook my hand as we started a new career together selling cars. Another memory of the Fiero shot in as I traversed it across the back lot of the dealership, plunked down some cash and brought it up with title in hand to get him back on the road of life again. There was another bright smile and another happy time. Then a memory came of Justin, this particular one much more recent than the others. It was a cold rainy December evening about a week prior to our trip. It was short of snowing but still cold enough to freeze the marrow. He took me aside outside of a bar and said "I'm going to miss you like hell man, I really am. But I know that you are going off to do great things." His faith in me at the moment was unflinching, and as I remembered it I thought of how drunk I was. And yet, I could not have let that memory go through the worst hangover, or the best binge. Frozen by the thoughts and fixated on the blurred white outside I sat in the big leather seat a smile came to my face and then tears to my eyes. All the moments in between were blurs, they were signposts for small towns on the long journey across the country away from my life in Denver.

"He smiled happily as the distance grew from the town he knew, the land ahead closer in view," Justin's voice ebbed its way into my vague thoughts. As I came out of my head for a moment, it seemed that Justin had, at some

point, switched from his repetitive beats to some gentle bluegrass and was now mumbling to himself to stave off the boredom. I knew he couldn't stand any music lacking a synthesizer, so I took it as a small, but grand act of friendship. As I righted myself in the seat and wiped the wet spots from my face, the heavy fog that encircled the car began to clear.

"Where are we bud? Are we in Purgatory?" I asked as I blinked at the dissipating white outside.

"Close. We are just south of Wichita. That was some fog bank dude, I couldn't've seen a pile of shit in front of me if I was driving through it. I wasn't sure I was going to make it but it's clearing, and by the way, why the fuck don't your prayers work?"

"Beats me. Want me to take over?"

"Nah, you just chill, I'm good for now and I forgot how much power this car has when you need it. You can take over at the Texahoma border." My smile grew to a smirk of pride as I looked at the mediocre smile of my friend.

"Texahoma? When the hell'd you start speaking country?"

"You try listening to this crap music for two hours and not picking up a phrase or two!" He slapped both hands on the wheel to denote his annoyance, and then, as suddenly, was overcome with a momentary terror as the car squirmed left to right.

I laughed and sat back to watch the landscape change.

Around 10 and just south of the northern Texas border we pulled over for a cigarette and to switch off. As we stood in the dark cool, chokingly humid air I sparked up a burning Camel and looked up through the clearing clouds and found myself staring at the same constellation I always looked for. Somehow Orion and his bow were always fascinating to me. His gaze always fixed off to some unknown point, his bow readied for any threat that lurked in the darkness of space. And at the time, it seemed as if his bow and its arrow pointed east, towards Florida.

"Dude, you sure you don't want to call it a night? That storm was rough on both of us and you are clearly spaced!" Justin laughed as he looked at my skyward gaze with bemusement.

"Literally? Or figuratively?" I joked with a cough and chuckle of smoke, "Nah I'm okay. Just thinking on stars again. Let's just stop off for some dinner and a beer and I'll be good to go to Shreveport at least."

We resumed our seats, fired up the bellowing, still searing pipes, and streaked off down the road in the filmy rain and snow soaked car.

After a stop near Shreveport, we trucked on in the car for another day or so. Along the way we saw the falling leaves of late fall in Louisiana, got stuck in the perpetual traffic of Alabama, and fought against encroaching exhaustion in the vast recesses of empty that comprise any road between Pensacola and the eastern coast of Florida; but eventually we arrived on my dad's driveway, tired, flagging, but too wired to sleep.

The car was parked, the trip was over, and 1400 miles were behind us. The exhaust rumble that had pervaded every moment on the road subsided into the slow creak of cooling metal. As I sat in the overstuffed leather seat, my hands still on the wheel, Justin popped out of the car and sparked a cigarette as he looked at the small white home, baked yellow by the salt air and consistent sunshine. I was not so quick to leave the car and my seat behind. As I stared out the windshield at the recessed garage door, I felt a disturbing hollow in my stomach and an eerie void in my thoughts. I was in Florida, I'd escaped Denver, I was at my dad's house in the warm sun near the surf. I kept wondering why I wasn't brimming with happiness and whole with elation. My eyes fixed on the blank door as my father opened the front door and came outside to greet us. I looked over to him, a man I hadn't seen in nearly a year, and saw the bright welcoming youthful smile from my thoughts of days before that belied his sixty-five year old frame. His body was slouched with the weight of time. Never the less, as always, he looked overjoyed to see me. Gradually I shifted out of my seat and into the slight morning air. As I walked over to him I still felt an emptiness I couldn't explain, but I figured if anything would make me feel at home it would be a reassuring hug from a father that not only helped his son grow, but grew with him. But as I gave him a bear hug that always follows extended absences between fathers and sons and tried to throw myself into the moment I only found myself still feeling empty, albeit warmer and staring at the GTO. The baggage packed hastily in the back of the coupe reminded me of the baggage that rested quietly in some dark corner of my thoughts, less hastily assembled but equally disorganized in its arrangement.

"How'd she do on the trip down? I saw that storm you boys had to drive through and I wasn't sure if you were going to make it down as fast as you'd thought." His calming rumbly voice eased my tension a bit.

"She did okay. Gotta figure out why the heck I've got no windshield sprayers, but she got us here. Sorry I couldn't bring little red back to you dad." I said as I pulled two cigarettes from my pack and handed one to each of the men that stood around me.

"That's alright Wil, the Fiero did its best and got us through what we needed to." He patted me lovingly on my back and took a drag from his cigarette with a calm ease generated by years of such queries.

It was always so strange that once a car was gone, relegated to someone else's possession, that it always then was a thing, and not a she or he.

As the three of us stood in the warm morning sun and a cool salt sprinkled breeze we were near silent from lack of sleep and exhaustion. My dad was always a bit that way, so we simply stared at the silt-bronzed blue paint of the car for a moment and silently marveled at the journey that had passed. In my head I recounted the miles, milestones and moments along the way, and for a second I thought of my Claire and my little red Fiero both frozen in the past in Colorado.

I tried to thaw out and dive into the endless summer that I'd dreamed of over the next week. Justin stayed with us over Christmas, and there were trips to the beach to marvel at the 70-degree water in the middle of December. There were nights spent exploring the pitch-dark nightlife of the small coastal town. Then on Christmas day there was an epic and hotly contested game of RISK that began at dusk and concluded in the first rays of early morning.

And then it was over and I was staring into the greyed brown eyes of my friend as he hesitated to get out of the car and head through security to the flight back to his home. Fourteen years of friendship, and in a matter of moments we would say our parting lines, our parting confrontations and pessimistic jabs at one another, and I felt that I was saying goodbye not simply to my great friend, but to my old life. Farewell to the land I never loved, and bon voyage to those still to flee its boundaries.

For the first time in fourteen years we gave each other a hard and intimate embrace. A caring between two brothers complicated by the close quarters of the coupe, not born together, but who looked to each other as kin. The moment was there, and then it was gone and he was heading away, back to Colorado. As I drove from the airport, I fought back the tears that streamed from my eyes as I remembered and cherished the times, good and bad, and thought lovingly on the state I had escaped for a moment as it was all part of me.

As I drove northbound on I-95, headed for the hidden turn off for the small boating town of Stuart, along that dead straight stretch of concrete and speeding cars, the sense of loss and joy left me and I thought of my father and his life, my new life, that waited for me in the yellow-white house between

the little tress. I thought about the tasks needed to restart a life. Finding work, meeting new people, and maybe even trying to find a friend as close and loyal as Justin; who was now somewhere up among the clouds and headed the other direction. None of the thoughts seemed simple, and none of them were calming as my mind flickered with unknown stress. Then, I thought of the car meets and all the Friday nights spent standing among rows of hot cars in the cool evening breeze as they sat parked on the black asphalt that radiated the heat from the long days of a short summer in Westminster Colorado. As the miles to my new home grew shorter, my impatience with my new state, and Florida blossomed. And then I saw the sign "240 miles to Cocoa Beach". It was so simple, just a left turn at Cocoa, a right turn after Baton Rouge, a slight left through Texas and a left at the truck stop with the balloon humans and a few hundred miles back to my old home. 1400 miles to go and I could undo it all, I could be back in that basement, and back in those bars, and back with my friends, and with my memories, and away from the unknown that used to seem so much simpler. But I couldn't go back, I couldn't go back 'home'.

The Goat was parked in the driveway, its paint reflecting the tableau of colors that hovered in the clouds of Floridian twilight and for a moment I stared at it, took a deep breath, and went inside the little house. I had left my past, my memories, the best of my friends, the worst of my loves, and my Fiero to escape the troubles of my life. And, as I walked through the door of my new home, far removed from the cold winter, the warm summers, and the truths I knew of Denver, I knew the problems were just around the corner. They waited for me, in my bed, in my car, and in my head. I had given up everything and drove for miles and miles to go, for nothing.

[INTERVIEWS]

"I Don't Want to Talk About It."

**DON DeLILLO to
TOM LeCLAIR on
being interviewed**

A CONVERSATION WITH **PAUL SOLOTAROFF**

Paul Solotaroff is the author of three books, most recently *The Body Shop* which chronicles his bizarre and tangential forays into the culture of steroid use. A senior writer for *Men's Journal* and *Rolling Stone*, Paul has also published articles in *Vanity Fair*, *GQ*, *Vogue*, and the *New York Times Magazine*.

Folio: How does writing for prominent magazines such as *Rolling Stone* and *Men's Journal* facilitate or hinder your liberty as a writer?

Paul: I'm lucky that both magazines are interested in the things I'm interested in. We occasionally squabble over things that my gut tells me are important or moving, but, for the most part, if I'm really energized about something, both magazines provide a lot of leeway. I mainly write social justice stories about kids doing life in jail, no parole at the age of fifteen, gang bangers in south central, steroid monsters in high school. My larger pieces help launch congressional investigations, examine concussions in the NFL, look at other forms of brain damage faced by the soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. If I feel strongly about a major kind of social wrong, I can usually convince the editors. On the other hand, with high profile sport stories, if the guy I want to spend time with is interesting enough, or timely enough, and my story is within five to six thousand words, there isn't much friction. So I've been very lucky in that regard. That's why I've been at *Rolling Stone* for twenty years and *Men's Journal* twelve. I'm sort of in the sweet spot there, in terms of my instincts and the things that rile me up or turn me on. If I had an ounce of religiosity, I'd say I was blessed.

Folio: Does the Internet, with its abundance of Bloggers purporting knowledge, influence what you publish or how you view your audience?

Paul: Not at all, I pay no attention. I don't know if the audience itself has shrunk, but it has certainly been distracted. The thing that everyone is concerned about is how it impacts revenue and business. Five to seven years ago, these magazines looked like phone books they were so fat with ads. With the recession and the bleeding way advertisers are diverted to online companies, the market has been condensed. Part of my luck is still having a contract with

these two prominent magazines. The mastheads at almost every major magazine have shrunk madly in the last five to six years.

Folio: Does print media hold an advantage with its array of specialty journalists?

Paul: I think there is some terrific reporting and sentence making going on at certain web outlets. It doesn't replace the experience most viewers get from actually holding a magazine in their hands. When you're on a plane, a train to Philadelphia, or if it shows up on your doorstep, there's something special about being able to hold it and being able to look to where you want. We haven't figured out how to replicate that kind of sensory experience online. I'm on ESPN.com ten to twelve times a day. I'm on Deadspin, I'm on Gawker, and they have a whole lot of skills. They steal from us, we steal from them. Mainly what's transferring is talent. Lots of terrific print writers have transitioned to online sites. In general, it's become a smaller, more taut service. Not necessarily a problem.

Paul: The Body Shop is an emotionally charged and intensely intimate memoir. Was the process of writing it a more therapeutic or nostalgic endeavor?

Paul: The therapeutic value of writing is either overstated or only visible when writing a journal. When you're writing non-fiction, there's a huge amount of filtering that goes on. You're trying to write powerfully, but you're also trying to write towards the reader. So much emotion gets refracted from the emotional events being described. But, it is a way of reliving them and I've relived events from those crazy, crazy years very intensely. Some of it was pleasurable, some a lot more painful.

Folio: The Body Shop is centered upon a dimension of reality that heralds the superficial: steroids, debauchery, and the grovelling ego. How is such an immersion, or a warehouse of experience, beneficial to a writer?

Paul: Any visiting writer tells writing students the same vast kernel of overwrought truth: the more world experience, the more otherness you're exposed to early on in your development, the better it is for your imagination, for your

understanding of just how complicated it is being a human. It's as important as reading seriously. Thirty years ago I was in a writing program and was told that the way you really learn to write is by reading other writers to exploit every tactic they know. It's one of the half-truths we've worked thousands of years for. Unless your Nabokov, unless your Kafka, simply reading reflections and constructions of other masters can only go so far. You really need to know life and experience it yourself. The more you can spread yourself widely, the better your life seems when it comes to writing the important things you've endured.

Folio: Do you have a stronger affinity to creative, purely imaginative writing, or are life experiences your main inspiration?

Paul: It's much harder to write about yourself than it is others. One of the great pleasures of journalism is that I get to walk into a total stranger's house, turn on my digital recorder and ask anything I want, anything I seriously want to discover, and can reasonably expect them to answer it in five different ways. Whether it's in that same living room or ten days later, I come away with what feels like a coherent narrative. Just try coming up with a coherent narrative of your own life or imagining; it's much harder. It's more prone to doubt, personal weakness, and bias. As a journalist I get to talk to people intimately, explore what makes them tick and determine how it can be woven into a comprehensive story. I've asked gang bangers, superstar athletes, other great writers. It's been like stealing money. That bullshit line in baseball: Would I do this if they didn't pay me? Well, I would but I'd be one upright motherfucker.

Folio: Do you strive to maintain the integrity and accuracy of your experiences in *The Body Shop* or is there some degree of embellishment in order to capture what many writers call the truth of the emotion?

Paul: When you're describing anything that happened thirty years ago, you're doing a fair amount of embroidering. You certainly don't recall conversations, you don't remember what people were wearing. *The Body Shop* was written primarily as a narrative, so clearly my imagination was seeping into my memory, but that's what creative non-fiction is about. It's about letting yourself inhabit something deeply. Even if it's not your story or even if it's a story that feels alien to you, it's really getting in there and smelling what that other guys

smells, seeing what he sees, and then joining the readers to those perceptions.

Folio: How does inhabiting a character in a story compare to the compassion directed towards someone you interview?

Paul: Well, compassion isn't the right word. Seduction is more accurate. You're always trying to ingratiate yourself with whoever you're talking to. I've found that the most effective way to do that is by telling your own story, as they're telling you theirs, so the two of you have this fundamental recognition of humanity. It seems to open people up. I think it warrants a way of connecting with the more resonant parts of whoever I'm talking to. So, for instance, I'll talk about my son, whose profoundly autistic, or I'll talk about some of the more memorable experiences I've had running around the world as a journalist. To make the conversation a dialogue rather than a forced monologue is what I aim for.

Folio: Proponents of writing often claim that one's skill can only be improved by writing, all other activities being extraneous. Do you agree?

Paul: Here's what makes you better as a writer, here's what makes you better as a body builder, here's what makes better as a woodworker: repetition. It's immersion. It's running everyday. It's taking five-six hours to arm your fluency, sharpen your voice, improve your skill set. It's not even about what you write as long as you listen to yourself think, and trust your senses. Everyone has a different ceiling, but here I am twenty-three years into journalism and thirty-five years into practicing as a serious writer. I'm a better writer this year than I was last year, and last year I was better than the year before. All I have to do is look at the magazines I write for. You just get better and better the more you practice. It's believed to take around ten thousand hours of practice before someone can be considered a master of something, and even then it's unknown.

Folio: After writing for so many years, have you developed any strategies to overcome the walls you may face while writing?

Paul: I sort of know what my chops are. I know by heart how to structure a

story that will grab the reader by the throat on the first sentence, and how to go right through to the end without spending a lot of time allowing the reader to wonder why I'm writing about this. I've picked up some narrative and language tricks. The main fault is that any viable method involves a pattern, so I have to mix the elements up and stay true to what's important, which is usually whatever deep emotion I'm experiencing.



A CONVERSATION WITH **DANA SONNENSCHN**

Dana Sonnenschein is a full professor at Southern Connecticut State University, where she's been teaching writing and literature (from folklore through Shakespeare) since 1994. Her most recent poetry collection, *Bear Country*, won the 2008 Stevens Manuscript Prize (NFSPS, 2009). Her previous works include another poetry book, *Natural Forms* (Word Press, 2006) and two prose poem chapbooks, *Corvus* (winner of the Quentin R. Howard Prize, Wind, 2003) and *No Angels But These* (Main Street Rag, 2005). Her poetry has appeared recently in *Feminist Studies*, *Epoch*, *Lumberyard*, and *Silk Road*. Work on the manuscript of her novel has been enabled in part by residencies awarded by the Ragdale Artists Community and Vermont Studio Center.

Folio: I think most people know you as a Shakespeare scholar. When did you first become interested in Shakespeare? Did you always like his work?

Dana: I have always been interested in Shakespeare, but my experience in high school was pretty nightmarish. For example, here's your homework, you read *Macbeth*, list every blood reference in the entire play, then write a paper about it. I didn't take Shakespeare classes until I was in grad school and, first semester of the academic master's degree that I was working on, I took a Shakespeare class and, I guess, fell in love with him all over again – and discovered I was really good at figuring out how the lines worked. It was a really good fit in that way; I came to it as a poet, I close read really well, I knew something about history and I went from there.

Folio: Do you have a favorite play?

Dana: I do and I'm teaching it now – it's *King Lear*. And a bunch of reasons for that. It's always been more appealing to me than the other great tragedies because of the scope and complexity, but maybe more so now that I'm thinking about the contending philosophical views of how the world works and also now that I'm older so that I have a father who's in his seventies. There's something connecting for me in some way that, when I was twenty-two, I was all about *Cordelia* – I didn't have that sense of what age was truly like for human beings. I thought about that this semester. It's clear to me that the women in *Lear* are, in some ways, less than complicated and yet the humanity that the play offers is

rich and deep and Cordelia isn't simple. Even Gonnerel and Regan have their roles as children and siblings as well as murderous centaurs.

Folio: What about the sonnets?

Dana: The sonnets are not something I teach very much because students don't like them. But my answer is, yeah, there are two. One is "Let me not to the marriage of true mind admit impediments." And that one because of the fact that it shows Shakespeare's thinking about an issue in the poem that he also thought about really differently in the play. That's a really good match for Romeo and Juliet. And I was thinking about his views of choice of marriage partner – match made in character as opposed to match made by family – and that became really crucial to me for my dissertation. But, you've got to have one that's the poet's favorite poem, right? And that's the one that has "the bare ruined choirs where late the sweeper sang" in it. It starts, "That time of year thou mayst in me behold." I liked it when I was young, I liked it when I was older, and I like it now because it's melancholy and anyone who's actually looked out in winter woods knows what I'm talking about.

Folio: Doubtlessly, the works we read find their way into our own writing. Do you think that studying Shakespeare has affected your own poetry? How?

Dana: In good ways and, I think early on, in some problematic ways. When I was at Johns Hopkins and I was working on my creative writing, I was part of a small group of people who felt that poetry should not just be for poets, but should be something that could appeal, as it did in Shakespeare's day, to people of different experiences and reading levels. In other words, it should work on that surface "can-you-get-something-out-of-it-if-you-just-heard-it level," but if you slow down and you read it with a pen in your hand, it should speak to a lot of different layers and have underlying structures of meaning. And so that ethos of not sounding so impossible that no one will try to understand, but having something to offer those who read intensively like English majors, that's been formative from the beginning and I do credit that to Shakespeare. Even then, before I knew I was going to teach, he was my ready example of why "should people think it can't work for everybody?" and not be Rod McKuen, but not necessarily be T.S. Elliot, either. Now the downside is, if you read

enough blank verse, you reach a place where you start writing and, ha, almost everything you write comes out in iambic pentameter. And it gets an interesting response from readers who may not realize what they're looking at in this, I guess, second century of predominantly free verse, which is, "this sounds really prosy." Of course, you would like to pick them up and shake them and say, "Did you ever do scansion?" I think what I learned there is that's too long a line for what I do. So, I do write both in free verse and in forms and I'm very careful about where I choose to use blank verse.

Folio: There's word that you're writing a book from the perspective of Lady Macbeth. How did the idea come to you?

Dana: Actually, the idea came to me the second time I taught graduate Shakespeare classes here. I had a lot of students who were high school English teachers and who, for projects, sometimes did lessons, like, what they would do with this play, knowing what they know now, but with their students. And high school students are often allowed to do creative writing in response to *The Bard*, to do things we can't do at the university level, like write the missing scene from a play or a conversation between two characters that has to take place before X scene. That summer I thought "how come they get to have all the fun, right?" So I started doing some poems that were missing monologues from different plays. The first one I wrote was Lady Macbeth's dream journal. Which is, of course, not what I'm doing now, but it started there with that notion that I could take a bit of script, be more directorial about it, make that character my own, and supply it with a kind of dimensionality that even an actor would bring to the role. For instance, what were those dreams about? Once I owned a piece of it, I thought, you know, this play is full of Macbeth and not so full of Lady Macbeth. She gets demonized a lot and talked about a lot as if she were a witch, if witches have that kind of power. I thought what if I tried to tell her side of the story. It would sound very different from the play that we have, which is very male-centered.

Folio: Is the endeavor purely creative, or are you attempting to remain true, in some sense, to the play?

Dana: I started out thinking that I would. The more I learned about the

historical Macbeth from Shakespeare's sources, the more I learned how not true to history the play was. So what I thought was a given plot that I would be retelling turned into a completely different story that contained some elements. Now, because I was working from history and a historical novel, in my opinion, has the responsibility of being as true to history as it can be, I had certain places where parts of the story were known and places where nothing was known, so that I wound up being pulled between the pressure of characters developing and things happening as they will when you're drafting – the 'making it up process' where your imagination is the power that guides everything – and certain limits that I had committed to. It had to fit with what we're pretty sure happened. And, of course, it had to respond to Shakespeare, because even where it doesn't match, it comments thematically: what it does with the supernatural, the fact that it's a woman's perspective – there's a ton of women's history built into my book that you wouldn't even know exists; it's a man's world in Shakespeare's Macbeth – that's part of the point. Well, what happens to a woman in a man's world? That's a different question. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth shows one outcome, mine shows something pretty different. Next time I'm not going to write a historical novel. I'm not going to subject myself to a dual set of constraints, the literary Macbeth that I inherited and the historical Macbeth that I rediscovered.

Folio: Writer's block is an oft-feared phenomenon, but rarely do we take the time to consider it conceptually. What do you think writer's block is? Should we write until something compelling occurs on the page or wait for inspiration?

Dana: I think we call writer's block lots of things that are actually different. That's like a catchall term for wanting to write and not writing. Lots of things cause that condition. Probably the most obvious is trauma, grief, and stress. In other words, life has a person so bound up that they can't write. My readiest example is from the AWP conference. The British poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy said that she spent about a year off writing, her mom died, she couldn't write, and the poem that she was reading was the first thing she wrote afterwards, which allowed her to come back to writing. It was a long poem about dealing with the death of her mother. Now, you might think that poetry as therapy stops happening when you reach a certain level of craft or profes-

sional success; I don't think that's true. In that case, if it's a life-related issue, I would suggest writing as therapy to get out of it when you feel ready. Although there are fallow periods. That's natural. Not writing isn't a problem, it's not writing when you want to be writing. Another thing that I see happen is self-consciousness. Whether that's the initial realization of what kinds of things good writing consists of or of how much work it is to produce something that's complicated, there's this kind of seizing up that happens because the expectation, the internal editor, is there kind of censoring anything that gets near the surface. And the answer for that is Ann Lamott, *Shitty First Drafts*, just to give yourself permission to write something really bad. Whether that's a draft that gets revised or whether it's just getting it out of your system so that internal editor shuts off and the good stuff can come out. Now, there's a third kind of cluster. Sometimes people think that writing is a special activity removed from, or different from, daily life and their mental state. In a sense, of course, it is, whether you think of it as artistic flow or that absolute focus that goes into writing. But, in another way, it's not different, which is to say, people's imaginations are working all the time, whether they're dreaming at night, whether they're fantasizing during the day, whether they're thinking about how things work, or trying to problem-solve. That sort of creative thinking stuff is on all the time. If you accept that it's there, ask your imagination a question and it will answer.



[COMMENTARY]

if you're doing it for money or
fame,
don't do it.
if you're doing it because you want
women in your bed,
don't do it.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI

JUDGE'S PICKS

P O E T R Y

BENJAMIN GROSSBERG

FIRST PLACE: "NOCTURNAL" BY KATE GARNETT

This lush haiku series offers vivid, emotionally fraught imagery, while teasing the reader with just a hint of over-arching narrative. In the fourth section, for example, the surreal image—a woman's hands as a "night animal," moving the mist "aside" as if it were a kind of veil—occurs in the context of an explanation, nearly a defense. The section begins, "I told her to Leave / But." But—clearly she didn't leave, and now the speaker must explain why he let her stay. We are given just enough context to understand the section as the story of seduction, but we do not get bogged down in character or extraneous events. In this way, the poem distills narrative into a series of luminous moments. Finally, we are left with a hospital gown, a tree house, a woman "becoming / something nocturnal" and a dead girl. Do we make narrative leaps to connect these objects? That's our business. "Nocturnal" gives us the lyric glimpses to do with as we please. Also lovely here: the music. The poem's as dreamy and atmospheric as a nocturne.

SECOND PLACE: "PEAR" BY MICHAEL GAVIN

"Pear" depicts a simple moment between father and child. The language is spare, daily, and straightforward, and yet the poem has a powerful emotional charge. As I read it, the speaker is young—perhaps in grade school—and deeply dedicated to his father, as he fulfills his father's request immediately ("At his word"). And from the father there is a sense of confidence, of ease. The father's "thank you" gesture is sweet, almost unconcerned: he distractedly "pats" the child's knee. The poem's final image is especially lovely: the pear, held up before the sun, acquires a halo of light. It goes from a simple thing to an object of beauty—something to be examined closely, and in so doing takes

on emblematic weight. It is as if the father were admiring his own contentment and satisfaction in his role of father, in having such a dedicated family. This poem offers emotional depth with a remarkably light touch.

THIRD PLACE: "EXCERPT FROM JB'S DESK" BY MICHAEL BELLMORE

I read this poem as an elegy—though an elegy for a time that has passed, rather than for either of its two principal subjects, JB, who has died, and his wife who is “slipping away.” The poem doesn’t give us much about these figures, but we do get a rich sense of the childhood the speaker spent around their house. The poem evokes this childhood through clear, sensory detail that appeals to all of the senses, from the smells of yard work to the sound, the “shlunk,” of a foot pulled from mud. The result is a full and fully engaging world—one that is finally contrasted with the current state of the grounds: a “trashed” fence and blackberry brambles “turned to skeletons.” What is dead here—what is being mourning—is a whole experience of youth. Also notable: the poem’s language, which is economical and precise throughout.



Benjamin S. Grossberg is an associate professor of English at The University of Hartford, where he teaches creative writing. His books are *Sweet Core Orchard* (University of Tampa Press, 2009), winner of the 2008 Tampa Review Prize and a Lambda Literary Award, and *Underwater Lengths in a Single Breath* (Ashland Poetry Press, 2007). His third collection, *Space Traveler*, will be released by the University of Tampa Press in 2013. His poems have appeared widely, in venues including *New England Review*, *Paris Review*, *Southwest Review*, and the *Best American Poetry* and *Pushcart Prize* anthologies.

JUDGE'S PICKS

P R O S E

LAURIE FOOS

FIRST PLACE: "WINDOWS 1-9" BY KSANA STANLEY

I chose the winner because the story's construction is artful and gives us "windows" into moments in a character's life, and the break with traditional structure represents boldness on the writer's part. Each window includes a defining moment: moments of realization, disappointment, happiness. The windows into the characters life come together to form a kind of miniaturist portrait of immigrant culture and of a woman's choices (or lack thereof) during a period of great change in the United States. The writer shows both an ability to stay in the moment and to use exposition effectively. The story's structure is a risk, and it is one that pays off for the writer.

SECOND PLACE: "TOUCH" BY ROBERT COATES

The premise of the story is absurdly comic—the main character being stuck in an elevator with the girl of his lust-filled dreams—and the writer doesn't shy away from the comedy. As a comic writer, I know how difficult it is to balance the line between absurdity and pointlessness, and the writer manages this well. The writer maintains a balance between the present and past, remaining both in the moment and moving into flashback at appropriate times. The story is well-paced, and the narrator's self-deprecation in conjunction with his obsessive thoughts works well at exploiting the humor of the situation and of the narrator's fantasies. The end of the story provides an ironic twist that adds to the humor as well.

THIRD PLACE: "STRANGERS" BY ELYSE PEDRA

At the core of this story lies the question of whether the protagonist's loss of love will lead to an important realization about himself. I appreciated the writer's ability to remain in scene throughout the story, and to offer a realistic depiction of bar life for this particular character. The dialogue has the ring of authenticity and serves to move the plot from beginning to end without feeling extraneous. The ending gives us a glimpse into what may be the future for our protagonist in the brief exchange between strangers in a bar.



Laurie Foos is the author of the novels *Before Elvis There Was Nothing*, *Bingo Under the Crucifix*, *Twinship*, *Portrait of the Artist by a Young Walrus*, and *Ex Utero*. Her novella, *The Giant Baby*, will be published in September as part of the *Open Door Series*, and her sixth novel, *The Blue Girl*, is forthcoming from Coffee House Press. She teaches in the low residency MFA program at Lesley University.

JUDGE'S PICKS

V I S U A L A R T

ETHAN BERRY

FIRST PLACE: "THREE CUPS" BY MARIANA BAQUERO

Mariana Baquero's ceramic work is thoughtfully conceived and very well crafted. I am impressed with the application of the images to the cups and the different ways that the forms are arrived at. I see what appear to be significant images of what I assume are writers or poets on the cups. This is suggested by the overlay of text and patterns. The use of glazes here is very well controlled and shows that a visual idea is being developed by inventing and experimenting with the images and colors.

SECOND PLACE: "THE COMPLEX" BY CIARA CUMINSKI

I love the dramatic point of view in the paintings of Ciara Cumiskey. The material of the paint is handled impressively in the painting of the forms. I really get the moment. Is she going to draw the apple, write about the apple, or eat the apple?

THIRD PLACE: "WHERE ARE WE GOIN" BY JOSEPH VUMBACO

The photographs of Joseph Vumbaco seem to depict scenes from an early Roman Polanski film where characters act out a silent existential drama. I get the feeling that I am not supposed to be seeing this happen.



Ethan Berry teaches in the Printmaking department at Montserrat, as well as Senior Seminar, and has been teaching there since 1977. A producer and designer for film, video, and performance events, he is past president of the Board of Directors of the Boston Film/Video Foundation, which was founded in 1976 in order to provide for artists an organizational support system for the creation of independent film video. He is a co-partner in ART ON DEMAND, a consulting group that provides arts programming and design consulting services. His work has also been shown at the DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA; the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston; the University of Massachusetts; the Provincetown Young Artists' Exhibition; and the Drawing Show at the Mills Gallery, Boston. More recently, he curated the exhibition, *Seeing is Believing: Skeptical Print Activity* at HallSpace Gallery in Boston in the spring of 2003. His work was also included, with several other Montserrat Printmaking faculty, in the exhibition, *Printmaking on the North Shore*, which was in the River Gallery in Ipswich, MA in the spring of 2003.

[BIOGRAPHIES]

Now I am quietly waiting for
the catastrophe of my personality
to seem beautiful again,
and interesting, and modern.

FRANK O'HARA

MICHAEL BELLMORE

is a storyteller, musician and journalist whose works are well known to an exclusive circle of Connecticut cultural elite, including – and limited to – his relatives, close friends, and any who are forced by circumstance and/or politeness to pay him any attention. His poems have been previously published in the comments sections of popular YouTube videos, and have been inserted into the ads of last Sunday's New Haven Register at the gas station that employs him. He is currently working on a memoir entitled "Newsboy Cap: The Gerald Bellman Story."

EMILIA CATURANO

is a secondary English Education major and psychology minor that hasn't had free time to read and write for fun since she started college. Since writing an honors thesis on dystopian literature, she has found herself looking over her shoulder on more than one occasion to check if Big Brother is watching. She dreams that she will spend the rest of her life on a beach with an endless supply of novels, pens, and notebooks. In reality, she will be engulfed in a pile of poorly written middle school essays and young adult novels.

ROBERT COATES

has been writing for as long as he can remember, but didn't realize it was what he wanted to do with his life until age 11. After years of writing terrible, terrible short stories, he's honed his writing to something pretty tolerable. The various writing classes he's taken at Southern have helped him get to where he is today. He's currently working on his first novel, hoping to get it published sometime in the next few years, as long as it doesn't kill him.

LORI ANN DeSANTI

graduated this past December with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English. She finds pleasure in seeking inspiration to write from eccentric sources and oddball experiences. Lori has spent the majority of her writing career in coffee shops drinking lattes, creating poetry, and people watching. She plans on attending an MFA program in creative writing to further improve her technique, as well as to compile her work into a book of poetry in the near future.

ANGELO GALLO

is a senior studying English and psychology. He is working towards being either a teacher or an amateur foodie, one of which he hopes will change the world. In his spare time he can be found befriending half-blind kittens, mountain biking, and acting rather unheroically during desperate situations. Angelo is an avid non-skater, proletariat, and has a Tumblr. Despite what his writing suggests, Angelo does read quite often - he has numerous books with bookmarks in them to prove it.

MICHAEL GAVIN

the illegitimate son of a Shanghai nightclub singer and the American emissary, Gavin was given up for adoption to Franciscan Friars. On the back of the word of Christ, he was educated in the Classics and joined the Foreign Legion, fighting insurgencies in Sub-Saharan Africa. After the conflicts, he settled in Namibia, began his own trucking company and proceeded to build most of the roads from Johannesburg to Nairobi. He now lives in Vienna with his wife Imogen, her lover Greta, and their dog Max. He began writing poetry in the Fall of 2011.

KATE GARNETT

has lived in over ten houses in Connecticut, which most likely contributes to her fear of commitment and her unquenchable love for pocket-sized bedrooms. She thinks of her poems as her children. "Some," she says, "feed themselves somehow, without arms or legs, but they each carry my heartbeat." Kate's one wish is to write something that will move somebody to change. She explains the theme of her poetry as said best by singer-songwriter Chris Pureka: "I'm thinking of the night that all the lights went out and how I learned to see in the dark."

MACKENZIE HURLBERT

is an English major with a passion for creative writing and journalism. When in need of a creative suggestion, Mackenzie calls upon the advice of her pet newt Ozzy – her unassuming muse who resides in a fish tank on her desk. Mackenzie also enjoys painting and owns multiple shelves of Stephen King novels (her favorite being *The Shining*). In the future, Mackenzie hopes to eventually be a successful novelist/journalist, to have multiple pet tree-frogs, and to travel to Australia.

JENNIFER LENO

is an Honors College art major procrastinating with every fiber of her being. Despite her unrelenting aspirations to be a certified badass, Jen enjoys singing with the SCSU choir, performing in theatrical productions, and being as close to the ocean as possible. She's honored to be part of Folio for her second year of publication.

JOE McCARTHY

is a junior at Southern where he studies English with a creative writing concentration. He sees literature as a way to better understand the human condition. His work generally suffuses serious, somber, or abject topics with humor.

ELYSE PEDRA

is an English major and French minor. She began writing poetry and short fiction during her senior year of college, and fell in love. After embarking on an independent study in poetry, she has come to admire Andrew Hudgins, Robert Hass, and of course, Ms. Sylvia Plath. Elyse enjoys cheap, delicious wine, All Things Considered on NPR, and not making plans for the future.

WIL RANDOLPH

is an English major with an allergy to more fiscally responsible majors. He hated English class in high school, but after a nearly constant nagging by his mother, he read Pat Conroy's *Water is Wide*. From then on he was a self-proclaimed writer with no distinct ability beyond his knack for near constant daydreams that took place in any class that included mathematical reasoning. His interests are subject to varied whimsy but come back to roost in the world of the automobile and the foggy clouds of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Wil plans to continue stringing sentences together in some semblance of order in an effort to make enough money to afford gas and a cold beer.

KELSEY SAMEK

is an English major who has a big interest in poetry from the Romantic era. Her favorite poets include Gerard Hopkins, Percy Shelley, Dr. Seuss, and John Keats. She enjoys sharing a nice bottle of wine and hanging out with her cat. Kelsey hopes to continue writing and some day have both her socks match.

KSANA STANLEY

is an under and over graduate, retired French and Latin teacher, taking a creative writing course. Impulsive whimsy landed her, plunk, right in the middle of a classroom full of creative, fun students. She puts her best foot forward (She used to dance a lot, you know). Ksana brought all of her baggage, the good and the bad. Then she wrote Windows! Ta-dah!

GEOFF TROUP

is graduating from Southern Connecticut State University with a BA in English. He plans to concentrate on British Modernism in Graduate school. He once bled for Folio, but the actual story is far less cool than it sounds. He would like to thank James Joyce for being worth plagiarizing.

NATALIE WALL

is an English major with a focus in Creative Writing. She is looking forward to graduating and working her way into the writing world of fiction. She also has silent aspiring dreams of being the first famous white girl rapper from CT. The only foods she dislikes are eggnog, cheese raviolis, and black olives. She currently lacks all skills of the kitchen and, like every other American, she is constantly battling her addiction to McDonald's and Taco Bell. In the future, Natalie plans to write a similar poem to the one published here that will expose the Little Mermaid's little known hobby of practicing beastiality with her sea creature "friends." Natalie would like readers to know that she is a life-long fan and supporter of Disney, particularly the classics, and is not attempting to tarnish anyone's childhood memory of a wonderful dog, despite the fact that she completely condones Goofy's actions.

A PLEA FROM THE FOLIO EDITORS

FOR THE WAVERING WRITER:

BEING A SERIOUS WRITER INVOLVES TAKING SERIOUS RISKS. YOU COULD LIKEN WRITING TO THE JOB OF A TIGHTROPE WALKER WITH NO MISTAKE-FORGIVING NET TO FALL ON. SUCCEED AND THE AIR GOES THICK WITH THE CHEERS OF THE CROWD (YOU'RE PUBLISHED, YOU GET FAN MAIL, AGENTS WANT BOOKS DEALS!); FAIL AND YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF POPPING VICODIN JUST TO DEAL WITH THE PAIN (THE NEW YORK TIMES SLAMS YOUR BOOK - YOU FIND YOURSELF WRITING CLUMSY CIRCUS METAPHORS FOR DOLLAR STORE GENRE FICTION). OFTEN, IT'S EASIER TO LET YOUR WORK REST SOMEWHERE IN THE ALLOYS OF YOUR DUSTY HARD DRIVE THAN IT IS TO SHARE IT WITH ANYONE. BUT UNLESS YOU'RE EMILY DICKINSON AND PLAN ON HAVING ALL YOUR WORK PUBLISHED POSTHUMOUSLY (GOOD LUCK WITH THAT - YOU KNOW YOUR DAD'S NOT GOING TO READ ALL YOUR OBSCURELY TITLED WORD DOCUMENTS), THE ONLY WAY TO BE A REAL ARTIST IS TO ENTER INTO CONVERSATION WITH A REAL AUDIENCE. BEST-CASE SCENARIO: SOMEONE READS YOUR WORK AND LIVES JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE FULLY OR CONSCIOUSLY OR VIVIDLY OR FREELY BECAUSE OF IT. WORST CASE: YOUR WORK EVOLVES FROM THAT DUSTY HARD DRIVE OF YOURS INTO INK ON A PAGE THAT NOW COLLECTS DUST ON A SHELF (AN OAK SHELF, A PLASTIC SHELF, A CHEAP COMPOSITE WOOD SHELF) SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD (PROBABLY JUST THE FOLIO OFFICE). SO WHY NOT PUT YOURSELF OUT THERE? STOP TRYING TO RIVAL ACHILLES' OBSTINACY - SUBMIT TO FOLIO TODAY (OR ELSE!).

AUTHORITATIVELY YOURS,



THANKS

J E F F M O C K TOM DORR

ADOBE INDESIGN THE
CONNECTICUT STUDENT POETS DR. BLUESPIRE
FUCKING MFA PROGRAMS METAPHORS

TIMPARRISH SCSU IT DEPARTMENT THE SUBWAY MAN

THE PODIUM HAIKUS

DANA SONNENSCHNEIN

FLOW BETSY BEACOM LITERARY VOICES
CHICAGO AWP
PLAGIARISM SANTORUM OUR STAFF

PAUL SOLOTAROFF LOVED ONES

SCSUBOOKMARKS OUR EXCELLENT READERS

ALL WHO ATTEND OUR READINGS

EVERYONE BRAVE ENOUGH TO SUBMIT EVERYONE WE REJECTED

THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT RON PAUL TRAYVON MARTIN

MARGARET

ATWOOD

THE JUDGES

YOU

JAMES JOYCE

PAST FOLIO STAFFS

BELLMORECATURANOCOATES
DeSANTIDONNAHUEGALLO
GARNETTGAVINHURLBERT
LENO McCARTHY PEDRA
RANDOLPHSAMEKSTANLEY
TROUPEWALL