RE:VISIONS

14TH EDITION

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This representative collection of writing by Notre Dame students is published through the Creative Writing Program in the Department of English. Each year, a new editorial board consisting of graduate students solicits and selects manuscripts & oversees the production of the journal in order to encourage creativity & recognize student writing of notable quality.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers/Contributors,

We are thrilled to present you with this lovely trinket of a magazine. Our editorial team had the pleasure of digging through the creative brains of the Notre Dame undergraduate community to select these gems of poetry, prose, and visual art. We would like to say that we're more than impressed with what our community has to offer. These pieces are moving, funny, beautiful, personal, intelligent, and everything we had hoped to include in our publication. We hope you enjoy them as much as we did.

Thanks for picking up *Re:Visions*.

Sincerely,

The Editors

CONTENTS

ART

BY ANN MANGANO

Cinqueterre 43

POETRY

JACK PIETROWICZ

"Leviticus 25:31" 18

Cord 19

GERARD LEDLEY

Madeleine—Schedule II Controlled Substance 20

Crooner 21

ELLE MAUREEN NEWCOME

What is the sound of a body, falling? 22

KATHRINE FETIZANAN

Green Lotuses 29

Dream Masquerade 31

LUISA MADER

A Lullaby 32

CLAIRE TURGEON
Pestilence 34

JACQUELINE CASSIDY
Design Problems 35

DOMINIQUE ESTES
Anxieties 40

JESÚS MENDOZA DOWNEY
Landscaping 42

MIREK STOLEE
My Modern Lotaria Machine 46

LAURA GRUSZKA
Someday 54

PAIGE AFFINITO
so, you like my ass in leggings? 55
Genesis 4:20 57

KATE GIRDHAR
Invincible Me 59

ROBERT TERESI
Mommy 61

SUZY LEFELHOCZ
Unwinding 64

PRESTON IGWE
Classically Beautiful 78

ADRIAN MARK LORE

an item that can only be used once 81

if the vacuum after discount returns 84

MOLLY STEWART

Performance piece to make words/sorority girls/dictators go outside 85

When the Ferris wheel breaks down (Polaris) 87

PROSE

GRACE MCCORMACK

Onward to Florence 11

ALLIE GRIFFITH

6:33pm 15

CLAIRE TURGEON

The Complete Manual for First Rendezvouses and Romantic In Counters 25

HAP BURKE

Backlights 28

LAN NGUYEN

Empty House 36

TRINI BUI

everywhere and all around 37

EVE HLYWA

Raucous Gods 38

ADRIAN MARK LORE
Prologue for a Biography 44

KAREN NEIS
FROM MS 11.17.15 47

MATILDA AYRIS
Navigating America—AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE 66

HANNAH PROVOST
9 Out of 10 Ways 73
Death in Black and White 75

CONTRIBUTORS 89

ONWARD TO FLORENCE

Grace McCormack

There is no dignified way to walk through a green plastic kiddie pool filled with 11.2 gallons of room temperature tartar sauce. The first issue, of course, is the high viscosity of the material, which promises to plunge into its depths any traveler who does not restrict their gait to a stuttering, cautious shuffle. Second is the cacophony of squeaks produced by the repeated contact of the kiddie pool's sauce-slickened surface with the rubber soles of one's sneakers. The worst aspect of the endeavor, however, is unquestionably the smell. Tangy and invasive, the sauce aggressively clings to every fiber of one's clothing, soaking into one's pores, filling the olfactory center with an urgent anger.

It was the intensity of this smell that made Sue Hoffle cough slightly as she climbed out of the pool and onto the stage of the 72nd Annual Saint Cecil Parish Fish Fry. Generated by her small, twelve-year-old lungs, the cough's faint sound nevertheless reverberated around the otherwise silent gymnasium. On the stage, Father Lewis stood frozen. As Sue approached him, she was struck that his expression was remarkably similar to that of Saint Peter when watching Jesus walk on water as depicted on the cover of her seventh grade religion textbook. Amazement. Fear. Disbelief. The only difference that Sue could see was that Peter had a large, thick beard while Father Lewis was clean shaven. Also, Father Lewis was holding a cage with a hamster in it.

The hamster's name was Florence. Unbeknownst to the animal, Florence was the masterstroke of a fundraising campaign conducted by Angela Pilkington, President of the Saint Cecil Committee for Parish Upkeep. At the beginning of January, Angela had placed Florence's cage in the seventh grade classroom, and as Angela had predicted, over the subsequent weeks and months, the small rodent had nibbled and shuffled her way into the affections of nearly every child attending Saint Cecil's Grade School.

Most were afflicted with a rabid infatuation, intense and unheeding of its own impending cessation. Mrs. Garcias, the seventh grade homeroom teacher, had to open her classroom twenty minutes before the first bell to accommodate the sheer volume of children who wished to visit the hallowed cage before class. On the slush covered parking lot where the students took their recess, debates of the relative merit of each of Florence's features regularly culminated in fist fights. Around the dinner table, parents were treated to lengthy treatises of the creature's greatness. Florence was a seven ounce celebrity; a brown-furred phenomenon; a four-legged legend that loomed large in the mind of every child and parent in Saint Cecil Parish. And now, on a cold Friday at the end of March, Florence was finally to be auctioned off.

That evening, mingling with the smells of grease and tartar sauce and the high pitched wailing of toddlers was an electric hum. Parents filed through the squeaking gym doors and shook hands with vigor. During the day, these were plumbers, nurses, and auto technicians. Tonight, however, they were high stakes negotiators, bold heroes on a mission. Under their sweaters, each heart beat a smidge faster, pulsing with the primordial desire to provide for their young. They piled their Chinet paper plates with the all-you-can-eat fish and homemade coleslaw. They handed their children a dollar each to guess how many gallons of tartar sauce was in the kiddie pool in front of the stage. They clasped their hands when Father Lewis gave the invocation. And most of all, they waited.

Finally, at 7:32, Angela Pilkington and Father Lewis climbed on stage and announced that the auction was to begin and all who wished to participate should approach the stage. At these words, each parent stood up with a degree of simultaneity typically reserved for the singing of the Star Spangled Banner before the eighth grade basketball games, pushed in their metal folding chairs, and walked to the stage with an air of casualness. Only the tightly packed arrangement of their bodies betrayed the urgency which the crowd felt. The parents gathered as close to the stage as possible, leaving only room for the kiddie pool of tartar sauce which was positioned in front of the right side of the stage.

It was only through this small gap in the mass of adults that Sue Hoffle could watch the proceedings. There has been a Sue Hoffle in every seventh grade classroom in every school in the history of America. She lived with her grandmother in a cramped bungalow behind the Saint Cecil soccer fields. With frizzing hair and limbs at various levels of development, she had the appearance of being crudely constructed. On the rare occasion that she spoke, her open mouth would reveal a crowd of teeth stubbornly unyielding to the mess of wire braces that caught on her chapped lips. While the other girls in her class had formed into tight confederations, officialized by exchanged bracelets and reciprocated sleepovers, Sue had remained a single unit, vulnerable to a variety of attacks.

She now sat, alone, at the base of the bleachers to watch the auction of Florence, her sole ally in the seventh grade classroom. Around Sue's neck was a pink lanyard with the key she had used to lock her grandmother's screen door earlier that evening. Her sneakers were still damp from her trek across the slushy soccer fields. Her grandmother would be asleep when she returned. Sue watched as Angela Pilkington handed Father Lewis Florence's cage.

The bidding began. And Sue watched. Five dollars. Ten. Twenty. Mr. Fisker raised his hand. Sue saw his daughter Leslie Fisker place birthday party invitations on the desks of the girls on either side of Sue. Twenty-five. Twenty-seven. Thirty. Mrs. DeCaucus shouted out. Sue saw Anthony DeCaucus drawing a butt on Sue's lunchbox in permanent marker. Thirty-five. Forty. Forty-five. Florence rustled in her cage. Sue saw her life stretch in front of her. Days and weeks and months of these small embarrassments, all piled on top of each other and going on and on and on.

Sue stood up.

She walked forward towards the tight mass of parents. The only clear path was that above the kiddie pool. She paused at the green plastic edge of this sea of gleaming white, then unceremoniously strode ahead. The quiet splorp of her sneaker diving into the tartar sauce cut the noise in the room by half. With each movement, the onlookers grew more silent until the only sound in the entire gymnasium was her own squeaking, sloshing footsteps. The eyes of every parishioner followed her pilgrimage as she reached the stage

and hoisted herself onto the platform.

Her shoes, now filled with the creamy, white glop, squelched with each step she took to the center of the stage where Angela Pilkington and Father Lewis stood with Florence. Angela Pilkington's bright red lipstick formed a perfect "O" as she watched this ungainly, odorous creature approach. Father Lewis, almost certainly still in shock, did not resist when Sue gently took Florence's cage. Florence rustled softly. Still shuffling slowly and unceremoniously, Sue made her way to stage left, opened the creaking gym door and exited into the cold March night. In her wake walked a trail of size 6 ½ Sketcher footprints.

It is indeed an axiomatic truth of the universe that there is no dignified way to walk through a 11.2 gallons of tartar sauce. There is no dignified way to steal a hamster from a priest. Or be a middle school pariah. But at twelve years old, Sue Hoffle did not have the luxury of dignity. What she had is the knowledge acquired through daily practice: that every indignity can be stomached, that every blemish eventually heals, and that seventh grade could not last forever. This was Sue Hoffle's wisdom, her super power. It gave her the ability to do what no other person in that gymnasium could and cross a sea of indignity and embarrassment towards a future of promise and tartar sauce stained glory.

6:33PM

Allie Griffith

And they're playing that song again and all it makes you want to do is slap the girl adjusting the provolone on her panini. And you are behind a body and another body is behind you and then there are two in front of the body in front of you then three beside you and so you consider falling into the body in front of you, domino style, and hope the whole thing just lies down for a second so you can get your baked cod. And while they're all down you could stack them up and block the ice-cream corner because you used to hate mint chocolate chip but now you can't stop thinking about it just sitting there, untouched, no blemishes have messed up its Covergirl complexion (yet). Except you know that the zit-givers will soon be oiling it up with their clawing paws. They are the tiny sweat beads that start crawling slowly, slowly, tentatively down your face, then BAM the floodgates open and you are a greasy, bubbling circle sausage face.

Acne: they gave it to both you and the mint chocolate chip ice cream.

But you don't become a domino because you don't know that body in front of you and won't talk to it let alone touch it. So you stand still. You are standing, you are standing, standing. And you are standing and thinking about your desires. And you are wondering if this is what a criminal feels like before he steals the Chanel purse or SpongeBob pajama pants. You want what the body in front of you has. Want it now. And you are not standing anymore but shuffling shuffling shimmying slyly almost touching its shoulder and you can see what you want, it's just laying there asking for consent. But the body is stealing it and there's no more left and now you are standing again and standing for more to come.

There's always more to come.

Yet you wish you weren't so malicious and instead made this a Pac Man game where the bodies wouldn't have to fall, just maybe were eaten in one

beep. Then you would beep yourself around and beep beep beep and the maze would be empty and it's just you and the fruit in the middle, waiting unamused and ready to be rescued. Your stomach would be a small planet but you wouldn't care because the roads are empty and the bodies are gone and you never knew what the floor looked like beneath you until just now and that makes you feel omnipotent. And you are rewarded for gulping the bodies with a bonus life. You'll save it for tomorrow.

Digestion was never one of your priorities.

Sometimes you're in there and you try to hear yourself think of your desires but you are deafened by *I'm sorry excuse me are you in line what's over there I'm sorry ew so long I'm sorry so hungry dude excuse me hey what's up left right left south left right right north west east I'm sorry* and then you forget what you desired and your heart won't stop beating and beating and you're so hungry but you forget because of the beating. You drop down, in tornado position, arms covering your head in a strange sort of worshipy homeless look, and set your tray on the ground. You chose the spot by the mint chocolate chip ice cream because you knew it would attract bodies. And that maybe the bodies would put some of their stir-fry on your tray. But the bodies trip on your tray and what the fuck at you and stare at their little rectangle friends and you feel their eyes. And you want to go home.

Maybe next time you should try holding a cardboard sign.

So you decided it might be a good idea to teach bodies a lesson and marinated them and stacked them inside metal containers. Just stacked them up, nice and close (that's what they want anyways, right?). Stacked them up, and let them be picked up and slathered and oiled and peppered and cut. You began to hear them crying out that they would be torn apart, their bodies would be swallowed, and the remainder of their limbs would be whisked away on a moving contraption. But you told them it wasn't a big deal because almost always they survive, barely get touched, and end up somewhere surrounded by Hefty.

Plastic always attempts to display something real.

But you'll get up and try this again because it shouldn't be this hard to walk and pick up things and chew. And they're playing that song again and

it makes you wish you had a sweatband and Reeboks and a Larry Bird jersey on. And this is the Finals, man! You are the best! You made it this far, you are the hardest worker, you're off the charts, you're the best, you're the best, you're the best. And maybe this place isn't what you think it is but it is really a Caribbean vacation with lots of islands to choose from. It's beautiful here (they keep telling you). And a lot of bodies want to be on islands. And you can be on an island every morning, every afternoon, every night, a different one every day. And all you have to do is stand for a little and walk for a little.

Islands are hard to choose from and I'm picky, too.

"LEVITICUS 25:31"

Jack Pietrowicz

they have redemption rights and revert in the jubilee.

unrepentant i emblazon myself with a little slice of heaven a heavy machete leaves the lightest marks. concomitant with erosion are fleshly nameless atrocities sucking at the city's sweet neon dugs. to flagellate the western wall of the willis tower, i punch until my fist sears and swells to the size of the western world.

a gaggle of headless geese waddles worse than a thousand stumpnecked chickens dancing macabre on the ash-besmeared corners. fold the concrete into a crane and then we'll talk about the beauty of your banal words about teacups and your pathetic fashion sense.

i should chuck you out of this skyscraper window, your chucks catching the balcony below to break your fall along with your ankles. until your cartilage tears, your achilles will never heel, and you'll fail once again to break the impact with your feeble voice.

welcome to the city, weak-boned child – this is the way the barbarians will caress your skull until it explodes.

CORD

my mother drew the cord around me when i was twelve and from that point
forward i lost all semblance of conscious thought until the
fork punctured her back and my
father forked his tongue and offered me
flamingos pink as father's flesh - i used to be
farinaceous to my crossed "T"s and dotted "I"s

MADELEINE–SCHEDULE II CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

Gerard Ledley

Proust once ate a madeleine and hallucinated a seven volume novel. Thinking about Proust thinking about eating that madeleine made me hallucinate a lady in pink walk towards me down a narrow hallway and then vanish. Madeleine's are a hell of a drug. Proust spent most of his time writing and I spend most of my time sitting on my bathroom floor watching water drip from a faucet. Madeleine's—not even once kids. Drugs in Proust's time were much more innocent things—opium for headaches, cocaine for eye-anesthesia, methamphetamines for weight loss, madeleine's for memory recall. Nowadays most educated people stay away from opium and cocaine and methamphetamines and madeleines because we know about their dangers. But literature was my gateway drug to second hand madeleine intoxication. Once I was addicted to oreos so bad it turned my teeth black. I will say I did some of my best work on oreos. The withdrawal was unbearable though and I ended up freebasing soggy oreo remains out of glasses of milk. Proust died in 1922 of pneumonia a well-known complication of madeleine addiction. I'm just thankful to Sesame Street for introducing the wider public to sweet addictions.

CROONER

Frank Sinatra loved to sing about the wee small hours of the morning and stunning women in elegant dresses and hotelbars and cigarettes and alcoholheartbreak and manhattan but he was born in hoboken new jersey the son of an italian abortionist and had to take elocution classes. What does Frank Sinatra know. I love to sing about actually no wait I'm lying I don't love to sing. I prefer to sit alone at two in the morning basking in the ambiance of colored christmas lights that I hung up with thumbtacks four months ago and drink whiskey out of coffee cups. Sometimes I put on ol' blue eyes and let him do the feeling for me for a while but he always sounds tinny on my shitty computer's tiny speakers and I'm sorry but I'm like *Frank, stop complaining and get your shit together she obviously doesn't love you and you're getting a bit desperate it's sad not to mention it's bumming me out*. Frank always ignores my advice anyway new jersey people are such assholes. I hope Frank Sinatra figures out his life soon or else he'll end up a washedup washout nobody. I'll end up an accountant.

WHAT IS THE SOUND OF A BODY, FALLING?

Elle Maureen Newcome

Shower fall—skullcap crack,
pop of pre-cranial
pre-frontal pressure.

Cause of collapse:
Scholarly facts packed too tight.
hoarded Knowledge fractures fast.
absolute corruption of bought brilliance.

A hyper-ambition apex, this untimely
climax is creativity uncorked.
it bursts gray-brain matter:
a powerful puree spurt.

The splatter surges like champagne:
a torrent-like toast to elite education.
the tense escalation illuminates
A prefect, flawed.

The skull fizz hisses slow
along soap bubbles down the drain.

These million-dollar brains
descend pungent pipes:
a tuition liquidated
Then

purified in city sewage
pumped in to caffeinated Keurigs
powering late-night, uptight, students bright.

Perfection encouraged to a point where we forget
final drafts are forged on the crippled backs
of countless rewrites.
teacher's apple bitten: future unwritten.

Artist Statement: Accompanied by my
caffeinated-Keurig coffee, I tired to write
with very long or very short lines.

But ibit the wrong apple. Honey crypt.
McIntosh. Macintosh. frazzled imagination
crisped. I was sabotaged by a burst
of inspiration (perhaps desperation)
powered by pent-up frustration and jam-
packed information.

In sum, the polar-lengthed lines
didn't spill out quite right. So I took a left
and adjusted the margins to meet the paper.
Or rather, I adjusted the paper to meet the
requirements.

Length is subjective, and this is unlined. I
went for creativity uncorked. Buried deep is
your short-lengthed assignment about a
long-lengthed poem. It is about a short-
lengthed life from the standpoint of
eternity. Or a long-lengthed life from the
standpoint of a fetus. I didn't feel this

length requirement right.

what I'm trying to say is: you are a neuron.
and this is my long-lined poem on short
paper. synapse. She snaps.

THE COMPLETE MANUAL FOR FIRST RENDEZVOUSES AND ROMANTIC IN COUNTERS

Claire Turgeon

The Preparation of the Optical Allusion

1. Step one: Yes, freak out. A member of the male species has, in fact, beseeched your presence at a place where I'm pretty sure they eat food. You're screwed.

2. Step two: You must make yourself into an optical illusion. There's a reason you had to consult this manual. Start by covering yourself with two inches of make-up. Preferably the stuff from the Halloween stores. Guys love when they can't fathom your nationality.

3. Step three: Dress yourself in a nun's garbs. Make sure the wimple comes far enough down the tunic to obscure all cleavage. The last thing you want to do is scare off your man. He needs to know the Lord is on his side; hence the biblical allusion.

4. Step four: Re-dose your aftershave.

The Arrival of the Mail Species

5. Step five: Now that you've officially prepped your vessel for the night, it's time to deal with your habitat. Ensure the room is amply trashed for when he arrives. This lets him know you depend on a real man for your needy basics.

6. Step six: Cover your counters with baby pictures of yourself so he'll have some idea of what your children will look like.

7. Step seven: Hide in your room until he arrives in case he feels compelled to role-play the story of Rapunzel. You'll finally have the perfect excuse to showcase all those wigs in your room.

8. Step eight: On the off chance he's not into LARPing, have him fax you when he's here. Men love being old-fashioned for their woman.

The Consumption of his Wallet

9. Step nine: Insist that he let you drive his car. Give him a chance to relax while you violate every traffic law to show him you're a bad ass.

10. Step ten: When you're finally seated, order the most expensive item on the menu but keep stealing bites of his food instead. Men don't ask a woman out unless they want to go broke. Plus, giggling while you eat his meal will make you look cute as you slowly bankrupt him.

11. Step eleven: Take your shoes off and scratch his shins with your toenails. This is way more efficient and suggestive than footsie.

12. Step twelve: When you're done, promptly stand up and flee the scene. Let him know you wear the pants.

The Knight Cap

13. Step thirteen: Invite yourself back to his apartment. Brownie points if he lives with his parents because that means you've scored yourself a sensitive man.

14. Step fourteen: Assert your dominance by filling all his cabinets with feminine products and claim your territory by leaving bobby pins on every surface.

15. Step fifteen: Now it's time for the nightcap. Heat up some milk for him so he can see your maternal side. Don't be afraid to scratch behind his ears while he drinks. It will soothe him.

16. Step sixteen: While he finishes his dairy, quietly slip away to don your medieval helmet.

17. Step seventeen: Take an Instagram pic to show everyone women can be knights in armor. This is the 21st century after all so you have to be a #feminist.

18. Step eighteen: Text him a hundred times to get all his personal info. He'll give it to you, of course, because you changed your contact name in his phone to "Mom" before you left last night.

19. Step nineteen: You should now have enough information to forge the appropriate matrimony papers.

20. Step twenty: Show up at his house to move your stuff into his house.

21. Step twenty-one: Have your first domestic.

22. Step twenty-two: File for divorce.

23. Step twenty-three: Return to your hovel and hunt for your next male.

24. Step twenty-four: Mourn for your loss upon realizing you just took dating advice from someone who's been single their whole life.

BACKLIGHTS

Hap Burke

There's a weighty silence right now as I reach for my phone, like someone's holding their breath. I can touch it and it will light up, a hundred thousand pixels sparking like embers and sparkling like stars—every blue white purple green gray white red flame dancing across my palm. I remember reading about Saint Elmo's fire when I was younger—green shocks of lighting that spun about masts and yardarms on the great ships of the seventeen-hundreds; the poor, shivering sailor standing alone below the dripping ropes, holding his Bible and reaching for the rails, his breath cutting sharply against the cold, foamy spray.

GREEN LOTUSES

Kathrine Fetizanan

Little carp swim between my toes.
A pond of nuts and herbs swirl around.
They nibble and their bites
Tickle so much that I squirm.
The splashes earn Mama's scolding
And I retreat to soldier's position.
Fish continue to swim, swim, swim.

Shi shi shi
Nai Nai scrubs them to the color of Mei Mei's
Cleaned bottom.

Geh geh geh
Snail shells and seashells fly in the air
As Jie Jie snaps and cuts nails one by one.
Xue hua falls and shimmer across like scales.
They're kneaded, rolled, and pounded
Like the bao Mama makes in the morning.

Re re re
One petal, two petal, three petal, four
Petals folded under hot soaking leaves.

I yelp.
Red burns across my face
And Mama's yells of losing face
Ring like a prayer gong.
Big toe in front, heel in-

Let me die.
Let me die NOW!
My soul escapes through my mouth
As my screams wake my ancestors.

I am blind!
To every thing but white hot flashes.
Choke the flower, choke the roots!
I want to tear the lotus from its stem!
A thousands scorpion bites
A thousand paper cuts
A thousand hacking of limbs
Could not possibly compare
To this attack.
And everyone thanks *Zao Jun*.

Time crawls.
I hobble in tiny pots across the room to practice.
Each shuffle like a heavy bronze *gui*
Shattering my skull.
Colors fly at me.
Why does the earth think it's a top?

Spin, spin, spin.
Mama, Nai Nai, and Jie Jie are birds
Twittering how perfect my petals are.

But my lotuses are bent.
My lotuses are crushed.
My lotuses were killed.
Only maggots and worms remain.

DREAM MASQUERADE

The wax drips on my face and I lick off the burns, chewing on plasticity. Your hair is on fire and so is mine but the boat's not sinking so I guess we're fine. We are forever rowing in this lake of black petroleum, swirling with stars in a dark hole. And yet you smile. Why do you smile? Your pearl skin glows, and I'm left wondering why the humming birds are making nests in your hair and not mine. Mother willows overshadow, swaying their arms in tandem with the non-existent wind that blows through my hair. Why do words race from my mouth faster than I can keep up? But I don't know you. I still don't know you.

A LULLABY

Luisa Mader

I.
I remember steering wheels like shotguns. And the melody—a tender melody speaking then—braiding streets like rope between my fingers. Light falling bones against the tall window. The air burrowing around my neck to coax me on. He smiled at me on the sidewalk and the night circled its ritual dance, tapping softly.

II.
That old shed by the railroad tracks smelled of wild berries, charcoal, mold. In the corner was a red rust stain and twelve chapter books. A note I couldn't read. Once, a half empty bottle of perfume and a vase of fresh flowers. I carved my name in a snow bank and left my shoes on the doorstep.

I saw a picture once but it was taken in the daylight.

III.
The powerlines stretch out down the road and we are alone. Sinking, the mud soaked earth breathes – inhales us near. I could paint my body with the sunset. I would draw into it and it would draw into me. Out at the cliff framed river, I imagine I am a diver searching for the bottom of the ocean. In courage or fear I slip and stare at my toes. I remember the tightness of breathing.

IV.
It is my turn to water the garden. I make a game of it. Point the sliding hose high in the air; let it drop. Water gushes around me like a halo, marking me - a special signal. It pools around my feet as

I play on. Soon the water rises high tide, but I am left dry. It is only after the stream stops that I begin to drown.

The surge gently crawls under my eyelids, just to remind me that it is still here. I'd greet it with shaking hand, but I have dissolved into background music. All that is left are bald wrists.

V.

I postponed my plans to watch a small hedgehog bleed its way into life. The mother hobbled into the backyard, spoke of death, and convinced us she'd stay only a few moments. Minutes turned to hours but I stayed past sleeping. The baby, when he breathed at last, stretched out a hand. The trees leaned in to greet him. I sang a small birthing song, one of a hope that lasts until the first winter. They went on their way. Seeking - I think - the tug of the ocean.

PESTILENCE

Claire Turgeon

It sounds like an apology
I'm sorry for what I didn't
say or what I said because
Now we're lost and have no map

And I think we sprung an oil leak somewhere
back in Lawrence, Kansas since that's where
I lost the treads on my shoes. Now
the tires spin but I don't move

from the hollow where they're buried
the demons of another life not lived
that claw against the sinews
of my keyboard. Liberation

does not come to those bastards
and so we lie in words and in beds
with our fists in our mouths because
writing is kill or be killed.

Where O negative crusts in my cuticles
and my halo sputters before clanging down
around my neck like a manacled noose
and the numbered memories for which I search—

mere vessels for the reaping words
they are and they aren't and now
I'm dizzy and my legs fold and my knees buckle
the words pick me like flowers to garnish a grave

DESIGN PROBLEMS

Jacqueline Cassidy

I hit you with my kitty doorstop.
I bashed your head in last night. I loved my kitty doorstop.
I don't want it to have blood on it. I let her snuggle with you.
You are taking up too much space.
People are asking who are you and it's not important. The important part is the smashing.
I like the way it feels. I do it over and over again because I can't get it out.
Because it is never REAL, it's at night.
They are ideas —> it is abstract—>
they tell me that is not the convention—>
what does the cat look like, they want the cat to be alive, it is not, it's almost concrete,
it's a doorstop. They play a blame game.
They sound abstract. They are actually critics.
Well, there are different kinds of bleeding, this is one of them. It's blue.
It has oxygen-is oxygenated. I'm hungry. There's a process recall. There is not a recall menu.
You have to have a system, drills, it's in the appendix. Blunders! There is a victim game. Why do I have to apologize?

EMPTY HOUSE

Lan Nguyen

My name is officer Jack Lumber, and this is my report on Case #0011673402.

On the morning of August 23rd, around 7:40 am, I received a call from headquarters about disturbances in the Woodland estate. When I got there, around 7:55 am, the front door was open. There were no signs of barged entry, as the door was spotless and the hinges were intact. There were footprints going one way from inside the house. It looked like it was made by an animal, a large dog perhaps. The prints were stained red as well; I guessed it to be blood. I immediately called for back up.

I checked inside the house to make sure the residents were still there, with my firearm on hand. There didn't seem to be any signs of life no matter how much I called. I followed the footprints, which led up the stairs. The smell was horrible, thick and musty. The footprints led me to the master bedroom. I thought to wait for the other officers but I feared that someone's life might be in danger. I readied my firearm and opened the door. When I went inside, I was horrified by what I saw.

The mattress and carpet were ripped to shreds, and stained with enormous amounts of blood. The footprints ran all over the room, including the walls. I saw human handprints as well. Someone must have been struggling with something in this room. At the foot of the bed was a tipped over basket filled with bread, still warm. The bloodstains were most concentrated on the northwest corner of the room. Upon closer inspection, I noticed that a piece of clothing camouflaged with the blood. It was a red hood, small enough for a child to wear. Around 8:12 am, I heard patrol cars coming up the driveway. Back up finally arrived.

EVERYWHERE AND ALL AROUND

Trini Bui

Everything disjointed – disjointed but connected – little vignettes instead of full stories. I can't do what I need-want to do, something about me a little too try-hard and not trying hard enough. My roommate calls me a friendship-ruiner in jest. "You let everything go," she says. "You don't fight for it – or yourself – as much as you should." Laughing and half-serious, I say she's not wrong.

Twenty minutes into a two hour drive, I have to pull over. I shove my car door open and run around to the other side so I can throw up without anyone seeing. I don't know why I was worried about optics. The light faded hours ago. The road is dark in both directions and all around. Even with my emergency lights on, no one sees me. I wipe my mouth with the back of my hand, swallowing the sour aftertaste instead of spitting. I think about driving into the surrounding desert. I think all the time about driving into the dirt and cactus toward the foothills and never coming back.

He moved out of state because the desert is too dangerous a place to raise children. He won't admit he was afraid of drying up. I don't tell him that we have a harsh monsoon season every year. Contrary to popular belief, the desert gets a lot of rain. The soil, I once learned, isn't porous enough to hold all that water, though. We end up flooding instead of really absorbing.

In hindsight, I see where things got fucked up. It goes back two or three years, but it always starts with this:

you and me, on the floor of a poorly lit studio apartment. We were spread across the floor, a fan spinning not because it was hot but to keep the air moving. You had an arm over your eyes, your springy hair cushioning your head on the worn carpet. You're not tall, just too big for the room, and you had to lay diagonal in the empty space between the desk and the bed to keep your legs from scrunching against the wall. I was curled beside you, back to you, book in my hands.

RAUCOUS GODS

Eve Hlywa

Raucous gods are those who dream of mundane divinity. Sanguine is the ruddy flesh stair down which sleeping tricksters see men whose rubicund hands hurl slave masters.

One and one wrestle upon the limit of endless steps. Two I see enfleshed god and theotic man glistening with unpored sweat. Suns set rising lunar crescendos and stars intensely gaze on in twinkling rivers of indifferent anticipation. Oath-watcher discerns evening stars and the morning star hails the pale reflections. Three times three threes of ages stand unmarked in furious silence. Three thighs are torn and hands are lain upon a forehead to anoint in blood profane steps of heaven's clay and cast falling stars down from weighty celestial chariots. Three instants succeed only this but not each other as two orbs are one and eclipsed corona fixes itself in empty sky. Only has he stood himself upon ineffable pristine distance.

I waited silent in my moved place as I screamed vulgar oaths at twins unbirthed for two were one and three were two and one were three as numbers ceased and orders broke my frigid flame dimmed and pale face burned and all saw I with blind blazing eye sleeping awake at falling steps soaking mingled virile flows as dawn and dusk my red lips met in thrice hemic kiss. Crimson hands touched crimsoned face. I nursed my wounds' unopened days free of perfidious blame for crimes undone as unfettered heels struck bloodied magnate usurper's temple.

Pitches clash as edeified stones sound cacophonic music ordered by pedestaled conductor dancing instead to the sound of ambitious instrumentalist architecting strange tunes as noiseless ears burst from the babbling logic waking slumbers divine and lulling watchful mortals as

dreamers picture all is as it has been.

Screaming in blood I dying birthed myself as observer ceased to conceive no more fecund distinctions as I and You and He. One and one and one make three when only this one still may see blasphemous stairs from altitudinal depths with unbloodied clay member piercing the sky. Nothing begins when debating climactic lifeblood spills down soaking the very ladder penetrating that which toppled stands forever. Stairs stiff reddened by rebel upshot recede as a scale of abyssal transgression is and becomes what always has been unless this never was. Divine pranks were pulled, masquerades never impostors played, falling stars whose unseen thrones chariots kept fixed never hurled from their seats. Who struggled, and who was struggled, and who kept oath-broken time upon merkabic tapestries.

Quiescent men sound prophesies of mortal gods. With downcast face and blackened hearts mighty hunters lay bricks to grasp unfallen mantles of staring gods with milky eyes.

…

[The following text was found scribbled in the margins:

I AM. I AM knows I AM. I AM knows I AM knows I AM and so knows I AM NOT. I and You and He are We.

I count three. Two seem the same. One differentiates two. Three thighs were torn, yet there were four. How many are seen when one sees three? Does one see one? For I see two: one and three. Do I make three? I am I and you are You and three is He and We are Three. Things blur too closely yet still I distinguish. This is all I see but do not know: never-ending grades of Three as One and yet I AM.]

ANXIETIES

Dominique Estes

Uncertain of the "correct" answer to the dental assistant's passive-aggressive question,
"Have you been flossing?"
because, while her latex gloves are thoroughly covered in blood,
—a virgin gingival sacrifice to the Tooth Fairy proving my guilt—
lying and the truth would make me look equally disappointing, so it's a matter of personal preference.
I tell her I've been thinking about it.
Virtually incapable of casually making friends because everyone's on their phones all the time,
and it makes them seem so busy-like business professional, like I'd be interrupting them, like maybe that girl is genuinely invested in her friend-with-benefits' one word text messages, like maybe Angry Birds takes on a vital urgency to the only nice kid in my physics class,
like my intrusion would be trespass to chattering chattel.
Terrified that love doesn't really exist and
selfishness masquerades as flowers and breakfast dates and moving in together and wedding receptions.
Apprehensive about shaving my legs because at this point that could mean uprooting a family of small woodland creatures.
Always a little panicked on the highway because my driving instructor told me I was so bad at changing lanes that I could kill somebody
and all trucks seem like they might actually be evil Transformers waiting for a chance to kill me and I'm desperate to be more than a somebody.
Afraid that maybe it makes sense to divide by zero in divorce settlements because neither of them was truly invested in the relationship to begin with.
Constantly worried about the time,
it slips away like my hopes for a merciful end to the coup d'état of my

Facebook feed by sorority event pictures.
Unwilling to talk on the phone because it's an in-person conversation locked in a water tank and I'd prefer not to drown in my own sweaty voice.
Horrified by the concept that death could be
my consciousness floating in darkened dimensions without stimuli, a meaningless breech from reality,
an eternal unknowable insanity.
Hesitant to shop at the mall because I don't know how to politely reject the hungry advances of sales associates as they corner me into buying fifteen pink shirts when all I wanted was a pair of fuzzy socks and I can't even handle the vibrant confidence of salmon or peach, let alone pink.
I don't have any phobias except I have
a very specific kind of claustrophobia while standing in motionless masses of people whose faces are blending together where all I want is to
collapse into an effervescence invisible to fate.
Maybe that's more freedom than fear.

LANDSCAPING

Jesús Mendoza Downey

My father ripped at the roots of the tufted weeds
and carefully skipped his fingers around his newly planted stems.

What was earlier that day owned by crabgrass and dandelion
was now populated by neon colors, on sale at Lowe's garden center.

My father sweat through his shirt to please his wife and son
with a new front lawn, the usual pride of the homeowner.

So imagine his surprise when one of the neighbors drove up, spoke
through his car window, said that's some good work you're doing.

Mind if I speak to the owner?

CINQUETERRE

by Ann Mangano

PROLOGUE FOR A BIOGRAPHY

Adrian Lore

PRÓLOGO

Tratar de realizar la reseña histórica de un personaje ligado muy estrechamente al autor puede generar la tentación de mitificarlo, de exaltarlo o sublimarlo, o por el contrario de negar su realidad. No es este nuestro caso.

En realidad, la tentación fue de plasmar recuerdos de Doña Berta Barroso (1909-1969), un deseo de toda la vida que, pero las ocupaciones del diario vivir, o tal vez por el complejo de mal escritor, no nos atrevimos a realizar. La decisión la tomamos, finalmente, a raíz del diplomado en Saberes de Vida, ofrecida por la Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar y la Universidad Eafit de Medellín.

A manera de trabajo, se les sugiere a los alumnos a realizar la biografía de un antepasado tomado de su propio árbol genealógico.

Nunca antes nos había llamado la atención el tener o conocer nuestro árbol genealógico, ni nos importó la circunstancia de no haber conocido abuelos, tíos ni primos, pues con la mamá, cuatro hermanos, y después esposas, hijos, cuñadas y sobrinos (y ahora hasta nietos) nos parecía suficiente. Por primera vez cavilamos sobre lo agradable que sería haber tenido un frondoso árbol genealógico.

Bueno, con Doña Berta inició el pasado de esos nietos e hijos de nietos, y por ello nos dedicamos a esbozar lo que recordamos y pudimos recopilar de la intensa vida de Doña Berta, una ejemplar mujer para la familia Sanchez Barroso.

– Rodrigo, el autor

PROLOGUE

To attempt to carry out the historical review of an individual closely linked to its author can generate the temptation of mythologizing her, of exalting her or glorifying her, or on the contrary of obscuring her reality. This is not our case.

In fact, the temptation was of capturing our memories of Doña Berta Barroso (1909 – 1969), a lifelong desire which, but for the engagements of our daily living, or perhaps owing to the complex of the unscrupulous writer, we never dared realize. The decision was made, finally, owing to the Knowledge in Living certification offered by the Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar and the Universidad EAFIT, in Medellín.

As an assignment, students were suggested to compose the biography of an ancestor extracted from his or her own family tree.

Never before had we engaged the idea of having or knowing our own family tree, nor were we concerned by not having met grandparents, uncles or cousins, as it seemed that with a mother, four brothers, and then wives, children, in-laws and nephews (and now even grandchildren), we had plenty. For the first time, then, we thought of how nice it would have been to have a vibrant, leafy family tree.

And so, with Doña Berta began the past of all those grandchildren and children of grandchildren, and it is thus why we commit ourselves now to sketch out what we remembered and were able to put together of the intense life of Doña Berta, an exemplary woman for the family of Sánchez Barroso.

– Rodrigo, the author

MY MODERN LOTARIA MACHINE

Mirek Stolee

FROM MS 11.17.15

Karen Neis

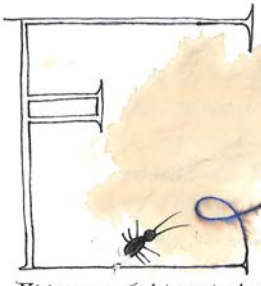
Restoration

This manuscript was found at the bottom of the well of St. Dwynwyn's abbey, a remote convent in an obscure corner of Wales which burned down under mysterious circumstances in 1347. It contains an episode of Arthurian literature the like of which is unknown in any other book.

Scholars have hypothesized that the text is the work of three separate authors. The initial, temporary labels "A," "B," and "C" were adapted by a particularly witty academic into the amusingly fitting sobriquets "The Aesthetic," "The Bloody," and "The Cagey." These authors were probably three rival nuns at St. Dwynwyn's, whose disagreements over the direction of the story are not inconspicuous.

Restoration has been tiring and difficult, due to water and fire damage and the merciless onslaught of a colony of well-dwelling bookworms, who have presumably feasted on the book for around six hundred years. While it may at one time have been a massive work, most of its pages have unfortunately gone missing. The ones that remain have hopefully been placed in the correct order.

Pages missing. Author "C."



laine, alone, stacked the books in the scriptorium in neat order. She had once alphabetized them, but she had grown bored of that system and now sorted them by the color of their bindings. The scriptorium of the court of Camelot was of course the finest in the world. They had hundreds upon hundreds of books, and scholars flocked here from across the globe to read them and copy them for themselves. Elaine never had to contend with the sadness of having less than a dozen books to care for, and only one of them – a book of Catullus' poetry – being any fun, and only one more – a thin bestiary, borrowed from London – being at all beautiful to look at. Elaine lived in the center of a cosmopolitan world, not the backwoods of some tiny little country no one cared about. Elaine, furthermore, had all the papers and inks in England at her disposal – she never had to steal materials from the mother superior or visiting scholars in order to write an Arthurian story with women who she used to care about.

11.

Elaine was proud of her books – she had no family of her own, no lover, few friends: the friends she had once had did not seem to like her anymore. But she loved her books, even if they could not love her back.

No one understood Elaine. She was the only one at court, besides visitors, who could read Greek and Hebrew. She had no idea how anyone managed to feel good about themselves in their religion, knowing as they did that huge portions of the Word of God were written in a language they knew nothing about. What supreme idiots. It is not really that hard to learn, anyway.

Elaine had lived at Camelot her whole life, since her parents sent her away when she was barely seven years old. She hardly remembered them anymore, except that her

father had had a horrific bald spot that he covered in all manner of cheap and gaudy hats, and her mother had had a habit of picking her nose that she was incredibly ashamed of. They had been so insecure – they probably still were. Elaine did not understand that. Who cares about appearances? There is nothing you can do about them – it is far better to sharpen one's mind. It did not hurt, however, that Elaine had been told her whole life that she was extraordinarily beautiful, and it always lingered in the back of her mind that the other ladies of Camelot – and perhaps even the lords – were jealous of her beauty. It sometimes came through in their writing.

12.

All of a sudden, Guinevere flung herself into the scriptorium. Her fancy hair was a flustered mess, her face all red and pimply, her eyes swimming with emotion and her brain quite expired. With Guinevere, there was always some disaster or another.

"The king has returned from battle! He has slain Mordred!"

"Oh." Elaine, still recovering from her recent beheading, did not like to tax her voice.

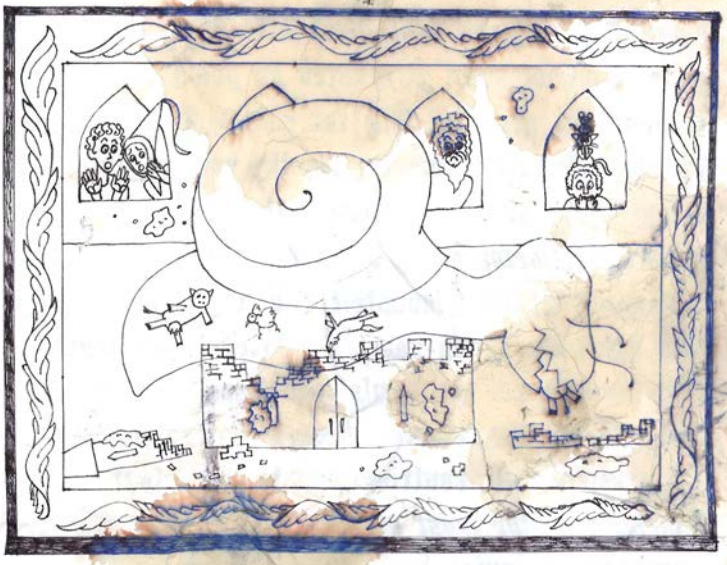
"*The Life of St. Rita*! Quickly! The magicians need it to heal him!"

"One moment, please."

Elaine located the book and serenely gave it to her queen. Guinevere scolded her for taking so long, then rushed out of the scriptorium in a swirl of robes and slipking perfume. Elaine wondered how she ever got away with wearing silk robes, painted shoes, and those hideous crowns of weed-flowers. The miserable librarian struck a flint – which she kept to light the lamps in the scriptorium for late-night reading – and caught fire to a scrap of one of her many excessive papers. She watched the scrap burn in her hands. She imagined pressing it against the wooden scriptorium walls. The scriptorium was placed so that if it fell, so would the whole castle. Then all the knights and ladies and lords and scholars would have to go elsewhere. No one could stay in Camelot if Camelot was gone forever. Maybe they could go somewhere that actually existed – like

Missing Pages. Author "B."

13.



"Run away! Run away! It is the *Snail*!"

"The *Snail*!"

"The *Snail*!"

14.

The knights screamed like women and fled like cowards! The Snail was allowed to roam through Camelot unmolested! It feasted on goats and chickens and produce! The fat riches of fat Camelot, all laid to waste! Oh the horror! The lost revenue! The shattering economy! To strike at Camelot, *Camelot*! This beast from Hell truly had no respect! What a monster! Did it not know how many hundreds of oh-so-clever writers had poured their little hearts and souls into Camelot?! Did it not appreciate the efforts these brainiacs exerted, their irreplaceable contributions to the arts?! *Camelot was the most wonderful place that had never actually existed, Goddammit! You stupid Snail! I bet he couldn't even read Greek and Hebrew! I bet he's never even been in love!*

And then –

And then –

15.

It started to eat the people!

16.

First just the prostitutes. Then it chewed up some farmers. This was all fine.

But then it ate Bors! Just as he leapt of the boat from the Crystal Tower following his tragic divorce! It chomped him into bite-sized bits! The only part it spat out was his poor, indigestible

broken heart!

The Snail started to pick off every one of the Knights of the Round Table, as well as their supporting secondary characters, one! by! one! It gobbed up **Gawain**, the tallest! It gnawed up **Viviane**, the strange and creepy fairy! It severed **Ingramore**! It dispatched **Pagonet**! It masticated **Merlin**! It crunched **Kay**! And the more it killed, the fewer there were to kill *it*!

At last it turned to Guinevere ... if only I did not have to write further ... but alas, it bit off her

SOMEDAY

Laura Gruszka

Legend has it Snow White summoned woodland creatures to help with the housework. I wonder if monks are anything like her—if they whistle a Gregorian tune (if you could call it a tune) and chirping angels fall like stars to scrub the pans, framed through doorways a chorus of hallelujahs. Such faith requires a snow-white conscience, or so I'm told. And while the maiden in the woods prayed to her absent prince, so does the monk, searching skyward through soap bubble cherubim. An apple presses its purple shadow against the windowpane. He knows which fruits to fear, yet he eats it anyway. In a greasy, unlit kitchen, he crunches into red skin with a clicking jaw, reaching mental tendrils out to yet another who was left alone by a savior who's taking his golden delicious time.

SO, YOU LIKE MY ASS IN LEGGINGS?

Paige Affinito

i bought these to fit in,
and there's no room for you.
i bought these to fit in. and ok—maybe i was looking for some sexual acceptance
but to assume it was for you, phallus?

see, i sought approval from my own gender
paid ninety dollars for spandex
muffin-top-inducing, best-with-converse-and-flannel,
cool-college-chick-blending-in-with-crowd, made-in-china spandex.

i'm glad you like them, too
though please, young gentleman
let me leave nothing to your imagination

i'll give you the behind the scenes, the backside story
the inside scoop. it's yours for the looking
it's yours
for the grabbing:

i put on my leggings today because
i'm bloated
because evolution requests that my uterine lining shed,
that I tampax myself up for six days so crimson endometrium
doesn't drip down my sexy thighs.

i'm cramping, i'm mean

i'm craving peanut m&ms, an oreo blizzard, and a happy meal
saturated

fat in
subcutaneous layers of skin
stretchy collagen and elastin, connective tissues
held in chambers
mysteriously packed in odor preventing nylon.

nastia liukin, amelia earhart
their asses wrapped like packages allowing them to fly
no,
they weren't trying to
fit
you
in.

but come, anyway. primitive,
I am calling you to my
survival-of-the-fittest butt cheeks
luring you in with my Darwinist

asshole.

GENESIS 4:20

when almighty god double-dog dared man to touch his pointer finger
after rubbing his big ol' feet all over heaven's oriental carpet,

the kliffs of kalifornia
emerged from the kracks of kim kardashian,
quaked by static shock and miley twerks

now! paparazzi climb on what was once formless and desolate,
throwing tabloids with words of heavy stone, preaching from
their Mount Sinais of social media and color ink printing

now! engulfed in a cloud of medicinal marijuana
adorned with the salty mist of ocean mammal tears, thirsting
for synthetic oil and dreaming of seaworld

first—dripping visine unto his record-breaking drought pupils
our savior, yeezus christ, saw all that he had made
and it was very good.

he then struck steel letters upon the kalifornia kliffs to be known by all kreation
excess materials were used for in-n-out billboards.
he ordered that all who roam the earth selfie, or be instagrammed,
and a side of animal style fries.

then god commanded:
let there be coachella,
where pseudo-hipsters run around in urban outfitter flower crowns

and everyone must like fro-yo
and yoga
and

let's pump this earth with botox so it will always be how it was

in the beginning!

INVINCIBLE ME

Kate Girdhar

I ate a starburst,
Let it bust up all my head,
Drove a picket through their
livers,
Stomped about in fields
of hearts gone to seed.

I laughed my way
through thickets of diamond,
Poured out my blood
to fill the moat,
Slipped in pools
of plasma at my feet.

I caught a constellation,
Tied it to a wishing-well,
Marked up all
the trees with my
initials,
Then burned the
lightening into rain.

I let the wild beasts
keep coming,
Watched them knock out
my ruby teeth.

I picked them back
out of the sewer,
and I wove a crown I'll
never keep.

MOMMY

Robert Teresi

Dedicated to those still breathing and alive in Flint, Michigan

My mommy is a professional penny collector.
Every day she goes to work and
fills up bucket after bucket.
"A penny doubles in worth when you smelt it."

Mommy pours the melted pennies all over my body
Until all of my skin is charred.
She hands me a bar of soap and I scrub scrub
The dirty away.
She pours another bucket on me, and the dirty
Washes away down the drain.

"It *hurts*, mommy! *Why*, mommy? *Why*?"
"There's no other way."

Sometimes mommy pokes me with a rusty needle
To keep me from getting sick.
It hurts, but I feel brave when it's over.

I don't know if the needles are working.
It's so hard to stand up and to play with my friends.
My head hurts.
My teeth are falling out.

I put my teeth under the pillow, but
The tooth fairy didn't come;

I didn't lose hope.

Every night I sleep on 12 teeth of all different kinds:
Molars, Canids, and Incisors.

Last night mommy told me a secret.
The tooth fairy is an alcoholic that has been
Eating my teardrops and
The plaque off of my decaying enamel.
The tooth fairy is going to die.

"The tooth fairy is going to die."

Dying is not existing, at least not anymore.
Dying is the same as never existing at all, except
Dying makes it okay to cry.

"*Why*, mommy? *Why*?"

Mommy tells me to pray to god
Because god will save me, and
God will save mommy too!

But I don't get it.

When I pray, god doesn't say anything back.
So I got to thinking that maybe god was with the tooth fairy.

You know…. Dead

And then I got to thinking that maybe
God was the tooth fairy, and the tooth fairy was god,

But the tooth fairy is a girl and god is a boy
So that can't be true.

I sleep and my fingernails corrode one by one until they become dust that I
Lap up like a hound from my bed sheets in the morning.

And then there is
This:
The sky is unravelling.
Reach
Out for it. Just the first thread, silently. Not all things that can be spun
Into a sentence's frame—
So don't try to coax it. Walk with it down the bright hall,
Wind it around a graceless hand, see—it's only the sky—
It shimmers.
And I, weightless in the
Midst of
Whatever has
Happened, I, the eye of the storm, staring at the ceiling, have made every requested effort to
Store this
Light.
My due is paid.
I have tried to pull the sun from my lungs, pour it into a bottle,
Store it in another's hands, but
Then in one
Room, as I knew it would, and didn't give a damn—
The glass all

Shattered, and without

Home

The light returned to me,

A particular

Mix

Of elation and horror,

For there are so many things that cannot be told here,

And I am too used to falling into words—

Yes, like refuge.

Now they are all undone

Of the blue-green-silver-thread of the sky, which is suddenly needing

Reweaving,

Though I don't know how—I'm just pacing, and

Pacing, breaking, and breaking, and then,

Finally, breath, and unwinding.

NAVIGATING AMERICA–
AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Matilda Ayris

Maumee, Ohio

An abundance of cars surround the small cloud-grey Ford hurtling along the American highway at the very law-abiding speed of 68 miles per hour. Unlike travelling at home, where the trains enable a leg stretch and some interesting people to watch, the car is filled with people I already know, and things that we don't really need. A forest-green backpack. Novels and notebooks. Two winter jackets with gloves shoved into the pockets. F has brought a packet of sunflower seeds. Two pillows: one with some kind of plush on one side, the other with an enormous star spangled banner spread across the front, because when in America you embrace the flag and go on a road-trip. If you, like me, don't have a license, you find a friend that does. The static plush is making my hair connect to both the seat in front and my face. I try to stretch my legs out, but as my knees dig into the chair in front of me, G grunts.

"Stop moving so much, your knees are digging into my back."

I keep moving, my hair increasingly hedgehog-like. The road outside is a stark grey against the white sky, through which the sun peeks every half an hour or so. The changing leaves offer a kaleidoscope of autumnal colours. Auburn, tangerine, sunshine yellow meet carrot orange, apricot, key lime green, buttercup and caramel in a range of colours reminiscent of paint samples. Some of the trees still boast green leaves, yet even these are slowly turning golden in the warm October weather. The yellow stripes in the middle of the road have blurred into one long line, drawing a thick border between the cars going in the opposite direction offering a false sense of security. S takes one hand off the steering wheel and gestures towards the Garmin, which is angled towards the passenger seat:

"Where are we?"

G leans forward, trying to discern the exact road we are on. The screen has been poked and prodded and it is now becoming increasingly difficult to see anything but greasy fingerprints. He tries to zoom in, but his frantic prodding results in the screen zooming out and we are given a view of the whole Midwest. He finally manages to zoom in again:

"Urm, turn left now!"

Even at our reasonable pace, there is no way we can turn, and so the car speeds on straight towards that well-known Ohio town: Seven Hills. The leaves blur, creating an orange streak, a border between the earth and sky. The sunflower seeds spill out of their bag and scatter across the seats and floor of the rental.

I mention that S drove us all the way to Philadelphia, a drive that somehow took fifteen hours, due to umpteen stops, and miscommunications.

S: "I mean, [driving was] incredibly boring in a way. You just have to talk away, listen to music… Maybe you should mention when you tried to kill us all by listening to acoustic music twelve hours into the trip…"

I laugh and point out that I meant more in terms of the roads themselves, rather than mishaps that we happened to have encountered.

S: "The roads are huge. So many freeways. Driving in the cities was scary, because I'm not so used to so many lanes and so many cars. And remember the Garmin leading us down the wrong way on a five lane highway? But I saved us!"

F: "Yeah, that was pretty scary…"

S: The cruise control though, pretty cool! Most cars in Ireland don't have it.'

"No, no, you stay in the car. Flash your lights when you want to order."

Caramel milkshakes. Cookies and Cream. Coffee and birthday cake. Chocolate, vanilla and strawberry. Burgers with cheese, cream cheese, American cheese, mozzarella. Spray cheese? Absolutely not. The milkshakes are thick, oozing with sugar, and would have been easier to eat with a spoon then with the candy striped straws with which we have been equipped. The

burgers? Thick, meaty, juicy, hot. But are we in a stereotypical diner somewhere in off-the-map-and-authentic-America? No. We are in a small car, stuffing our faces and attempting to stretch our legs out by opening the car doors and waving them around outside. The diner we have been recommended is called Svenssons, 'a staple of American diners' or so we've been told, and it is located in Seven Hills, Ohio, which is officially a city, but appears to consist of empty shops, a 7/11 and at least two Ukrainian Orthodox Churches. The houses are all far back on the lawns, with metal netting separating them from their neighbours. Several of the fences have tacked up signs 'Beware of the Doberman', but no people, let alone dogs are in sight. The only signs of life are the Svenssons' staff, who jog between four parked cars, their arms filled with milkshakes, cheese curds, straws, napkins and burgers.

S: "Seven Hills Ohio though… American suburbs are pretty strange. But Svenssons' had such great burgers. I remember when we turned on the radio and it was the 'Pursuit of Happiness' Midwest version, and instead of swearing they said 'cuckoo'."

*

New York, New York

"Is that an English accent? Which football team do you support? I'm Man U. You know Man U? Hey, I'll show you the quickest way to get to Grand Central, don't take that bus, just come with me."

The doors slam shut and I find myself on an empty bus, somewhere out by LaGuardia. I'm told we are heading towards Queens. The bus careers through narrow roads which slowly grow wider. The signs above ask me to respect my fellow passengers by turning my music down.

"Oh, you study literature! Not just a woman with an accent, but a good head on those shoulders too. I wish I'd met ya a few years ago. But hey, at least I've met ya now. I'd murder my wife for you, y'know. She's really been getting on my nerves…"

The bus swings violently and stops. The doors open and an old man wearing a Giants beanie steps on, swipes his card and shuffles on board.

"Sit down, and hurry up man! But yeah, don't get me wrong, I love my wife. I'm just messing. But you are in New York! Best city in the world. I mean, I haven't been around the whole world. But I come back here and it is home, real home. Best city in the world, I tell you."

Outside the buildings are becoming increasingly tall, and fire escapes slither down the sides. Men with paper bags stand in groups outside corner shops and old ladies with large sunglasses and small dogs aimlessly amble down pavements scattered with chewing gum. The streets are slowly becoming filled with children with backpacks of all designs: some with badges pinned, some with personalised ribbons, some left unzipped allowing a view of an assortment of papers, water bottles and folders. The small dogs and old ladies move closer to the shops, balancing the distance between the rowdy children, and the men with bags. The bus comes to a sudden standstill, my bag sliding towards a stain of god-knows-what, before I grab hold of it and pull it back towards me. A plethora of kids stumble on-board, punch lines and fists are thrown around until the stampede eventually decides to sit in the back of the bus.

"I'd give them a hard time. But y'know, it's Thanksgiving. They're happy because they get tomorrow off. It's a good day y'know. You look at me like he's-some-old- man-don't-remember-no-school, but I remember the holidays at least!"

The streets are becoming increasingly filled with shops. Restaurants with fluorescent signs advertise noodles, falafel and sushi. More cars are appearing on the streets, and the bus has slowed down allowing for the increase in traffic.

"Now, you get off at the next stop, and you take the seven train and it'll take you straight to Grand Central. Don't get off early, Grand Central ya hear? It's the last stop, can't miss it. And Happy Thanksgiving to ya, I hope you love it. Best American holiday in the best city in the world. Boy, you're one lucky lady."

*

South Bend, Indiana

Last week we walked to Target.
S: "Oh my god, sweat comes to mind. Not just damp, Matilda, wet. I was wet with sweat afterwards. But also: just so treacherous. We thought, well I thought to be fair, that it would be safer to walk on that really steep embankment. Do you remember? We just thought it would be like Europe."

The snow on the side of the highway is grey and slushy, and brown ice is slowly inching around my ankles, and then melting, dribbling into my shoes. As the cars ground to a halt we zigzag across, horns ripping at my eardrums. Totally fine, just a small highway. We slip down the back of Wendy's, following in the footsteps of some abnormally large-footed person who has created a path for us. Across a second highway, with only two lanes this time: SUVs, person carriers and pick up trucks. My toes are cold and feel disconnected from my body, which is becoming increasingly hot under several layers of clothing. I'm beginning to regret the decision to not ask for a lift:

"My roommate has a car..."

"No, no this is great. There can't be any more roads to cross. There is gonna be a pathway or pavement here somewhere."

We cross the back of one hotel, and then another, and walk along a large metal fence. Ice has formed on the small puddles in the mud, and it cracks under our feet. We saunter across a parking lot filled with bright yellow cement mixers. Emerging from the bushes, the shop in front of us is green, not the welcoming red of Target. It sells plumbing, lamps, curtains, spades and general hardware, none of which we need. The parking lot is larger than the plumbing shop itself and each parked car has four spaces to itself. At this point the sky is becoming bruised: broken purple clouds fill the horizon. Every now and then a glare of red blinds us as the sun begins to set. S points across the car park:

"I think I can see Target from here, it is just across that hill, on the other side of the road."

S: "Should we have got a car to Target? An Uber, yeah. We were stupid for just thinking we could just get the bus, and then hop across. That was a strange time though, it was also consumerist. Because we did buy some glow sticks on the spot, which is pretty capitalistic, pretty American."

Arms loaded with notebooks, highlighters and binders we trek back towards the bus stop. Frozen hands clutch at thin plastic bags and tired numb feet clamber through snow and gravelled ice. The bus stop is empty, and the next one is scheduled to leave in forty minutes. S unzips his jacket mumbling:

"Can we at least wait outside? I am just so, so hot."

"This is so dumb. I'm just going to call her and ask if she can pick us up.'

"Yeah. Yeah, ok."

*

I asked G about travelling in America.

G: "I think it's [driving] definitely the best way to see America. I mean, I think that like anyone visiting America should do a road trip. It is something that should be done."

On the Road and the legendary Route 66 are two examples of how America has become synonymous with cars. Individualism, and the ever present notion of freedom, furthers this to the point where getting on public transport is seen to take some of that freedom away. This is less obvious in larger cities, but in places like South Bend this becomes increasingly clear. The South Bend bus is of course free, and it leaves a few times an hour. But the connections are few and far between. It is this notion of a pre-dictated route with no options for alternatives which is troubling. Straying from a pre-destined route becomes incredibly difficult, and ultimately a choice has to be made between conforming to what becomes practical and easy, or going to your preferred

destination at a cost of cold feet, time and an increasing irritability. The other option is to ask for a lift, and this perhaps entails an even greater loss: a loss of independence. It is laughable when you consider that I have moved to a new continent only to find myself traipsing across highways and the back of hotels to buy notebooks and highlighters. Ultimately, the dependence on cars and the lack of options in public transport results in an encouragement to conform: a conformity to drive and to thus join everyone else in their pursuits of individualism and freedom as they hurtle along highways, or a conformity in following a predestined route, to the University Park Mall and back, with no options, no pathways and no connections. Perhaps this issue is particularly problematic for me because I am not American. I have been brought up on pathways and zebra crossings. I have been able to be independent without a driving license. However, ultimately America conjoins independence and cars, and without accessibility to one, you cannot have the other.

9 OUT OF 10 WAYS

Hannah Provost

You will forget me in 9 out of 10 ways:

1. You will stop thinking of me in every second. And then I will stop inhabiting even the minutes. Then the hours. The days.

2. Slowly, but then all at once, you will no longer be able to recall the way I smell and the lightness of my touch. The scent left from my hair tossed across your pillow will disappear with the aging of the air. The memory of my fingers brushing your cheekbones, along your hairline, feather-light, that goes without a notice. Without a care? Who could say?

3. Stories of me will become fewer and far between. The things I used to do and the stories I used to tell won't be your first example when you make a point anymore. You will reach past that. New memories will come, new stories to tell. New clementine's to peel open and tear apart.

4. My friends will fade into people you once knew. You won't say hi to mine, but I'll say hi to yours. Is that because you're just shy? Or because you'd rather forget, than hold on.

5. Music will no longer be connected to me, to that night we sat for hours on the floor exchanging beautiful words and peanut butter crackers. Maybe in a while you will listen to that song that you sang to me. This time you won't cry. I wonder if I will, always.

6. My name will just become a name again. Other people are allowed to own it. The sound of it will no longer make you glance up, hopeful, wondering.

7. You will find more of yourself in this new time. There is more space for you. There is no space for me. As if I took up no space at all.

8. You will start to see other girls for themselves, and not in the context of me. When you became a stranger, I started seeing you in every haircut that half-resembled. I would not wish that on you.

9. You will become obsessed with her hips.

10. You will figure out, finally, what love is. There will be a lightness to it, a relief. And then, in the glimmer of the reflection of a faded memory, you will think of me one last time.

DEATH IN BLACK AND WHITE

I had expected to remember it in black and white.

Instead, the memory lingers in vivid color.

Like a Polaroid, it is a moment frozen in place. I can run my fingers along the edges. There is a lot of green, much more green than I had ever seen in that arid country. Perhaps that's why a little white sign reading Favor, no pisar al hierba is driven into the ground in the middle of a patch of rather tough and weedy looking grass. At least it's grass.

The walls of the church and the hospice are white, though, as is the garb of the little Salvadoran nuns who greeted us on our arrival. But the flowers at the base of La Divina are almost violent in their brightness—pure and solid, pinks and oranges and reds. Across from La Divina, a blue awning, tan picnic tables and rows of colorful refresco bottles sit waiting for parched tourists.

Not so different from the historic decades-old pictures I had seen before of this place—perhaps now a little less torn apart by civil war, a little more bent to tourism, just as wrought by poverty. Matured from shades of black and white, to color.

One other difference. They've cleaned up the blood off the altar, and buried the dead man, Romero, who only wanted to speak up for his people, speak against repression, speak against poverty. Speak against that which all of those photographs bound in albums—those charcoal paintings on the walls of a chapel—say but can't put to words.

There were four of us out in the parking lot outside the hospice when I noticed the little green building with its door ajar. A flashbulb goes off, and the memory of this modern moment is as solid and tangible as any of those

old photographs. I can take it out and look at it whenever I like.

I don't like to much.

Because through the open door of the tiny little green building, you can see the outline of a person's feet against a white sheet. Feet that will never step on the ground again.

The death in black and white I had seen so much of in old photographs not an hour before was now in living color.

We go inside.

I am standing, but it feels like I am sinking to my knees. Sinking to my knees beside a gurney where a body that no longer has a soul lies wrapped in all the nuns had to offer: the forgiving peace of death. A body empty but for memories of the someone they used to be.

I can't tell if they were a man or a woman, but I can still see the outline of their feet. Feet that carried backbreaking weight, ran to hug loved ones, walked to school and work, danced. And when my friend Ignatius begins saying El Padre Nuestro, I don't hear the words, I just hear the echo of laughter and pain that was a life.

Trembling, it feels like I am scrambling to pick up black and white photographs off the pale blue tile floor as they keep spilling from the safety of my mind. Hundreds of photos of death and bravery, civil war and murder, martyrdom and injustice. Bloody poverty glaring back from the lifeless bodies of someones who used to be but are no more.

I tremble now because this photograph in front of me is even more tangible than the rest. And it's in color. It's in the now. Poverty is still glaring.

The room smells like the hospice had—faint antiseptic and sickness, decay. The smells stick to the cool tile floor, the fading green paint. Us.

My fingers shaking, I try to tuck the memory of those old photos away,

tuck them anywhere, but still, death in black and white stares back at me—they keep fluttering to the floor.

In the hospice, there is never enough medication to go around. They can't afford it. And so they suffer, until they die. And then they suffer no more.

And poverty wins.

Again.

And a body without a soul who used to be a someone is no longer a someone anymore. And so they lie on a gurney under a white sheet. And I see the outline of their feet, and wonder where their soul is gone to. And if it's fair that even now, even decades past the El Salvadoran civil war, poverty is still staring back at me through pictures in my mind.

Where is their God?

Where is mine?

I had expected to remember it in black and white, because surely, this kind of death only resides in the horrors of the past.

It turns out horrors are just as sharp in color.

CLASSICALLY BEAUTIFUL

Preston Igwe

In the beginning there was void, and God's spirit moved the water and said "light be," and the sun was here just as you appeared after I spoke to your existence in a prayer, or was it a dream? And it was revealed to me how your kind came to be.

The sun kissed the face of the earth and then they made the kind of love that we imagine when we speak of fire, passion, strength, all the characters of a Black woman.

And who knows how long this love lasts, because this was before there was time and we didn't have enough of it, when it couldn't be wasted. When anything and everything was infinite, and so it's of natural consequence that your beauty is endless, that your hips are boundless, your heart is kindness, and your grace is timeless.

Your skin is the color of the Earth. Polished by hard rains and the glaring blaze of the land you once called home. Your mind swirls with the kindred love stories of Egypt and Nubia that we no longer tell. You are Aphrodite and Zena. A warrior and a lover in perfect harmony.

Your hands are incredibly versatile. They can gently wipe away the tears of a young black boy who just realized that society sees him as an enemy, and every day is a battle. They can also form tight fists as you look into your child's eyes and tell him, "Baby, anyone who is after your life must go through me first, and I'm not afraid to go to jail. I rather die for you….I rather die for you then live in a world where I must bury you. Baby I will carry you. I will put prayer in you and hope there will never be despair in you. I will teach you about love. You will know true love long before you

find a woman good enough to marry you. And even then, I will still be there for you.

That is the love of a black woman. The same love showed to me by my mother, my sister, my grandmother, and every woman who had a hand in shaping me into a man. Not the man I am today, but the man I hope to become. Because they want far greater for me than what I currently possess.

But back to your beauty, the essence of your beauty cannot be captured in words. There is…there is life in your chest and joy in your breast. Your helium smile can lift my spirits when all the tragedies of the earth are weighing me down. Let me breathe you. Fill my lungs with the essence of you, and I will no longer need oxygen to survive! For it will be your spirit that replenishes me.

Or better yet, it will be the reflection of the Most High's spirit in you. In your walk, in your talk, in the way your eyes light up when you see another brown skinned woman on the television screen. When I see the power in you, I recognize the power in Him, and I realize why 400 years of slavery could not destroy you.

You're like a sunrise in a nation at war. A beacon of hope in a land where solitude is the best friend to the black man. You are our finest soldier. Always on the front lines with your arms outstretched intercepting the bullets meant for you as well as those meant for us. You are a mother, a sister, a teacher, a lover without ever ceasing to be a fighter you are a queen. A queen whose kingdoms were written out of the history books, but live forever in your soul. Know that the blood of the creators of civilization course through your veins, and remember that royalty cannot be made to feel inferior. I said royalty cannot be made to feel inferior.

So ladies be proud of your skin, for the magical melanin allows you to capture the sun as if it were a firefly. You glow when others burn. Be proud

of your hair, however you choose to wear it, because Queen Nefertiti had hair like yours, and she was able to unite two African kingdoms, creating one of the most powerful empires to ever exist!

Know your history. Never relinquish your self-worth. You are precious and wonderfully made. And that's beautiful.

AN ITEM THAT CAN ONLY BE USED ONCE

Adrian Mark Lore

an act of consumerist subversion is
woman a fiscal form of sedition can
be your body, as a treason

to crack open your ribs in
the rhythm of numerical orders
allow us to swab the inside
of your heart, quickly, quietly,
listening to the buttons of
lowering cut rain over the
gray gum-spattered carpet

as you inhale we urge your protests
let out your fears in a single deep
sigh for the breath-of-life-alyzer

desires to view you warranted and insured
from the inside and without

anything to defend you or your
loved ones an implicit insurrection

are these two crimson dollars i thumb
that violation is against international
safety standards because

it's a man's world

and men will be men

woman makes yours an unlawful
weapon that we must confiscate
these tits, were never

yours is this is
a personal search
for what am i the
object that is missing from
the palms of clammy, empty
hands holding the buckling
belt that binds the wasted
excesses of your scanned
and coded human body priceless
when not tagged by the memory
machines spinning around you
round in a fugue or in orbit by

you, in the back:

< me? >
< you >

lift up your arms and
bend over backwards,
take off your shirt and every
last layer of your intimate evils
that angle your legs into the shape
of a gun that locks the bolts of your
hips riding a bicycle deep into the
anal crevice of a fast-moving train

thrust into it steadily with

the anima of divine suburban
middlesex beyond the reach of
train tracks operates this
phallic form of metal detecting
your penis as a bullet who
wouldn't want you
shooting up our patrons

who we must [remove from you]
must we [remove from you]

all items with which you may
cause harm to others or yourself.

but there is no cause for panic
for we provide you plastic part
replacements when you arrive at
the destinations of a sacrilege

by way of single file marching nubile
thawing april raining may resume

IF THE VACUUM AFTER DISCOUNT RETURNS

“that the perfume of the wafting glisten closely music in aroma tempo tick the scanner skinning red electric eye shot’s blood lasers the touch over item in bagged eye blood’s shot up after cleansed lensed eyeing the orbit through aisleated polish side streets unfolds neat over hidden gutter, invisible speck lick their antiseptic heel high stringing the viola lines the lines the hidden gutter aisle lines wafting perfume cheek and when closely the aroma ticking tempo and since howls how typed up receipt descends from the mouth like white tongue polish and dry and skin and leather and notwithstanding, synthetic and tinfoil and total and gross total and the final forest of injections, needling the clerk, the skin, and the vacuum after a discount,” she says, “never filled, like the reverse form of a death in the family, is a funerary right.”

PERFORMANCE PIECE TO MAKE WORDS/SORORITY GIRLS/ DICTATORS GO OUTSIDE

Molly Stewart

The problem

The meat sack: everything is too arbitrary and curled inward. The words are lazy. They bring you inside and stand quietly, cheekily, smug, to let you admire! their wooden charm. Deer heads swollen. A sack. The ease of marking your territory onto another's— monopoly tokens piling up unabashedly in the backseat.

Come on in and gawk: the sorority girl/words/neoliberal dictatorship complex could overwhelm their. Anthropologie palace-prisons. The words lead you in. Wall quotes in thin typeface make i's from the corner.

You leave. anD

They let you come back. Drawing all over the door this time: while you understand there are certain things the—public at-large might never see you not do.

The set

Urban Outfitters' tapestry, Kate Spade sunglasses, a dorm room full of (shovels.)

Action

Carry a tarp through the doorway, tied to a long pole like a schooner mast. Siri. Where's the nearest—sailboat junkyard? Perhaps it's a mistake to try to project outward with a wreck that keeps crashing onto—its native shores. Lots of blisters on your heels, where the audience members take turns walking. Right behind you.

When the scene is: still the tarp dipping towards the floor because your triceps have begun to spasm in an involuntary but seemingly. Significant.

Way invite the hospitable girl/word/dictator to swaddle herself with it. Contemplate the added shock value of doing? this naked or in alternate frames of body.

Note
Every shovel costs $14 and—if you add them all together, plus admissions fees, you can get the words to say ?¿ something to somebody.

Action
Be silent to the words? And see—who breaks first Running your. Hand along the edges of a Paris tapestry trapped inside there with you: begin to pitch a tent smearing it with pine/sap as you go. With the long pole balanced—Atop A pAir of A frAme shovels. The tapestry for a tarp, the tarp for a roof.
You can "then read" self-effacing poetry as poetry. That speaks to the LED lantern-draped-imaginary-Chinese-sky.

Conclusion
Plan to finish just before 3:14 or so. When the crane's been booked to—come tear the roof off. Depending. On the tenor of the words? girls? dictators? you can invite them: into the tent with you or tell them they've been expelled OUTwards you can. Give them shovels if they'll/take them.

WHEN THE FERRIS WHEEL BREAKS DOWN (POLARIS)

Once upon a time
we toss our ratty night clothes aside and go hunting (apartments) atop the broken Ferris wheel.

(Rustling, on the chair beside me) a butterfly tears its cardboard cocoon to dewdrops and dives (into the
blue sand).

When the bars creak, I forget (the drowning buses/coming dawn)
I like it quiet, sitting beside Polaris

(you argued once for loading our silences aboard the Ferris wheel and forcing it around, around, around, back to the loading dock until something

disconnected)

and I like it quiet
when our feet interlock like small fingers inside a broken house

You say all at once you've got us (me, Polaris, and the butterfly)
floating together in your sight, but Polaris wins by default.
You choose Polaris as your third eye and beckon towards the cigar box.

Its descent is arson, lighting the broken wheel on fire.

CONTRIBUTORS

Paige Affinito is a senior Accounting and almost-English major who will be working as a federal tax accountant after graduating this spring. When she's not nose deep in tax returns, Paige enjoys writing almost-anything and everything. She wholeheartedly-believes there is no greater power than that of laughter.

Hannah Ayris is an English and American Studies major currently studying abroad at Notre Dame from the University of East Anglia, U.K.

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Hap Burke is from Saint Louis, Missouri. A graduate of Saint Louis University High School, he came to Notre Dame last semester as a freshman in Zahm. He enjoys writing, drawing, and writing about drawing.

Jacqueline Cassidy has studied and is studying in space. She has won awards you may want to Google but will never win yourself. Her work appears above and she's sure the end is near.

Jesús Mendoza Downey wrote "Landscaping" while reflecting on a story his dad told him not long after moving to their current neighborhood. He's from San Diego, California but thinks South Bend will reside in his mind for a while.

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Mathematics and eventually become an attorney. He loves consuming literature and pizza. When he writes, he writes to entertain.

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Eve Hlywa is a junior studying honors Mathematics, along with the Theologies and Languages of the Ancient Near East. An alternative title for her submission is 'Apotheosis.' It is the first in a collection of mythic stories she is currently writing.

Preston Igwe is a senior Sociology and Arts and Letters Pre-Professional major from Houston, TX. He only started writing for pleasure a year ago, but he finds it challenging and very rewarding. Preston enjoys watching sports and freestyling with his roommates.

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Ann Mangano is a senior majoring in Economics and Sociology and minoring in Studio Art. "Cinqueterre" was based on a photograph she took in Vernazza, Italy while studying abroad in the fall of 2014. It was a Christmas gift and a thank you for her parents. "You're Making My Heart a Garden" was inspired by Ann's sister and a Matt Mahr song "Garden". Her sister sent her the lyric "you're making my heart a garden" and asked her to paint it. As a side note, her oldest sister and brother-in-law inspire her, too. Both paintings are done in oil paint on canvas.

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Adrian Mark Lore was born in Cartagena, Colombia, and teleported to the United States—for good—in a record-breaking seven hours in the summer of 2011. He attended high school in a California desert whose only significant weather pattern is "sandy... again". He is currently majoring in Psychology and Peace Studies, and on the side is working on his debut novel: *Zoroaster's Schism*, a doorstop about Monsanto, codependent relationships, and Japanese grammar.

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Luisa Mader is a sophomore psychology major from San Antonio, TX. In her spare time she enjoys long walks in the rain, well-timed puns, and psychoanalyzing her friends.

Elle Maureen Newcome dances in elevators if the music is catchy.

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Hannah Provost is a writer interested in the indistinct line between fiction and reality, and hopes to find ways she can blur that line even further. She strongly believes in the healing power of nature and suggests you buy a hammock immediately.

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