



# RE:VISIONS

15TH 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, and oversees the production of the journal in order to encourage creativity and recognize student writing of notable quality.

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers/Contributors,

We are honored to present you with this collection of prose, poetry, and visual art created by our local undergraduate community. We asked that our contributors address a theme of witnessing, reacting, and proceeding, based on the present political climate. The works we selected encompass concepts of anger, joy, fear, faith, and motivation. We are more than impressed with what our community has to offer. Overall, the collection presented in this journal provides a diverse array of creative voices that need to be heard. These pieces are everything we had hoped to include in our publication. We hope you enjoy; we hope you feel inspired.

Thanks for picking up *Re:Visions*.

Sincerely,

The Editors

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Heat small pan and add coconut oil. When it splutters, add mustard seeds and red chili, along with the chopped onion and curry leaves. Mix all ingredients and serve with cooked basmati rice or Kerala red rice, okra stir fry, fried fish. Have dad make this pachadi because he follows instructions. Have mom make everything else.

### *Apples*

Once upon a time there was a princess who filled her empty pockets with books and pride, who could best most men with her sword and took no notice of princes, until the prince took no notice of her.

Such a story begins on a train from Hyderabad to Palakkad, where the princess arrived with her ladies in waiting and came across a Most Unlikely Prince. All hair and bell-bottom jeans, pastel among his colorful friends. The son of a postman. He counted his words. She'd lost count of hers long ago.

She knew Unlikely Prince from somewhere, here and there. They'd exchanged pleasantries and his quietude unnerved her. On the train she lashed him with her sword with his back turned. Ladies and gentlemen gasped.

He patched his wound and bade her good day.

The princess tossed her hair behind one shoulder in a show of grace and elegance. Her pockets were empty again, save for the book she brought for the journey. The ladies in waiting chattered in the chambers of the slow moving train. She didn't notice.

She tried to apologize to Unlikely Prince, twice. But both times she found herself five feet from his booth in the train, and turned back. And for two hours she watched the back of his head, tilted away from her. He stared out the window at passing shades of green and brown.

At the snack car she purchased an apple, bruised but red all the same. She handed this to him. She couldn't speak, but he heard anyway.

With this fruit, accept my apology.

With this fruit, accept my love.

## *Peaches*

They grow in our backyard, past the edge of the pond and into the valley where acorns sprout. Three trees that sag in September until Neha and I, with baskets, pick firm fruit for jam. Pots sizzle, steam rises, and we struggle over balance of fruit, sugar, and pectin. We run out of pectin because I drop an open box on the kitchen tile. But in the end we fill nine mason jars that I'd rather use for make-your-own candles and artistic pencil cups. We give half to friends and forget the rest in the back of the fridge, eating our bread with butter instead.

## *Plums*

I watched my aunt at the stove, stirring plum chutney, and I wondered why she never had another child. Megha was seventeen and when she came home from school Mema put down the spoon. There were cheese crackers for us both, ants on a log, leftover payasam in little teacups. Megha was a tall, thin child with both her knees skinned from volleyball and her hair brushed straight on each shoulder. We ate and the barrage of questions began—how was school? How was the physics exam? 98—what happened to the other two percent? No, I'm just kidding sweetie. Have you given any thought to classes next year? Yes I know it's only September. Megha had the flattest American accent of all the cousins even though she was the one in Jersey and could take Malayalam lessons. She talked like Taylor Swift. And she didn't speak much, only Mema did, answering most of her own questions the way she did when on the phone with my mother. When Megha left to do homework she went to a tidy room, the whole house was impeccably tidy. I wondered why Mema never had another child until Checha strode in, his voice displacing air in the room. And I realized that between the three of them, in this vast house, there just wasn't enough room.

## *Strawberries*

Ice cream— cold, sweet, vaguely tart—

Duke.

Old, blind, deaf, kicking.

Kicking.

Water.

Deep water.

Hell is guarded by gates that a twelve year old leaves open.

Or heaven.

Ice cream in a little dog dish on the floor of the pantry.

Door left open.

Gate open.

Water.

Kicking?

Kicked.

## *Palmyra*

It was an unknown quest that ended with a trip to the Asian grocery store on Dale Mabry Road, when my father stopped in hoping that Asian meant the whole continent today. It did; we found it between rambutan jelly and jarred lychee, the nungu. Smooth, translucent, nestled in sugar syrup. Its absence was the downfall of twenty years in America, according to my father. And while it was not fragrant, plucked fresh from the palms of Guruvayoor, it was a start.

When my father ate he remembered bike rides with Dasettan, who stayed out late and ate chicken curry on school nights. He remembered the untrimmed mornings of monsoon, sand, stolen books from cabinets. When my mother ate she remembered early courting days, wearing cotton saris while a young man took her to the palm trees. Eventually the memories came together and bled into others. Remember the trip to Newark? The old man at the Cracker Barrel? The apple

on the train?

When we ate, my sister and I, we remembered nothing. It tasted terrible.

### *Bananas*

We called her the orangutan, for her ears like teacup saucers and her head like a coconut fringed with hair. She grew in pieces, feet and hands before body, legs before waist. What emerged in the end was a whole entity, nuanced and elegant and ridiculous, who eats her bananas sliced with butterscotch, rather than mashed into baby food and fed to Enna Solla Pogirai. In a few years my sister will eat them soaked in rum, and she'll think we won't know her anymore, but we will.

### *Jackfruit*

Pink clouds herald dawn for the ancient kitchen  
For the woman who earned her name—Ammamma  
She straightens dishes, chakka varati jars,  
And is startled in the doorway by the young man.  
At once she gathers to boil black tea  
And she smiles and remembers long ago.

Her guest was no one a week ago.  
A small idea from calls in the kitchen  
On telephone, while she set out biscuits and tea.  
“Good morning, would you like tea?” asks Ammamma.  
She hands a porcelain cup to the young man.  
As he stares intently at the jars.

“Chakka varati,” she says, opening the jars.  
“Looks good,” he replies, like a girl months ago—

Her granddaughter, love of the young man.  
There are fragrances and whistles in the kitchen.  
To answer is her call as Ammamma  
And to portion what's left of the tea.

At dawn it seems far too early for tea  
And for chakka, yet she opens up the jars  
“Would you like some bread?” asks Ammamma.  
She spreads chakka on bread, like decades ago,  
For daughters and granddaughters crowding the kitchen.  
And once, years before, for another young man.

“Do you need any help?” asks the new young man.  
He reaches for the kettle, pours out the tea,  
And silence falls upon the kitchen.  
He straightens dishes, chakka varati jars,  
The first help she's had since years ago.  
“No need, mone, no need,” says Ammamma.

But here is another that calls her Ammamma  
A tall, quiet, white young man  
With a candor and smile from generations ago  
And a taste for milk and sugar in tea.  
“Can I take one home?” he asks of the jars.  
She finds wrapping paper in the kitchen.

The young man sips his cup of tea,  
Ammamma wraps the largest three jars,  
And the kitchen glows like dawns ago.

## *Tomatoes*

Because he's part of your life too, and in the time it's taken for you to change hairstyles once and careers three times, to learn that high-waisted pants are better in theory than practice, to greatly respect those that can sit at a table and accomplish the mundane with duty and diligence, and to accept your curse as a writer, you realize he's family. You love him for not the way he dries your tears or remembers that you like lavender scented body lotion or the that he loves the pachadi, but because he doesn't excavate his sandwiches anymore. He eats them together, accepting the whole for its textures and tastes. You decide you can do the same.



low she whispers,  
broken and ugly,  
who is he?

give her happy light, Vitamin D, put her in bed.  
when the tick tock of midnight, arguments cease,  
only low bass left right left,  
missed a beat  
and murmured her heart-

who is he?

she is the outbound of hide and seek  
and lost star  
always found out first  
for being wordless  
and silence is too hard to bear-

too loud to notice.





For the moment, though, Eric had no intention of returning to the folds of his mother's soft skin. There was too much to take in- the abundance of sweet smells, of moving parts, of already forgotten conversations was dizzying. And it was wonderful.

Somewhere, a carousel was spinning its music, but Eric could barely hear over the sound of laughter and unbridled freedom. Twenty or so children swarmed over him, infesting him with their glee. They bounced off of unyielding adults like balls in a pinball machine, unable to stop their momentum or unwilling to try. Eric spun away from a flustered nanny and smacked into a red popcorn cart. It teetered for a moment on the edge of eternity and then righted itself. The vendor, a perfectly proportioned man with chestnut hair, looked accusingly at him, furrowing his chestnut brows. Eric patted the cart awkwardly and ran.

Past the corn holes, past the funhouse, Eric wandered. A good ten minutes were spent gazing longingly at the caramel apples, remembering the promise his father had made to him after they passed through the gate and had permitted the pimply teenager to brand them with paper wristbands. His father's words, "Maybe we'll buy you one later, if you're lucky" wound through his head, as did the accompanying wrinkly wink.

Eric walked between the long, long legs of a man on stilts and came face-to-face with a pretty girl around his age. She had blue cotton candy feathers in her hair. He smiled, as a reflex, and she smiled back. Her pointed teeth were a beautiful aquamarine. He didn't want to look away, and was almost grateful when a unnaturally hairy man bumped into him, severing their connection.

The violent sunset was a colorful backdrop to the trio of pappy, white-haired men arguing intensely over the relative merits of two white bunnies. The bunnies looked identically evil to Eric, their intelligent red eyes bored with the humans tasked with judging them.

On his right, a group of teenagers was teasing the pigs waiting to be judged. They were poking sticks through the slats in the wood and

tapping the pigs's shoulders and then shrieking gleefully at the animal's sad eyes when they turned around. One of the teenagers, a pale boy with full lips, smirked at his friends with his red mouth and broke off one of the boards of the pen. He walked forward, and before Eric could react, he stabbed a particularly plump pig in the side. The pig's squeals mingled with Eric's scream as he turned and ran from the pen.

He ran for five minutes or thirty years or at least until he had left his world and entered a new one. When he finally stopped running, Eric doubled over, wheezing. He hadn't had lunch, and his stomach was trying to eat him in revenge.

It was time to find his parents. He desperately scanned the crowds, but he couldn't see his mother anywhere. His view was blocked by the huge, red and white striped canvas tent that had appeared behind the funhouse. Had that always been there? He recalled a little boy he had seen earlier riding on his father's back, his sticky hands swatting at the strings of flags strung across the sky. Perhaps if Eric could get higher, he would be able to spot her.

The lines for all the rides had disappeared, and Eric didn't question his good fortune. He ducked under all the rails and walked into the dusty clearing that surrounded the ferris wheel. The attendant was gone too, but the ferris wheel turned without anyone at the controls. The ground was littered with broken toys and the occasional lone flip flop. Eric didn't linger in this silent museum, and he leapt into the bottom cart before he could change his mind.

His chosen cart was smaller on the inside, and considerably less safe than he had originally thought. There was no metal bar holding him down, no belt strapping him in. What if he decided to jump out the side and join the artifacts below? It would be a mess for the people in charge. They should really install a bar, he repeated to himself, eyeing the dirt below.

When Eric's cart finally reached the top, he was looking out over a darkening sky. The sun sank into the ground, flashing one last time before abandoning Eric in the night. After a moment, he realized that

none of the rides were running. And, there was something off about all the people below. They seemed small—too small. As the wheel turned back around and Eric’s cart approached the ground, he realized that the people didn’t just seem small— they were small. All of the adults had disappeared, or maybe they had never been there, and the carnival was entirely populated with children.

Eric walked warily towards the maze of carnival games where the children had congregated, drawn by the light. The rest of the park was silent as the night mist rolled.

He pushed his way through jeering children until he saw what they had been so avidly watching. Two kids were throwing darts at balloons pinned to a painted board. A girl with a halo of frizzy yellow hair missed the wall completely. She walked forward slowly and then very quickly, as though she had made up her mind about something. She stood in front of the remaining balloons, as seemed to be dictated by unwritten rule. Her opponent, a muscular Asian boy, threw his gaudy pink dart into the girl’s ear, where it twirled like a tropical flower. His knuckles were white around the bouquet of colorful darts left in his hand. A strip of tickets spat out a grinning plastic clown’s mouth, making a long red tongue that he ripped off possessively.

Before the Asian boy could walk away with his winnings, however, the girl with the yellow, bloody hair snuck up behind him and planted the pink dart in his neck. The tickets, now wet with his blood, she pried from his thick fingers. The crowd swallowed her as she backed away.

Eric tried asking the children around him what was going on, where all the parents were, but their glares and threatening gestures silenced him. As he wandered the maze of games, he saw a girl drowning in the dunk tank and another pounding desperately at the high striker. The bumper cars had a wild assortment of sharpened sticks and scrap metal haphazardly attached to their frames. The lions chased the zebras around and around the carousel, faster and faster, until the carousel dissolved into a colorful blur with the occasional child tumbling out. And

everywhere, everywhere he saw the grinning plastic clowns offering their long red tongues to the lucky winners.

Eric turned around the corner where he had entered all those years ago with his parents and found himself face to face with a squat caravan painted like a night sky. On it, there were three suns, one slightly smaller than the others, and he probably would have stood there, mesmerized by the winking stars forever, had the door not then opened to reveal a tiny woman. The beads in her hair clinked as she shut the door behind him and pushed him onto one of the dusty cushions covering the floor.

“You’re looking for your parents.” He desperately wanted to look at her mouth while she spoke, but he couldn’t look away from her deep green eyes. It seemed as though her pupils were growing.

“Yes, I can’t find them anywhere.”

“I cannot help you find something you have not lost.” Her eyes didn’t blink. The pupils were definitely growing. There was only a slim green ring around the inky black.

“Can you at least tell me if they are safe?”

“Someone they trust has betrayed them.” There was no green left, and the black was spilling over the pinky-white of her eyes. The eyes narrowed and looked at Eric accusingly.

“I... it wasn’t me! I love them! I would never... Tell me how to fix this!”

“It is too late. The string has already been cut.” Her eyes were all black, like those of a spider. She closed them as she said her last word, her black lashes the twitching legs of a hundred spiders trapped in her eye sockets.

Suddenly, Eric was outside, and a night breeze was flapping the flags strung above him. All the children had stopped playing games, and were clutching their tickets tightly as they followed the sound of a lone flute. Eric followed too.

It didn’t take long to realize where they were headed. The canvas had been drawn back at one end of the giant red and white tent,

making an elephant-sized entrance. As Eric made his way inside, he heard a man's voice call out, "Step right up folks, step right up. Acrobats, sword-swallowers, animals from this world and the next, and a special surprise at the end. This is a show you don't want to miss." The master of ceremonies wore a black coat and tails with a glossy top hat.

Eric couldn't see to the other side of the tent. There must have been hundreds of children inside, all of them gathered around the stage in the center. It was there that the acrobats swung through walls of fire and the master of ceremonies unchained a prisoner and forced a sword down his throat. And it was there that, after the last horse-sized rabbit had hopped off the stage, the master of ceremonies revealed the promised surprise.

"And now, for the moment you've all been waiting for. We have two new additions to the freak show. Put your hands together for...the fat lady and the dwarf!" As he spoke, a spotlight turned on, revealing a cage being lowered from the ceiling. In it sat Eric's mother and father.

The children's faces all moved in unison as they watched the the cage swing overhead. Eric ducked as it passed, afraid that they would see him.

"Now, it's time to redeem your tickets. For the low, low price of ten thousand tickets, you can take home your very own freak. Do we have any winners tonight?" One girl pushed her way to the front, a large cloth bag flung over her shoulder. The master of ceremonies made a show of counting her tickets one by one, until he made a signal and a second spotlight turned on, revealing a bearded woman and a man entirely covered in tattoos sitting dejectedly in another cage hanging from the ceiling. Their cage was lowered slowly while the girl below cried, wiping her eyes with the now-empty cloth bag. After the cage was ceremoniously unlocked, all three ran out of the tent together, hand in hand, without looking back.

"If no one else has enough tickets, it's time for the birthday boys and girls to come forward and receive their presents. Adrienne, Sydney, Dylan, and Eric, please come forward."

Eric startled and looked around to see if anyone was looking at him. How could they know that it was his birthday? How did they know that he was there? He walked forward, maybe because he was scared of what would happen if he didn't, maybe because he was hoping that in this world birthdays were still a good thing.

The birthday children were alone on the stage except for the master of ceremonies and a large, colorful wheel. The master of ceremonies was delivering a well rehearsed speech to the audience explaining the rules of the game. Each child would spin the wheel, and written on whichever wedge the ticker landed on would be their present. Eric was only half listening, so aware was he of his parents's presence. Every twenty seconds, their cage swung over his head.

Adrienne spun the wheel and was presented with seventy-five free tickets. Sydney would be locked in the funhouse for a night. Dylan's left hand was chopped off messily, right there on the stage, after his spin ended on the bright red wedge. All the while, Eric's eyes followed the cage. Surely his parents had heard his name get called. Could they see him? And then it was Eric's turn.

He walked up to the wheel. From here, he could see the white face paint caking under the master of ceremonies's jaw and behind his ears. The man's gums looked very red by contrast, almost as though they were bleeding. The wedges of the wheel, Eric could now see, were not all of equal size. The two smallest wedges were right next to one another. The slim golden wedge read, "You may free the freaks in the cage of your choice," and the adjacent black one read, "You must kill the freaks in a cage of our choice." Eric's mouth was dry, and he felt his gums cracking and the blood dripping into his throat. He could hear the creaking of the cage's chain as it continued to swing.

"Happy birthday Eric! Spin the wheel now."

And then the wheel was turning, and though Eric couldn't remember touching it, he knew that he must have because there it was, ticking slower and slower as it spun. Maybe he had spun it long ago; he couldn't remember. Eric's heart stopped as he saw the wheel stopping

on the black wedge. His heart remained stopped as it ticked over to the gold wedge. Before he could breathe, it ticked one final time to stop on a bright green wedge.

“A free caramel apple for the lucky boy!”

# *FRESH, NEVER FROZEN*

BY MICHAEL O'CONNOR



# REPAIR SHOP

KATE SCHERZINGER

Pretty girl, open yourself  
Lungs under stripes of bone  
Bars of bone, wide as a cell, dimensional  
She wants to pierce them with a corset string  
Jerk them closed and lock them like a jaw  
No frame to keep her from  
Skin neat shrinking where she wants it  
A cage around a cage  
Snap shut small

Pretty stupid, if you ask me  
Basic functionality belongs in the  
Circuit box, the brainstem, take a  
Screwdriver with an X like a dead eye  
Take a finger and a thumb like two bony blind  
Mechanics looking for the telltale break  
If you connect the right wires  
You'll relearn how to  
Love your lungs  
Loathing isn't natural, so  
Did someone clip your wire

Girl? No.  
If you were a real girl  
You'd know how to be alive  
Hidden in your circuit box are  
Ten trillion lines of code  
Perfect one oh one oh one one oh  
Perfect machine: real girls don't have flaws

In their coding, aren't missing lines  
Like you can't eat can't live can't  
Premise one, premise two  
Conclusion:  
You are not real

Open wide, little dying machine  
Empty your stomach and blame it on your brokenness  
When you're fixed you can't fault the cage  
Inside your chest for all the things you hate  
Soon they'll mend the broken wire, the missing line  
And when they do you'll just be

Yourself  
You should be ashamed  
Already hate this body more than anything  
But not enough to stop altogether  
Would you rather be fat or dead?  
At least the other broken girls succeed



nutritional value, and even inoculating the public against dread disease. The unwitting consumer believes these attenuated arguments, carefreely purchasing the products. Unbeknownst to her, the mischievous miniatures lie in wait in their Trojan horse tomatoes, plotting havoc upon her stomach.

Let the Martians tremble at an organic revolution. The consumers have nothing to lose but their grains. For the good of all society, may the Farmer in his oppressive ways be uprooted and the Martian enemy cast out!



wishing but to pulse once more but the  
four seventh inches, fuck that eternal screw up... tap

tapping inch by inch, rising, tapping  
the spirit in braille, a blind dead man's tale rising up

crawling through the embankments of dirt  
a whisper of shadowing reality, tandem

dancing gaily to the surface in  
moans of the hopeful, ignorant to the destruction

above... pupils dilated, exposed  
become the bright white lights of the pearly gates above

drifting through the radiated wind  
falling upon the ears of bears with gills, fish with fur

indigenous populations dead  
and destroyed civilizations of opaque control

and haunting hymns, forever forefront  
in labored minds of lifeless survivors' death rattles



I'm a world-champion ice cream eater, despite  
my tendency to leave lactose in the toilet bowl. I'm  
sorry I'm so goddamn gross sometimes.  
Look dad, I learned my alphabet!

B

A

C

I learned decimals too. 0.08 plus a Budweiser  
Is a great day in the basement.  
I would buttchug melted peppermint bonbon.

Who knew a five milligram tablet could expand  
like a magic-animal-growing-capsule in your stomach  
and fill a void that the wetness of other women and  
the aroma of Kahlua only managed to occupy a corner in.  
Congratulations. You are your father.  
(that's impossible).

# THE LEGEND OF THE BOG WITCH

MADISON LOFTIN  
~~~~~

No one in Peter's Hollow knew where the legend of the Bog Witch had started. Probably, the residents thought, with a particularly inventive traveler. Peter's Hollow got a lot of those—usually people who were making their way down to Florida and needed the residents to ferry them across the massive swamp. Fear could fuel a lot of things, the people of Peter's Hollow had learned, and the swamp certainly instilled fear in a lot of people.

There were stories. Stories of people who had decided not to pay the fare for a resident to take them across the swamp and instead had gone alone, their empty boats found wedged in the mud weeks later. Stories of alligators, jaws agape, leaping from the water to snatch unsuspecting travelers from their boats and drag them into the murky depths. Stories of children, unsupervised for a mere moment, drowning in the green-grey waters.

But the story that outshone them all was the story of the Bog Witch. As the legend went, Eleanora Evans had appeared in town one day, her wild curls matted with dirt, her green eyes bloodshot, and her feet bare and cracked. She had walked all the way to Peter's Hollow from Savannah, and, upon arriving in town, had promptly collapsed.

Alice Benjamin, an old, wizened widow who was permanently bent at the back, took it upon herself to care for Eleanora. It was two weeks (or a month, depending on who was recounting the legend) before she woke up. When she finally did, she hardly spoke. She didn't say a word, save that she was from Savannah and her name was Eleanora. Alice didn't seem to mind her ward's tight-lipped attitude, and she allowed Eleanora to stay with her indefinitely, as long as she helped with the cooking and cleaning.

To everyone but Alice, the girl was unsettling. She was far too

quiet, and far too comfortable with the swamp for an outsider. They often saw her, her bright green eyes sunk low in her hollow face, sitting by the edge of the water, the cicadas screaming their mournful song from above as she traced the tips of her bony fingers over the surface.

She seemed to make the lonely Alice Benjamin happy, for reasons the townspeople could not discern, and so they decided to tolerate her peculiarity. That was, of course, until one night.

Usually, the person telling the story would lean forward at this point, for it was the event upon which the legend hinged, the event that was sure to send shivers up and down the spine of the listener.

One dark night in June, the groundskeeper at the town cemetery was out doing his rounds, like every other night, when he heard the unmistakable rumbling of alligators bellowing. The townspeople were well aware of what this sounded like—it was a like a growl, but deeper and gravelly, and it caused water droplets to dance on the water's surface with the vibrations of the creature's body.

This time, however, it was different. It sounded as though every alligator in the Okefenokee was bellowing in unison. Covering his ears, the groundskeeper made his way towards the swamp to see what had gotten the alligators so excited.

He had, in fact, been right about the number of alligators—there had to have been at least 50 of them, bodies rising from the water as they bellowed, green eyes glowing in the dark. And in the middle of it all was Eleanora, her shoulders bare, head thrown back and black hair shining in the moonlight. Her head snapped forward as the groundskeeper stumbled backwards in fright, and he saw that her eyes were glowing just as green as the alligators that surrounded her.

He ran, tripping and stumbling, back to the mayor's house, banging on his door until he answered in his nightgown.

A town meeting was called that night. It was clear that this woman was a witch—no mortal could have stayed in those gator-infested waters and lived. Eleanora had to have been conducting some sort

of ritual, perhaps to do away with the townspeople or infect their water supply with some terrible disease. What would she do to the townspeople once she realized they knew her secret? Angry and afraid, the townspeople voted for her public execution the following morning.

The mayor knocked on Alice Benjamin's door at dawn, and five men pushed past her to take Eleanora from her room. The girl looked much like she did the day she first arrived, her feet bare and her hair tangled from sleep. She said nothing, even as Alice screamed and cried and beat upon the mayor's chest with weak fists. Her lips remained in a thin, pale line as she was led out to the gallows in the town square.

"Any last words, witch?" asked the executioner as he tied the noose around her neck. She, as always, remained silent.

The deed was done quickly, and she did not hang for long. Once a few men had cautiously pulled her body down, the matter of where to place her body was discussed at much length. The good Christian citizens of Peter's Hollow couldn't bury a witch among their own dead, of course, and so a few men were elected to go out on a boat with her body and toss it to the alligators. It is said that she floated for an instant, those green eyes still wide open and menacing, before her head disappeared beneath the water.

Some people swore that if you took a boat out at midnight and dropped three drops of blood into the water, Eleanora would rise from the depths and drag the poor, stupid soul into the water to drown them. Others said she would grant you a single wish. Either way, no one wanted to go into the swamp at night, once heavy fog settled above the earth and it was nearly impossible to tell the black sky from the black water.

The children of Peter's Hollow grew up on this story, and their imaginations ran as freely as the otters that foraged for food along the edge of the swamp. Ruth Abner was one of these children, as was Aloysius Beckett. The pair lived in houses next to one another, and most of their lazy summer days were spent skipping stones on the water and speculating about whether or not the stories they'd been told were true.

"It can't be," Ruth said, for nearly the hundredth time, as she

pulled her skirt up to wade a bit into the water. “My mother says it’s just a story to scare people from wandering into the swamp at night.”

“Your mother,” Aloysius replied, “doesn’t want to frighten you.” Aloysius thought himself more intelligent than Ruth; he was a year older than her, and Aloysius prided himself in the experience those extra months had brought him. “My brother said that he saw her, once.”

“He didn’t,” Ruth assured him snidely. Her long, dark curls fell down her back, and she tied them up with a ribbon to keep them out of her face. “The Bog Witch is a fairytale. I’m not afraid of the swamp.” To make her point, she waded further into the water, feeling the slime of the mud between her toes, and turned back towards Aloysius.

“My brother said he once came down here at night with his friends, and she rose out of the water. He could see her big, green eyes. Then they ran away before she could grab them and drown them.”

“Your brother is a liar,” Ruth said adamantly, coming back to the shore. Aloysius folded his arms across his chest. He didn’t like being contradicted, especially not by little girl. His pride was large for someone of his small stature, and he felt the sharp sting of being told he was wrong.

“Fine. If you’re not afraid of the Bog Witch, then prove it. Let’s go tonight. Drop three drops of blood in the swamp. Then we can prove that the stories aren’t true.”

Ruth would have never admitted it, but she felt her heart rise in her throat in fear. Despite her insistence that the Bog Witch wasn’t real, she didn’t like the swamp at night. It made her skin crawl, although she couldn’t quite place why; she loved and admired it during the daylight. She was fascinated by the soft green algae and lily pads that covered the surface, the knobby knees of the cypress trees that rose from the water, the turtles that basked in the sunlight. At night, however, it seemed to her somehow more sinister. But she couldn’t let Aloysius know that, for if he did, he would win.

“Fine,” she said casually, not allowing her face to betray her fear. “Then we can put this whole argument at rest.”

“Fine,” Aloysius repeated. “I’ll meet you here at half past eleven. We can use my brother’s boat.”

“My mother won’t let me out of the house that late,” Ruth replied, hoping that Aloysius would take her flimsy excuse.

“Tell her you’re staying with Emily,” Aloysius replied, referring to his thirteen-year-old sister. Once he had committed to something, he wasn’t going to let it go.

Ruth, seeing no way out, acquiesced, and the two shook hands before parting ways and going to their separate houses. Ruth told her mother the lie, and her mother gave no sign of suspicion, so she took her coat when the sun began to set and made her way to the house next door.

Emily greeted her at the door. The girls were not good friends, but Emily was a good sport and often agreed to have Ruth sleep in her room. That way, Aloysius and she could stay together until the dwindling hours of the evening without the threat of the disapproval of their parents.

The task ahead of Ruth and Aloysius put somewhat of a damper on their usual rapport, and they sat quietly on the bench in the Beckett’s garden, exchanging only a few words as the sun sank lower and lower and stars began to dot the sky.

“Should we go now?” Aloysius asked, checking the watch he’d gotten for his thirteenth birthday. Ruth nodded, swallowing her fear, and helped Aloysius drag the old canoe across the grass to the edge of the swamp.

“Aren’t you worried about getting lost?” Ruth asked.

“Aren’t you worried about getting drowned?” Aloysius snapped back, and Ruth rolled her eyes.

“No, but I don’t know where we’re going. The swamp looks so different in the dark.”

“I know where,” Aloysius replied, puffing out his chest and taking the old wooden oar in his hands. “Get in.”

An uncomfortable silence settled over them once more as they

pushed off from shore and made their way over the black water. Ruth jumped when they heard the splash of an alligator moving into the water, and Aloysius laughed.

“Scared?” he taunted, trying to disguise his own fear with arrogance.

“I don’t like alligators,” Ruth said, crossing her arms over her chest instinctively.

“Or you don’t like Bog Witches,” he replied. The shore had disappeared behind them into the night, and Ruth had a feeling that they were nearing their destination. Sure enough, Aloysius soon pulled next to a cypress tree and tied the boat to it. He rested the paddle across his lap and bent to pick up the knife he’d stolen from the kitchen earlier that day.

“Are you ready?” he asked, his voice betraying some of the fear he was feeling. Ruth nodded, but his hands were shaking too much to make the first cut. Ruth sighed in exaggerated irritation and snatched the knife from him, ignoring his half-hearted protests. She slid the knife across her palm, hissing slightly in pain. She looked at Aloysius, his eyes as wide as saucers, and extended her palm over the still water. The droplets of blood made tiny ripples as they hit the surface: one, two, three.

Ruth and Aloysius waited with bated breath, staring across the vast expanse of water, but the swamp remained still. Ruth turned to her friend, a triumphant smile on her face.

“See? I told you—” she cut off suddenly, her head tilted to one side. “Do you hear that?” Aloysius did. It was the unmistakable sound of an alligator bellowing in the distance.

“It’s fine,” he said, shivering and pulling his coat tighter around him. “They do that all the time.” But another alligator joined in, then another, then another, until the pair had to cover their ears. They could see them now, rising and falling back as the water danced around them. There had to be at least thirty, which terrified them both; it was beyond rare to see this many alligators in one place.

“WE HAVE TO LEAVE,” Ruth shouted to Aloysius, trying desperately to quell the fear that was rising in her chest. Aloysius, in his panic, reached for the paddle and knocked it off his lap into the water. They froze, watching helplessly as the paddle disappeared from sight. Before Ruth could say or do anything, the alligators suddenly fell silent and sank back into the depths of the Okefenokee.

Ruth’s heart was beating so hard she could hear it in her ears. Aloysius was desperately trying not to start crying in front of Ruth, but the thought that it was all his fault if they both died would not leave his mind.

“We just have to sit here until morning,” Ruth whispered, trying to assure herself of their safety as much as Aloysius. “Then our parents will realize we’re missing, and someone will come find us. I’m sure of it.” Aloysius sniffed but did not reply, worried that his voice would betray him if he spoke.

There was another splash in the distance. Ruth reached for Aloysius’ hand, and he squeezed hers in reassurance.

There was a shape in the water, moving towards them rapidly. Ruth swallowed, and, unsure whether Aloysius had seen it yet, said nothing so as not to frighten him. It was probably nothing—an alligator or an otter or a turtle. However, as it grew closer, she could tell that it was none of those things, and she could also tell that Aloysius had seen it; his hand tightened around hers to the point that it became painful.

As the thing moved into the moonlight, Ruth and Aloysius both gasped. It was a young girl, her shoulders bare, gliding easily through the water towards their canoe. Her black hair was plastered to her head with water, her skin waxy, and her bright green eyes were set low in her skull.

“It’s the Bog Witch,” Aloysius whispered, his voice trembling. “We’re going to die. Oh God, we’re going to die.” He made the sign of the cross and began to pray the Hail Mary under his breath feverishly.

She did not stop moving towards the boat until she was right at its hull, and Ruth scrambled backwards, onto Aloysius, who yelped

slightly.

“Who are you?” The girl’s voice was deep and gravelly, reminding Ruth of the bellows they had heard moments before. Two sets of bony white fingers appeared over the edge of the canoe, and then the girl was pulling herself into the boat, water dripping from her hair and skin. Her eyes, glowing in the moonlight, were as green as the legend said. Her face was as gaunt as a skeleton, but there was youth in her features. She looked to be only a little older than Aloysius, which made Ruth feel nauseous. The witch’s dress hung heavy with water over her thin frame.

“I asked you a question,” the girl repeated, ringing out her long hair into the water.

“I-I’m Ruth, and this is Aloysius,” Ruth responded timidly. “We live in Peter’s Hollow.” The girl threw back her head and laughed, sending a chill down the children’s spine. The laugh was as deep and throaty as her voice and seemed to reverberate against the cypress trees surrounding them. It seemed to Ruth that she could feel that laugh in her very bones.

“Well, it’s nice to meet you, Ruth and Aloysius. I am Eleanora.”

“We know who you are,” said Aloysius from behind Ruth. The green eyes detached themselves from Ruth’s brown ones and focused upon Aloysius’ blue ones instead.

“Oh?” she said, smiling to reveal a row of pointed teeth. “Do you know who I am? Or do you know me as the Bog Witch?”

“Are you not the Bog Witch?” Ruth asked, her curiosity piqued.

“I am the one your people call the Bog Witch,” she said, leaning forward slightly. “But make no mistake, those people do not get to have any say in what I do or in what I am called.” Her voice had lowered to a hiss at this point, and Ruth slowly moved back towards Aloysius once again.

“Are you going to drown us?” Aloysius blurted, and the green eyes flicked up at him once more.

“I don’t harm children,” Eleanora replied. “Unlike your ances-

tors, I'm no monster. No, the only people I have ever drowned here have truly deserved it."

"So, we get a wish, then?" Ruth asked, feeling her terror lessen a bit with Eleanora's statement. The witch began to laugh again, and Ruth flinched.

"Who told you I grant wishes?" she asked, still smiling widely.

"Well, everyone, really," replied Aloysius. "They say that you either drown the people who summon you or give them a wish."

"I see. Well, the sooner you realize that most people are cruel, despicable liars, the better."

"That's not true!" Ruth protested, instantly wishing she had kept her mouth shut. It felt as though the green eyes were boring holes into her very soul.

"Are you certain? What have you been told about my death?"

"That you came to Peter's Hollow and could control the alligators. That you were a witch, so the townspeople hung you," said Aloysius.

"Lies," Eleanora replied, tracing a bony finger along the surface of the water. "That mayor always did like to bend the truth for his own benefit. And time has only solidified my tragedy as folklore. I despise Peter's Hollow for my death, of course, but I despise it even more for that." Ruth and Aloysius were silent, their hearts beating rapidly, and Eleanora looked up at them.

"Would you like to know the truth?" she asked them, smiling sinisterly, and they were both afraid to do anything but nod. Ruth found Aloysius' hand once again and grasped it tightly.

"I was a quiet girl, then," Eleanora began. "I ran away from my home in Savannah after my mother passed away—my father was an angry, bitter person who took his sorrow at my mother's death out on me. I walked and I walked, straight out of town, not knowing where I was going, drinking from streams and sleeping in cotton fields, until I could hardly walk anymore. Peter's Hollow seemed like the right place to quit walking.

“Alice Benjamin was one of the few good souls on this earth. I told her my story after she took me in, and she was like another mother to me, for that brief period I lived with her. We laughed together and talked with one another endlessly. I miss her greatly.

“The mayor at the time was a man by the name of Edward James. He was tall and lean, with a thin face lined with anger and sorrow. He took a special interest in me, although I never had any interest in him; he was about thirty years my senior, and I was too innocent to realize what he was doing.

“He was always at Alice’s house, popping in to see how I was doing, asking about my life in Savannah. I never spoke to him much; I was wary of men, after my father, and was too timid to respond to his persistent questions. Once, he reached out to stroke my hair as I prepared supper, and I jerked away, surprised. He became quite flustered after that and excused himself from my company with the statement that he had important mayoral duties to attend to.

“I believe that was the moment he realized I was not going to reciprocate his feelings. He started coming to the house less and less, and suddenly I noticed a change in the town’s atmosphere. Everyone was suddenly very skittish around me. I talked to no one but Alice as it was, but I began to feel especially lonely during that period. My sanctuary was the swamp; I went down to the water every day to observe the plants and the wildlife, much of which I’d never seen before coming to Peter’s Hollow.

“I learned quickly the source of town’s anxiety. Edward had been steadily planting seeds of suspicion in everyone’s minds, telling them that he had reason to believe that I had been exiled from Savannah due to dabbling in witchcraft. People were so afraid back then, so guarded, and Edward preyed upon this fear in order to ruin me.

“No one could do much about their fear, however, as they had no proof of my sins. But Edward found a way around that as well. He paid off the groundskeeper of the cemetery to tell everyone that I had been conducting some sort of ritual in the swamp. That I had somehow

been able to control all the alligators in the Okefenokee.

“I was in a state of shock on the day of my execution. I had been nervous, but I never thought that my unintentional snub of Edward would ultimately lead to my death. I looked in his eyes as they put the noose around my neck—I hope to God he saw my eyes every day until the day he died.”

Eleanora was no longer smiling. She now looked more like the scared, innocent girl, no more than seventeen, who had been strung up for a crime she didn’t commit. “I became everything Edward—and everyone—feared while I was alive. I am the swamp; I live it, I breathe it, it gives me life. I found my voice. I found immortality.”

The pair was hanging onto her every word, their eyes wide.

“Are you satisfied with your answers?” Eleanora asked, suddenly sounding quite weary, as though the weight of her past had settled upon her shoulders.

“We thought you were evil,” Aloysius blurted, “but—but you’re not.”

“I am the swamp,” Eleanora replied with an arched eyebrow, “and the swamp does not have the capacity to be good or evil.”

Ruth, not quite knowing what to say, simply replied, “I’m sorry.”

“Now you know the truth,” said Eleanora. “But I assume you must be getting back home. The sun will rise quite soon.”

“We can’t,” Aloysius said, somewhat dejectedly, “I dropped the oar in the water.”

Eleanora rolled her large green eyes and slid silently into the swamp. She returned a few moments later with the paddle.

“Thank you,” he said, and Eleanora sunk back into the water until just her eyes and nose showed above the surface. She gave a small wave with those long, thin fingers, and then disappeared completely from sight.

Aloysius untied the boat silently. Neither of them could find the words to describe what they were feeling; in fact, neither of them knew

what they were feeling at all.

They continued to move towards the shore, the hum of crickets sounding from all around them, and the tip of the sun beginning to show on the horizon, heralding the dawn of a new day.

# DUSK IN DAKAR

OLIVIA TILL  
~~~~~

Five o'clock shadows cast down their doubting eyes.  
They turn my wall – a hapless host to a lone Light Bulb – gray.

My sea-glassy-eyed window vets each immigrant sunbeam

who asks to take refuge  
who would settle its errant light  
("anywhere")  
("please")

Even on the nails  
who used to host pictures but those were  
voted out in favor of hanging my  
hand-washed floral underwear  
up to dry like funeral bouquets

Even on the backs  
of the first mosquitos  
to arrive at the feast  
before my Great Mesh Wall goes up

Even on my porcelain face,  
which is wont to ponder,  
but instead  
looks askance  
and instead  
pulls a thin veil across the window  
and instead  
flips on the switch  
for the lone Light Bulb.

In its castigating orange light  
I lean against the shadow-chilled wall  
that rests between my bed  
and the prayer mats of my family.

violence

Is heard The sound  
of founders stomping  
A late nation groans  
between their hands head  
lines fight to be  
remembered

we are internal  
- eternal nectar  
drink and be merry  
while below their hands crawl  
and fold  
like little card houses

fear is like a diamond sharp  
end the point being  
words are daggers  
and there is no  
point

fear is like a child afraid  
to speak her tongue  
where bravery is not a choice  
but a survival instinct

fear is like a man on the  
border running away from  
both sides  
bleeding from his nose  
but also from  
the bullet holes

this, is greatness  
again

my country is building  
walls with children  
playing hopscotch a  
cross the line

beneath the covers  
which truths are lies  
which bullets bite  
this deep of a Dream



## *PERMISSION*

I want to write about flowers.  
About yellow petals, and sturdy stems and powdery pollen,  
I want to write about the sunrise that is never the same,  
Can I write about flowers?  
Can I write about the sunrise?

## *GROWING UP*

Tana talks. She can now say mummy, daddy, baby and bye.

Tana laughs. With her eyes, her almost toothless mouth, her nose that moves up and down ever so slightly.

Tana cries. When she is hungry, or tired or wet.

Tana walks. Totters really, moving faster than her short legs can carry her, falling forward, laughing at herself, standing up, doing it all again.

Tana is growing up before my very eyes.



Here in my suit of broken glass

I stand,

reflecting and revealing.

Here in the twilight of an age

long-forgotten and

subdued.

I stand to be received.

# FIGHTING FAITH, FINDING FAITH

MITA RAMANI  
~~~~~

*"Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty" (Hos 10.2).*

"Did you know it's illegal to be more than one religion?" My best friend stated in a tone that was so authoritative it genuinely scared the crap out of my third grade self.

"But..." I struggled to find the right words to respond.

"No butts, no cuts, no coconuts. You are illegal. You could go to jail." The clump of girls around us gasped and looked at me. I was supposed to say something. But I just wanted to run away. Away from them, away from jail, away from the world, away from my religions.

Ten years later, I am now more comfortable with the construct of religion. I've been through them all; Sunni mosques, Hindu temples, Catholic cathedrals, Buddhist temples, Lutheran churches, Gurudwaras (Sikh houses of worship). For goodness' sake, I go to a Catholic university. I live on the assumption that no one really knows how religion started or where it came from. It was either the byproduct of evolution, or an adaptation that arose from cognitive group behaviors. But somehow, someone, somewhere, decided that the human race would follow these set of beliefs, this social construct—a faith—and they called it religion. But somehow, somewhere a society constructed a religion of its own, and that religion demanded total loyalty.

So that principle of total religious loyalty, I guess, makes me the illegal one. And let me be the first to tell you, it's the worst. I mean, I love my religions, but sometimes it just sucks. I live my life as a precarious balancing act of blending my two religions, Hinduism and Sikhism, while tiptoeing around the fundamental differences between these two worldviews that often clash.

History likens Sikhs and Hindus to warring factions. Hinduism

is one of the oldest world religions, developed during the time of the Indus Valley Civilization, whereas Sikhism was founded much later, around the 1400s, in the state of Punjab on the west end of India. Sharing their geographic territory has led to a host of conflicts. Operation Blue Star, which by the Indian community is more commonly referred to as “what happened in 1984” because its name is akin to that of Voldemort’s, is only one example. Violence broke out between the two groups and the subsequent riots became the bloodiest conflict in India since the partition of India and Pakistan. There were shootings on the street; people were burned alive; my grandma had a stab wound that left a scar on her right forearm; thousands of lives were lost. So I essentially follow two religions who hate each other. Great.

*“Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6.12).*

Religion has always held a central role in my life. Probably because my mother is hell-bent on the idea that without religion her kids will grow up to be awful people and spend their lives in jail. To a certain extent I was dragged into my religion (more correctly, my religions). But each one holds a special place in my heart. It is easy to love each of my religions when I pretend the other doesn’t exist. It has become a natural part of my life to celebrate Hindu festivals, which happen more often than people imagine. And yet to all of these festivals, I wear a steel bracelet or anklet, one of the pillar characteristics of Sikhism to remind the wearer that they should only do harmless actions. Ignoring is easy.

It doesn’t help that there are so few of us who follow more than one religion. Society may not accept it or understand it, but I know it is not just me. Religious pluralism tells me that I am not alone. Religious pluralism exists. It exists at least to the extent that as the human race we have given it a name. There are more people who follow two religions. And just like me, many of these people are Sindhi.

Virtually everyone in India identifies with the culture of the re-

gion which their family is from. My family is from Sindh. The small state of Sindh, once in India, now lies in modern day Pakistan. To the west of the state used to be the ancient Indus Valley civilizations, and to its northeast lies the state of Punjab. In this unique geographic location, the Sindhi people formed a unique culture. A blend of Persian culture, Islamic culture, Punjabi culture, Indian culture, and two religions. It bothers me how the Sindhi people virtually lack an explanation to why they practice both. They just do. It never seems to be a problem for any of them, to switch between religions. They make it seem so easy. It's not.

I joke with my parents that Sindhis are a “dying race.” Because we are. There are not many left, primarily because we were a small group to start with, and the Sindhi diaspora (similar to the Jewish diaspora) split us up to places all around the world. It's not easy to find another Sindhi, especially one my age, who is trying to balance ‘two’ in a world that preaches ‘one.’ So I blame the weak community, the dying race, on why I can't seem to grasp the concept of my religions.

I never really understood how Sindhis practiced both. Not until New York.

*“Seek, and ye shall find” (Mt 7.7).*

New York just has a lot of everything. Lots of people, lots of stores, lots of money, and lots of Sindhis. Living alone in the city for two months prompted me to look hard for these Sindhis. I was determined to find someone: someone who struggled as much as I did, someone to tell me I was not wrong to doubt the way in which I was raised.

From the outside, the building bordered on decrepit. It was a small blue cube, chipped and peeling paint, tucked into the unassuming corner of Jackson Heights in Queens. Above the entrance doorway in black paint were two symbols, an Om (Hinduism) and a Khanda (Sikhism). Walking inside the temple with bare feet, the chills that crawled up my spine were not from the cold brown marble floor. I had found it:

a place where both of my religions lived together. I still cannot decide if that terrified me or relieved me.

On one side of the temple were the statues and figures that I always saw in the Hindu Temple, but on the left was an altar with the Guru Granth, the holy book for Sikhs. Somehow the Sindhis managed to fit two religions, two temples, into one room that was just a little bit bigger than an average high school classroom. It took quite a bit of my willpower to not go up to every person in that building and hug them. It took more willpower to not run away. But my willpower wasn't strong enough to stop myself from crying.

I was not alone.

I am not alone.

At their cores, both of my religions believe that every action has a reaction and we should do good to get good. They both preach an eternal cycle of life and death that can only be broken by pure goodness, when we become one with God. They call for us to live by the principle of Dharma, which is the core ideal that all humans should follow the rules of the Earth, adhere to the duties assigned to them, and live righteously with virtues.

The point of religion was to give people morals and standards, rules to live by, things that would make people better people, and society a better society. Religion is supposed to bring us together, not drive us apart. I may follow two religions but I follow one faith. To be honest, I believe everyone who follows a religion, or multiple religions, follows the same faith.

We all want to be good people; we all want to do what's right.

It is getting easier to admit that I follow both. I don't hide it anymore. But sometimes it still kills me. Sometimes I'm damn proud of it. I have some days where I think I would be better off without either one. I think I will never raise my own children like this. It rips a child apart from the inside. But it has also given me something to hold onto. I have a small community, but it is stronger than anything else that exists outside.

I want to let my religion be my home.  
No one can be illegal in their own home.

*“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God” (Isa 41.10).*

# PRICELESS WANDERING

NICHOLAS JEFFREY

I once found a priceless artifact on the sidewalk,  
So I threw it one hundred million feet in the air  
And waited a year for it to fly back down and  
Explode on the ground like a softened skull.  
No one wanted it anyway.  
I kept walking down the road and I saw a purple  
Pen hidden in the rubble. I snatched it and put  
It in my pocket with no pen protector.  
No one else needed it.  
Once I reached a crossroads, and there was  
Nothing there to steal or break, so I sat and  
Thought for a month. I gave up and broke  
Myself.

# THE GODS OF GARY

It's your move.

Take these fine tablets and heart burn no longer,  
Quell any stinging compunction and spawn unto the world  
A new era of Gary,  
Gary barely carries the groceries,  
but, unlike Laocoon, this equinophobe welcomes the Trojans with his serpent.

Go home Gary, indolent fool,  
I have a minatory poetic moral tale to write.  
Take an HGH shot from Wachuwanaheer  
And see if that cures your inadequacy.  
Your silver-tongued god is so pleasing to  
Listen to: the echo in your empty head.  
Meanwhile, an Arabian man brushes his teeth with  
His daughter in the morning.  
They always say brush for at least 1 minute and 30 seconds,  
But I can do it in 43.1 seconds flat.  
Efficiency is Wachuwanaheer's greatest virtue.

Once, a bald man told me I could have whatever I  
Wanted as long as I set my mind to it.  
The Wachuwanaheerean prophecy proved true:  
My wife died in a pedestrian accident cause by an opossum less than a month later.

Did you know that they have opposable thumbs?  
Good thing my wife can't play dead.

Happily proclaiming the power and efficacy of  
Wachuwanaheer around the neighborhood,  
I encountered an anticyclone preacher from the East  
Reading the Gospel of Mark from inside the bare  
Palm of his hand.  
I asked him if it were better to kill your wife or cheat on her.  
He said to dethrone the Dictaphone, hit 'em in their funny bone,  
That's where they expect it least.

I told him I had not the pleasure or opportunity to enact either,  
Gary's wife is a prude it turns out.  
I sacrificed that Rolling stone baritone  
On an altar to a greater god: Whateyewanaheer.

The seals were cast in blood and the road could not be turned from.  
Frogs only hop forwards.  
No more looking to the sides or getting off with expectation.  
Only Whateyewanaheer and me now - ethereal bliss.

But the world allured me,  
And in an unguarded moment,  
I listened to her temptress voice.

# THE SPIDER AND THE SNAKE

ALEXANDER DAUGHERTY

There once was a land on an island split in two.

There once was a land on an island with a forest made of dark stone and glass.

There once was a land on this island, in this forest, that housed the many animals that roamed from the beginning of the turning of the earth.

In this forest, there was a Spider. The Spider was beautiful and glowing and sleek and wonderful. With an ornament of red adorning her, the Spider whisked about the forest, searching for friends and food and Fools. The friends to speak and laugh with, the food to eat, and the Fools to whom to whisper wheedling wishes and feel-good fictions with which to lure and snatch.

So it was that, with the ever-presence of these whisperings and the constant lispng lilt, the Spider wove string and sticky spells into a gorgeous tapestry. The Fools that followed her about the forest in search of the wishes and fictions grabbed for the tapestry, crying ecstasies at knowing the Spider, praying gratitudes that they should be there with her.

But the tapestry was a web and the Fools were ensnared.

That is how the Spider lived.

Also in that forest lived a Snake. The Snake was marvelous and smooth and barbarous and huge. With a cross-checked browning and great, fanned neck, the Snake slithered about the forest, crushing leaves and twigs and life and more in his search for a meal. Fools, too, like those that followed the Spider, followed the Snake, though never the same Fools. These Fools wanted not reassurance and glorious satisfaction. These Fools wanted food. They knew that the snake should

shed his skin, should betimes kill a Beast but not consume it and then they should eat.

So it was that, leaving skins and carcasses-wet, the Snake led a train of sickly, pandering Fools that sought only what the Snake would leave for them.

But following the Snake was dangerous and the Fools were crushed under his weight or trapped in a loop of following-to-no-destination.

That is how the Snake lived.

One day, when the Spider was whispering a web and consuming the remains of a Fool, the Snake slithered beneath her great web. Seeing this, and seeing the great number of Fools that followed the Snake, the Spider thought, “Now, I certainly can’t have as great a Beast as he wither-winding through my forest,” and resolved to capture him as she had all other Fools, for she was bigger than him and her web more than strong enough. Anything that was not a Beast was a Fool. So that night, having consumed and caught as many Fools as she could in her whispers, the Spider dreamt and bespoke a web of shape and shadow and blistering size that rivaled the snake in all but coloration.

Perhaps it was a skin. Soon, the Snake’s Fools plunged into the twingling shape and were consumed.

And the Snake knew this and raged. The Snake spit and hissed and thrashed about, killing Fool after Fool, frightening more and more from his tail to the web of the Spider. The Spider saw this and smiled.

The Snake began to plot.

Seeing how big the Spider was, how powerful her web, the Snake devised a plan to catch the Spider. That night, he approached the home of the Spider, bearing the hiss and spit from the Fools that remained loyal to her – even in their captivity. His Fools, too, spit and hissed and roiled at the others. “Ours is the True One,” they’d cry, but neither group knew.

“The Spider promises prosperity and wondrous winding wish-things with her whispering tapestry. But look! She consumes you Fools that step into her whispers. She lies.”

And the Fools on both sides, meaning different things, screamed, “Lies, all of it!”

And the Spider, stepping forward with the head of a Fool in her hand, “You are a Snake, you could not know of my whispers and wishes. You could only know of venom and rage and slithering. Come forward and speak to me, my Fools will not listen to you.”

The Snake slithered forward, two Fools crushed. The Spider took a bite, as a pear or an apple, from the head the Fool in her hand; the others chose not to see. At the edge of the shadow-tapestry-Snake whispered by the Spider, they met, tongue to fang and spit at one another, the venom searing.

Neither recoiled, only let the blood boil.

In time, the Fools were silent, for they all knew of their doom.

This was the time; this the fight.

Plan forgotten, the Snake lunged at the Spider and the Spider at the Snake. He tangled in the tapestry and she crumpled in his jaw. Tens of thousands of Fools were crushed when the tapestry came down. Tens of thousands of Fools woven into the tapestry, too. Tens of thousands of Fools looked on, not wanting to flee yet not wanting to drown.

*Flee. Drown. Flee. Drown.*

*Flee.*

*Drown.*

And the rolling mess raged on.

~

There once was an island split in two that came to have a forest of many creatures big and small. In this forest there were many Fools

that followed many Beasts for their own purposes.

But in the battle of the Snake and the Spider, neither the spinning Spider nor crushing Snake could win. While they wrestled and rined, the Fools moved on.

While they spit and hissed and whispered, the Fools moved on.

The Fools move on.

And the Spider and the Snake only drown.



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successratesnotincluded

somerestrictionsmayapply

mustbedesperateandmisunderstoodtocall

Chloe, whom everyone calls Rocket, grew up in Texas. Her blue suburb hides like crabgrass among the trimmed red lawn. She mentions her sex-ed courses with an eye roll she's certainly executed before. The course didn't have to be medically accurate, she adds. The too-censored: all slips of the phrase "birth control" retracted. Slideshows of heterosexual couples holding hands. It sounds like a joke, Rocket says. She coughs a laugh in exasperation. But it goes on: slideshows of graphic STD pictures. The Skittle Metaphor. The Skittle Metaphor? She cups her chapped hands accordingly: your sexuality is a Skittle, and if you pass the Skittle into a variety of hands, the final recipient will be repulsed at the worn-out Skittle. And the tampon day. Rocket covers her mouth with her free hand, self-incredulous. The tampon was from the eighties. All she remembers is that it looked to be the size of a rolled-up t-shirt. At that moment, she knew both she and this t-shirt tampon were incompatible.

## COLEOPTERIST

Nothing's a secret once you know about it. The jewel beetles became a regularity in the kitchen. The first was the color of a geode's guts, translucent purple. It sipped from the lavender-licorice tea you left out. You'd forgotten about your tea while on the phone with your cousin, when you raced off to look up how to legally change your name (Pallas or Mo?). The beetle met you under the wink of night. Once your pulse slowed from canary levels, the beetle let you pet it. With two fingers. It was warm, as if you had just released it from cupped palms.

You learned not to crack the window—the beetles didn't need help, thank you very much—and not to make Irish tea without milk. One lapis lazuli beetle resented that. Onyx, emerald, opal, ruby, aquamarine. Golden legs and veined wings, injected with ichor. Otherworldly. The geode beetle liked the name Pallas for you, but you let it keep the name. You chose Mo for yourself, only you changed your mind later and didn't change it after all. At night, under the hum of your kitchen lights, pincers clicked against ceramic, tiny toasts to old friends.



the howling backseat.

I wanna go to Splash Mountain!

Space!

Be quiet before we all go back!

Okay, Space...here...let's race...get ready, get set, and g—

GET BACK! What do you think you are doing?

Let's go to Hollywood Studios!

Do you think they still have those pork shanks way back by Gaston?

Honey, we just ate.

I wanna go to Hollywood Studios! The girl was costumed in a light blue dress, reminiscent, but for the lace and the frills, of the tunic of the Virgin Mother, having been crowned (and here, be-wanded) in her heaven. The boy had on a T-shirt and shorts.

Darling, those turkey legs just aren't filling.

Here, look, let's have a picture with Pinocchio!

Fuck Pinocchio...let's go to Hollywood Studios!

What did you say?

Ooh, look, she has a pork shank...excuse me, where did you get that? Back by Gaston's? to nodded assent. See, I said so. C'mon kids, let's go. Thank you so much, a semi-saccharine pseudo-smile playing about her puffy lips. After ten feet, Ooh, it's so hard to walk so far!

Think maybe you oughta grab one of them scooter things...?

What, you think I'm fat!?

What? No!

Ho-lly-wood! Ho-lly-wood! Chanted in ritual imprecation, to the spirits whose dwelling is here in our world and whose purpose is naught but our dreams and delight.

The doctor just said 'pre-diabetic.' I'm not one of them fat, lazy, trashy assholes you see on those things!

HOLLYWOOD!

Honey, don't scream! And darling I never said that you were!

JEE-zus, what I wouldn't give for a little respect around here! She scratches her ass, half-visible through her size-or-two too-small jeans shorts. They trudge to Gaston's, the princess's plea for her most-favoritest part of the parks now forgotten, soothed as she is by promise of a pork shank, just ahead, past the next turn and the last weary Dumbo ride...

The father lies on the bed. The mother lies in the bathtub. The children lie on each other, each grasping the loot from the dreams of the day, their catch of the magic slipping away through their fat, eager fingers...

Honey, shouted through the bathroom door, maybe I should grab one of them scooters!

He had known it wouldn't be perfect. He had heard the lies, the whispers, heretical murmurs out in the night.

Outside the Haunted Mansion, beyond its animated ghosts, spiritless spirits circling through, he had overheard a conversation whose meaning was frankly beyond him, but whose import he felt he might clutch at.

A temple to kitsch. A parade of poshlust'. The last writhing spasms of this moribund land.

Will you shut up and come on?

This place is trash. Look around you. Fake, I say, fake, all of it's fake. A monopolistic, money-grubbing monument to Mammon. It's fake, I say, it's fake.

You're the fakest one here. Now quit ruining it for the rest of us.

I do not deny your claim, but I refuse to accept your command.

Shut up and go get a beer.

How can I, when each one is ten dollars in this goddamn place, this money-grubbing, greedy, swindling, penny-pinching, usurious den of thieves? You there, directed to the father, you think this is some innocent happyland, some bright, clean, shiny, innocent place?

Wait, w-what?

Leave the man alone—

Let me tell you what...this place is evil. It is corrupt beyond redemption. Innocent? Pshaw. Fags fuck at night behind bushes. During days they tap their phones, primp their faces, beg to be boned, have trysts for four in Mission Space. Every last detail here was added with the same evil, yes goddammit I say evil, purpose: perversion—sex, sex and money. The two great evils, leaving this land forever unredeemed, unredeemable. I hope it burns to the ground. And how I wish it were already aflame! I SAID, HOW I WISH—

Let's go. It's bitter bastards like you who ruin life for the rest of us.

And a noble calling it is—pissing in other people's porridge. The two trudge off, leaving the father clasping his son's hand as if to keep himself grounded, grasping as a man rendered blind in brilliance grasps at the walls, for reassurance of the familiar world this unwanted light had better not have laid waste to...

Sex. Sex and money. Minnie a succubus then, or only a whore? And Mickey her pimp? And in what unwholesome combination does Pluto, or (dear God!) Goofy, fit in?

Cinderella bends over the little princess, each attempting to out-brat the other.

Christ, four dollars for an ice cream cone?

Even the muzak in the bathroom is from the soundtrack.

You are now entering a world of dreams and imagination, in which the elevator so soberly awake drops once then withdraws within.

Have you seen the arcades? Damn, this is luxury.

The man with the bags held out his hand for a tip...

Why bother with it all? What meaning, what truth can possibly be glimpsed past all this? What life can be lived once the Frozen songs start? Let it go, says the bitch who's always had everything, playing another bitch who's always had everything and neither of whom relin-

quishes in the slightest her grasp upon shit.

What the hail do you mean Wandrin' Oaken is gay?

It's subversive, I tell you, they're teaching the kids to be commies...

If they're commies, why would they want money so bad...?

How would I know? Am I a Communist?

A fly settled its dung-covered legs upon McCarthy's skimpy pork ribs.

Wanna know why Epcot has China?

I tell you, I saw it, in the back of that Lilo and Stitch excuse for a ride, it took shape in the darkness and drove out the light and that stench was not garlic breath, no, but rather the first flickering fumes of hellfire, incipient upon this Gomorrah.

Tonight would be the last, and to celebrate they would, after trudging through crowds dense as lead and led by dents, eddies in the molten mass, after being pressed against an hundred other sweating, heaving bodies, after being cordoned off like kindergarteners and waved at with glow-sticks like wandering herds of grounded aircraft, at last see the show. The fireworks. They're Number Two. In consumption of ballistics and pyrotechnics, that is. After, of course, the army.

The father felt desiccated, wrung-out. Of time and money, of patience and belief. His faith in the unshakeable blessings of entertainment had begun to droop, to slowly quietly die. And as his belief in the wan rodents waned, he found himself regarding it all in a different, more sinister light. Panem et circenses (though he's never heard the phrase). Overpriced panem and childish circenses. But at what true cost? And what was the motivation of those dwelling in the places he could never see, the dusty dark dungeons beneath the Castle, shoring up the foundations of that magnificent illusion?

His children had sunburn, and he and his spouse were chafed from the sweat between their hams. His camera had run out of battery, and the charger was at home. His phone's screen had cracked, and he

had lost his wristband. This pilgrimage was not for the weak. All you intrepid souls, self-examine ere you dare enter our all-American Holy Land!

And could there be any real Castle, silhouetted a magnificent purple against the night's vast, inexorable dark? a magnificent purple from the 120,000-watt LED lights? Or is the Castle all an illusion? and this vast vulgar misrepresentation all that remains for this our lost land?

Step to the side, please, don't block the pathways!

You're ruining the magic!

From all sides, a thousand children whined.

When does it start?

I wanna go back to the ho-tell!

From all sides, a thousand sweating heaving underclad bodies converged in a conglomeration of the perdition of this nation, the unloved unwashed unkillable masses that swarm perpetually about us.

Main Street, they call it! But of what city? Eh? Do they say? Could it, imagine, be Dis?

Admit you enjoy this.

This what?

This mocking pose you assume. A thousand mindless bodies egged him on.

[.....]

You're damn right I do.

From somewhere, someone screamed.

They had chosen a spot along the bridge leading to Tomorrowland. En route to the future they would watch the last remnants of their younger selves' pasts. While guzzling funnel cake. 750 calories, \$12.

I don't think it's time for it to start...did you hear what I said? I said I don't think—

No, goddammit, you don't.

(The fuck's his problem?)

Show's gonna start now.

What?

The show.

I don't think so...I don't think...

The loudspeakers squealed, then the children. Man, even so young, yet again emulating machine.

Wishes do come true, Pin-oak! quoth a familiar cheery voice. A maudlin tune in the back, a mildly believable electronic approximation of a strings section. When you wish, upon a star—makes no diff'rence, who you are—

Each celestial fire rendered invisible in the electric glare.

Just dream it, blares a friendly grey-coated voice through the speakers as the masses beneath are enlightened not only by his words but by a shower of fire. A rich-bitch, Hollywood-ho voice warbles some sentimental song—Wishes—wishes—dreams—interspersed by quotes from movies, snippets of more memorable tunes, all the Qlippoth and detritus of this life sweeping up suddenly on the father, smothering him in a grey, uniform coating of ash.

Beside him his wife, munching on funnel cake. Beside him his mouse-eared kids. For the first time, to the tune of this offense to good taste, he began to consider his life in whole and could find it little better than trash. And yet, here—the plaintive, badly sung cry of the millions, each invested in the voice on the speakers, as the fireworks gleamed like shattered glass, beautiful despite Their best intentions...each little tot in the nation sucking on his popsicle and dreaming of dreaming the American Dream (always capitalized, almost as if we knew what it meant) grows older, still to do little more than dream, wish, but upon what star?

A chorus of castrati in crude counterpoint proclaim they wish they may, they wish they might, have the wish, they wish tonight.

What an ugly word is “dream.”

The blackness of night is pierced for a moment by a sprinkle of blue, now green, strung into the sky like so many Christmas lights on an inverted tree. A synaesthetic moment gearing up. Synanaesthetic,

rather. Dope for dullards.

And yet, despite himself, something is touched by this. This plaintive plainsong, these cries countless in unison, all their hopes, “dreams,” wrapped up in a nice clean shiny life-always-gets-better-don’t-you-cry package.

And so, when the bombs go off, the nightly noon, the world wrapped in an artificial brilliance, he does, yes, despite himself, feel something. He begins to cry now, tears streaming freely down his cheeks, fat sweaty palms grasping the railing of the bridge in the fervent unsaid unheard imprecation he and all these other sweating heaving bodies hurl at the artificial brilliance painted for them on the sky, for pardon from their own irreversible perdition.

Here truly, he thought, was something (finally!) real.



wife and kid, himself and second wife and kids, himself and third wife and her kids, himself at Las Vegas, himself in Paris, himself at a Croatian sunrise with a patiently vacant look he thought pensive. The literary critic never posted any picture but a good one. Himself with dog, with other dog, himself with second wife's cat (he should delete that), himself in Dos-Equis Most-Interesting-Man-in-the-World pose, himself at Tennessee Williams festival, himself at John Steinbeck festival, at the Hemingway house in Key West, himself at the Burning Man festival with the same patient vacancy plastered onto his face, turned to the east as the sun above the Sangre de Cristo threatened resurrection.

Outside, a soft rain began; millions of cockroaches swam to their deaths.

The literary critic sipped his Coke. The literary critic scratched his balls. The literary critic turned to the wall to admire the plaque hung there "in recognition of achievement and literary merit." Cash prize too.

The literary critic sighed and opened the book. The epigraph was from Juvenal. "And also, nothing is safe from his lust, not woman nor virgin, not betrothed husband, or boy too young for razor." That was what Google Translate said at least. He'd never taken Latin. "Obfuscatingly learned learned learned showoffish, turgid, overwritten, and with strongly reactionary and homophobic tendencies," wrote the literary critic. He turned the page and began to reluctantly read the first chapter. "Given a choice, Alexander would"—he skimmed the next few hundred pages under his finger, until he thought he glimpsed the word "clitoris." Unfortunately, it proved to be "clutter." "And why do you clutter your life and self with such shit? Why"—after a solid thirty minutes of effort, the literary critic found a sex scene. The literary critic fondled his cock. "Lubricated, she lasciviously reached a mischievous finger around to his dilating asshole, as her own cunt dilated wide"—it was all over in a matter of minutes. The literary critic gazed at the doll with a vacant look, patient for nothing, object forgotten in the self-satisfaction of his stupidly spraypainted smile.

Outside, the rain had ceased. Millions of termites moved in a

dream. Millions of plagiarized people swarmed, to invade each last lair, every hiding place, ruin each framework, and replace it with spit.

Outside, a child aged three fell to her death from a nearby balcony.

Outside, a young man made up his mind to go mad, a dog outmaneuvered its tail in a battle of (dim) wits, and an old man shat himself, curled up in a bus stop; and the literary critic, wrapped up (nay, mummified) in his work, would never understand nor be able to express how empty, lost, and lonely each was, how each felt an undefined desire in an eternity of death.

Inside, the literary critic cleaned up the mess with a Burger King napkin, decided he ought to give the book credit at least for its...pleasurable aspects.

“It is a stylistic tour de force, an obscenity in the best sense of the word, a slap in the face of society, and a gut-wrenching protest against life itself.

“However, in the end, the author fails to successfully express himself. His characters remain unmoving, unreal, deeply, disastrously fake. In the end, the main character (the ostensible protagonist—and, one wonders, a stand-in for the author?) fails to convey any real depth of emotion: He is a flimsy and dried-up excuse for a man, a man who fails to understand either his situation or himself and whose only recourse is a never-ending parade of distraction and self-puffery.”

The literary critic sighed, x-ed out of Facebook, packed his briefcase, went home for the night, and dozed fitfully, fretted by dreams of paralysis.



Sell a couple cd's and now it triggers a housefire

So much we take for granted,  
How can we grow if I keep my feet planted?  
How am I doing my part if I don't help anyone else understand it

Because the question of what color matters shouldn't matter to you,  
Right now we're beating a nation up until it's straight black and blue

We can sit by our tv's and say that's messed up  
Or we can do something about it  
No more just liking and just hash-tagging black lives matter  
Donations where income can have an outcome  
Quotations where we can make our kids proud sons

Time to change the way we look at stereotypes and superstition

Martin had a dream, and then passed on the vision

The day we change the world is the day we save the world  
Stand and love one another, or say you hate this world  
The privilege where I don't look left and stand for what's right  
Sometimes we look at our tv's as if they're still black and white  
Pac kept heads up and Kendrick made it alright  
Funny how we look up to those who aren't even white  
Next time we finally listen remember hip hop matters because of Black Lives



It takes very little,  
And the shutters snap—  
Locking on to some shadow of a dream:  
Time made timeless.

My door unlocks, and Longing tiptoes in  
Humming a lullaby of pillow forts, hot chocolate, and being tucked in.  
For a moment, Reason steps out for a smoke,  
And Logic streams out my ears.  
For a moment, Eden is within my grasp.  
Its hymns of promise are all around me,  
Filling my ears,  
    My eyes,  
        My nose.  
I'm drunk on flawless hope,  
Happily drowning in blissful ignorance.

Then,  
The moment passed,  
As moments are apt to,  
And Reality comes calling with a smart rap.  
It raises a critical eyebrow arches at the shards.  
As if to say "Really? You thought that could last?"  
It takes up the broom with the cluck of a tongue,  
Efficiently sweeping the remains of my fabricated dreams  
Into the corner of my heart reserved for broken glass.  
    Adding to the pile.  
Beautiful promises that never last.

## *GROWING PAINS*

One night, I fell asleep a child  
and woke up an adult.  
Toes hanging over the bottom of my mattress,  
inviting the monsters under my bed to have a snack.  
My clothes were too small,  
and my feet were too big for my favorite shoes.  
I'd outgrown who I was;  
I didn't fit where I used to.  
My legs were too long for my rocking horse.  
The places that once cradled me,  
now pinched and squeezed.  
I was taller—  
tall enough to reach the shelf  
where my mom and dad hid everything not meant for children.

But I wasn't any bigger on the inside.  
I couldn't quite fill my new body.  
I was confused—  
disoriented—  
shaken up in the space between  
me  
and who I was.



## *HIDDEN*

I am the secret keeper,  
A lover of hushed tones  
And bated breath.  
I am the silver cloak of dawn  
When the earth is clinging  
To the newness of day.  
I am the mystery of silence  
In the moments of death and hope.  
I am the secret keeper,  
The herald of softness  
And dewdrops  
And melancholy.  
I am the key  
Hidden in plain sight,  
The whisper of sunlight  
Amidst a storm,  
The space beneath  
A willow tree's drooping branches,  
And the heartbeat  
Of the youngest of children.  
Yes, I am the secret keeper,  
And I am life itself.

# LITTLE MERMAID, GO HOME

MEGAN MCCORMACK

*She saw the humans and her eyes glimmered black with mischief.*

And when she tired of floating among kelp beds and flossing with shark teeth,  
She traded her voice for legs while octopi suctioned gently onto her body,  
And she emerged from the depths among surf boards as waves broke overhead.

*She surveyed the surfers, splaying her electric eel body on patterned beach towels.*

And when she heard the cries of gulls fighting over trodden soggy fries,  
She donned a purple string bikini, aviator sunglasses, and beach waves  
And prowled down the boardwalk, leaving bloody footprints and wolf whistles behind.

*She licked her lips and drew strength from the salt of desperation that lingered there.*

And when she danced in the strobe light of the moon by the pier,  
Bodies atrophied and collapsed over hips and flashes of slender thigh,  
And she smiled coolly as knives pricked and hacked the soles of her feet.

*She tore her dry hair from her dry scalp, weaving it delicately around her neck.*

And when the scum-colored sea foam whispered to her ankles about the cove,  
She left her spring break umbrella troupe to find the dagger there,  
And she slipped in tenderly into the men that followed to discover her secrets.

*She rose into the air, screaming once more, to find a new realm to claim.*

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Alexander Daugherty** is a student at the University of Notre Dame that is heavily involved in theater and writing. He is majoring in Neuroscience and Behavior B.S. and English with hopefully-a-concentration in Creative Writing. He enjoys fishkeeping and knowledge (for obvious reasons) and finds the greatest love in musical harmony, string instruments, and tragedy.

**Victoria Devine** is a sophomore Marketing and English double major from Thousand Oaks, California. She chews a pack of gum a day and hasn't slept in weeks. Once she lied and told a cute boy that she knows how to surf, and she lives in fear of having to prove it.

**Kate Girdhar** is a senior undergraduate from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania studying English and Pre-Health Studies. Her poetry has previously been published in Re:Visions and The Juggler. She likes old things and new ideas.

**Laura Gruszka** Laura Gruszka is on her second cup of coffee today. She is a senior double-major in English and music with a concentration in creative writing. Having played xylophone on the drumline for four years, she is eager to share that two drumline members are published

in this edition of Re:Visions. (See: Luisa Mader, aka Boots.) Laura is especially grateful to Rocket--known exclusively, by everyone, as Rocket--for inspiring "Tex-Ed."

**Nicholas Jeffrey** is a sophomore English and Psychology major from Tampa, Florida who enjoys long talks on the beach and 19th century Russian literature. Creative writing has only been a part of his life for about a year and a half, but it is now an essential part of his lifestyle and something that he hopes to pursue beyond just a concentration at Notre Dame.

**Grace Larson** is a freshman at the University of Notre Dame who is living in Welsh Family Hall. She is from Cambridge, Minnesota and is pursuing a double major in English and piano performance.

**Andrew Lischke** is an award-winning alcohol evangelist. Not quite recovered recovered coffee addict. Finger drumming enthusiast. Big time social justice guy. Often highly distracting. Incessantly in search of sleep and kick-ass sandwiches. Will probably end up as a crazy cat lady.

**Madison Loftin** was born in Savannah, Georgia to an Irish Catholic family. She is currently a sophomore English major at Notre Dame, and is particularly fascinated with 19th-century Gothic literature as well as the literature of the American South.

**Luisa Mader** is a junior psychology major with a minor in really bad puns. Currently studying abroad in Puebla, Mexico, she can only assume there will be hell toupée when she returns. She wants to know if you got that one.

**Megan McCormack** is a senior from Los Angeles studying English, French, and Art History. She currently lives in Big Deck Haus with

some of the best people she knows, and yes, this includes unofficial roommates. She is having a hard time thinking of anything other than her impending graduation. Yikes.

**Roseline Olang'** arranges her life around Art, Literature, Economics and most things fantastic. She is also obsessed with elephants.

**Michael O'Connor** is a senior at Notre Dame studying biology and studio art. He has always enjoyed occupying a space between the arts and sciences; the balancing act keeps him on his toes.

**Alison O'Neil** is a freshman Biological Sciences major from Pasadena, California. She writes for Scholastic and The Irish Rover, and this is her first literary magazine submission. In her free time, she enjoys feeding campus squirrels.

**Malavika Praseed** is the author of "Fruit Salad."

**Mita Ramani** is a freshman at Notre Dame, planning to double major in Economics and Philosophy. I am also a part of the Glynn Family Honors Program in the College of Arts and Letters. I aspire to go to law school after completing my four years at Notre Dame, and hope to practice law and defend those who are unable to defend themselves particularly individuals who have been marginalized by their communities.

**Kate Scherzinger** is a sophomore English major concentrating in Creative Writing. She's written 3 unpublished novels and over 100 poems. In October 2016, she had a narrative essay, Undeniably Excellent, published in Notre Dame Magazine. She was the 2016-17 president of Mustard, Notre Dame's creative writing club, and she's a current staff member on The Juggler, one of Notre Dame's literary magazines. She also competed in the 2017 Wham Bam Poetry Slam. Sometimes she spends time not writing.

**Mirek Stolee** is a graduating senior with dreams of becoming the world's biggest board game scholar. He will remain in the city of South Bend, Loneliness (LO) next year, so please reach out if you want to play some games.

**James Anthony Stoner** is a freshman from New Orleans, LA, and Stanford Hall and an intended philosophy and Russian major.

**Olivia Till** is a senior Political Science major who recently discovered that poetry is a top-notch coping mechanism in the current political climate. Sometime between her second and third cup of coffee on any given day, she can be found working on a poetry series inspired by Dakar, Senegal, where she studied abroad in the spring of 2016.

**Claire Turgeon** is a sophomore English Pre-health dual major from Cleveland, Ohio at the University of Notre Dame. She is in house Slytherin and her patronus is a Donkey. Claire owns way too many figments of imagination and is currently trying to barter them with the Muses for a novel manuscript or a film score. Imaginative donations are always accepted.

Originally from Chicago, **Jake Williams** is currently a freshman at Holy Cross College. As a poet, songwriter, artist, and activist, he wants to create change in our world through creativity and art. As a member of a Chicago writing club called Young Chicago Authors, Jake's vision is to make the city he lives in a better place as he believes that we as students, are the future to ameliorating the way of life in The United States of America.







