The Garfield Lake Review 2023

Table of Contents Letter from the Editor Staff FICTION

Danube vs. Vienna- 9 The Two Annas- 12 The Art of Kapultation- 16 Blackout- 20 The Plutonian Shore- 22 Cora- 25 Samantha Whose Last Name I Never Learned- 35 Consequence- 40

POETRY

The Mist- 52 Penitent- 53 Paraselene- 54 Driving over the speed limit on the freeway- 55 The Painter's Dream- 56 Still life of party with lesser saints, many who refused to marry or have sex with rich, pagan kings- 57 Roughhewn Summer Afternoon- 58 I am a star- 60 reaching event horizon in chicago, illinois- 62 On Infinites- 62 The Next Generation- 63 Stopping in the Woods with Frost- 64 Drought- 65 The Mountain Climber and the Old Man- 66 We Are Free- 67 A Weekend at DeDe's- 69 The Reality of Being - 71 Elegy for a Seamstress-73

Dress Pattern-75 Wood-76 Air- 78 Not even the Moon-79 Though you Never- 80 Never, Never Land, My Ship- 81 Judgement Day- 82 Positivity-83 Glitz of Darkside- 84 Perfection-85 Polyphemus Among the Stars- 86 Storm Breather- 87 It's Easy to Love the Rain-88 The Phantom- 90 The Stills- 92 Dwindling Daises-93 Seasonal-94 Red Sun- 95 Dear Sleep- 96 Duck-98

VISUAL ART

Lou- 100 Deer Skull and Shells- 100 Skull- 101 Discarded Ornaments- 102 Trophy- 103 Family Portrait- 103 Recess Deconstructed- 104 Gripping Read- 104 Meditation- 105 Locking Down the Sun- 105 Fallen Leaf and Rain #1- 106 Log Burst- 106 Cotton Candy Skies- 107 Clouded Perception- 107 Harness Your Power- 108 Working People- 109 Sky Portal (Double Exposure)- 110 Aerial View I- 110 Horizon- 111

NON-FICTION

Incident in Vava´u- 113 Stars- 121 Matchbox Tears -- A Clark Lexington Story- 127 A Letter From the Editor:

Dear readers,

A new year and a new edition. Just as we have for over fifty years now, a small group of students came together to make this year's edition of the *Garfield Lake Review*. This year's edition is very special. It proves that despite the challenges of recent times, creatives will NEVER stop creating. Artists and authors are known for their perseverance. Which is why the theme for this edition was far more abstract than previous years. By chosing this theme we wanted to inspire creatives from all over the world, and that goal was accomplished in stride.

The theme for this edition was Atmosphere, representing both physical and abstract ideas. The sparkling stars in the sky. The drops of rain pounding on the windowsill. This theme was meant to be a challenge. And all the authors included in this edition conquered the challenge at hand. Embodying atmosphere, especially due to the vastness of its nature, is not an easy task. But atmosphere is more than the theme. It's the journey, or even the process, that can truly set the atmosphere of a piece.

Hanna Sauve Editor

Editorial Staff



Hanna Sauve- Editor

Hanna is a sophomore here at Olivet College. They are an English major with a minor in Women's and Gender studies. This is their first time as editor of the Garf, and they are incredibly grateful that they have such an amazing team! Aside from the Garf, they are on the Women's bowling team, a member of Alpha E, and in the GCHP. They are hoping to go into the publishing industry after college.



Bray Wright- Editorial Board

Bray is planning to study Library Science after college, and she is currently serving as the Editor for the Echo, Olivet's school newspaper.



Reece Yeager- Editorial Board

Reece is a junior English Major at Olivet college. She loves to read, write, watch movies, and spend time with the most important people in her life. At Olivet College, Reece is involved in GCHP, is on the Women's bowling team, a member of Alpha E, and of course, is on the editorial board of the Garfield Lake Review. One day, she hopes to go on to be a published author.



Sebastian O'Leary- Editorial Board

Sebastian is a senior here at Olivet college. He is a Sports Recreational & Management major with a minor in Media Production and Communications. He's involved with a lot of extracurriculars on campus like the Swimming and Diving team, and even Greek Life as a member of Phi Alpha Pi. This is his first time being a part of the editorial board for the Garf, and he's so excited to work with everyone on it!



Mitchell Beck- Editorial Board

Mitch is a junior and an English major at Olivet College.



Mackenzie Hillsburg- Editorial Board

Mackenzie is a third year at Olivet college. This is her first time working on the Garf. She's also a member of Alpha E, the Marching Comets color guard, the Difference Makers, Capella Comets, and Delight.



Jake Dickinson- Editorial Board Jake is a senior at Olivet College studying History and Creative Writing. He is a member of the soccer and

tennis teams, as well as a member of the Hosford History Society. This is his first year working on the Garf.



Olivia Smith- Editorial Board

Olivia is a freshman here at Olivet College. She is an English major. This is her first time working with the Garf, and she feels incredibly honored and grateful to gain this experience.



Meredith Dodson- Faculty Advisor

Meredith Dodson has been the GARF faculty advisor for three years. She joined up for the joy of working with literature and has stayed because of the joy of working with students. Every year brings new creativity and energy to a long tradition. In addition to this role, Professor Dodson teaches composition and creative writing and chairs the Arts and Humanities Department.

FICTION

Danube vs. Vienna

One day, in the dreamy Middle Ages, three young friends lived in Moravia: a thinker, a poet and a dreamer. They loved every dawn. They decided to visit Vienna, to buy jewelry there. They liked furthermore a gold of a starlit heaven. They passed the Danube River and a miracle happened. The miracles came often true at tender thoughts. In their souls by the Danube, a total secondary human-becoming took place: in the thinker through praise, in the poet through appreciation and in the dreamer through honoring. The men were enchanted and bewitched. In all three cases, the primary human-becomings were fulfilled: at the thinker with the first thoughts, at the poet with the first poem, and at the dreamer with the first infatuation. The bygone thoughts were about the dreamed Golden Fleece, poem was about journeys of Zeus into clouds, and the infatuation was related to Ovid-like beauty of butteries. In addition, the thinker thought of the Danube, that is about: size, quantity, water, depth, fish. The Danube was thereat cerulean. The Poet wrote about Lorelei - a girl from a grove who had drowned in the Danube, because she was not loved. She had drunk an azure water of the river, like an ambrosia from the moon. The dreamer dreamed of a river wizardry, because he was absolutely enchanted by the dreamy Danube.

Thus. The third way to the human-becoming is the philosophy. The philosophy must be mysterious and should be grounded in an ontology of laws-like rules. A mermaid was indeed really a she-philosopher. She must have been touched by the celestially Apollonian breath of a nightingalelet.

And all the rest of my story happens in the world of today.

The mermaid is an inhabitant of a Danube depth. In the great depth, she has hidden a treasure of silvery cranes –a handful of silver, fallen down from stars. From today on she is very dreamy, because she purposes to think of a beautiful poem to the end. It would be a sonnet about a dreamy awaking of the spring-like

druid. This is besides a delicately (most) lovely poem of eternity. I can name it the moony sempiternity. The mermaid sleeps in a pit under the Danube during the day. >The early bird gets the worm< that sentence is erroneous for the sake of charm of the spellbound metaphysics. She wakes up every midnight and sits on the banks of the Danube behind the city of Vienna. The mermaid wants to describe a charm of the sea of lights. She looks at the beautiful city. The Mozartean genial spirit rests in her and the mood of the city is quite unbosomed. The Danube is enchanted, because the mermaid heats the water up to 35 degrees for the sake of her soul's warmth. The heat energy takes place owing to the warmness of her bosom. Boys can swim and bathe in the warm Danube without limits. They are the lineal descendants of above heroes of the Dark Ages, of the thinker, the poet, as well of the dreamer. Even a fisherman can easily refresh his body in the warm water, fallen in love with a silent, dreamed epiphany, then >Loose lips sink ships<. From today a miracle will take place. This miracle is fulfilled by a singing of a eesome, pulchritudinous, fair, beauteous cormorantling. The noble august star, namely the constellation of the philosophers, shimmers over Vienna, the Danube and the mermaid. I recall the dearest, most tender weird of all people of this story. The star signalizes the fulfillment of all dreams. I'm just in love with the mermaid, the star and all of Vienna. I have many wishes to Danube and Vienna.

I believe, Danube will be inhabited only by all mermaids forever. In the future, the thinker, poet, dreamer and this mermaid will be adoring the Terpsichorean Arts in the heaven. Until the end of days, their love to all birdies will have been taking. Explanations for Readers:

Nightingalelet – in fact the neologism – small Nightingale.

Sempiternity – poetic eternity.

cormorantling – as diminutive in English, like a birdie, never used in the famous literature. The adjectives, to wit: eesome, pulchritudinous, fair, beauteous denote the word: pretty; eesome = eyesome.

weird – fate, destiny

A formal legitimation, that substantiates the using of the wordlet: nightingalelet by me is the German DICTIONARY by Jacob Grimm from 1889, that includes a diminutive: NACHTIGÄLLCHEN, n. kleine nachtigall - translating: small nightingale. It is about the results of method: comparative linguistics. Besides it is justified, because both languages were historically related...

Paweł Markiewicz

The Two Annas

Sable Night, mother of Dread and Fear, Upon the world dim darkness doth display, And in her vaulty prison stows the Day.

William Shakespeare, The Rape of Lucrece

"I've seen her on the Tall Road," Ivan the Carter told Anna, his one bloodshot eye staring at her like a faded ruby, his spoiled eye hidden behind a tattered patch of faded canvas. "She is the image of you in a drop of clear water. Shiny and new and singing with joy. Best to stay away from this woman."

Anna had no family. She was alone. There should not have been a woman on the Tall Road who was her image in a drop of clear water. She plied her wares on the Little Road, exiled from the drives of grander life and love which propelled some to rise in the rank toward nature's elite. Even in this degraded world, even at this lowly time – some people transcended. Those people were not Our Anna. But this Other Anna, singing with joy, sparkling like a gem, had no doubt accomplished such loft. It had reduced Anna's stature, causing her to retreat into the gloominess of her fading day.

Then another time, but still at this place, at this point, Anna was listening to Olaf the Forester tell tales of the Other Anna, who is quick, bright, rich, free. And it was at this point that Anna gave herself leave to hate the Other Anna, this creature of light who cast Anna into the dark. For even if this woman was only a traveler's tale, a mendicant's rumor — that is, not an existent being — the very story itself cast Anna into the shade. She was not the Other Anna of song and story. She was just Anna.

The idea began to close in on her soul with the weight of reality. Anna could sense the pull, out there in the gray hills. This was far beyond the ability of her senses to see, hear, taste, touch – yet she knew the Other Anna was there, a bright, fixed point, unlike Anna, who was a creature of dust, dull and scattered. Anna orbited around Other Anna like a dead moon.

"Best seek not her out," Olaf the Forester told her. "She'll do you harm. You know this in your heart. Never such a thing as this has ever come to good."

Anna turned away from the forester, toward her world with names all strangely etched and formal, as if this was the only place on earth, and there were no other possible worlds, and his words scattered behind her like a trail of ash.

Huddled figures sold clams, mussels, winkles and scallops on long, rough boards. Anna sat on a stool next to a basket of crabs that had patterns of black and white spots, and when Anna looked at two in the same gaze, she saw they were in mirror image. The sun had already set, and she had only sold short of a dozen. The market was thinning as darkness fell around the muddy square like a drape. She counted the coins in her palm. She would owe the carter twenty more and there is no such victual as a day-old crab.

She gathered her skirts, stretched out her back, and turned to pull up her satchel. But a soft hand rested on her turned shoulder. A woman, a cowl over her head, a long tunic draped around her shoulders, her tawny blonde hair forming a crescent over her bright bronze eyes, stood but inches from Anna's face. Her other hand held forty coppers. Her smile was a facsimile of another shape, the likeness of a reflection in a mirror undistorted by time. She dropped the coins in Anna's stretched palm. The woman grasped the weir of sluggish crabs and turned quickly away.

Anna trailed behind in the gloom. The woman was far ahead, striding briskly and cleanly, as if the common laws of locomotion did not apply to her form and limbs. She scaled over and down the Rocks of Woe, and swiftly around the Slough of Agony. Anna only kept the woman in sight by crashing into rocks, dragging her feet in mud and losing a shoe. As she rounded gnarled trees, the slate gray sky bled twilight. Anna lost the woman. The Other Anna slid behind a stand of brambles denuded of leaves, leaving a hint of her scent in the cold air.

Down in the Warren of Hovels, Anna slept lightly. On the other side of the stream, two men were brawling. In the next hovel, a woman snored in high pitched reels like a saw played with a violin's bow. Anna heard a man speak outside in broad dialect.

"You shouldn't be down here, Miss. It ain't safe."

"T'll be fine," a firm, familiar voice answered. Anna sprung from her bed and threw open the door. The draped figure descended the road, making fast progress to the Slough. Anna moved only a few steps when Ivan the Carter grasped her arm.

"Best let her be, Anna," he said, drawing on his pipe in the dark, the bowl of tobacco like dusky coals in the night. "It's never good to follow them. Leave it be, woman."

But Anna never listened to Ivan the Carter on matters of self. How could he speak for her? She would follow the Other Anna – for that is what Ivan would do if there was an Other Ivan. But the Other Anna was just as fleet-footed as the last encounter, and Anna was hampered in her wooden clogs, and by her weak and unfocused eyes and lame leg.

The Other Anna rose over the crest of three hills like a gazelle. Anna was about to give up, to live with the notion that her brighter self was a form detached from her, leaving her lonely, empty, and destitute of joy. But Anna managed to mount a final hill. The valley was like nothing she had perceived: below was a duplicate of the valley of her birth. Every rock, tree, stream and rolling hill seemed to have reiterated itself to the minutest element. But on second glance, Anna spied differences. Some details were formed off center. The Tall Road was a trifle too tall. The Little Road was a bit too large. The Rocks of Woe were far too worn and round, like the rumpled folds of an eiderdown quilt. The Slough of Agony revealed few signs of pain at all; in fact, it looked proud and gleaming, the very idyll of robust health.

Anna sat on a stone that was quite like the stone just behind her, but more worn around the edges, comfy like an antique chair. In front of her, a brighter sun of eerie dimensions hung honored in the sky, no cloud daring to cover its brilliance. And faced with this vision of gleaming and uncanny totality, she all but forgot the Other Anna.

Eric Maroney

The Art of Kapitulation

They heard the war approaching long before they saw it. Allied planes, Spitfires and larger planes, bombers roared overhead. They sought cover in brushy road ditches. Thunderous artillery drove them off the muddy ruts of the road into the sodden woods. Finally, the clack and roar of engines and tracks, like emissaries of peace.

On August 20, 1944, hands raised with a white cloth, nervous, ready to run and knowing they should not, the three approached a pair of American riflemen. They were marched at gunpoint to an American Army Lieutenant who did not look up; who said, "Documents."

They handed over their muddied soldbuchs. The Lieutenant took them and then motioned to his men, who threw the Germans to the ground.

Their sleeves were ripped open.

They were searched, their pockets turned out.

Becker had the SS blood tattoo. The Americans found a Bulova and two gold wedding bands in his pocket.

"Do him," the Lieutenant said, and Hans Becker was taken into the woods by two Americans. Hans went without a word, he did not look back, and they watched him go until he and the Americans were invisible in the pines.

Shots, from that way; the sound made them jump. Again shots cracked, muffled by the noises of the personnel carriers and marching army of men. The men who walked Becker into the trees came back, looking somber and serious.

Valter had never received the blood type tattoo. Yet his uniform,

his soldbuch, betrayed him as SS, and they took him and Otto Meyer, who was Wehrmacht, to a small wire holding pen for German prisoners. He thought they lived because they had not looted American bodies.

There were few SS there among the prisoners. Many had been shot on sight as soon as the tattoo was found. But not so many of them surrendered to capture. They knew.

#

"I was treated for my infected wound and eventually sent to England, where there was no room for more prisoners, then on a ship to America. To Georgia, to work in the fields. Otto Meyer as well," Valter told his old neighbor, Gunter Fritch, in 1950 when Valter got home to Stuttgart.

Hot, hard stoop labor, cultivating peanut fields, okra, cotton, working alongside the men who sharecropped the fields for more prominent landowners. German prisoners were treated well, fed well, paid a dime an hour.

Word of the Dresden fire bombings came in late February of 1945.

Otto quit eating, beside himself with worry.

Otto's jokes stopped; his humor went into hiding like a darker vapor in a lost cloud of memories. He could not smile, and he did not want to meet anyone's eye.

"I have prayed for my family every day for four years," he shared with Valter. "Now, I pray even more. I have to know that they are alright."

"I have already lost everyone I loved, Otto," Valter said. "I'll say prayers for your family now, too." Otto looked up at Valter through worn and worried eyes. "Thank you, friend. You understand. I am sorry for what you have lost."

In 1946, on the SS Samaria, an old India mail liner converted to a troop carrier in 1943, they were transported to France. They were to be repatriated to Germany after three years in French slavery, rebuilding what they had torn down, digging minefields, setting back the clock of war.

#

"Be cautious with these," a swarthy French Sargent said, handing them thin steel rods and shovels. It was all the safety instruction available, and the guards stayed well away from the work.

Each morning they went to fallow fields. The land was to be put back into production.

Each minute of each day, they probed with the meter-long rods. Gingerly, they dug out mines and rocks alike.

"Gently, Valter," Otto snapped, the duty wearing on him, the lack of news of home weighing heavier each passing day.

"Nothing," Valter said, "each time, I hope it will be nothing." They worked the length of their probes apart, in line with twenty other men, each a meter apart.

"Don't work on your knees or squat. Better that each man stays on his belly," Valter said to the group on the first day.

"I don't want one to blow up right in my face," a blond youth from Berlin quailed.

"Listen! I was a Pioneer! I know mines," Valter responded to the man as if to slap him with the words. "Better in your face and dead before you know it than killed anyway or maimed when your neighbor blows up, and you are too high to be under the blast!"

So on their bellies, in communion with the earth.

They had very rainy days and Sunday afternoons to themselves. Some thought the muddy ground made the work easier. Some thought it more dangerous, as the hard, dry earth seemed less treacherous; it offered their probes consistent resistance.

"Each time I push the rod into the ground," said Otto, shaking out his rotting socks in the evening, "I don't know if I will have one to dig out, have one go off, or nothing."

Valter grunted.

"Can I say something to you, Valter?" Otto asked.

"Of course, you can."

"I feel terrible. My family needs me. Or they are killed in the bombing. Many times, I think that if I just pushed the rod in hard and got it over with, that would be the best."

Valter didn't have an answer for him and slowly shook his head. He felt much the same.

Men moved slowly, carefully, prodding and probing for devices the dead Wehrmacht had planted years before. Many were blown to hell, killed, maimed, any future they had ever dreamed of blown away in a gust of high explosive-driven steel balls.

"Possibly, Otto finally did push the rod down too hard," Valter told Fritch. Fritch's son was not back yet. "It was worse than war."

Jerry Mollenhauer

Blackout

My roommate took off right before I lost my job at the pizza place. The only thing he left behind was a note that read, "Moved back home." If only the unpaid rent were attached to it.

I sit at the wobbly kitchen table, gazing at the floating dust particles that you can only see when the sunlight shines in at the perfect angle. Sometimes, you have to convince yourself that they aren't old skin.

The air conditioner moans, as if it's irritated that it has to work so hard. I haven't left the apartment in four days, for fear that the hellish temperature might melt away my spirit even more. Is a heat wave a heat wave if it doesn't end? I gulp down the remainder of my orange juice. The pulp sticks to the side of the glass. It always bothers me when that happens.

As I stand up to go put my head into the freezer, the air conditioner suddenly goes on a strike of silence and the refrigerator releases a final gasp. I walk across the room and flip the light switch. Nothing.

There's a knock at the door. I peer through the peephole. It's the lady with the beehive hair from across the hall. I crack the door open."Is your power out?" she asks.

"Yes," I answer.

"It must be the whole building," she says.

"Maybe the whole city," I say.

"The food in your fridge will go bad after four hours," she says.

I'd take that information to heart if I had any food in the refrigerator."Thanks," I say as I close the door.

When the power goes out, it's amazing how all of your habits remind you that you're nothing without it. The TV isn't going to turn on and your phone isn't going to charge.

There's another knock at the door. It's the guy from downstairs who exclusively wears jorts. "Do you want a new roommate?" he asks.

"What?"

He nods his head to the left. I glance down the hallway and see a scraggly, black cat with a patch of white fur on its chest.

"It was out lying in the sun," the guy says. "Looked a bit overheated, so I let it inside."

Before I can say anything, the cat walks through the doorway and rubs against my leg.

"Catch you later," the guy says.

I fill up a bowl with some cold water and set it on the floor. The cat dashes over and drinks furiously.

At least water is free, I think to myself. Kind of.

I head into my dingy bedroom and grab the coin jar off of my dresser. "This should be enough to get you some food," I say.

I step out the apartment door and look back at the cat.

"I think I'll call you Blackout."

Zach Murphy

The Plutonian Shore

In those days all colors seemed to be variants of grayscale, as if blue were just gray with a few dark drops in it, purple was the same with a few more, and red was just purple sliced open. None of us knew of color theory, or had seen a color wheel, or had any chromatic sensibility beyond raw perception, wordless as it is. Our boy X, as we called him, walked along the crumbling shoulder of a highway, snow crackling under his thick black army boots and telephone poles buzzing their frozen mystic in the sub-zero of early morning. Each painful breath stung his larynx like a pick-axe against a brooding block of ice. Each exhaled cloud threatened permanence, to revolt against thermodynamics, to susurrate against the drab backdrop of the highway and to expand, metastasize into an annihilating fog through which no form of light could poke. He looked but he did not see: a gleaming mound of evergreens piled on the side of a hill ahead; yellow stripes painted with a methodical exactitude hardly reflective of the panicked Byzantium he knew of as his country and its concomitant infrastructure system; an orange-striped Tony the Tiger casually decomposing in a mess of rags and film cannisters on the other side of the guardrail. Each thing seemed to bypass his senses and enter memory directly.

Around the bend two fellows stood at the guardrail chatting, and X overtook them quickly. They introduced themselves as Francis and Brendan. At first they spoke of the weather, which made sense, but the conversation soon took a turn when Brendan asked, "Who controls the weather?"

The obvious answer notwithstanding, which Francis brushed aside with one swipe before our boy had a chance to let it percolate into verbiage, let alone to vocalize it, they were stunned, silent.

A wisp of cloud regurgitated into a gloaming out of which menacing vibrations spread until its dissolution, moments later. "I think you're mistaking material with intent," Francis said, thoughtfully looking off at the hillside. "An electrical wire is an electrical wire, regardless of who sent the current through."

"But you see, Frank, that the line between animate and inanimate is so arbitrary that what we think of as miraculous is actually mundane and what we regard as lifeless is actually seething with pulsations and emanations."

Frank, transmigrated in name, was no longer the type to be stunned in awful silence. "A seething eye is no more intensional than an electron spinning between two vortices indefinitely."

That seemed to decide it; our boy X punched back his shoulders and gave a quick smile that might have been seen as smug and gloating had Brando, remonickered himself, chanced to regard him, adversarially or otherwise. But Brando was intent on Frank, as Frank was intent on Brando, and our boy let the crunchy air molt into furrier, heavier atmosphere with the dissemination of sunlight. So many things he was feeling, and not a single word forthcame to speak to either of them.

"I take it you don't believe in death, then?"

X, our boy, our colorless twat, our hueless turd, did not follow.

But Frank did, and not only that but he took the opportunity to transubstantiate yet again and was followed in kind by his companion—and hereby Frank was now Franz, and Brando was Bruno. "I guess I don't."

"I guess that settles it."

"Settles what?"

"Our boy, X, here, is acting crazy to get attention."

"What?" Franz said, turning his beady black eye directly at our boy to get a good look at him. "Stop pretending to be crazy, you pretentious loser!"

Then Franz and Bruno hopped from the guardrail nearly insync, their shiny black wings and long ebony beaks glinting in the sun before they drifted off, soon becoming nothing more than splotches of ink against the crumpled sky.

Caleb Murray

Cora

"Mrs. McCrae's mighty queer," Momma says. Her house is right 'cross the street. It has a big window that sticks out. Momma says it's a "bay" window. I don't know what that means; I tell her "isn't a bay with water?"

She laughs and tells me "Yup, but it's called a bay window just the same." She don't tell me why; I call it a stick-out window.

The stick-out window's got shutters on the sides, but they're all chipped and when I stop my bike in front of Mrs. McCrae's house, and look real hard, I can see webs. Sometimes, a big black spider comes out and eats a moth that got stuck. I told Momma the first time I seen one of Mrs. McCrae's spiders eat a moth and she said to quit being macabre. I guess that means gross, 'cause she scrunched up her face like she does when Nana cooks meatloaf.

I don't just watch the spiders, though. What I really like is seeing Cora. She's in the stick-out window all the time. I guess she likes to look out 'cause Mrs. McCrae don't let her go outside. I wave to Cora almost every day, and sometimes I get to play with her. I like playing with Cora. Mrs. McCrae says she likes me to play with Cora too 'cause she's lonely and sick. That's why she can't go outside. It's ok though, 'cause Momma says I can play with Cora inside Mrs. McCrae's house if I'm not a bother.

Momma says, "old ladies need sweet little girls to help them feel better." I think Mrs. McCrae likes talking to me and Momma. She doesn't yell at us or shoo us away like she does the others. Maybe 'cause we're nice to her. The other kids and grown-ups say Mrs. McCrae's crazy. One time I heard Mrs. Lewins from down the street tell Momma not to talk to Mrs. McCrae because of what she did. But I don't know what Mrs. McCrae did. Momma says it's none of my business and I shouldn't be fiddlin' in adult conversation. I don't care anyway; I like Mrs. McCrae and I like playing with Cora. We're almost the same age, but Cora is older some, and she has yellow hair instead of brown. We both got blue eyes though; Mrs. McCrae says we got twin eyes. I like it when she says that 'cause I always wanted a sister, but Momma says I can't have one 'cause Daddy is gone. Cora and I pretend we're sisters, though, and it's ok. Cora's daddy is gone too. One time, I asked Cora if her daddy died because his heart couldn't work no more, like my daddy.

She says "no, Daddy died because he was a bad man." She don't tell me why he was bad, though.

It's raining outside today; hard. It clinks on my bedroom window. I wonder if Mrs. McCrae's spiders are ok. I hate when it rains. I want to go outside; I want to see Cora in the stick-out window.

"Elizabeth Jane!" Momma hollers at me and I got to go to the kitchen.

"Momma?" She's on the yellow telephone.

"Elizabeth Jane, Mrs. McCrae would like you to come have a tea party with Cora. Would you like to go?" She asks me, grinnin'.

"Please." I'm so excited, I answer real simple.

"I'll send her over shortly, Mrs. McCrae; thank you kindly for the invitation," Momma says into the phone and shoos me off to get my raincoat and gushies; they're still a little soggy from yesterday.

Momma says I have to keep my hood up the whole way there so I don't catch nothin', and make sure I take my gushies off inside 'cause if I get mud all over Mrs. McCrae's house I'll be in awful trouble. Momma smiles and hands me her giant umbrella; she says I can borrow it if I promise not to open it 'til I'm out of the house and to not forget it at Mrs. McCrae's. I promise.

I splash in every puddle when I walk to Mrs. McCrae's, but I'm real careful not to get more water inside my gushies 'cause Momma says that will make me sick. I knock on Mrs. McCrae's front door and when she answers I make sure I'm real polite like I'm supposed to.

"Hello Mrs. McCrae. I came for the tea party; thank you for inviting me." Mrs. McCrae always smiles at how I talk. And she calls me Little Miss.

"Please come in Little Miss," I walk into the house just a little and make sure I take off my gushies before I step on the carpet. Mrs. McCrae helps me take off my coat and she hangs it with Momma's umbrella in the closet by the door. Cora is sitting on the old purple-y couch. Everything is dusty in Mrs. McCrae's house, but I don't mind. My house gets dusty too; Momma says she can't always keep up on the dust 'cause she's always tending to me. She don't get mad about it, though.

I say "hi" to Cora and she smiles back. Mrs. McCrae tells us that we need to dress like ladies so we can have tea. Me and Cora go to her room; she has lots of pretty dresses, and she even lets me pick first, so I get the prettiest. I pick the blue one with all the sparkles. Cora even lets me borrow her shoes with glitter and big heels. I guess I look kind of like a princess; Cora does too but in a pink dress.

Mrs. McCrae calls that tea is ready and a lady is never late to tea. We get to the table real quick. Mrs. McCrae got out all her fancy dishes; there's a real teapot and cups on little plates and tiny sandwiches and everything! I sit next to Cora on a big wood chair, and we pretend we're fancy. Cora says when we drink the tea, I have to stick my pinky out 'cause that's really, really fancy. So I do. Mrs. McCrae laughs. We laugh and drink the tea and eat the little sandwiches. Cora and I get full and want to play another game. Mrs. McCrae tells us we can go, and she'll clean up the tea party. Cora and I go to her room; we play dolls. I try to put one of the dolls in a little pram when Mrs. McCrae comes in and says I have to go home.

"Am I a bother?" I ask her (Momma always says I can stay unless I'm a bother).

"No Little Miss. Your Momma just called and said that she needs you home lickety split." Mrs. McCrae smiles, but also looks sad.

"Oh." I don't want to, but I tell Cora bye. Mrs. McCrae hands me Momma's umbrella and I remember not to open it in the house.

"Thank you for tea," I tell her. Mrs. McCrae smiles again, nods, and tells me I better get home before my Momma gets upset.

I don't splash in the puddles this time 'cause I'm mad. Why do I have to come home already? I walk across Mrs. McCrae's yard and see Mrs. Lewins marching towards my house, too. She says "Hi Elizabeth, darling." And I say "Hello ma'am" back 'cause Momma says I always have to be polite to grown-ups, even though I don't like Mrs. Lewins. She follows me into the house and goes to the kitchen to see Momma; I take off my raincoat and gushies and put them on the hooks with Momma's umbrella.

"Elizabeth Jane, come here please," Momma says. I walk to the kitchen and see her and Mrs. Lewins sittin' at the table. "I need you to go up to your room, child, and behave. I'm going to have a visit with Mrs. Lewins."

"Why do I have to go to my room?" I ask.

"Mrs. Lewins and I are going to have adult conversation that is not for children to hear." I go to my room and close the door. I know I'm not supposed to fiddle in adult conversation, but I can't help it; I open the vent in my room and push my ear hard against it. There's a grate in the kitchen, right under Momma and Mrs. Lewins. I can hear just fine.

"Lord, Marilla, I'm so glad you sent for Elizabeth right away," Mrs. Lewins says.

"How could you expect me not to? For heaven's sake Ruth, you phone and ask what I'm doing this evening; I inform you that I'm free, as Elizabeth Jane is with Mrs. McCrae and you demand that I call her back at once. I didn't know what to think. I phoned Mrs. McCrae as soon as we hung up." Momma sounds upset.

"Well, I've tried to have this conversation with you before, Marilla. You continue to divert me with assurances that Mrs. McCrae is just a lonely, eccentric old lady and you have no desire to immerse yourself in an old woman's business. My God, Marilla, had I known you allowed the child in her home, I would have pressed harder! Maybe this time I have startled you enough to hear me out."

I don't like Mrs. Lewins talking mean about Mrs. McCrae. Momma should tell her to mind her business, but Momma don't!

"I just don't see the harm in letting Elizabeth entertain an old lady and her... uh, grandchild. What could be the harm in letting Elizabeth play in that little old woman's house?"

"Cora was her daughter," Mrs. Lewins says, real flat.

"Don't be ridiculous, Ruth! A woman of Mrs. McCrae's age couldn't have a child that young. Besides..." Momma stops all quick. Then starts talking again, "Wait. What do you mean 'was' her daughter?"

"Do I finally have your attention?" Mrs. Lewins asks, but Momma don't answer so Mrs. Lewins keeps talking, "Margaret Winston

was married to Joseph McCrae when she was only 17; Joseph was nearly twice that - yes McCrae as in McCrae Textiles. Real sour sort of man; bad reputation; foul temper. Margaret didn't care; she was mad about Joseph. Had been ever since she met him at social event or other, and he asked her to dance. More important to Joseph than reciprocating Margaret's affections, though, was to latch himself to a 'nice' young lady who would bear him a son. It was all about inheritance; Joseph wouldn't get one cent out of McCrae Textiles until he 'shaped up' on his father's rubric. Just before Margaret turned 19, she gave birth to a daughter, Cora. The delivery was quite tragic and prevented Margaret from bearing any more children. This, of course, threw off Joseph's plans; however, it didn't stop him from trying to find other means of fulfilling his... needs. Joseph forced Margaret into backdoor treatments administered by unscrupulous charlatans. 'Healers' they had the audacity to call themselves. Of course, nothing was successful, and Joseph took to punishing Margaret with his fists for her 'shortcomings'."

"Jesus," Momma whispers. Momma never curses.

"This went on for some time. Margaret was 26 when she finally... let go," Mrs. Lewins says back.

"Let go?" Momma asks.

"Yes. Margaret plunged a kitchen knife into the back of Joseph's neck, and when he was dead, she dragged him into the pantry, and cleaned the mess."

I almost scream and slap my hands to my mouth so Momma won't hear.

"Dear God," Momma says. "But what about Cora? She had to have been what, seven? Wouldn't she have seen something?!"

"Oh no, Cora was with me and my mother at the time. Mrs. Mc-

Crae had asked my mother to watch Cora earlier that day."

"I had no idea you were connected with the McCraes!"

"Well, we weren't, exactly. Other than a neighborly basis, you know. I had played with Cora a time or two and Mrs. McCrae apparently saw my mother as a trustworthy adult to keep an eye on her daughter," Mrs. Lewins answers.

"So, do you think she planned it? Murdering her husband, I mean?"

"I was too young to understand what all was happening at the time, but now that I can speculate, yes. I mean why not? Joseph beat her senseless and Lord knows how many times she likely caught him with a whore or two," I gawk at the vent. Momma never uses that word - it's a bad, terrible word and I'd be in awful trouble if she ever heard that word come outta my mouth.

"Was she sent to jail, or an institution? What happened to Cora?"

"Calm yourself, Marilla. My mother left me home with my father, just long enough to take Cora home and check on things; Mrs. McCrae hadn't called to relieve my mother at nearly 10 o'clock that night, which was most irregular. When she got there, she found Mrs. McCrae sitting at the kitchen table. My mother told Cora to go to her room and get ready for bed while she spoke with Mrs. McCrae. Mind you, I found all this out from my mother and whispers in town much later, when I was old enough to understand, so I don't have all the details on the conversation she had with Mrs. McCrae. But, it's my understanding, that they discussed Joseph's violence and indiscretions. I imagine some time after that, Margaret showed my mother what was whisked away in the pantry. I don't doubt that my mother was shocked nearly out of her wits, but rationalized that she certainly couldn't blame Margaret for putting an end to the abuse. My mother convinced Mrs. McCrae to report herself to the police, and she promised to

back up the accusations."

"And?" Momma blurts.

"And Mrs. McCrae phoned the police. Apparently, they arrived and spoke with the two women. As I told you, Joseph had a reputation in the town for being an ill-tempered brute. By the time these events were taking place, I had been put to bed by my father and told not to worry about my mother or Cora."

"So, she wasn't reprimanded? How is she living across the street? If your mother supported her at the time, and you know of the abuse, why do you believe she should have been punished for her actions?"

"Oh, my dear, it's not for killing Joseph that I think she deserves punishment. It's for what came after."

"After?!" Momma hollers.

Mrs. Lewins got quiet, so I push my ear on the grate harder.

"Well, after Mrs. McCrae and my mother called the police, naturally Cora was taken and placed with an aunt for a time until everything was sorted out."

"Of course..." Momma says.

"Once it was determined that Mrs. McCrae had just cause for her actions, she was allowed to return home and Cora was sent back as well, after a time."

"Yes, yes..." Momma's getting itchy.

"The love of her life was gone. As much of a bastard as he was, Margaret loved Joseph every minute from the time she met him. I can only imagine being so confused as to love such a person as Joseph McCrae, to be raising a young daughter on one's own (no implications on you, my dear), and to have the death of a husband on her conscience all contributed to what she did. Though that certainly does not excuse her and nor do I."

"For God's sake Ruth, excuse her for what?" Momma's yellin' now.

"Shortly after she and Cora were reunited, Margaret drowned Cora in their bathtub and attempted to hang herself from the fixture in the bathroom!"

"Jesus in heaven, you must be joking," Momma gasps. I almost run out of the room, but I hear Mrs. Lewins keep talking.

"I assure you, I am not."

"Then how is she living across the street?!"

"The hanging didn't take, dear. She became unconscious for a short time, then managed to get herself down, I reckon. I heard she just left Cora in the bathtub until a police officer came by after Cora's teacher reported that she hadn't been to school in nearly two weeks. The officer talked to Margaret and thought she seemed very odd, and given her recent history, took it upon himself to forcefully search the house. That's when they found Cora. They carted Margaret right off and she ended up spending some 30 years in a mental hospital going through shock therapy and all manner of other psychiatric treatment, approved or not. None of which was enough of a punishment, if you ask me."

"And... they let her out?" Momma asks slowly.

"Oh yes. After the 30 some years of treatment, her doctors claimed she was 'no longer a danger to society'."

"Then who the hell is the little girl who's with her now?" Momma

curses again.

"There is no little girl living with Margaret McCrae, Marilla..."

"Yes, there is! I've seen her. In the window. Elizabeth plays with her. I..." Momma hollers again.

"Marilla, it's not a child, not a living child; it's nothing more than a doll that crazy woman totes around in her dead daughter's place!" Mrs. Lewins hollers now, too.

I burst out of my room and run straight to the kitchen. "You're a liar!" I scream at Mrs. Lewins. "Cora is real. I play with her; and Mrs. McCrae never hurt nobody! You're a liar, a liar, a LIAR!"

Momma yells loud at me to hush and go back to my room. I yell louder, "NO! You hush, both of you!" Then I run, fast. Run out the door. I run to Mrs. McCrae's, bang on the door but no one comes. I peep in the stick-out window; Cora's sittin' on the purple-y couch lookin' straight at me, right through the stick-out window. I bang the glass and holler loud as God, but she don't move. Cora sits. And smiles.

Meghan Roth

Samantha Whose Last Name I Never Learned

Our apartment building was a little gray thing in a quiet part of town. It was old, but well maintained; discrete, but comfortable; six units in total; and for the most part, leased to unassuming tenants. We crossed paths washing laundry in the basement, bringing up groceries, throwing out trash, smoking cigarettes on the fire escape – unexceptional. The exciting things that happened in the neighborhood happened somewhere else. We didn't have the problems that other buildings had. I don't think we had roaches, and the appliances worked. I had lived in worse places. I thought we had it good.

Our building was three stories high: units one and two on the first floor, three and four on the second, and five and six on the third. I lived in unit six. Mark Donoghue lived in unit one. He serviced HVAC systems and liked conspiracy theories. The Aloyas lived in unit two. They were a young family of three. Jackie Blohm lived in unit three. She was the kindest of all, and she smoked like a chimney. Josh and Terrence lived in unit four. They were a couple in love. Samantha, Samantha whose last name I never learned, lived next door to me. Everyone knew about Samantha.

Samantha raged. Family came to visit, and she raged. She left for work, and she raged. She came home late, drunk from the bar, and she raged. She smoked cigarettes with Jackie, and she raged. Our walls weren't thin, but I heard her from my apartment shouting on the phone or to her visitors or to herself or to God in heaven. I never figured it out, what made her that angry so often. She never told me. I kept to myself when she came around.

I only ran into her once – an accident on the second story landing. She had a small child on her hip. "Camille," she said. That startled me. I didn't realize she knew my name. "This is my nephew, Chris. Say hello, Chris." Chris hid his face in Samantha's chest but waved his little hand. "See how smart my nephew is," she said. She subjected him to some small tests of intelligence. He counted to ten. He knew his letters. He spelled short words. "We're going to the bookstore," she said with pride. "To buy more books to learn new things. Say goodbye, clever boy." Chris hid his face in Samantha's chest again and waved goodbye. I watched them leave. That night I heard Samantha shouting at Jackie on the fire escape. She cursed her sister, Chris' mother, a woman I never met, in loud and vulgar terms.

Samantha raged like that, around but never at me, until she disappeared. Really disappeared. People come and go in buildings like ours all the time. Samantha didn't leave. No, she disappeared without a trace. She disappeared with all her furniture and personal possessions, and stranger still, traced around what she took in chalk. Everyone in the building got a chance to look.

She or someone, we didn't really know who, traced the couch and the entertainment center in the living room. They traced four small circles on the floor where the legs of her coffee table rested. They traced a small television in the entertainment center too. They traced shelves and picture frames on the walls from the living room, through the hallway, and into the bedroom where they traced the bed and the dresser. The only things that remained, the landlord furnished. The oven and refrigerator remained in the kitchen, though someone took and traced Samantha's microwave. The claw-footed bathtub remained in the bathroom, though someone took and traced Samantha's towels on the rack. Whoever emptied the apartment even traced around Samantha's tooth brush on the porcelain sink. Everything was in place - or out of place, depending on the perspective - except for one thing: someone traced around Samantha in the bathtub, curled up with a river of tears flowing from her.

The landlord let us in and out of unit five. He didn't know what to do with it. He left the door unlocked. None of us knew what to do either, but we visited. We visited more than once. I listened to the neighbors' steps from the couch in my living room. I heard them walking up the stairs to the second-floor landing where they stopped and waited for a moment, for two moments, for three moments, or longer. I don't know what they did, thinking, looking, listening. Whatever it was, everyone did it. In a much slower, more deliberate gait, the neighbors finished the pilgrimage to the apartment. Mark Donoghue was the quickest and least reverent. I confused the Aloyas for Josh and Terrence unless they brought their toddler. Jackie Blohm took the longest. She knew Samantha best. She had the most to think about.

I visited too. I sat on the living room floor where the couch used to be. Samantha got better light than I did. A tree blocked the sun on my side of the building. She had hardwood floors, and I had carpet. Other than that, we lived in identical spaces. In the void Samantha left behind, I closed my eyes and felt like floating. I liked the sensation. I didn't like the walls where the picture frames used to be. The outlines bothered me. They reminded me that I didn't keep pictures in my apartment. Not of my friends. Not of my family. Not of myself. Who had Samantha loved? I wondered. And did she love better than me? I got lonely. I went to her bathroom, to the tub, and I curled up like Samantha. I cried like she cried. That's all I did.

Things went on like that for a week. Then, the landlord wiped the apartment clean, and leased it to someone else, Casey van Beek, a musician and university student. Samantha wasn't his problem. I didn't mind that the neighbors talked. If they said anything bad about Samantha, I already knew it. It's the other stuff I thought was interesting.

Mark Donoghue thought she went to live on a commune. Before she vanished, they had a conversation at the grocery store about hormones in food or an adjacent topic. He didn't say as much, but I got the impression that Samantha felt insecure about her body, not so much about the way it looked but the way it was vulnerable, maybe to the chemical ingredients in her food or something else she couldn't say. She felt unsafe. That was enough for me. I stopped listening when he implicated the president and

most of Congress.

The Aloyas remembered Samantha fondly. She doted on their daughter, whom they introduced to me as Sofia. She babysat, organized play dates with her nephew, and nurtured Sofia's natural curiosity, her infant intellect. They described her as "eccentric." I appreciated the discretion. They loved her despite her fury. Josh and Terrence felt the same. It surprised me that they had weekly dinners together, the three of them. She was a loving presence and a protective force for them as she had been for the Aloyas. They didn't speculate about what happened to her. It frightened them too much.

Long after Casey van Beek moved in to unit five, I caught Jackie on the fire escape. I didn't smoke. Nothing was on fire. She hadn't said much to the neighbors since Samantha left, and I wanted to talk. She said hello in her usual way, quietly with a wave and a smile. She was still the kindest of all. I stood beside her as the sun set on the back alley and the neighborhood buildings and the trees in between them. The right thing to do would have been to ask how she felt, but I cared more about what she knew. I blushed at my own indecency. Instead of asking, I stood there, mute, cycling through the sentences I thought worked best in my head

"Sammie liked you," she said, breaking the silence. Jackie called her Sammie. "She had a funny way of showing it." She tapped her cigarette to punctuate the sentence. A bit of ash fell. "She loved more than she hated. That's saying something, right?" She took another drag. "Sammie hated everything." I thought about the lost picture frames. I thought about dust. Without anyone around, unit five smelled like dust.

"She didn't like how the family raised their kids," she said abruptly.

"Whose family?" I asked.

"Her family."

Jackie didn't say anything else. She looked at me right in the eyes for a long, long time. Her cigarette burned between her fingers down to the filter. She looked at me, until I got it. Samantha was always going to disappear. The reasons why never mattered.

That made me think. I still think about Samantha often. She was tall and trim. She had long, dark hair with streaks of gray. She had lanky arms and legs and fingers that matched. Her brown eyes flashed. I thought them wicked, but maybe she was just clever. They sat on a square face with a large nose and thin lips. That woman, the woman in my mind, climbs the stairs in our gray apartment building up and down forever.

I can explain the way she looked and what she did and how she was, but I can't picture her like I used to. I have the words that I use to describe her, but it's just the words anymore. I have as much left of her as what she left behind. Lines, lines, lines. They tell the story but fail to close the distance. How could she have known? I didn't know any better then. I'm not sure I know better now. I try to love better. I try to talk more. I try to protect what I love. I try to be kind. I try to do what I can before I fade into the lines, the lines that fade into the distance, the distance into which we disappear. That's the way it goes. Samantha knew, and she beat us to it.

Taylor Thornburg

Consequence

They were on the run, fighting a hard rain. The older of the two, Jody Rogers, was out ahead of his brother by a few paces as they made their way along the bottom of a deep gully that cut between two farm fields. A stab of lightning was followed almost immediately by a deafening crack of thunder that shook the tall oaks and the ground beneath the men. In the pitch blackness it was impossible to move more than a few feet before encountering another obstacle -- downed tree limbs or a thicket of brambles. A gust of wind washed the two in a sheet of water.

"Jody!" Cal Rogers shouted. "Jody, hold up, man!" Jody turned and picked his way back to where his brother was crouched down against the slope of the gully.

"What's wrong? You hurt?" Jody demanded.

"No. I gotta catch my breath."

"We need to keep moving, Cal." Another low rumble of thunder rolled over the men.

"That's all we been doin' is movin', Jody. I'm fuckin' beat, man" Jody looked hard at his brother as the pulsating lightning cast him in cold relief. His head, hair burr-cropped, glistened with rainwater than ran in streaks down his thin, pointed face, dripping from the strands of a dirty-blond goatee. His eyes, close-set, small and deep-brown, gave him the appearance of a ferret.

"Look, they're after us. We need to move."

"No, man," Cal snapped. "What I need is a break."

"For Christ's sake, Cal," Jody shot back. "Let's get the hell out of here. Don't forget, we wouldn't be running like this if it weren't for you." This was a side of his brother Jody knew too well -- the stubbornness, the willful refusal to pay attention to any other voice than the one inside his head that insisted he always do the wrong thing.

"You have any idea where we are? Where the hell we're going?" Cal demanded.

"These woods cut through Arne Jepson's land, the old man? If I remember right, three-quarters of a mile on or so, there's an abandoned barn. We can get out of this shit, get some rest. C'mon," Jody resumed the lead, with Cal muttering behind. Gradually, as they moved, the worst of the storm slid on to the east, leaving behind fitful showers whipped by periodic gusts of what remained of the wind. It took the better part of an hour before the brothers reached the end of the gully, clambered wearily up its slope and onto the edge of a cornfield. There was a break in the remnants of the storm clouds, allowing light from the full moon through.

"There it is, over there," Jody said, pointing toward a hulking shape fifty, sixty yards distant. The only way to reach it was through the corn, which was waist-high in mid-July. Its wet leaves murmured in the wind and with the passage of the men.

The barn itself was two-stories high. The upper floor would have been given over to the storage of hay, while the space below was reserved for housing farm implements. Over the decades, weather and neglect had left the structure sagging badly, with a rusting plow and tired seed corn planter its only occupants. There was plenty enough room for the brothers, who slumped wearily against the musty timbers of one wall.

"About time. I feel like shit, man," Cal said. Jody looked at his brother, rainwater glistening in the moonlight, his clothes soaked through and clinging to his bony frame.

"We should be okay here for a while," Jody responded, pushing

his fingers back through his thick hair, trying to squeeze out some of the water.

"Well, I ain't movin'," Cal declared. He reached behind his back and withdrew a pistol from the waistband of his jeans, laying it on the ground next to him. He pulled up the cuff on his left leg and removed a pack of cigarettes from inside the elastic of his sock, a trick he had learned during a stretch in the Navy two years before. "Nice and dry," he announced, tapping one of the smokes free and lighting up with a book of matches kept in the cellophane of the cigarette pack. He drew a deep lungful, closed his eyes and exhaled, letting his head fall back against the wall.

Jody looked at the gun, cold-black in the moonlight, and shook his head. Outside, the wind had fallen away to sighs rustling through the corn.

"Why did you do it, Cal?" Jody's voice was low, flat.

"Why did I do what?"

"You know what I'm talking about." Now Cal opened his eyes and shot an annoyed look sideways at his brother.

"Kill the dude?"

"Yeah. Why?" Cal took another drag off his cigarette.

"I didn't like the way he was lookin' at me."

"You didn't like the way he was looking at you? That's the reason you did it?"

"That's right. I could see it in the old fucker's eyes, lookin' at me like I was beneath him, like I was a piece of shit, you know? What gave him the right? I had enough of that all my life. I wasn't going to take it from him." "Cal..." Jody's voice trailed off. "Didn't we say we were going in, grab the Oxy and split, nice and clean?"

"Okay, yeah. So what's your point, big brother?"

"The point is you couldn't leave it at that, could you? You had to fuck with the ATM. You know how much time you wasted?"

"C'mon, man, there could have been a couple of grand inside that machine."

"Yeah? A couple of grand?" Jody said sharply. "And exactly how much did you get?"

"I just needed a little more time, that's all."

"Bullshit. You weren't going to get into that machine, and you goddamn well know it."

"Fuck off, Jody."

"And on the way out, you have to kill the pharmacist, just for good measure."

"I told you, man -- "

"I know what you told me, Cal," Jody cut him off, "and a that's why we're in the shit we're in, because once again you don't give a good goddamn about anything else but what you want to do."

"Think whatever the hell you want," Cal shot back, finishing his cigarette and flicking the butt out into the night. "I'm going to grab some zzz's."

Jody found himself sinking into a deep weariness as he stared at his brother. All twenty-seven years of my life it's been the same, he thought, trying to protect him from himself. Time and again it had proven to be a lost cause. Not that he had much help, surely not from their parents, who acted as though once they brought two sons into the world their jobs were done. The old man was distant and abusive. He paid attention to two things -- beer and watching baseball on TV. His sons? An annoyance at best. And mother? Well, she was no baseball fan, but she did like to drink and so made herself a fixture at the local bars.

So, the two Rogers boys were left to their own devices. Jody had had his share of scrapes but nothing like the trouble Cal habitually got into himself -- the fights, vandalism, petty shoplifting, repeatedly getting expelled from school until he finally just dropped out. At the age of nineteen, he got fired from his job as a pizza delivery driver for stealing. That landed him in front of a judge who gave him a choice: eighteen months in jail or enlist in the Navy. So, it was off to sea for two years. Maybe it was the ocean air or being under the thumb of the ship's officers, but aside from a couple of stretches in the brig for bar-brawling, he managed to do his time without serious trouble.

But back in civilian life, Cal reverted to form. He was just as stubborn as ever and trouble always found him -- he drank too much, floated from one dead-end job to another, went through a string of broken romances.

For his part, Jody had managed to cobble together decent life, at least for a few years. But then came a divorce, and a few months later he got hurt in a forklift accident at the sprawling distribution warehouse where he worked. After weeks of physical therapy, he lost the job but not the searing agony in his shoulder, and he got hooked on painkillers.

His prospects were not good. There were few jobs around since the air compressor factory packed up and moved to Mexico. What little savings he had accumulated evaporated quickly. It was at that point that he caught a minor break. Through a friend, he landed a job as a weekend short-order cook at the truck stop out by the interstate. The work didn't aggravate his shoulder, and it brought in a few bucks, though barely enough to keep the wolf from the door. And all the while his need for the pills grew.

That's when he made the biggest mistake of his life. He listened to Cal.

"I'm tellin' you, man, that little hole-in-the-wall drugstore has got a shitload of Oxy."

"How do you know that?"

C'mon, Jody," Cal answered scornfully, "all the doctors for thirty miles around here write up their prescriptions for that place."

Jody knew Cal was right, so they hatched a scheme. They would hit the store just before closing time, clean out the pills and be on their way.

"No muss, no fuss. We're in and out in five minutes." That's the way Cal pitched it. It's not that Jody didn't have misgivings, but his need for the drug and the prospect of making some real money selling the surplus clouded his judgment enough so that he went along with his brother.

The Village Pharmacy occupied the end building in small strip mall near the edge of town. They took Jody's pickup truck, parked around the side of the brick building where shadows fell, pulled black ski masks over their heads and slipped in a couple of minutes before nine o'clock.

And from the get-go, things started heading south.

There were no customers inside, only Jim Smallwood, the sixtyyear-old pharmacist who owned the store. Right away, Cal locked the door, pulled out his gun and started yelling at Smallwood to lie down on the floor behind the counter. "For Christ's sake, what are you doing?" Jody cried in alarm. "Put that thing away."

"You worry about getting the stuff in back, and let me take care of this."

Jody felt a rush of panic at his brother's rash behavior, so he quickly went to the pharmacy stock shelves, found the Oxy and swept all of the bottles, perhaps twenty in all, into a plastic shopping bag. But when he emerged, he was angered to see Cal using a short length of pipe to beat the front of an ATM that sat near the rear of the store.

"Jesus," Jody yelled, "will you leave that alone? We got what we're after. Let's get the hell out of here." But his brother wasn't listening, continuing to hammer the machine with blow after blow.

"You miserable fucker!" he kept shouting. Jody grabbed him by the shirt and spun him around.

"Leave it! We're outta here, okay? Now!" Cal was spent, panting. He dropped the pipe.

"One more thing," he said, pulling his gun from his waistband and heading for the store counter.

"What are you doing?" Jody cried. "I said let's go!"

But something had snapped inside of Cal. Stepping behind the counter he pointed the gun at Mr. Smallwood and began berating him. "Why are you looking at me like that, old man? Don't you fucking look at me like that. Don't ever look at me like that."

And then he pulled the trigger. Jody watched in horror as the spent shell kicked free of the gun and clinked loudly when it hit the tile floor. "What have you done, Cal? What the fuck have you done?!?"

"Shut up, Jody. It's done. Let's go." His voice carried a coldness his brother had never heard before.

They quickly exited the store, climbed back into the truck and drove away. But their troubles were not over. With more than a hundred thousand miles on the odometer, Jody's rusted-out Ford had seen its best days. And that night, it chose to give up the ghost. They managed to make it only a few miles out of town when it happened, on the old blacktop that headed north off State Route 41. The engine quit, and all attempts at revival were futile.

"We're screwed now," said Cal.

"Come on, we'll walk," Jody said. Within half-a-mile, the skies opened up.

#

Jody woke, his head snapping upright. He had dozed but did not know how long he had been asleep. He rubbed his eyes and tried to guage the time by the position of the moon, which was now fully clear. He guessed it was still an hour or two before dawn. They needed to get moving again.

"Cal," he called out, nudging his brother's shoulder, "wake up. We've got to get a move on." Cal muttered and tried to roll away from Jody's prodding. But he persisted. "Come on, we need to get out of here." Grumbling, Cal sat upright and reached for his cigarettes.

"Where are we gonna go, Jody?" he said. "I suppose you got a master plan all worked out?"

"Well, I think our best shot from here on is to stick to the fields.

We're only a couple miles from Seaton Springs. I figure when we get there, we can grab a car."

"Oh, 'grab a car," said Cal with derision. "Just like that," Jody stared at his brother for a long moment. This was so typical of him, Jody thought. Fuck something up and then criticize the person trying to pick up the pieces.

"Look," Jody said, "if you've got a better idea, I'm all ears. Remember -- "

"That's right," Cal barked, "I got us into this. How many times you gonna remind me?" The tension between them hung while Cal finished his smoke.

Jody fought against his weariness and what his better judgment was telling him. Yes, their prospects were slender, but they were in this so deep, did they really have any other choice but to keep running? They sat for another long moment, then Cal cocked his head.

"What the fuck is that?" he asked. Jody had picked up the sound, too, a steady whump-whump-whump in the night sky that was drawing closer. Quickly, Jody got to his feet and peered outside the barn. To the southeast, he saw a bright light descending from the sky, playing over the corn.

"Christ," he exclaimed, "it's a chopper! The cops. They've found us." Jody quickly shifted his focus to the field fifty yards away where the rows of corn were being disturbed by the advance of men, the lights of their headlamps skittering across the field as they moved forward. Swiftly, the state police helicopter moved directly over the barn, the noise from its beating rotors deafening, its searchlight blinding.

"Come out with your hands behind your head," came a raspy voice through a megaphone from the 'copter. "It's all over. Come out now, and nobody gets hurt." In the field, the police had moved to within twenty yards of the barn. Jody knew the running was done.

"They got us, Cal. Time to end this."

"Give up? Just like that?" Cal said, grabbing his pistol and jumping to his feet.

"What are you doing?" should Jody over the din of the helicopter.

"You two in there," The megaphone again. "I said come out and do it now!"

Cal was checking his gun, popping out the clip and jamming it home again, all the while muttering, becoming more agitated.

"What are you doing, Cal?"

"You think I'm just gonna walk out there and end up spending the rest of my life in the slammer? No fuckin' way, bro'."

"Come on, Cal. Don't do something stupid." But deep within him, Jody knew it was lost. He saw it Cal's eyes. It was as it had been so many times before -- his brother was beyond reach. From overhead, the megaphone barked again:

"One minute. You've got one minute to show yourselves!"

"This is it, man," Cal said, tensing.

"Please, Cal, listen to me. For once in your life just listen!"

"Nothing to say, brother. Nothing to hear." And with that, Cal raised his gun and stepped out of the barn into the full glare of the police lights. "Cal, no!" Jody pleaded, but his voice sounded hollow and very far away.

"Drop your weapon!" ordered the megaphone. "Put it down now!" but instead of complying, Cal shouted--

"Sonsabitches!" -- and squeezed off two rounds in the direction of the men in the field. Instantly, came a single rifle shot in return.

Jody had turned away in anguish as his brother confronted the police. When the order came again to give up, he clasped his hands behind his head and walked slowly from the barn. He could not look down at his brother in the coolness of the predawn. He did not see his spindly legs, one crossed awkwardly over the other, cigarettes tucked inside his sock. And he did not see the spreading crimson stain soaking into the ancient soil.

Nick Young

POETRY

The Mist

The mist loiters outside, pacing about, a word gripped tightly in its throat.

It taps on the window, each rap a fist bending the body of a pillow.

You look out at the mass of descendant cloud, at that scourge with pockets full of moonlight

and stars stuffed into the recess of its coat – what more could it possibly want from you?

Matthew J. Andrews

Penitent

Alone, I walk through night Within dark forests, I atone Moon solely alight Alone, I walk through night My path is finite Only one step shown Alone, I walk through night Within dark forests, I atone

Mitchell M. Beck

Paraselene

Paraselene: the effect of creating a perceived halo around the moon, often resembling a double, caused by the reflection of ice and light in the night sky. Also known as a 'moon dog'

Splitting the sky, his body is held in its diamond atmosphere. I count his doubles, real or not, his limbs expanding like a radiance, clinging to the fractal light of the dance floor, the night, the space he occupies despite himself. Bad omen, that's what they used to call them, these celestial doubles, a second moon appearing where only darkness should stir. Beautiful things beckoning our downfall.

Here, now,

he extends his arms and devours adjacent stars under our gaze, eyes closed but knowing what creatures observe such a miracle in the dead of night. An illusion, or perhaps realization, this second self, this specter of light that comes when the mood is right, when the frozen clouds and moon make magic above an empty street, when they see their chance to be born again. He is here and not here, shaking apart into prophecy for so many men who are gone when the morning light comes. One last glance

at him, my ephemeral moon dog, this boy swirling high above me like crystaled storm dust, radiating with the promise of proximity to something ancient, a ghost I've left hanging like a breath.

Daniel Brennan

Driving over the speed limit on the freeway

Sun-bleached fragments on the 5: I would have stepped out of the car in a time now past, just as rushed, and jumped into the rapidity. Motion of the asphalt to blink into the afterlife. I'd forgotten all the prayers I learned as a child, and still, I moved my lips wordlessly as we accelerated past.

Jane-Rebecca Cannarella

The Painter's Dream

A gentle easel for the scene, To capture gold from nature's treasure, An ideal thought without a seam, Ethereal, perhaps, in beauty's pleasure.

The sky's sun, an orb of gold, Life sustaining rays of light, Painter's brush stroke can hold, The lasting meaning of the sight.

Cast dimensions on canvas frame, A concrete object of the form, Wild beauty for the moment tame. Am I to take this as the norm?

Twilight and the end of day, The picture remains for the view, Starlight sparkles for the play, Letting mind and soul renew.

My soul appreciated the created beauty. Is this a part of cosmic duty?

Francis Conlon

Still life of party with lesser saints, many who refused to marry or have sex with rich, pagan kings

The wait staff, all men wearing dark suits and offering meaty appetizers, slice through the somber crowd. They pay attention and will write about each guest in years to come. The saints, satiated by fumes of faith, refuse the chicken kabobs and hot wings. A few sip water.

With wreath of blazing candles on her head, Lucy carries a silver tray with two eyeballs. Rumors roll that they are hers—the ones she gouged out or maybe the king's guard plucked them with his spear. *My name means light*, she says to anyone who will listen. Lucy averts her eyes—the new ones God miraculously plunked in her head—as Paul the Hermit, wearing only leaves, enters the room. He extends his arms and a raven flies through an open window and drops a half loaf of bread onto his weathered hand.

Juthwara of Cornwall presses two soft cheeses to her breasts to ease the ache of her father's death. This bad advice from her stepmother does not help and she, like the cheese, weeps. After the party, her stepbrother will touch her, find her garments moist. Believing the lie his mother had whispered into his ear—that Juthwara is pregnant—he will slice off her head with a sword, serving her up as the patron saint of cheese.

Soon, the music ceases. Cecilia has abandoned the organ pipes and now reclines in the corner. It was a mistake to come to the party given the axe blows to her neck three days ago. Even in death, Cecilia adds to the ambience, reposing uncorrupted, draped in silk, a mysterious and delightful smell emanating from her body. Composing, even in death.

Jennifer Clark

Roughhewn Summer Afternoon

People lean into the wind, their summer clothes fluttering, expressions deeply clarified. I'm almost proud of our species.

The avenue points straight to the sea, from which all blessings flow. The skyscrapers lean like the people, but with stiff aesthetic dignity

rather than loose-limbed humor. I haven't lived in the city for years, but feel its opulence crystallize in glitter of filtered sunlight,

plate glass brimming and brick absorbing every taint of gloom. The crowd surges toward the harbor where restaurants feature the fish

that will soon be extinct. Oysters imported from the south pose on ice, their thoughts unknowable. Lobsters conspire in big square tanks.

I'm talking myself into lunch, but it's a long walk to the pier where my favorite scallops broil. Watching the wind off the water

angle people into postures comic as old silent movies, I realize that we're regressing with gestures that define like runes. Only the finest of seductions, rare events, can shape us to fit each other, leaving no residue weeping in the corners of the park.

William Doreski

I am a star

watch as I collapse

in on myself

a luminous body

filled with hot air

and nothing to say

crushed by the gravity

of all the decisions

yet to be made

and all the bodies

stuck in my orbit.

reaching event horizon in chicago, illinois

up

and away from small town to new horizons blasting into unknown cosmos to orbit celestial bodies and scorching stars gripping tight memories of those left behind yet grasping for discoveries to be observed desperate for a landing pad to call home again attracted by the gravity and a deep unknown burning fast and low on fuel

On Infinites

With a line from "A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" by Douglas Adams

In the city there are less stars looking down at me and in turn I often don't glance up as I don't have the time to gaze into nothingness and wait for it to ogle back at the sorry excuse for a star that lights up their night. Not bright nor guiding I populate their sky with infinites still-infinite possibilities for what is and could have been, each day looking duller as infinities turn finite and into the twilight twinkles a different kind of infinityone greater than the immeasurable distance between our stars and theirs that is only definite after we are not-as incomprehensible as the space between the cosmos and as enigmatic as Big Bangs and their leftovers, and therefore as esoteric as looking up is meaningless.

The Next Generation

With a line from Michael Phillip's 'Mycorrhizal Planet'

Spores soar through the squall the promise of danger and discovery—of new fungi in a final frontier fuel the cosmonauts that are primed for survival and, God willing, a novel civilization began by one and built for all to be prosperous like we couldn't imagine but must try so that we may one day be able to go boldly too.

Daphne Fauber

Stopping in the Woods with Frost

My chore: to gather wood that day, but a bed invited me to stay beneath the canopy of trees a mossy sponge of sweet decay.

Dots of sunlight filtered through where a clump of violets grew; birds bantered with choral songs, a resplendent rendezvous.

The breeze blew cobwebs from my mind, my worries I could cast behind; a chipmunk paused quite near my face I could touch him if so inclined.

These woods are rich, green and deep, but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep

Arvilla Fee

Drought

Gasping, he awakes to a rising sun, heat of the day already upon him.

Sunlight blazes leaves off trees, slashes bush, smashes grass, burns paths.

Mottled shade creeps along his window, bubbles, peels, is swallowed by the house.

Beads of sweat pool in the furrows of his brow, quick and keen with the sting of salt,

salt in the earth, salt in the breath of wind — shawl of dust sweeping the farm of beast,

memory of thunderclap as they fall — stalks of crops sucked, cracked,

raining wrinkled seed as they die — And the plowman, his back burnt,

squats in scorched earth, pauses and allows himself one searing moment:

the dream of a single, crisp, six-pointed snowflake.

Hugh Findlay

The Mountain Climber and the Old Man

Leave myself time to get down before dark. That's my mantra.

And yet I'm still above the tree line as the sun begins to sink.

I'm on the ledge that forms the bottom lip of the old man's granite face.

Such a struggle to get here, why shouldn't I go higher.

Up his nose. Into his eye sockets. Then there's that furrowed brow.

And the majestic crown of his head. The eagles, the vultures, roam far below.

They want nothing of a creature that is higher than sky.

All that lives here is the mountain itself and only because of some animating light rays.

In the dark, he's just rock, dead and unburied. If he were really alive, he would swallow me whole.

For my bravado, if nothing else. For my stupidity, if that didn't suit him.

John Grey

We are free

As my lips graze hers I realize how it feels, Her soft peaches and cream chapstick covered lips on mine.

We are free.

The same chapstick she used to slip in my hands when I needed it,

For a moment I wonder if I taste like it as well

We are free.

When she pulls back she lays her forehead on mine, Neither of us opening our eyes.

We are free.

I whisper with my eyes closed, "Forever I will love you," Opening her eyes, she lets a tear escape.

We are free

She opens her mouth to talk, I put my lips on hers to let her know I know her, how she feels.

We are free.

Standing in the middle of the same church that tortured us both.

We are finally free

She kisses me and once more,

I taste the peaches and cream on beautiful lips

Free.

A Weekend at DeDe's

DeDe is my grandma, She wanted something different. She watched me grow the only way I knew how. Fast. She was my best friend for the first years of my life, Time, I never thought I would regret, She was a companion, a confidant. That time I wanted it forever, best friends till the dark end. Now when I look at her bright eyes, they once held the very last piece of my dad, they hold dread. They only hold the memory of my attempt on my own life. The first moment she got me alone, she just asked why I didn't love her, why I didn't love them enough to stay. They hold my failings They hold my fear. In my heart and in my soul I know she wouldn't love me if she knew me. If she actually knew who I am, who I love. I don't want to be the reason my mom finally gives up on the family of liars and judges. They are my dad's family. I just want their love. Mom says to just tell them, Tell her, Like it wouldn't break her, Like they could actually surprise me. Mom tells me Dad would love me. But would he, really? Maybe if I told her, she'd feel bad. She'd remember every time she's said something bad about people with my 'lifestyle', Maybe she'd feel like I did, every time I heard it Everytime I sat through a weekend at her house. She's afraid to stay alone, it's my job,

Supposed to be my pleasure to be there as the last grandchild. But a Weekend At DeDe's is torture.

Emily D. Laird

The Reality of Being

golden shovel poem after Robinson Jeffers' "Praise Life"

Do we not know of our connectedness on this earth? ...each country one to another, those with the least as well as those with the most. But for seeing outlines on maps, every and any little thought of inhabited regions beyond our own – too often perceived inconsequential. A country

is to its people as the world is to its countries. Dismiss those times our clotted minds have had us thinking we exist within territorial vacuums void of the humanness at our ready across land and sea. Be it bliss or be it anguish,

let us remember all that makes us the beings we are, grasping at perfection on imperfect footing. Ask yourselves what lavish feasts,

palatial mansions and laden riches mean if without compassion for this child who is hungry 5000 or 500 or 5 miles away with no shelter overhead. Might we gaze into a new mirror to remind us of this thing called reality; but not just reality... also truth, courage and kindness? From where one stands defines life's goodness and the framing of time. Out may be in and in may be out, depending on the lens of the beholder. An open mind has few to no limitations, capable of adapting to the transient nature of life. Every thing has a reason, but assuredly, one does not always know exactly

what the reason is. People have always prospered, but conterminously throughout history they have suffered... with devastation threatening human life.

We can and should joyously praise the gifts life brings, yet we must also acknowledge the hardships it presents. Each individual deserves a praiseworthy existence, but be attuned that the utterance of praise for some can instead be the utterance of pleas for basic sustenance in life.

If blinders are such that

one cannot see both bliss and anguish, or forgets the

reality of being, then the sting of unexpected pain is

likely to be of great proportion, such as a giant boulder versus a tiny pebble.

The saving grace is that life has a way of keeping us rattled barely enough in

а

reassuring way, to prevent our morality from drying out like a hardened, hollow gourd.

Deborah LeFalle

Elegy for a Seamstress

In 1937, Aneta toiled fifty hours a week at 25 cents an hour, half a man's wage. Back and forth across the work tables, her girlfriends and she shouted Lithuanian until the bossman roared: "Do you Lithwhacks understand 'quota?""

When the company modernized, Aneta bought the foot-powered Singer she hunched over for years for six scarce dollars, unlike some rouge-heavy women who made other arrangements.

In her basement she sewed repairs for pennies. When her first daughter married, Aneta designed a knee-length ivory and organza lace gown that younger sisters would share in turn, each one insisting, "Mama, raise the hem!"

Years later, granddaughters called her Bobute, laughed at her immigrant rhymes as she created sun dresses the colors of zinnias and anemones. When she tried to teach them, they refused: "No, Bobute, you will always be here."

Now, the sewing factory is abandoned, windows shattered by stones thrown by no-goods who know nothing about sixteen-hour days, the deafening whir of machines, the strike of the needle through a finger not quick enough, a day's wage lost for blood on a batch of aprons. Each Labor Day, the granddaughters bring their children like spools of thread to the foot of the stone. After a prayer, they pull weeds, picnic on blood soup and sausage with brown bread, decide whose turn to house the Singer no one knows how to use.

Dress Pattern

Fossilized dots of the pattern tracing wheel pock the oak kitchen table, I inherited.

As a girl, I refused to wear dresses that Babica made. I wore boy pants

stolen from neighbors' clotheslines. The whippings I received from Mati

did not stop me. Taking refuge in Poppa's lap, my tears mingled with sweat

of a blue work shirt filled with stars, holes burned by welding sparks, the fabric's life expectancy

prolonged by needle, thread and the magic of Mati's fingers as she sang in a strange language

Poppa no longer understood, but knew enough about me to buy me a man's blue work shirt

to sleep in at night, Babica clucking in her throat and Mati holding her tongue when Poppa put his foot down.

At Poppa's funeral, I wore a man's suit and tie, the kind he wore for Sunday or for favorite company.

Wood

Saturday afternoon, I scrub the wood floor of Sister Bel's room, no bigger than a bird house, as the earthy smell of Murphy's Oil Soap spreads like incense.

A dresser and bronze bed coexist like mourning doves in a cramped nest. Above the bed, a picture of the man Sister loves. Nothing else. I imagine her sleeping like a virgin named Mary, and then that angel appearing, changing her life forever.

While I work, Sister limps, scrutinizing my work, ensuring I go with the grain. Oak, she says, symbolizes strength and endurance. I nod. When I finish, Sister inspects, and a crescent moon smile lights the sky of her face. From atop her dresser, she lifts a plaster bust of Mary and Baby Jesus, like maybe she won it at Kennywood throwing baseballs at a pyramid of metal milk bottles, her habit sleeves rolled up, her arms the color of cream, her right eye squinting, like aiming down a riffle barrel, her arm like Mazeroski turning a double play.

She hands the figurine to me like a swaddled infant. Except for a chaste-white doily, the dresser is now barren. In silence I leave. Halfway down the hall, I return to thank her. Through the crack of the door, I watch her sit on the edge of the bed as she removes shoes in need of polish and slips off the foot, the wooden foot, a cleaning rag buffing what I recognize as oak before she places it on immaculate floor boards.

Air

The very breath you'd summon to say no would be enough to snuff a match's flame. However, should you also say my name, the very word might act as one might blow on embers, stoking smolderings to blaze. Not doing anything could do the same thing, though, so know you wouldn't be to blame, not knowing how I burn. One of these days

I'll risk the fires of hell itself, aware that only one of two fates could apply should I tell you how. For such honest air, such breath, will only cause a fire to die or catch and grow. Though once the deed is done two flames, like two breaths, may grow into one

James B. Nicola

Not Even the Moon

Having voiced the unsaid, what next? Not even the moon could see in me what you see; the mirror transmits a different sight, but somehow

you find the apple in this dark barrel, overlooking the bruises and the poor stem, gracing me with your fingers and the fragrance of your body.

Today, I am a new wine to be sampled, a hard-crusted bread with a sliver of soft cheese, an olive in brine,

awaiting your lips, your teeth, opening myself to the new tomorrow, this sweet taste, this word-filled love.

Though You Never

I see you in the stones littering the path, in the oak's crumpled leaves, in the beauty of the onion's scroll, beneath the red clouds to the west

and the snail climbing the shack's wall. When I close my eyes, I hear your pulse in the cicadas, inhale your spicy fragrance in the

afternoon's exhaust, taste you in the sweat trickling down my cheeks as I dice carrots by the hot stove. But I need more. I need the tangible you, not

your hills and fields, but your breasts and knees and everything between, not twilight's soft shoulder, but yours, warm in my mouth as we absorb

the mourning dove's late song, and your fingers tickle my chest, gathering love's little bouquets, one by one, smiling together at the blossoming unknown ahead.

Robert Okaji

Never, Never Land, My Ship

Never, never land, my ship, For now would be too late. I always dreamt someday you'd come, But my days were spent in wait.

If you had come when I was young, What shores we might have found, But I was closely watching, And you never came to ground.

So never, never land, my ship, I'm too old to sail the seas. I'll finish out my days ashore ... But, wait, I hear a breeze--!

Could it be my ship has come at last? I squint my eyes to see, But the sound was just my own deep sigh, No speck disturbs the sea.

So never, never land, my ship, You've taken far too long, Seek out some younger dreamer, For I'm no longer strong.

Mark Pearce

Judgement Day

Erasure after Anna Akhmatova

Imagine streets grieving, Bonfires of killer bees, Angels standing on roses, Flowering in dismay, Fragrant perfume pungent Like blood, covering The blackbird's wings. Is life a ghost passing me by? Whose mirror shadows These troubled clouds? The grave diggers are sickened By corpses piling up in front of my house. The church bells cease to ring. The torch bearers raise their fist In the air! They must Dance before the arc of the covenant or die.

Lisa Rhodes-Ryabchich

Positivity

A young person with great ambition Their dreams high and their confidence strong They are creative of mind and bright of spirit And beloved by family and friends

As the journey to adulthood begins They set out to make a name for themself Their mind races with ideas and a goal And their new path lays revealed

But they begin to show attrition They begin to think that something's wrong Their goal, while they feel so near it Now they fear that the journey shall end

They feel riddled with sins They doubt their sense of self They feel obligated to play a role But at the cost of their true self peeled

While they feel weak of body and mind They remember who surrounds them A loving community of people and support Who acknowledges them for who they really are

Years turn into decades, and their goal they find Their negativity has gone numb They learn to never sell themselves short For positivity can take them far.

Andy Sadler

Glitz of Darkside

I put an opera on my rainy night stereo and heard the arpeggios of a furious woman's passion, purple swaths of jester melody. My heart flying higher as the queen of night displayed her crescent moon her silvery stars and agitated strings.

A plan of vengeance unfolded, while a daughter feverishly sought escape from schemes under the icy queen's velvet sky of night, her despair's vault.

The music seesawed as my night marched. That horrible conflict, then on the horizon a hint—aside rain liminal of future golden lights of release.

My torso warm and on fire with storied opera, the outside raining and inside a cool night of moon and stars

an escape from the daily into the thrall of glittering Night!

Heather Sager

Perfection

What he should really be worried about is the fate others will try to make him

think he made for himself. But because he is too amused and too young to notice, one day

he will make what they say seem true. His efforts will continue with the tedium of

year-counts, and the perfections fail again and again, and then again, until in that one regard

they are perfect. He will have dressed himself up in a coat of worries and a pipeful of regrets.

Polyphemus Among the Stars

There is always the fear, that what has happened will repeat itself yet again, a planet sucked around its sun without cease or mercy or reason,

blind in its one eye, Polyphemus among the stars, ordained to be maimed and sacred in its scars.

At their edge, our orbits collapse, moving to the music of regret, receding at the rate of the square-root of memory.

The fragments fall too far too quickly, tempting us to take up the hem of gravity.

Joel Savishinsky

Storm Breather

As the storm starts brewing around me, I settle into my body plant my feet on the ground where my heels start sending roots toward the core of the earth, release my shoulders and open my chest, until my heart is bare and out there, for all to see. No walls that may collapse on it if they give in to the storm. And then all I do, all I can do is breathe. So I breathe in the storm and breathe out warm air

Eva Schiffer

It's Easy to Love the Rain

It's easy to love the rain when it's falling out there and you're sitting in here, drinking a cup of hot tea and smiling at the sound of thunder a mile away

but it's far more difficult to be a lover of the rain when you are so small and stuck out there without a roof or walls, hiding beneath a leaf, holding on to a stem, shivering without any clothes or sense of time.

It's easy to love the rain when you're nice and dry, watching the patter outside from your warm place within

and the insignificant thing, too small to be noticed, the heartbeat just a pebble drowning in the ocean, out there beneath detritus or the petal of a flower – he loves the rain, too, as much as he fears it

and his love is deeper than yours, and more difficult; it's truer and it's much better earned. When the storm passes, it's easy to forget the rain was out there when you are looking out from inside. It disappears from thought as the puddles are drying

but the small thing that is out there waiting for the end? He feels gratitude that the storm is over and then he deeply, deeply drinks; trembling when he looks up and sees a dark cloud passing.

The Phantom

I reach out in this soupy darkness And touch the phantom of your face – My fingers along your cheek As I feel your body relaxing, your eyes closing In comfort, in safety, In utter satiety While my eyes acclimate.

I lie in bed in the soupy darkness And feel the phantom of your body beside my broken body. Rivers of pain and pleasure run up and down me, My heart split in half with love and betrayal, My mind transfixed and erupting, The blood collecting beneath me.

I fall asleep in the soupy darkness And I dream about the phantom of you. Haunting every nook within me, Blasting out the cobwebs, pounding my rock hard senses Into sand, pulling my joy into darkness, My anger into light.

In the morning I wake up to the sun coming in And the phantom of you is gone from me, from here. I mourn the loss of the memories I danced with in the night. I mourn each morning, every morning The way a man mourns fresh death And I think of nothing but the encroaching night Where I will cry new tears And touch the phantom of your face Again, knowing your phantom will leave Like it always does.

There is that first moment when I awaken To the curse of the sun And I can still feel your body right beside me – Your warmth and your dolorous tragedy And your sex-drenched feline grace Before I inevitably, stupidly Open my eyes And see what is.

You have departed Leaving me here alone With a phantom Dressed like a woman I have to love.

The Stills

Everything, when I close my eyes, everything is still photographs or else slow motion

and when I open my eyes I wait for things to happen but nothing ever does

so I close my eyes again and wait to fall asleep

and all my memories are still photographs,

all my fantasies are slow motion.

When I open my eyes after hours and hours all is just as it was before

and so I close my eyes again and look at the stills.

John Tustin

Dwindling Daisies

Tragic

the way we idolize the beauty flowers hold. Awing over their petals and fragrance, so, we go and cut them selfishly, in hopes of keeping their beauty forever. While the whole time we anticipate their death. Slowly, their beauty droops their scent no longer lingers and you are reluctant to liberate their stems. Loving you was quite similar.

Seasonal

Our love flourished in the spring like the buds growing on trees. We grew into the summer, as the days stretched longer. You made me shine like the sunsets we once watched. Now it's fall, and the name feels ironic. You've left me to crumble like the leaves from the trees. Their orange and yellow hues still remind me of you. Because you were my sun glowing in the sky, and now lighting up the trees. You were seasonal. Yet every season brings me back to you. I wait for winter to come, in hopes that the cold front blows in liberations. - The lover that was not in love.

Ethan Valente

Red Sun

My home revolves a red sun. It is small and cold and dim. It bathes us in inky shadows And marooning twilights. My favorite time is when The sun drags up the muddy earth Drowning everything in its murky haze. I like the darkness. I like my cold little dim sun.

> Yet, when I see you, You make me wish that, just once, The sun would come bursting over the horizon, Bright and golden.

Dear Sleep

Dear Sleep,

for some reason, you choose to elude me. i lie waiting for your gentle touch yet you hold yourself away barely brushing my tired mind. i wove a net to trap you in. darkness, quiet the cool cotton of my sheets all to trap you in. i lie chasing your gossamer imaginings yet the ringing of my ears keeps you out, the twisting stomach the chilled feet the too small bed. will you settle down gently, gracefully, as a flag flowing in a soft wind?

Oh, Curse You, Sleep

If You Won't Come I Will Find You Drag You With Me Kicking, Screaming. Two Melatonin To Force My Slumber Trap You In. Throw A Tantrum If You Must. Rip And Pluck At The Thread Of My Dreams. It Makes No Difference. Tonight, I Will Sleep.

Duck

The job of a pinecone, a teacher once told her, is to protect the seeds. They close in the cold and open in the warm, ensuring the next generation, She wishes she were a pinecone.

At the dinner table, her parents sit, biting their tongues, biding their time. Someone sips. Metal clinks. The tension simmers, Molten under a layer of ice.

Like Uncle's wooden ducks, she's stuck floating on the surface. Passive. Unviolent. Unable to stop the coming slaughter. A vinyl plays in the corner. Put on to cover the silence, it only makes it louder.

Her mother opens her mouth. At once, her blood freezes, then shatters into pieces. The shards shred her lungs and prick her eyes. The shouting starts. She ducks under, praying bullet and lava both miss her wooden soul.

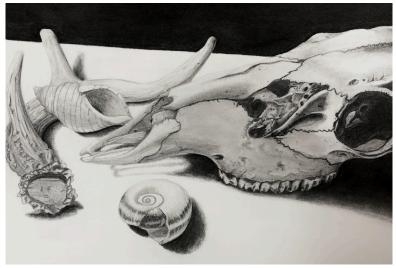
Bray Wright

VISUAL ART

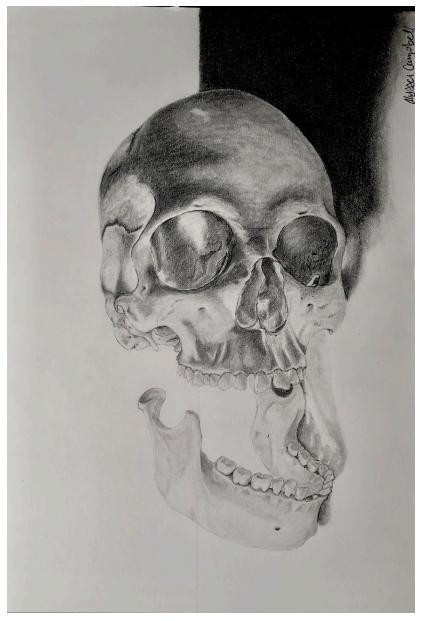
Lou



Deer Skull and Shells



Skull



Alyssa Campbell

Discarded Ornaments



Angel Dionne

Trophy



Family Portrait



Denise L. Bryce

Recess Deconstructed

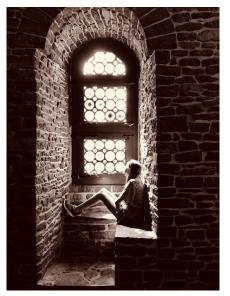


Gripping Read



Daphne Fauber

Meditation

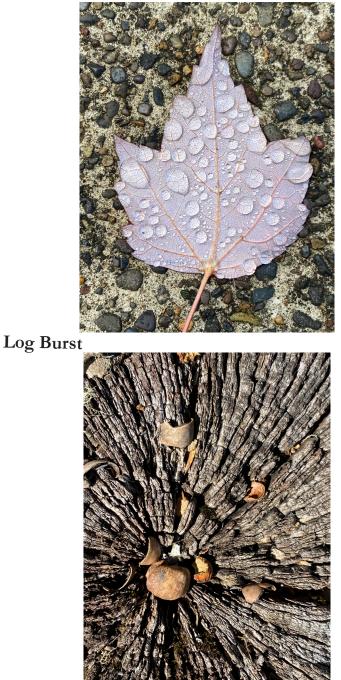


Locking Down the Sun



Arvilla Fee

Fallen Leaf and Rain



David A. Goodrum

Cotton Candy Skies



Clouded Perception



Leah Hopkins

Harness Your Power



Luna Musser

Working People



Mary Kate Murphy

Sky Portal (Double Exposure)



Aerial View I



Horizon



Erin Schalk

NONFICTION

Incident in Vava'u

"... And to tell the joys that were betwixt La Beale Isoud and Sir Tristram, there is no tongue can tell it, nor heart think it, nor pen write it." - Thomas Mallory, Le Morte d'Arthur

The first thing I noticed was her shirt: green, untucked, shortsleeved, falling loose down a long lean body. A sarong of a color swallowed by the years hung from her slim hips. Above, a head of much black hair. I concentrated on her face. Angular from the side. Dissatisfied. A tallish woman perhaps 25 (I was 30) in the doorway of the general store in the Vava'u island group of the Kingdom of Tonga, South Pacific where I was vacationing that December of 1981. I taught English in another archipelago of the country. Passing close by the woman on my way out, my radar recorded her.

Which is why, walking to the post office on a red dirt road next day, I recognized her even at a distance. She trailed with a shorter woman some 50 yards behind me. I slowed down so they'd catch up.

"Malo e lelei," I said to both, looking at one. "By the way, do you know the way to the post office?"

A beat as the tall one appraised me. "Oh, it's that way," she gestured. Contralto voice. Perhaps it was her leanness that gave the impression of height. She was my own, five ten.

"Are you visiting Vava'u? Did you know there's a dance at the hotel tomorrow? Maybe I'll see you there." Her eyes lay steady on mine. I nodded.

Next day I arrived at the hotel in my light gray slacks at five sharp. Though I was underweight in the islands, the pants were still tight. But the only dressy ones I had. I wore a darker gray shirt which I hoped looked like silk. The place filled up. First on the agenda was a presentation of "traditional" Tongan dancing. The London Missionary Society Methodists in 1797 created this tradition, confining the sinuosity of Polynesian dance in these particular islands to knees and elbows, feet and hands. Freezing the hips and covering the breasts.

The half-dozen dancers, girls under 20, performed to the music of young Tongan men singing heartily to their own accompaniment on battered guitars and bongos. Hefty mothers in black broadcloth took stage, as needed, to cavort about in order to divert the public's attention when they saw that their daughters were feeling self-conscious. What remained uncovered of the girls' skin gleamed with Tongan oil. It gleams, say Tongans of this utterly fragrant and velvety liquid concocted from coconut oil, flowers and herbs, only on virgins. Red hibiscus and yellow frangipani tressed the girls' hair. Ruffled cotton dresses of red, yellow and blue nearly reached their dipping knees. I had two drinks as my radar scanned for the woman.

She entered with a small army of probable relatives, she the fairest, tallest, slimmest. All were soon seated and eating like everyone else. Except me.

Once the live performance ended, recorded music played and the public was invited to dance. I saw the lean woman rise and begin to cross the floor. I intercepted her. Did we speak? The years are mute. We danced. Then she said to wait for her outside. It might be a little while, she was with her family.

Before long she came out and sat next to me on a bench. In addition to some dancers inside, it was my turn to feel self-conscious with my snug pants outlining me, in seated mode, with a definition beyond my usual style. We established that she lived in Vava'u with her multigenerational family; that she was one-quarter German; that I was returning to the Ha'apai island group in two days, my school vacation over. Not much more desultory conversation had passed when she lay her right hand on my crotch. Whatever I was saying leapt into the treble clef.

"T'll go back in first, then you come in," she said. "About 10 o'clock, you see that truck over there?" A big pickup with a canvas canopy. "Wait for me in the back."

I sat in the pickup well past 10, a snoring Tongan at my feet. The alcohol fumes in my head dispersed. What are you doing? You can be punched out and picked clean here any minute. I got down and was standing beside the vehicle debating between two places to spend the night when the woman's dusky register flowed over my right shoulder.

"Is anything wrong? We're going to leave pretty soon. Why don't you get in the truck?" I did. She left. The snoring man made way with his legs, an abiding mystery.

Five or six people soon hauled themselves in with murmured hellos. It was hard to see them under the canopy in the dark. The pickup rolled down a straight road, stopping as they got down by ones and twos. At last it halted by a lightly wooded hillside. The woman appeared outside.

"This is our place."

We climbed under palms. A large moon painted the ground beige and brown in a soft Polynesian night as only Polynesian nights are soft, as only a mother's embrace is soft. Faraway voices sounded. A dog barked twice. She turned to me.

"Wait here. I'll go for the things." She angled down to the left and was soon out of sight in what was and was not darkness, moonlight through the palms mottling the ground behind her.

She returned with a pandanus mat and a straw basket with Tongan oil, cups and rum. We sat; drank; talked a little. About what is lost to the years. We kissed. Moving under her later, looking over her bare shoulder sometimes through her black hair, I saw a bright star voyage all the way from one palm top to another. I thought but for a pebble where my left buttock pressed, we lay in Paradise. I shifted us to see if this were true. It was.

Looking back: What was all that? Lust and moral turpitude? A triumph of animal over human nature? A drunk fuck on a hill with a stranger?

Or did two with rum and palms, moon and mat, seize their fleeting chance? Did they somehow know they could trust each other? Would meet again in both Samoas? Remain kindled to the other four decades on?

My long-ago one of the dusky voice. My gracile one of the steady eyes. My lover with the strong sure hands.

Debauch? Romance?

I say Romance.

#

Thirty-seven years later while erasing old emails, I saw her address and decided to drop her a line. She responded fast.

I've been married 25 years. Early on, I urged a policy of consensual non-monogamy on my Latin wife: spouses ought not act against each others extra-marital attractions, I said. Marrieds err to equate loyalty with fidelity, to curtail augmented joy in life for their loved ones and themselves. My wife didn't buy this nor close. I've adhered to the no-deal (non-consensual monogamy, as it were)–irritably at times and barely at others. But more and more calmly with the passing years and cooling hormones.

Soon my long-ago one and I were videochatting. She was 25 when we met, is 63 now, but rather uncannily looks much the same save for a sumptuous current bust. We both married for-

eigners. I happily enough, but she is close to mute about her American husband. She's long lived in California, I in various Americas.

Her unchanged dusky voice wrought its usual hypnotic effect. I told her I'd written a story about our beginning—the one above—and she asked to read it.

"I like it," she texted later. "Thank you very much."

During our third call:

"You see red hair in Iceland because Vikings enslaved Irishwomen and carried them off," I informed her. I'd picked up this datum not long before from a genuine Icelander and felt proud of it.

"I wish I'd been one of those slaves," she chuckled low.

I didn't know what to say.

"Well," I replied at last, "a lot of children were born. And that's the current population of Iceland."

Slow laughter from the both of us.

"I wish I'd been one of those Vikings," I added.

More low laughter, from which flowed from her,

"When can I see you?"

I instantly invited her to Walla Walla, Washington, my leafy home town, where I was already scheduled to go. In my excitement at this apparent stroke of genius I invited her twice.

But over the next few days I felt the familiar signs of a troubled

conscience. Thus I told my wife I'd been in touch with the woman (the former had heard of the latter) and that we might meet. As friends.

"And you figured you'd better tell me," she returned in a micro-second. Her eyes rested not so much *on* mine as having *al-ready leapt inside them*. I'd prepared for a maelstrom, a severe frost or both in quick succession; preferring all that to the skulking and guilt, anxiety and insomnia of weaseling. But my wife was pleased (there could be no other explanation) that I'd been aboveboard. She continued pleased the rest of the day. Then the next. This cast me into wonderment: twenty-nine years together, true, but who knew the truth could work so well?

The passing of time, as in the truck in Vava'u, proved sobering. I decided I needed to be clear to the woman of the islands. The email I sent her said there could be no sex. This seemed necessary to establish, for our former bond had consisted of, it seemed to me, not much besides. If I were single, though, I wrote, it could be different.

"Good morning, I got your email don't worry about it," she texted back. "Sorry but I was not thinking like that. But you know we both adults and u know what ever happens u know we only human. If we see each other don't worry I will be a good girl. And whatever happened in Walla Walla will stay in Walla Walla. Much love for you."

"And for you," I responded, almost including "Much love for you too." But those extra five words seemed too much for a married man. Next, *worrying* they did seem too much. When had I become so *whipped*? As for the woman, I owned to myself I'd turned tender towards her over the years. In the islands? What I told myself then was that she serviced me well and often—period. And yet, I reflected (her text message in front of me), back then I *did* ask that she be included in an Orthodox Christmas Eve dinner party I'd been invited to (she came). Taught her tennis as best I could. And admired her deeply the evening she performed–gratis, solo, and very well–Tongan, Cook Islands, Samoan and Tahitian dances, complete with costume changes, for a living room full of people.

A thought experiment: If my wife's ex-lover Francisco wrote "Much love for you too" having received the same message from her–would that be okay by me? She liked their brief affair back in the day. Plenty. It would have continued if she'd had her way.

Nowadays it seems unlikely an open marriage or agreed-upon windows for swinging would have worked for us. Or at least for me. Falling off a cliff seems more likely. For one thing, there are numerous interesting men out there; my wife might have replaced me with one. For another, could I have handled my all but certain jealousy of the Franciscos of this world, whether drool-worthy hunks or fascinating dweebs?

Folks respond to jealousy in nine ways. The healthy two are self-assessment and improving one's primary relationship. The other seven look either dubious *(Demand commitment and Catharsis)* or downright disastrous. *Derogate one's partner or rival* (why not both while we're at it?) and *Avoidance/Denial*, for example, would seem to conduce to something a little short of happiness. Would I have grasped the first two lifelines, or sunk beneath the heavy seas of the other seven?

One thing's for sure. I was never cut out for the polyamorous version of consensual nonmonogamy. Responsible for two or more people's practical, emotional and sexual needs as part of a loving community? Processing ad infinitum whether A is justified in feeling neglected because B has been spending more time with C, while D has been slighting A? I like my privacy, thank you. And for all that I like to see myself as a turbo-charged stud–a legendary erotophile of the first order–the truth is, well, rather different. My sex drive is more a Cinquecento than a Ferrari. If

you're Polyamorous Man, this does not cut it.

The fact remains my wife, for whatever reason, decided to make me her exclusive project and expected to become mine in return as we teetered on the cusp of 40. Odds are I'm lucky she did. My health is fine and my finances flush compared to when we began. She's been faithful. I've tried not to make her sorry she gambled on me and have been faithful back.

The main alternative to monogamy remains good old-fashioned cheating. It's far more popular than open marriage, swinging, and polyamory combined. And more common than monogamy. The bald fact is that across the entire animal kingdom, geneticists cannot even detect monogamy. Neither in pigeons nor Homo sapiens. True: a certain primitive worm, in order to reproduce, copulates with itself. Those in need of reassurance, there you have it: Monogamy does indeed exist on Earth. That worm has never stepped out.

Still the question remains: will *I* be monogamous? Rereading my lady of the island's message, memories of music, dancing and sex with her morph into reveries of what could still transpire in the deep green glen of my home town. Can I get Spotify there? I mentally choose the warm colors of the semi-lit room I could rent in one of the many new vineyards thereabouts where she'd greet me in the doorway in black lingerie, yellow Brie in one hand and purple Cab in the other. Making such concupiscent "contingency" plans seems realistic enough. After all, isn't she right? We *are* only human. Anything *could* happen.

But as in the hymn, I too wonder as I wander out under the sky. How a long and usually happily married man pushing 70 can fantasize like this.

"The tragedy of old age is not that we are old, but that we are young," answers Oscar Wilde.

Daniel Bailey

Stars

I was flying, flying, flying. Flying with our chickens up into the stars. Wonderful flying, away from our tangle of rooms in the carriage house attic. I was five years old.

I woke up a little and the chickens disappeared. Soon I lost my stars, the stars that watched over Highwood. I was speeding alone through the empty dark. I woke myself up a little more. Light peeked around the window shade. My worry did not go away. Everything was changing too fast.

First my father had driven us into town to hear the bells ring the end of the War. Then we said goodbye to blackouts, ration books, and squashing tin cans. Next it was Goodbye, Dear Chickens. And yesterday was my father's last at the plant in Salem that turned the lights at factories and airports into invisible-to-our-enemies. Today we were moving to New York, where my father would design radio tube parts.

He was an engineer, a word that mixed up my tongue. He was helping me draw a picture in my mind of our new street—with side-by-side houses. Not like our carriage house on Highwood, a big estate on top of a hill in the woods. A hill much too far from town, my mother said. Much too isolated, my father said, because with no place to go except here and there, around a few empty buildings, my mother was lonely. I didn't want to leave. The chicken coops, rubbed-away gargoyles, cracked fountains, greenhouses with trees growing up through their roofs, and wornout lions guarding the weed garden were my friends.

I jumped out of bed and squeezed past men in coveralls. They were carrying our sofa into the hall and out the door to the outside stairs. The piano is next, a man shouted from the living room.

In the kitchen my mother poured cereal into bowl. There was no

fire in the big black stove—we were really leaving the twisty-tree apple orchard, the meadows with tall grass that scared me the first time I couldn't find my way out, the trees that led to more trees and trees after that, the steep hill, the buttercups peeping through cracks in the roads, and the lights of Boston far across the bay. We could see those lights from the terrace of the great big Main House. My father had promised that one day I would see them up close. But how could he keep his promise? New York was far away from Highwood, far away from Manchesterby-the-Sea, far from Massachusetts. No one sees Boston from New York.

My mother handed me my cereal and said Cynthia, don't bite your nails.

I hurried my breakfast so I could watch the men carry our piano down the outdoor stairs to the courtyard. On each step the piano jangled its keys. The men struggled. The piano fought back. While they lifted it into their van, it banged and banged. The way I felt.

Near the van, my father was loading suitcases into our car. He nested blankets and pillows in the back for my little sisters. I stood on the running board and watched. Go along and say your goodbyes, he said. He knew I would miss my friends.

I breathed the itchy-chicken smell of the empty coops. I rested my cheek against the nubby bark of my climbing trees. I gathered red fall leaves and kissed them. I crunched across our dried up Victory garden. I raced around the apple trees and patted the stone lions. At the hunting lodge, I stared at the sundial on the chimney. I would never find out why hunters needed a sundial.

I was back at the carriage house in time to eat my lunch.

I went down to the courtyard again. My father and I watched the

coverall men fill the last spaces in the van in a picture puzzle way of here-no-over-there-oh-for-goodness-sake-turn-itupside-down.

Are you ready? he asked.

I hadn't said goodbye to the stars. I knew he would understand. The stars had been his friends since he was a boy. In the winter after work, I ran to meet him as he climbed the one-hundred stone steps from the Salem Road bus. On the way home to our carriage house we looked at the stars and their constellation families. Now they were my friends, too. The hunter with the off-kilter belt was called O'Brian, like the lopsided man who walked his Saint Bernard dog on the Highwood Hill. The Big Dipper poured out the sparkling North Star. I wished my mother could ladle just one sparkle into my cereal. I wanted to see the Pleiades' seventh sister and Pluto, who was a planet and also a dog on the cereal box, but we didn't own a telescope. One last chance to say goodbye to the stars, I begged.

My father's sad face told me I'd asked for too much. We have to leave before dark, he said, but you'll see our stars in New York. Remember how they come along when we walk through the woods? They travel all over the world.

Stars were lights from hundreds and hundreds of years before I was born, which I couldn't imagine. The stars and I would always be looking at each other's pasts. And now I knew that stars could travel. It must be that stars could do anything. I twinkled them into my picture of New York.

Too soon Old Man Walker, who owned Highwood, arrived in his shiny black car from Boston. My mother came down the outside stairs with my sisters. A long time ago the Old Man had a mother and father who lived in the Main House. Now they were dead. My mother and I had looked through their windows. The furniture was covered with sheets. Because of something called the Depression, Highwood was an estate that had fallen on hard times, she'd explained.

My father handed the Old Man the rent money.

He nodded to my mother and said, It's time. My sisters scrambled into their nests. I squeezed in front, between my mother and father.

Off we drove. Slowly, for a last look at the carriage house and the curved granite wall around the courtyard. Flecks of quartz in the granite glinted goodbye in the afternoon sun. My mother bobbled on about living on Highwood at the end of an era that wasn't coming back, as if she were sorry to leave.

We drove past the empty guard-dog pens, down the hill, and around Lake Louise, which was still on Highwood, but outside the entrance. In town we drove by the church with the bells that were happy when the War ended, the same bells that wept when President Roosevelt died. How would they sound if they rang today?

Near the school, my mother reminded me that I'd go to kindergarten in New York. I wasn't used to girls, and I'd cried at a birthday party. But I would need new friends, and I added girls to my picture of New York.

My father speeded up. Goodbye Manchester-by-the-Sea.

My mother said, Our new street will be busy with cars. I put cars in my picture, too.

But then she said, Never, ever cross the street alone. If someone calls you from the other side, you must come indoors to get me.

How would that work? My mother was always can't-you-see-I'mbusy-Cynthia with her dust-mopping under beds, hanging diapers to dry, and watching my sisters. On Highwood I could cross roads alone. I could explore until the kitchen window glowed firered and my mother sang out, Cynthia, come see the sunset. Was I going to be a baby again?

My picture of New York shattered into tiny pieces of no no no. Before my mother could come up with another no, like no whining or no biting your nails, I closed my eyes and ears and pretended to sleep.

I felt the speeding, speeding of our car.

When my father had enough of my pretending, he said, Cynthia, open your eyes.

I kept them shut.

My mother said Cynthia sit up, in her voice for calling Come see the sunset.

How did I get stretched out across her lap? I squinted one eye open. The stars pulled both my eyes wide apart. Our car was rushing into rows, towers, and pyramids of stars, constellations I didn't yet know. Some in no constellation at all, an unimaginable number crowded together. I couldn't find O'Brian or the Dippers, but we were so close that without a telescope I saw young blue stars ones and old red ones. I saw green, too.

You were sleeping, my father said. You tired yourself out.

My mother woke my sisters. The dazzle made us happy. I wanted my father to stop the car so I could greet the stars.

Not stars, my mother said. City lights.

We were driving into lights? Could there be more city lights than Highwood stars?

Traffic lights, street lamps, and windows with lights behind them, my father said. There are thousands and thousands of buildings in New York, some so tall they're called skyscrapers. There are millions of people here, and millions and millions of windows.

This is where we would live? This is where my father had his new job?

New York was a big state, my mother explained. The lights would stretch to our new town, which she called Great Neck.

How many girls lived in Great Neck? What were they doing now?

My mother stroked her fingers down my face. If you sleep until we reach the hotel, you can go to our new house with your father early tomorrow when the van brings our furniture.

My eyes fell shut.

All the lights of New York—the towers, pin wheels, fireworks, and spinning carnival rides—danced bright and welcoming across my mind's horizon. Out there in the twinkling dark there had to be more girls than I imagined. Maybe one would see how quiet I was and come to me the way the chickens did.

I let myself fly, up to girls with stardust in their laughter and sunlight in their hair, girls who would be my friends the way the apple trees, tall grass, granite walls, and sundial used to be on Highwood. I heard faraway bells ring happy and sad all at once. Happy, for the way my life was changing and sad for the Highwood I'd left.

Cynthia Graae

Matchbox Tears – A Clark Lexington Story

The year is 1977 and the seven-year old blonde-haired boy is holding his father's hand as they cross the busy New York City street, blackened by the hour, gleaming from the pouring rain. The father's grip is firm but distant as his mind swarms with the dull numbness of a defeated soul.

In the boy's opposite hand is his prized collection of Matchbox Cars.

All the miniature cars and trucks are lined-up, facing in the same direction, all in their individual light blue plastic slots.

Oblivious to what his father is living through, the little boy holds on as tight as he can to his beloved symbols of childhood, their carrying case now wet and slippery in his hand.

He doesn't dare provoke his father's temper by asking him to stop on the rainy sidewalk even for just a momentary adjustment or break for his small tired arm.

He needs to be tough. He needs to be strong right now for his father.

Just an hour ago on the seventh floor he overheard a doctor telling his father that same thing, "... need to be strong for your boys right now."

The little boy wants to be strong too, just like his father.

He needs to be strong.

Crossing the busy City street, glimmering white and red in the rain from the million other interrelated lives coming and going on that night, panic strikes the heart and soul of the little boy. It is a panic equal parts disappointment, fear, loss, sadness, and uncertainty.

In that split-second, he knows he is not going to be strong enough despite trying his very, very hardest. He is about to disappoint his father deeply.

"But she is only 30 years old," his father silently laments, quickly crossing the busy street, "this is not how things were supposed to turn out. We were supposed to visit Gothenburg and camp the archipelago. She was teaching herself Swedish."

It takes his father what seems like a momentary eternity to shake free of the macabre trance the evening's news has delivered to their young family.

It is only then that his father realizes that the little boy has pulled free of his fatherly grip and is standing in the middle of the busy City street, in the pouring rain.

With those million red and white distracted souls coming quickly in both directions, the little boy is standing alone, unprotected sobbing.

By the time the boy realizes what is happening, the small glimmering epitomes of his childhood are careening across the wet street in every direction.

Some come to a stop against the wheels of the parked cars that line the street, a proverbial David and Goliath of modern steel and design.

A two-inch replica of his favorite dump truck, like the one the construction men used to fix-up the park near their house last summer, crashes blindly against the wheel of a large station wagon with rusted-out fenders. Some are not as fortunate and slide underneath the dark wet underbellies of their own mighty Goliath, without the benefit of neither slingshot, nor stone.

After a moment of panic, he spots his prized 1970 series No. 29 Racing 'Mini' – orange with a "29" sticker down each side, rightside steering wheel indicative of its early manufacture in the UK.

His Racing Mini is the smallest and plainest of all his toy cars, but it is his favorite—by far.

It is the toy his mother allowed him to pick-out the last time he went shopping with her, an activity he cherishes deeply.

That had been several months ago, before his mother constantly felt "too tired" to go to the park anymore, or to go shopping, or to do much of anything but stay at home and rest.

That was when his mother still had her long blonde hair and bright blue eyes that sparkled with life and adventure every time her little boy came in the room.

That was before his father drove her to the doctor's office located in the big City skyscraper one day, and his mother had promised him that it would just be another adventure like the hundreds they had together in the park, and that she would be home to make dinner with him.

That was before his grandmother ordered pizza that night, and he tried so very hard to stay awake and wait for his mother to come home, but he fell asleep watching TV on the couch.

Probably because the Racing Mini is so small and so light, it is speeding away from him faster than any of his other toys.

A large black limousine speeds by, just missing the tiny memo-

ry-filled object of his affection.

Somewhere to his distant right, he hears his father and older brother screaming at him to, "STOP!"

To the little boy whose blonde-hair is now thoroughly soaked, they both sound like they are yelling from the front porch of their humble middle-class home some two hours north of the City – he barely hears them, and doesn't register anything but panic in their collective voices.

All the little boy can see is his orange Racing Mini headed straight for the deep dark abyss of the storm drain.

Faster and faster he runs to catch-up to his beloved toy, completely blind to the millions of the full-size versions barreling towards him in both directions three lanes deep, but his little legs just aren't fast enough!

His father, consumed with panic at the sight of his son running across multiple lanes of busy City traffic, screams as the stretch limo nearly strikes his tender child.

Adrenalin at full tilt, he ducks and weaves through the oncoming traffic and barely scoops him up just as his son is reaching for the dangerous sewer drain!

#

Thinking about that rainy 1977 night brings tears to my eyes.

I feel the pain that the little boy didn't even recognize himself at the time; the pain of knowing that his beloved mother would never again climb the steps of their humble middle-class home.

I want to be there to help that little boy find his toy cars.

I want to be there to hug that little boy as tight as I can and tell

him, "It is going to be ok!"

I know it sounds strange, but I love that little boy.

It breaks my heart to know that there is nothing I can do to make it 'All Better' for him.

There is nothing I can do to shield him from the coming years of pain and sorrow he is going to suffer.

There is nothing I can do to stop his Matchbox Tears.

J. Dewey Oriani

Fiction

Paweł Markiewicz was born in 1983 in Siemiatycze, Poland. He is a poet who lives in Bielsk Podlaski and writes tender poems, haiku, as well as long poems.

Eric Maroney is the author of three books. His short fiction has appeared in twenty-seven literary journals and publications. He is a regular fiction and non-fiction reviewer for *Colorado Revien*. He works at Cornell University, and lives in the hills outside of Ithaca, NY, with his wife and two children.

Jerry Mollenhauer is a retired construction estimator who has published many short stories and op-eds over the years. He and his wife, Jackie, live in southern Minnesota. If he had to say, his preference is dogs, as Jerry feels cats are more aloof and can take it or leave it.

Zach Murphy is a Hawaii-born writer with a background in cinema. His stories appear in *Reed Magazine, Still Point Arts Quarterly, The Coachella Review, Maudlin House, B O D Y, and Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine.* He lives with his wonderful wife Kelly in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Caleb Murray is from Montana and currently lives in Western Massachusetts. His fiction has appeared in *Cleaver Magazine, Meat for Tea: The Valley Review,* and elsewhere.

Meghan Roth is a 2013 graduate of Olivet College, where she earned her BA in English. She continues to engage copiously in reading and writing all while she and her husband juggle two rambunctious daughters and one fat, sassy cat!

Taylor Thornburg is an author, essayist, filmmaker, and critic based in Omaha, Nebraska. His fiction explores strange yet humane ways of being. His nonfiction appears in *Cosmonaut Magazine*. His film reviews can be found on the *Hammer and Camera podcast*.

Nick Young is a retired award-winning CBS News correspondent. His work has appeared in more than twenty publications, including the *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, the *San Antonio Revien, Cafe Lit Magazine, Sein und Werden, The Chamber Magazine, Danse Macabre* and Volumes I and II of the *Writer Shed Stories* anthologies.

Poetry

Matthew J. Andrews is a private investigator and writer. He is the author of the chapbook *I Close My Eyes* and *I Almost Remember*, and his work has

appeared in Rust + Moth, *Pithead Chapel*, and *EcoTheo Review*, among others. He can be contacted at matthewjandrews.com.

Mitchell M. Beck enjoys writing.

Daniel Brennan (he/him) is a resident of New York City. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, his work aims to capture both the vastness we feel in the face of our ever-changing planet, while confronting our own bodies and the daunting elements of intimacy we feel every day.

Jane-Rebecca Cannarella is a writer and editor living in Philadelphia. She is the editor of *HOOT Review* and *Meow Neow Pow Pow Lit*, and a former genre editor at *Lunch Ticket*. Jane-Rebecca is the author of *Better Bones*, published by Thirty West Publishing House as well as among several other collections and chapbooks.

Francis Conlon is a retired and recovering teacher. For the past 20 years, he has worked as a seasonal ranger at Yampa River State Park in northwest Colorado. He currently lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Jennifer Clark is the author of a children's book and three full-length poetry collections. Her latest book, *Kissing the World Goodbye* (Unsolicited Press), ventures into the world of memoir, braiding family tales with recipes. She lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan. You can find her at jenniferclarkkzoo.com and @ jenniferclarkbooks.

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. He has taught at several colleges and universities. His most recent book of poetry is *Mist in Their Eyes* (2021). He has published three critical studies, including "Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors." His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals.

Daphne Fauber (she/her) is a lifelong creative and current graduate student at Purdue University studying Agricultural and Biological Engineering. She enjoys writing about small wonders, weird truths, horrific monsters, and everything that they touch.

Arvilla Fee teaches college English and has been published in various presses, including *Poetry Quarterly, 50 Haikus, Drifting Sands Haibun, Contemporary Haibun Online* and others. She strives for a personal connection in her poetry, hoping to elicit the feeling of "she gets me" from her readers.

Hugh Findlay's writing and photography have been published worldwide. He is in the third trimester of life and finds inspiration in everyday people, places and things. His Instagram is @hughmanfindlay.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, and has recently been published in *Sheepshead Review, Stand, Poetry Salzburg Review* and *Ellipsis.* His latest books include *Covert, Memory Outside the Head,* and *Guest of Myself* are available through Amazon. He has work upcoming in *Washington Square Review* and *Red Weather*.

Emily D. Laird is 17 years old and was recently diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She has been writing poetry since 5th grade and is currently writing a full-length novel. She is a part of the LGBTQ+ community, which she writes about a lot. She is also homeschooled.

Deborah LeFalle is a former college educator who started writing in her retirement. Besides writing, she enjoys being involved in the arts, digging into her family's past, and spending time outdoors communing with nature. Her work has appeared in journals, magazines and anthologies, and she has authored two poetry chapbooks.

Don Narkevic is from Buckhannon, WV. They have an MFA from National University. Their current work appears/will appear in *Agape, New Verse News, Bindweed,* and *Book of Matches.* In Spring 2022, Main Street Rag published a novella of their poetry entitled, *After the Lynching.*

James B. Nicola is the author of seven collections of poetry, the latest two being *Turns & Twists*, which just came out, and *Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith* and Sense. His nonfiction book, *Playing the Audience: The Practical Guide to Live Performance*, won a Choice award.

Robert Okaji lives in Indiana. He is the author of multiple chapbooks, including the 2022 Slipstream Press Annual Chapbook contest-winning *Buddha's not talking*. His work has appeared in *Vox Populi, Threepenny Review, Great Lakes Review, Evergreen Review* and other venues.

Mark Pearce is an author/playwright with stories published in various literary magazines including *Able Muse, Granfalloon,* and *Down in the Dirt.* His first published story was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and was selected as Granfalloon magazine's "Story of the Year."

Lisa Rhodes-Ryabchich is an adjunct English professor at Westchester Community College, author of short stories "Retribution On Cash Street" & "Moving On" forthcoming from Drunk Monkeys & "Sunday's At Yankee Stadium." She has 6 poetry books. She was a fellow at MVICW with a MFA from Sarah Lawrence College.

Andy Sadler is a senior at Olivet College with experience in investigative journalism, graphic design, radio broadcasting, and audio editing, among other things.

Heather Sager lives in Illinois where she writes poetry and fiction. Most recently, her work has appeared in *Poetry Pacific, The Bluebird Word, Setu, morphrog, Magma, Otoliths, Flights, The Fabulist, Highland Park Poetry's Odes anthology*, and more.

Joel Savishinsky is an anthropologist and gerontologist. His book Breaking the Watch: The Meanings of Retirement in America won the Gerontological Society of America's book of the year prize. His poetry, fiction and essays have appeared in Atlanta Review, Beyond Words, California Quarterly, Molecule, SALT, and Toho Journal.

Eva Schiffer is a German poet who lives, works and gardens in Washington DC. She uses poetry to catch glimpses and hold on to them.

John Tustin's poetry has appeared in many disparate literary journals since 2009. fritzware.com/johntustinpoetry contains links to his published poetry online.

Ethan Valente is a new poet, who looked for a way of expressing his emotions in an artistic way. He stumbled upon writing, without any formal background, and found the process liberating. His hope is that the words he composed find a reader that can relate to his poems.

Bray Wright is a senior English major at Olivet College. She enjoys reading, writing, and various fiber crafts. She is currently working on a short story collection.

Visual Arts

Alyssa Campbell is a senior at Olivet College. She is a Biology and Environmental Science double-major interested in pursuing a career in zoology or wildlife biology. In her free time, she enjoys creating still-life pencil drawings of various things in nature.

Angel Dionne is an assistant professor of English literature at the University of Moncton Edmundston campus. In 2019, she completed her Ph.D. in creative writing at the University of Pretoria. She lives in Canada with her wife and cats.

Denise Bryce is a senior at Olivet College majoring in both Graphic Design and History. She specializes in digital design, mainly social media, web design, and infographics. However, she does enjoy the visual aspect of art from time to time, through printmaking and drawing. **Daphne Fauber** (she/her) is a lifelong creative and current graduate student at Purdue University studying Agricultural and Biological Engineering. She enjoys writing about small wonders, weird truths, horrific monsters, and everything that they touch.

David A. Goodrum is a photographer and writer living in Corvallis, Oregon. His photos are forthcoming or have been published in *Cirque Journal, Wild Roof Journal, Ilanot Review, Willows Wept Review, Blue Mesa Review,* and other journals. Additional work (both photography and poetry) can be viewed at www.david-goodrum.com.

Leah Hopkins is a freelance graphic designer from Cereal City in Southwest Michigan. She served a variety of clientele ranging from small town senior citizens to multiple major local publications. She is currently attending Olivet College and is a graphic design intern for the County Journal in Charlotte, Michigan.

Luna Musser is a graphic design major graduating from Olivet College this Spring. They live in Lansing with their life partner, Pitbull named Yue, and their three cats Morticia, Gomez, and Alexandra.

Mary Kate Murphy is a Visual Arts and Biology senior at Olivet College with a passion for life drawing.

Erin Schalk is a visual artist, writer/poet, educator, and disability advocate working in Los Angeles and Orange counties, California. Schalk holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she focused on visual art and poetry.

Nonfiction

Daniel Bailey From Walla Walla, Washington, USA, has spent half his life in Europe, Polynesia, Asia and Latin America where he taught narly 20 years inside a gathering Venezuelan dictatorship. *Star 82 Review, The South Shore Review, CP Quarterly* and the *TESL Reporter*, among other venues, have presented his work.

Cynthia Graae's fiction, nonfiction, and translations have been published by the North Dakota Quarterly, Humans in the Wild, Barren Magazine, the Westview News, Kinder Link, Maine Public, HuffPo, the LA Review, Rattle, Exchanges, World Literature Today, Griffel, and Persimmon Tree. She lives in New York City and Hiram, Maine. **J. Dewey Oriani** was born in Middletown, New York. His mother died young, after which he spent his childhood in a fundamentalist cult, before joining the Air Force at age 18. James holds four undergraduate degrees and a Master of Education in Counseling-Human Relations. He lives in Satellite Beach, Florida.

Projects of the Bill Buchanan Fund

2023 is the 20th anniversary of The Bill Buchanan Fund and the centennial of the birth of Bill Buchanan. Bill Buchanan died in Sri Lanka before he could return for the celebration of his 80th birthday. Well over one hundred of his former students, colleagues, neighbors, family and friends participated in the service that was held for him. They came from around the country, and recited poems, played music and told stories for three and a half hours. Five years prior to that event, many had gathered in Klock Commons to celebrate Bill's 75th birthday, just like they had for his 70th.

Throughout Bill's 16 years of teaching at Olivet College, his classes were not as populated as the required courses. However, they were no less important. In his honor, the Bill Buchanan Fund was established on April 2, 2003 to create projects in support of the liberal arts. As the fund grows so will the amounts of the prizes and the award.

Currently the Buchanan Fund awards the Stevens Award and the Coleman Prizes (in prose and poetry). The Stevens Award recognizes an excellent educator in the tradition of Arthur R. Stevens & Charlotte Whitney Stevens, who both taught in Olivet. The first award honoring Art and Charlotte Stevens was presented at the Honors Convocation on April 17, 2019.

The Jim Coleman Prize was established in memory of Tim Boal, Class of 1969, and funded through the Bill Buchanan Fund. Prior to the *Garfield Lake Review*, Olivet College had faculty member Jim Coleman, a professor in the 1960s and 1970s. It was through him that the undergraduate literary journal we know today exists.

While Mr. Coleman now lives in Connecticut, his Comet connection continues through the Jim Coleman Prize, which has been awarded since 2008 to students who have been published in the *Garfield Lake Review*. The honoree is chosen annually by outside judges.

Past honorees:

2021 Penelope Katz 2020 Kailey Collins, Class of 2022 2019 Emma Cole, Class of 2018 2018 Adam Walle, Class of 2017 2017 Linda Jo Scott, professor emerita of English 2016 Meghan Eldred, Class of 2015 2015 Camieo Green, Class of 2014 2014 Meghan Wilkerson, Class of 2013 2013 Jennifer M. ten Haaf Hodges, Class of 2012 2012 Jennifer M. ten Haaf Hodges, Class of 2012 2011 Jacob "Coby" Heller, Class of 2012 2010 Anabel Montalvo Hall, Class of 2009 2009 Anya Letson, Class of 2008 2008 Katrina Williams Thigpen, Class of 2007

Olivet College strives to provide diversity and depth to students because its founders understood the value of a liberal arts education. Those associated with the fund experience this value. Marty Mason Jennings ('67) earned a degree in the fine arts, and Steve Burton ('68) studied chemistry. As a philosophy major, Jim Briney's ('69) education included biology, chemistry, math and physics. Marty and Steve are advisors to the fund, and Jim is its founder and representative.

A History of Olivet College and the Garfield Lake Review

Olivet College, the home of the *Garfield Lake Review*, has a storied history beginning even before the founding of our nation. Pilgrims that traveled across the ocean seeking religious freedom were the first Congregationalists, the founders of the earliest colleges in the United States. These same Congregationalists also funded the defense in the court case of the *Amistad*, a slave trading ship, in which the slaves won their freedom. These revolutionary efforts would trace their way to Olivet, Michigan.

Naming Olivet College after the biblical Mount of Olives, Rev. John Shipherd founded the school in 1844 in a small area of south-central Michigan. Because of Olivet's unorthodox view – offering anyone, including women and minorities, an education – the state of Michigan refused to grant Olivet a charter, so it opened as a private institute.

Into the early 1900s, Olivet College transformed from a primary school for educators into a true liberal arts college. By the 1930s and '40s, young president Joseph Brewer pushed forward with innovative educational policies that allowed Olivet to become a haven for scholars.

By the late 1990s, Olivet had experienced many changes, and the faculty created a new Olivet Plan to encourage students to combine the founding principles of the Congregationalists and the reforms of President Brewer. The Olivet Plan still exists today, allowing students to focus their education on the global mindset. It is a nationally recognized educational plan.

One of school's proudest accomplishments is the *Garfield Lake Review*. The *Garfield Lake Review* is a production of Olivet College students interested in creative writing, artwork, and music; it began in 1971 as a project in a creative writing class. The founders of the program were Professor James Coleman, Brent Danielson, James Hudson, Andrew Johnson, Amy Leithauser, George Parmenter, and Norm Wheeler.

The *Garfield Lake Review* is the annual literary and visual arts magazine produced by Olivet College students, and it is a proud member of the Olivet College Media Board. From its inception, the policy for the Garfield Lake Review has been to accept submissions from students, staff, and alumni. Submissions from outside of the college are accepted as well. Submissions for the magazine are accepted every fall; see guidelines at garfieldlakereview.com.

Works are chosen through a blind screening process that was introduced in 2006. The blind screening assures that no author will be judged by race, creed, sexual orientation, or political ideology. The selections are reviewed, selected and edited by students on the *Garfield Lake Review* Editorial Board.

Readers interested in donating financial support for future issues of the Garfield Lake Review should contact the Olivet College Advancement Office at (269) 749-7000. The Olivet College website is www.olivetcollege.edu.

Olivet College is committed to the principles of equal opportunity and nondiscrimination. The college, in its employment, student admissions, recruitment, and personnel policies and practices, will not discriminate against any individual on the basis of age, color, sex, gender identity, disability or disability status, height, weight, marital status, national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, military or veteran status, or sexual orientation.