



JABBERWOCKY

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand;
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffing through the tulgey wood,
And burred as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

“And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

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All contributions by members of the *Jabberwocky* staff were reviewed anonymously without input by the submitting staff member.

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Questions, concerns, and input can be sent to umassenglishsociety@gmail.com. Students interested being on staff for the next issue can contact the English Society in Fall 2016. Submissions will open again at the beginning of the Spring 2017 semester.

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A Question about the Universe

Liza Brackbill

Does the wondering go both ways?



Untitled
Zulay Holland

Bicycles

Nathan Frontiero

I can't ride them but
I'll roll downhill with you. Just
know that I won't stop.

The Glass over the Strange People

Paul Flamburis

One of them, the one whose name tag read Hello My Name is Linda, pushed her morning coffee into a hot slice of the sunrise so it would cool more slowly.

The other one, whose name tag read Hello My Name Is Anthony said, "It's still going to get cold."

Linda said, "Not before yours. And, don't."

Anthony said, "Don't what?" and thought, *You know what*, which was also what Linda said next.

I was inside the building while this was going on, I was sitting in an empty chair. I was a little early so I passed the time listening to these two do their scene. Through the glass I saw someone parking and wondered if it was my friend, but was disappointed to see a blonde normal-looking head emerge.

Linda pulled a wad of cash out of her back pocket and deposited it on the counter, a five to one ratio of ones to fives. "Ten on CBR flatbread," she said.

Anthony asked, "What do you get out of losing money?"

"One of these days you're gonna fuck it up, and then I'm gonna make you sign the dollar, and then I'm gonna hang it on my wall. That's what I'll get out of it."

"Well it is gonna be a CBR flatbread, so no bet. Excellent guess, though."

"No fun," Linda said, pocketing the bills.

The blonde guy walked up to the counter and Anthony disappeared into the back. He looked at Linda and said, "Chic'bac'n ranch flatbread, please."

Linda said "Three ninety-five" and turned around to give Anthony the order, but he was already back at the counter, holding a hot paper bag spotted with bacon sweat. Anthony gave the bag to the blonde man, the blonde man gave a crisp five to Linda, Linda gave Anthony an annoyed look. The man left without collecting his change.

Anthony said, "See."

"Wow. Good job, Anthony. Who knew the secret to filling the tip jar was making your customers wig the fuck out. Have you ever read a mind that didn't think you were an enormous dweeb?"

"Oh my god, fuck off."

"That was a serious question. No, right? You never have."

I liked Anthony. He was the kind of guy you would want to have a long dinner with at a restaurant where the entrées always arrived late. I could imagine us sitting together and waiting for our steaks. Anthony saying Nice to meet you, I'm Anthony to an empty chair. Me saying, So, Anthony, tell me everything you hate about the things you love. Anthony having a lot to say.

Linda suddenly put the crumpled cash back on the counter and said, "Yeah alright, this guy definitely wants a turkey bacon avocado."

When Anthony didn't say anything, I looked outside and saw that my friend was carrying his big strange-looking head through the threshold. The

same head I slept in at night. I liked it there, it was roomy. I was thinking of installing a new window, but only because I was bored. The brow jutted way out, making for a nice open balcony. Sometimes it was a good idea for us to be in two places at once, which got me out of the house. Now and then.

Linda gave Anthony an anxious look and a light punch in the arm.

“Hey.”

Anthony shook the fog out of his head. “Yeah. Ham, cheese.”

The strange headed man scratched an itch on a patch of bare head. He looked at each person behind the counter, up at the menu, back down to the people, squinted with half of one eye. He cleared a phlegmatic buildup from his throat and rasped, “So, which one of you is Professor X?”

Anthony looked surprised, but he shouldn’t have been. He had to know something like this was coming. Maybe I could kind of understand, though. Hearing truths out loud is not the same as knowing them.

Linda said, “Who are you supposed to be, Magneto? How do you fit into your helmet?”

The strange-headed man half-squinted at Anthony and asked, “So you’re the one I heard about. How do you do it?”

Anthony muttered, “I pour my mind into that of the human superorganism. Just like anybody else.”

Linda said, “Yesterday it was ‘I merge myself with the cosmic egg.’”

“Suck a cosmic egg, Linda.”

The strange-headed man bent forward to read the nametag. “So your name’s Anthony.”

“Apparently.”

“You would do well to pull your head out of your ass, Anthony.”

“Sorry, guy. It’s way stuck in there.”

“Pull hard.”

Anthony didn’t say anything. He looked like he was initiating a staring contest with the strange-headed man. He focused his vision on what appeared to be the weaker of the man’s eyes.

The man let him win as quickly as possible and said, “I’ve got a very long drive ahead and I won’t be stopping again anytime soon. I’d like to eat some breakfast first, but I’ve got no more money. I was wondering if you’d take a riddle as currency.”

“Why do you think I would do that,” Anthony said, without having blinked yet.

Linda’s hand briefly hovered over the phone, but she thought better of it. She walked over to the glass-encased emergency axe instead and stood there with her arms crossed.

“Because you’ve never seen one before. Not the way the rest of us have. The answers are usually right in front of you. This time you’ll have to think for yourself, yeah?”

Anthony won the staring contest again, the same contest. He still didn’t blink.

The strange-headed man reached across the counter to take Anthony's used napkin. Then he reached his hand inside his big coat, prompting Linda to tap audibly on the axe glass. The man slowly pulled a pen out from inside his big coat and scribbled on the napkin. Anthony took the napkin back. The man had drawn an egg shape around a coffee stain, which looked like a broken yolk or some kind of fucked-up embryo. Outside the shell he had drawn a cartoonish serpent, a scaly banner that read: Which came first?

Anthony said, "The evolution of the amniotic egg predates legless squamates. So what. Is this a joke?"

The strange-headed man said, "Smart kid. How old are you, Anthony?"

Anthony said, "A hundred and seven."

The strange-headed man said, "You're twenty-six. I'm older than twenty-six. Which makes me the egg. If we were an Orphic egg, you and I. Which we are. Which makes you?"

Anthony's face flushed. The man was a steel egg. Anthony looked like he wanted to crack him on skillet and see what came out to fry.

"So I'm a fuckin' snake? Is that what you came here to tell me, guy? So what?"

I happened to know that Anthony had always been fond of snakes.

The strange-headed man looked at Anthony with hatred and admiration, uneasy roommates in one pair of eyes.

"Just thought you should know. The way things are."

"Are you gonna order something, man?" asked Linda, with the implication that a *no* might summon the axe.

The hatred disappeared, most of the admiration disappeared with it.

"Come to think of it, eggs sound good to me. I'll have an egg and cheese on an English muffin."

Anthony made the sandwich in front of him, the first time he had ever done so, dropping it in the bag like it was a dead frog from a toxic waste dump. He paid for it himself with the cash he would have owed Linda if the man had ordered a turkey bacon avocado.

The man pulled out a black leather wallet, which was very fat.

"Here's my card," he said, sliding a blank eggshell rectangle across the table. Anthony flipped it over as soon as the man turned around. In barely-legible yellow letters there was an address that was not close.

Linda walked back to the counter and took one of the dollars back out of the register and I heard her whisper, "Anthony, will you sign this?"

The strange-headed man ate his sandwich on the way out and I followed him. He was my ride. I snuggled deep into the strange head and the strange head got in the car. We looked back and saw Anthony watching us through the glass while he sipped his coffee. Must've been cold-cold, couldn't get any colder now. Must've felt like snakes going down.



She'll be back

Yelena Rasic

a little stoner poem

Melissa Mason

my legs. they have wings.
my arms do too. so it's okay.
I lost the first part of the sentence
so it didn't make sense to finish it
maybe the water cells had sex
and reproduced.

Sloppy Peaches

Natasha Charest-Ciampa

Sloppy peaches are creeping, creeping, creeping towards our door. Slushing around, sugary sweet, the hallway stinks of severe syrup. Crumbling on my carpet, my nose is bleeding and I cannot tell if it is because I am seething with anger or you are seeping with feelings. I try to sage the crimson from my skin but I only burn myself. The peaches are growing sweeter in scent and you are crying.

Crispy as cardboard I tear you with my teeth. I spit on your face; under my foot you lie. You are something but I do not know what. There's a rose petal stuck in my chest and I feel like I may be dying. Rose petals undo settled stomachs, but I will never stop eating them. Tasty as your tongue and sweeter than the peaches, they melt in my mouth. I salivate for them, but you only feed me when you want to be fed. My patience is waning for a love you're feigning.

Withering into a whittled witless woman I sit silent in a corner. Tongues are forked and I am trying to avoid their scarring tips. I can hear you walking in the maze of peaches and petals. One quiet knock and I bet that your hands are sticky. I hear the slish sloshing of your bare feet as you shift your ample weight. Wishing washing your feelings, I can smell you from in here. You think I am stupid, you think I am usable. Sweet peaches smell sour and I am tired of the mess they make. You wait, wait, wait for a locked door to unlatch. Silly boys must only be regarded as toys.

Stranger than Metafiction

Nathan Frontiero

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a self-conscious text. Mark Twain pushes his titular character against the fourth wall and balks at literary conventions by breaking them. Through Huck Finn, Twain calls attention to the narrative itself. This lampshade hanging underlines Twain's rejection of the literature world's predisposition towards incessant interpretation. Indeed, the author may well be rolling in his grave knowing that this very paper exists. Mark Twain uses metafictional devices to satirize the typical pursuit of literary truth.

The author takes a stance against reading into *Huckleberry Finn* before the text proper even begins. His introductory "Notice" details increasingly severe consequences for "persons attempting to find a [motive, moral, or plot]" in the narrative (Twain 2). The wry declamation immediately establishes a precedent for the rest of the novel. This is a book that will take stabs at the structural constraints and customs of literature. Before any of the interpretable text has reached the eager reader's grasp, Twain swats them back. His opening statement promises to hold the reader at gunpoint if they dare to search for anything beyond pleasure in what he implicitly claims as a meaning-forsaken book, but the broader sentiment here changes upon second glance.

Twain's apparent staunch resistance of these literary elements skews cartoonish. He seems adamant that the text of his book should not be examined through the lens of these fundamental components of fiction, yet his remark's extremism smacks of satire. The author attacks the moral-, motive- and plot-seeking reader without offering a justification, straddling the fence separating two perspectives. He rails against the notion of deciphering *Huckleberry Finn*, yet does not explicitly call the novel devoid of plot, motive, or moral. To make such an assertion is absurd; at the very least, the book undeniably contains a plot. Twain also cannot deny the significance of his text—to do so would undermine the novel's indictment of Reconstructionist complacency towards slavery and institutionalized racism. Positing the search for a moral in the text as a criminal offense creates a subtle irony. Twain frames the act of interpretation as deplorable, yet embeds the story with a strong critique of racism and slavery, and thus suggests that the true disgrace is not in one's search for *Huckleberry Finn*'s significance, but in one's inability to find it.

The harshness of the notice alludes to a further level of lampooning at work. Although Twain signs the notice "By order of the author," the gesture implies satire, not sincerity (Twain 2). The brusque sentiment evokes ignorance, which befits the myopic, backwards mindset of the racist characters that the book criticizes. This piece of the novel, then, acts to introduce that mindset. Twain references his authorship from behind a mask to make an initial point that the remainder of the novel's critique supports. Enabling the continuation of slavery is just as ridiculous as shooting someone for trying to understand a novel's plot. Twain is frustrated with overwrought literary theory, but his deeper disdain is not for those who would decipher the novel to find his lesson, but for those who

would find that lesson inscrutable.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn's use of metafiction becomes more relaxed and playful once Huck himself enters. Huck immediately addresses the reader, "You don't know me, without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, but that ain't no matter" (Twain 3). With this introduction, Huck Finn asserts himself as not simply a character in a book, but as a real person. A book has been written about him, therefore he exists. He believes that even if the reader of this book has not read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, they should acknowledge his personal significance. He springs into view from out of nowhere, as if popping up in front of the reader somewhere on a crowded street, and begins his excited soliloquy. Huck's initial words to the reader are built on several assumptions: first, that the reader cares about his story; second, that the reader has time to hear it; third, that the story itself is worth hearing.

Huck does not wait to hear the reader's potential objections to any of these assumptions. He doesn't even bother to name himself until almost two pages into the story. He takes the reader's attention for granted, then rambles on and makes more claims to his relevance. He notes that Mark Twain—an author who "told the truth, mainly"—wrote Tom Sawyer, but never indicates that Twain himself is the actual author of *Huckleberry Finn* (Twain 3). Instead, Huck uses the fact that Twain has written about him as evidence to make the case for his own literal existence and narrative authority. Huck does not, however, glorify the fact that Twain specifically has written about him before.

Huck's pitch to the reader is this: I am a person you may not have heard of unless you happened to have noticed me in this book that you might not have read, but that's not important; because a book about me exists, I matter and you should listen to me. His quick remark that Tom Sawyer "was made by Mr. Mark Twain" feels more dismissive than exclamatory or boastful, since the detail is not separated from the rest of Huck's rambling (Twain 3). Twain's authorship of the previous book receives no extra emphasis. For Huck, the critical point is not that Mark Twain The Important Author has written about him, but that some writing about him exists at all. Through Huck, Twain skewers both the reader's gullibility and the trope of self-important first person narrators. The novel has been canonized—its narrative is ubiquitously studied and lauded—but its narrator is not an eloquent, educated character detailing some ideological awakening, but rather an illiterate con artist whose biggest heist is stealing the reader's attention by recounting his misadventures for nigh on three hundred pages. Huck does not argue for the reader's attention but he gets it anyway.

Mark Twain trades comical self-referencing for parody-laden literary allusions as the novel progresses. Most notable of these are selected Shakespeare references. *Romeo and Juliet* receives two larger mockeries in the text. The blood-bath that spills over between the Shepherdsons and Grangerfords is the novel's nod to the Montague-Capulet feud upon which the Bard's play is built. But where Shakespeare's treatment of the warring families is tragic, Twain's is farcical. Both conflicts have gone on long enough that the respective families have accepted the burned bridges as de facto. When Harney Shepherdson runs

away with Sophia Grangerford, a gunfight ensues between the families that claims numerous lives from each, but the lovers escape unscathed. This is a violent inversion of the end of Shakespeare's tragedy, in which Romeo and Juliet's deaths prompt the Montagues and Capulets to close the curtain on their feud. Twain situates *Huckleberry Finn* in a snarky conversation with *Romeo and Juliet* by adapting and repurposing the play's tragic denouement. He affirms the literariness of his own work by mocking one of the most well known works by the ostensible master of English letters.

The duke and the king vignettes throw a different jab at Shakespeare's catalog. Their "Shakspearean Revival!!!" [sic] playbill advertises selections from *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, but is actually nothing more than an absurd, idiotic display onstage (Twain 126). In this case, Twain makes a direct reference rather than allusion to Shakespeare's works, but he strips away the source meanings almost entirely. When the duke "[learns Hamlet's soliloquy] to the king," he recites a hodgepodge of Shakespearean dialogue (some of which is actually from the soliloquy) and nonsensical phrases (Twain 125). The king and Huck are similarly ignorant of the real work, so they both accept the duke's version without question.

Huck's unfamiliarity with literature also prevents him from recognizing a similarity between the Montague-Capulet and Shepherdson-Grangerford feuds. The duke and king's performances fully discard the content of the plays—their advertisements appropriate titles and disparate details from Shakespeare's work to create the façade that tricks town after town of illiterate ticket buyers. Just as Huck asserts his relevance as a storyteller by passively noting that he has been written about, the novel self-consciously asserts itself as canonical by making empty references to and fun of the canon. Twain both claims and disparages literary merit and interpretation in his sardonic approach to well-studied drama. He rewrites and recasts Shakespearean tragedy with a band of fools.

By the novel's conclusion, Twain uses metafictional framing to disclaim his authorship. On the book's final page, Huck narrates "there ain't nothing more to write about, and I am rotten glad of it, because if I'd a knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't a tackled it and ain't a going to no more" and soon after signs, "The End. Yours Truly, Huck Finn" (Twain 262). This frames *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a book within a book. The physical volume's cover reports the author as Mark Twain, but the actual text passes authorship to Huck himself. The significance of Huck's opening narration and the novel's introductory notice are thus redefined. Huck's first line to the reader is not the beginning of a live performance, a real time narrative related in first person—it is the first line of a composed account of past events.

Remember that the introductory notice threatening action against meaning-seekers is signed "By order of the author," not "By order of Mark Twain" (Twain 2). That ambiguity enables the initial assumption that the narrative and its preceding material are directly from Twain, when they are actually from Huck. With this final metafictional reversal, Twain playfully bites his thumb at literature. He shirks responsibility for the text but is still allowed to get his

viewpoint across. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is not meant to be parsed for its plot nor its thematic and stylistic elements, and why should it be? An illiterate young boy wrote it.

Work Cited

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. 1885. NY: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.



Untitled
Olivia Sheppard

This is a Morning

Divya Kirti

I take Plan B outside of CVS.
The homeless woman to whom I
always give cigarettes laughs at me,
asks me what Plan A was, sleeping
with women?
She is my only friend right now.
We both watch as the pink button pill pops
out of its foil home, out of my hands, into the trash.
There is a splash. I imagine
garbage-acid dissolves Plan B
as if it's Alka-Seltzer.
Does CVS sell Plan B Part II

or do I have to go to a clinic for that?
I ask the homeless woman if she thinks
the pharmacist will understand what happened
and give me another one for free.
She laughs at me some more and asks
if she can have the rest of my cigarettes
because smoking is bad for babies.

A ghost in my bedroom

Emily Johnson

I got my period
on my first day of high school:
do you bruise easily? A man with a cold stare
pulled over and offered me a ride this morning
I am paying rent
for my own body
but I can't keep spending your money at the bar.
Tuesday smoked my last cigarettes
please, mama, please –
I dragged my shadow
to your apartment
to tell you about spirals I carved
on my third grade desk
I'm afraid of your knees:
so natural and aligned.
A ghost sits at the end of our beds, but
my legs are too short, my impulses too quick.
I've stained years in coffee rings on tables
waiting for a glimpse of the red moon.
Light just filters
under the bodies of ladybugs
and you're playing
with her tongue in my mouth.

Practice

Christopher Gonzalez

I am a blind MC
seeking the sooth sayers cypher
freestyling into my walking stick
I am anonymous in these woods
I am my own songa

wandering from bonfire to bonfire
I seek a guild of griots convening
nightly, I hear there is a band
of blind MC's who see rightly

I hear they are able to sacrifice
their interpersonal fears to carry a collective
flow, and if you're too frightened
to unfold your untold wisdom
motherfucker you've got to go

so I have been practicing
by freestyling into my walking stick
and when I swing it thru the air
I am inquiring
I rely upon the stillness of dead stumps and stones
to get the clearest picture of the pitch black
it all takes shape when my stick smacks
vibrations creep and concretize
and paths begin to form
fogged and iridescent

(darkness forgives my foolishness
and loves me when I question)

Lately I've been freestyling
into my microphone
and when I sing into the air
I am desiring, I rely upon transient
spoken words and hope to peek
the design within the darkness
is a mind I woke to speak to

(I will keep true to the foolish love in question.)
So if I ever do I find the elusive MC's
commune with un-accommodated poets
I will show them I woke to step to fire and spit rhymes that outline a shapeshifting abyss
I'll let the metronome of crackling flame forge me a map, and I'll let it lead me
where meek peace brings rap

yes I will sacrifice my fear
yes I will practice every year

I will see
my own foolishness
through
from shade to shape

Third Grade Science

Madeleine Jackman

Solid: Our natural state

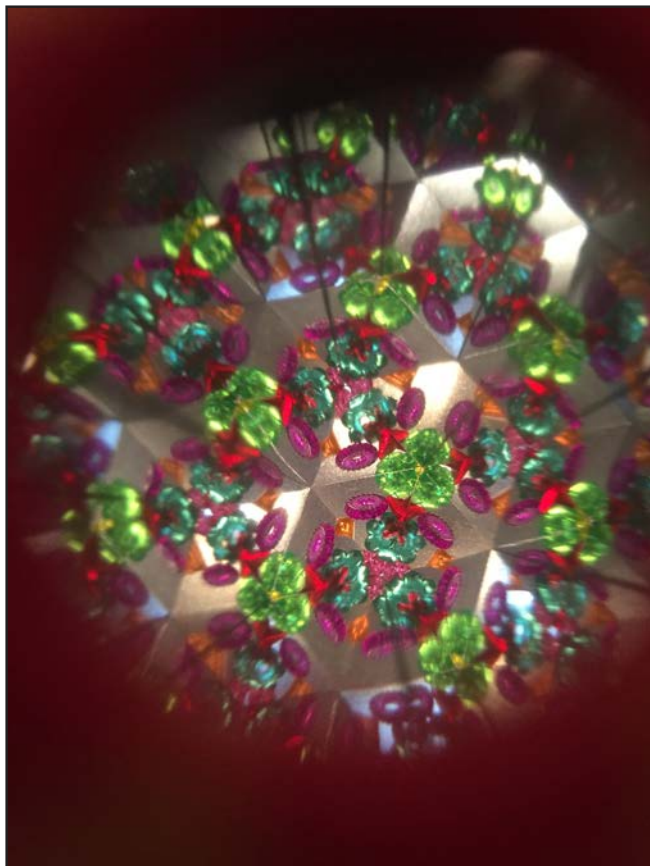
I wasn't born with the ability to crawl through walls.

Liquid: The process of thinning

Starting with an itch I couldn't scratch,
a crack in the wall that led to a river,
I didn't want to break so I learned to flow,
and suddenly the tea in Morocco is too hot,
and the coffee in Peru burns your tongue,
so you're moving faster, scratching the itch harder, and

Gas: The consequence of evaporation

An attempt to fill the atmosphere with my atoms
when I no longer have arms to hold the world.



Scope

Erik Nickerson

On a Bench Outside the Tallest Library in America

Michael Stern

It's hard not to look at the sky; the gleaming sky brushed with soft radiant white. The stars are there too, right where you're looking, but they wait for the gentle window of night. And out of the sky extends a red stone windowed pillar, reaching massively towards the Earth as it collides endlessly, crashing, against the academic stone tiles below.

The students are used to it. You can hear their living voices and thoughts as they walk past with hands in thick pockets, reaching out to push open the double doors and exhale deeply with flushed faces and bright eyes. Their quick determined strides make you think about the schoolwork you're avoiding.

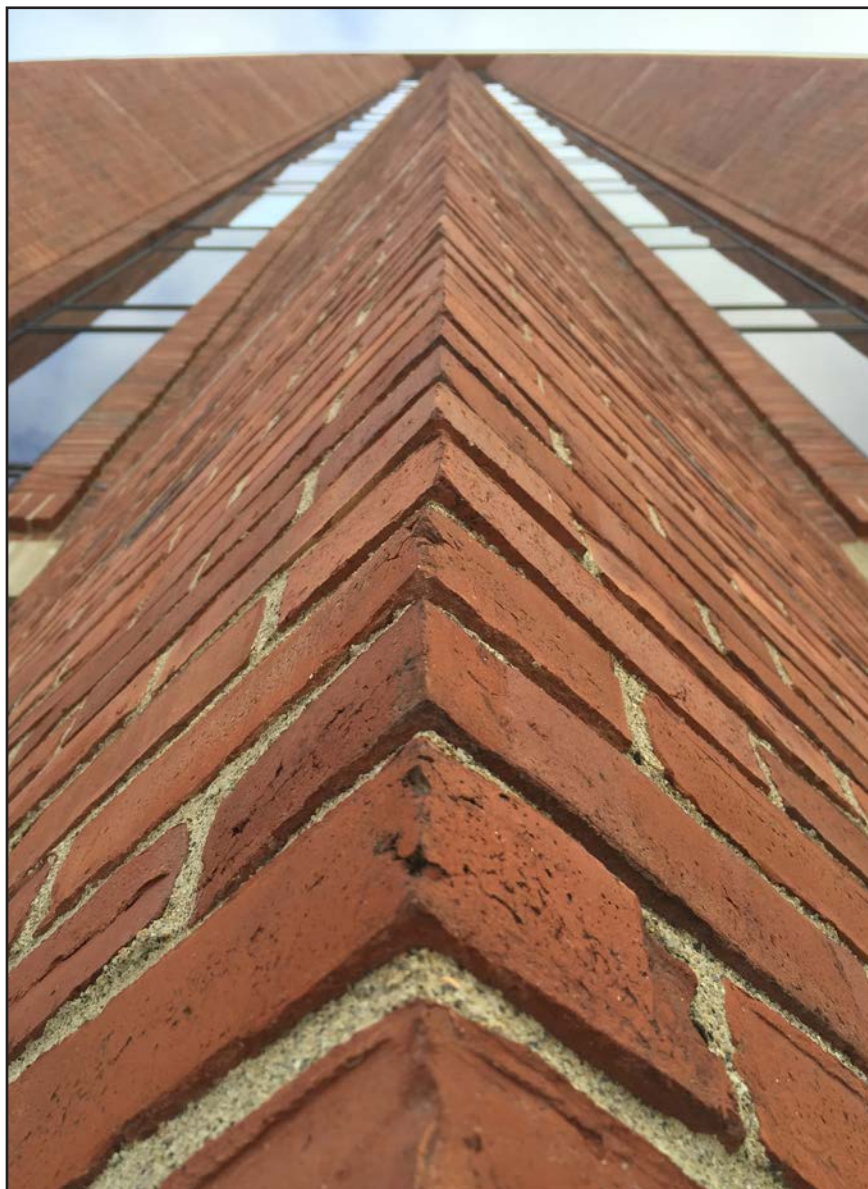
Not that it can ever really be avoided; the future weighs on you like an anchor from above, tied inextricable in a death-knot. But you're used to it—it's just schoolwork: read a few words, type a few words, scribble the chalk. It's not so bad and can even be enjoyable if you have the time, and in any case gives you a curious giddy fluidity when it's done.

But if you look back towards the unmoving library, you'll see that the schoolwork is not alone, not simply an isolated projectile gliding safely towards your sturdy shield. If you look closely (and after a moment this view is inevitable), you'll see that the schoolwork is in fact completely subsumed (and always has been) in something so massive, so amorphous that you think it must be a dream, and you have the strange desperate feeling of wishing you could open your eyes just a little wider to get at least a tenuous grip on so nauseating a situation. And though there are ups and downs the bottom line never changes, and the thing, which seems now to be swelling by the second, hurls ever more wildly towards you, churning, groaning and bubbling silently with a mind of its own, a genius mind. You half-laugh emptily at your flimsy shield, thinking that you must have bought the wrong brand, or something.

But open your eyes and the animate air still swirls with painted leaves, painted faces and dancing words and gestures. If the future is motion then so is this. If this exists (and my God, it must: look at the Sun!) then what power can the future have? What reality can the future hold? What could possibly elude what is already here, under my nose smelling like crunching leaves?

Heedless of the lurching Earth and the deepening night, the footsteps of the students continue. Their voices glide through the fine air, invigorated by unwasted sleeplessness. The tower stands persistent and unmoved, relentlessly reaching towards the nebulous dark sky. Nothing changes, but nothing is ever the same. And here, on this campus, every day more and more so,

the moments are like
sticks in a frozen river
I see from the bank.



DuBois Angles
Erik Nickerson

Danger in the Village

Andrew Hatch

In “Stranger in the Village” James Baldwin presents an essayistic take on black-white relations in America as contrasted with Europe. Presented through this lens, Baldwin’s theories about the rage endemic among black people, and the ignorance present in white people become more poignant and powerful. In this selected passage, Baldwin eloquently captures the rage that he and other black men feel towards the constant oppression they face, while simultaneously attempting to forcibly illuminate the ignorance of white readers.

Baldwin uses violent diction to help bolster his description of the rage that he and his brethren have felt from the first moment they realized how the white world has no place for black people. At a glance, the words of violence strike the reader. Even without comprehending the passage, words like rage, contempt, tension, internal warfare, and power glare out at the reader (122). Baldwin also uses the form of his language to aid the content in this passage. He continually lengthens his sentences, mimicking the strengthening rage he describes as his fervor about the injustice of the world grows. As he derides the almost comically ignorant white people whose thoughtlessness drives black men into ever greater furor, his sentences elongate from ten words, to thirteen, to two monolithic statements coming to 54 and 69 words, respectively. As Baldwin writes, the reader can almost feel his justifiable anger emanating from the ink as his words tumble over each other, thrusting clause upon clause. It feels as if Baldwin cannot find a place to put a period - the words that have been screaming as he, and so many of his kin, silently smiled and acquiesced to their subordination demand to be written down, immediately.

Baldwin structures his second sentence carefully so that the reader is forced to understand his intention clearly. Baldwin states that the concealing of rage that all black people must constantly partake in “deludes the thoughtless” (122) white population of the black population’s contentedness with their current lot, which in turn “strengthens rage and adds, to rage, contempt.” This phrase would have read more efficiently while maintaining grammatical correctness if the comma after “adds” had been removed, or if he had simply said “[it] strengthens rage and adds contempt.” But Baldwin deliberately shies away from this simple sentence construction. The two commas at the end of his sentence force the reader to slow down and realize that contempt is piled upon rage, rather than merely replacing it. Additionally, this construction allows “contempt” to stand alone at the end of the sentence, emphasizing its function and allowing the sentence to end on a sharp, derisive syllable.

Baldwin also makes a subtle allusion to the Civil War that helps explain the phenomenon of black rage. Baldwin states that, whatever method they may try, “no black man can hope ever to be entirely liberated from this internal warfare”. Although he is ostensibly speaking about the internal battle black people must face in order to keep their rage in check, the phrase “liberated from this internal warfare” calls to mind the internal war that liberated the American

slaves from their servitude. Although physical freedom was won, the war and subsequent Reconstruction did little to achieve a ceasefire in the war still raging in the hearts of black people across America. As long as “the power of white men” is still so clearly superior to that of black people, Baldwin is saying, the war continues.

Baldwin’s words have a second, greater purpose in this passage. In addition to revealing the rage due to the prod of white supremacy, Baldwin attempts to slash the blindfold from ignorant white people in order to reveal to them their unwitting treachery, thus coming a step closer to achieving equality. Throughout the passage, Baldwin deliberately directs the reader’s attention to the points he feels are most important. In the beginning of the selection, Baldwin reveals how “dissembling” leads to rage, which in turn accumulates contempt. But then Baldwin repeats these very same words almost immediately. Towards the end of his third sentence, Baldwin uses a dash where a period is expected, thus jarring the reader’s attention to the words that follow. With the readers full attention, Baldwin proceeds to describe how the aforementioned “rage, dissembling, and contempt” have arisen from the “realization of the power of white men.” This, Baldwin is saying, you must understand. The cyclical nature of rage, dissembling, and contempt bears repeating because Baldwin must drill this process into the heads of his white readers, who cannot have imagined that such a war is waged behind the eyes of every black person they meet.

Immediately afterwards, Baldwin again appeals for the reader’s attention. He begins his fourth and final sentence of the paragraph with an obvious plea, saying “What is crucial here is that...” Baldwin is begging for understanding from his reader, even taking them by the hand through his most important statement in order to foster their cognizance. Baldwin follows this plea by asserting that “white men have for black men a reality which is far from being reciprocal,” and therefore black men are compelled to “rob the white man of the jewel of his naivete”. This is the crux of Baldwin’s argument, and he makes sure the reader knows it. The black rage he has enumerated is a symptom of the oppression foisted upon black people by the white people in power, which is made even more infuriating by their abject refusal to acknowledge or take ownership of their own tyranny. So the mission of black people, therefore, is to seize this deliberate ignorance away. This is why Baldwin was so intent on directing the reader’s attention to certain points of this passage. It was borne out of the hope that his words, so finely crafted, could hold the power to steal away this tainted innocence.

In the passage, Baldwin speaks in absolutes and assumes the voice of all black people in order to make his points about the discrimination in society more powerful. Baldwin says that “no black man” can escape black rage, just as all black men are weighed down by the crush of white people, just as “all black men have towards all white men an attitude which is designed...to rob the white man...of his naivete” (122). At first, Baldwin’s decision to speak for all black people seems presumptive. But when the power structures at play are considered, Baldwin’s decision makes sense. As a well-educated, eloquent writer, Baldwin has the ability, and perhaps even the responsibility, to speak for the countless black

Baldwin understands that he must use his sliver of power in order to attempt to create a crack in white society's armor, which may one day help to lever the whole horrid thing apart. If Baldwin can force some small portion of his white readership to understand the problem America is facing, then the war in the hearts of black souls may be quieted, even if the result is only one fewer casualty. This is why Baldwin makes no apologies for assuming the voices of so many disparate lives as his own. Only if the oppression can be recognized by those in power as not just rampant, but universal, may progress be achieved.

In the paragraph directly following the selection, Baldwin reveals the luridly simple yet unthinkable solution to America's race problem. Baldwin knows that the black man only wishes, "by whatever means he finds at his disposal, that the white man cease to regard him as an exotic rarity and recognize him as a human being." The onus, then is on white people to cast aside their ignorance, and accept the offer constantly being placed upon the table by those they subjugate. Of course, Baldwin is well aware of this difficulty, and acknowledges the oxymoronic "will power involved in the white man's naivete" (122). True naivete should not need to involve any sort of willpower, but as Baldwin describes, white people cling quite ferociously to their worldviews, even when they may be vaguely aware that there is something terribly wrong with them.

This concept of willful naivete, and the black struggle to wrest it from whites, provides the backbone of the rest of Baldwin's essay. Baldwin believes that the "moral beliefs of a person, or a people, are never really as tenuous...[as they] appear" because without these beliefs that there is some controlling moral authority in the universe, "life would scarcely be bearable" (126). This is another point where Baldwin directs the reader's attention, announcing that this consideration is "of the greatest importance" to understanding "the Negro in America" (126). This is another fact Baldwin's supposed white readership must be aware of so that they may relinquish safely the beliefs they have built their lives upon, if such a deed is possible.

Baldwin considers the constant, hands-over-the-eyes refusal of white America to see their fellow black citizens as humans a disease. The persistent denial necessary to dismiss the "human weight and complexity" of an entire segment of the American citizenry "approaches the pathological" (127). Baldwin believes that those who "shut their eyes to reality simply invite their own destruction" (129). In this way, Baldwin illustrates how closely entangled the fates of people, both black and white, have become. Each risks destruction by the other's hand. No matter how lovely the pirouettes or how well-executed the flips, the mental gymnastics necessary to continue life as usual in America have reached critical mass. Once more, in the final paragraph of his essay, Baldwin calls for the reader's attention, telling them that "the time has come to realize the interracial drama...has created a new white man too" (129). The very identity white people have fought to protect has now become an identity predicated on protecting an outdated notion of it. The only salvation, Baldwin says, is the ability of black people to "turn [their] peculiar status in the Western world to [their] own advantage, and it may be, to the very great advantage of that world" (128).

In their entwined fates, the salvation of the black race by the destruction of white supremacy can only serve to cure the pox of denial America has been plagued by since slaves were first shackled in Jamestown. To achieve this end, Baldwin asserts, the black man must “fashion out of his experience that which will give him sustenance, and a voice” (129). This restorative voice is what Baldwin has been aiming for the entire essay, or perhaps even his whole career, as *Notes of a Native Son* shares similar, although less incisive, sentiments. His constant, pointed direction of the reader’s gaze towards the goals which must be voiced, coupled with his eloquent language and mastery of English, allow Baldwin to address the problem of white ignorance more effectively than almost any other person could. Only by listening to Baldwin’s voice of reason, and understanding his rage, may America be white no longer - and perfectly content with that.

Works Cited

Baldwin, James. "Stranger in the Village". Boston: Beacon, 1955. Print



Becket, MA
Xavier Williams



Becket, MA
Xavier Williams

A Soliloquy for Harper Lee

Michael Agnello

Believe me,
I care about her deeply.
But the reality remains
that I will not be able to sustain anything substantial with her and unfortunately,
I think she's well aware

It just seems to be our personalities
We both need the same level of melodramatic tension to feel the feeling we always
convinced ourselves was enjoyable
Loneliness,
encompassing nostalgia,
encompassing self-deprecation,
encompassing humility
A mutual pact, if you will

She writes to me with the hope I don't write back

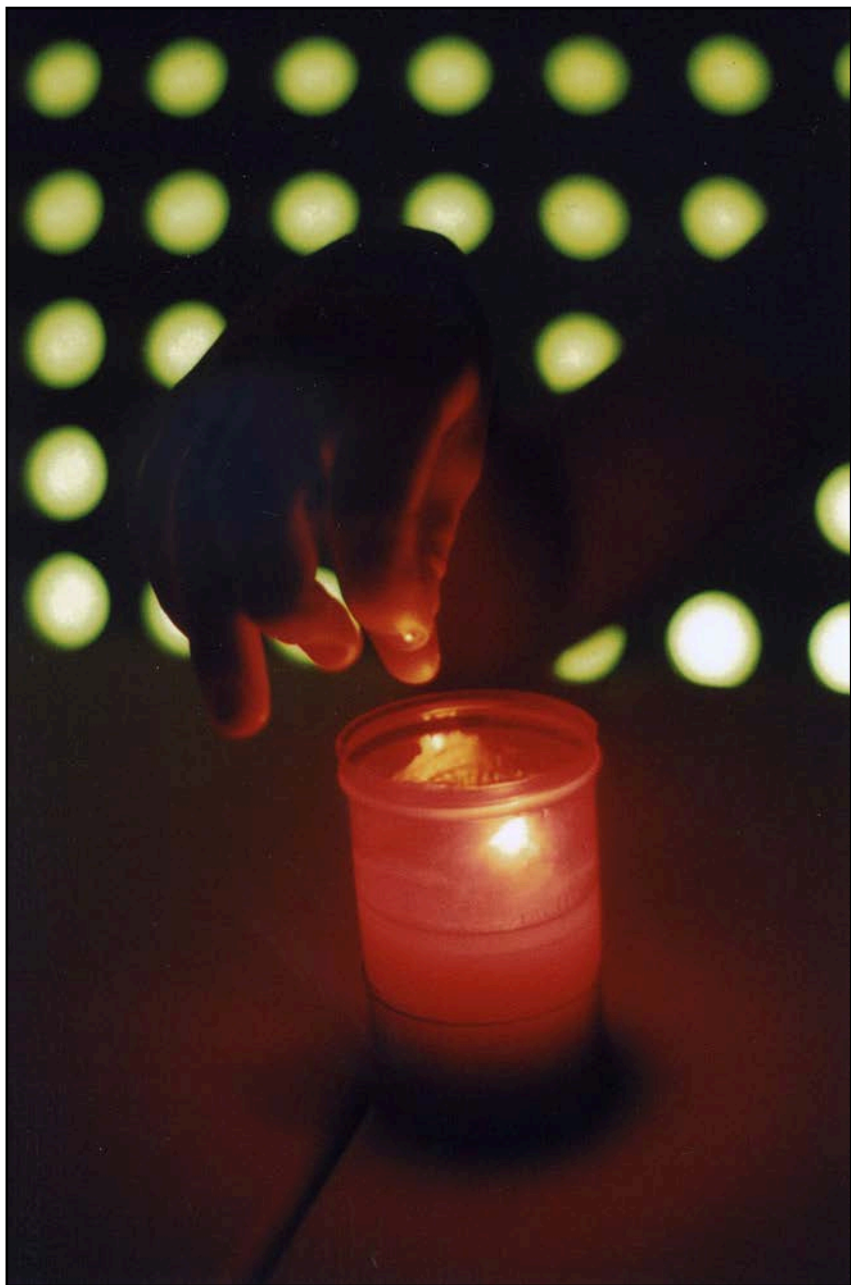
It's a way to control the tension

But in keeping with our melodramatic urges,
I never open the letters.
And what a power it is,
I might add,
To control tension.

Skipping

Nathan Galloway

Like that card game when you
don't get to play that turn
or how you can run down
the street if you are
particularly happy
or like
not going to class for a
bad reason
like jump rope or a synonym of that
I think
like not eating breakfast because
you feel sick because you hopscotched
bed last night
or like glossing over something that does not serve your purpose
accidental "fuck you"
you barely exist to me
hopscotch



Untitled
Yelena Rasic

Blanket

Ashley Ruiz Robles

I sit on the foot of the bed, curls falling out of my bun, make-up streaked. I cross my arms trying to keep myself from crumbling all over the carpet. I try to control my shallow breathing, my trembling sighs. I can't. I can't. And I don't think I ever will.

"How could you ask me such a thing?" I say in a cracked whisper. His face is shadowed by the light filtering in through the bathroom door, but I can feel him watching me from across the room.

"We've known this all along," he responds in a condescending half scream half whisper, taking a seat on the other side of the bed. His face displays a serious calmness as if we were discussing the weather, as if I was a stranger, as if I had been the one who begged him to run away, who begged him for love.

The bed creaks as I crawl towards him, my bare knees rubbing against the white blankets. He looks into my eyes as if to prove he isn't intimidated, but I need to convince him. I need to save us. "We can do this."

"We can't," he drops his gaze and I slump down to the floor reaching for the beads dangling around my neck. I move my fingers praying for a miracle.

"But what am I supposed to tell my mother? How will I face—"

"You'll do it. We won't tell anyone." He rises and walks past me to the window. I thought I was done crying, that I was at least able to control my tears.

"I can't. I won't." I stand, my legs threatening to give. "Look at me!" I grab his bare chin turning his face to mine. I kiss his neck, his cheek, his mouth begging him to stop looking at the ground, begging him to respond. "We'll make sacrifices. I'll make sacrifices."

"Stop," he mumbles.

"I'll get a job. I'll—"

He pushes me and my shoulder slams against the wall. "I said stop! I've already decided."

I recoil and fall to the ground, resisting the urge to reach for the beads.

...

He walks through the threshold of the quiet house after an excruciating day at work. He loosens his tie and drops his suitcase. "I'm home."

To his surprise, she greets him with a smirk on her face. He hasn't seen her since last night—she locked herself in their room, while he slept on the old couch listening to her cries. She looks years older. She looks like her mother.

"Good," she says with a flirtatious smile, kissing his shadowed cheek.

"How are you?" He asks cautious, alert, expecting her to explode.

She sighs turning towards the outdated kitchen. "I'm okay though I couldn't sleep."

"I see." He follows her and takes a seat at the head of the table.

"What's that supposed to mean?" She places a warm plate of rice and beans before him the way he likes it, the way his mother did for his father.

He picks up the fork trying to avoid the argument brewing between them. "Aren't you going to eat?"

He points to the empty placemat in front of her. She doesn't respond and he suppresses the urge to tell her to stop, to get over it.

"Did you hear that?" She asks, her eyes distant. He drops his fork and watches her stare at the empty hall. She rises and he notices her hair is in a disheveled bun, her make-up is smudged, her dress has brown stains, her eyes are rimmed red. She's changed.

"Where are you going?"

She gives him a toothy smile. The same smile she donned when they married, the smile of someone ridiculously happy or crazy in love. "I'm coming baby," she says running down the dark hallway and into their room.

I can't do this, he thinks, opting to remain seated as he finishes his meal.

...

She sits on the crumpled bedsheets cuddling her beautiful baby wrapped in the red blanket.

"Don't cry my angel," she whispers rocking her arms up and down, trying to soothe the baby. He continues to cry and she rocks him back and forth, back and forth, but it doesn't work.

Why won't he stop? He's right, she thinks, he's right. I'm a failure, a terrible wife, a horrible mother. I can't even make him stop crying.

"La-la-la-please-baby-sleep." She rocks him faster, harder, but his high pitched wail won't cease. "Mommy's-here-Mommy-loves-you," she tries to keep singing but her throat feels tight as she begins tearing up at the realization that regardless of how hard she tries, she can't do anything right. Their cries intertwine, echoing throughout the house.

"What are you doing?" he asks opening the bedroom door. He takes a step and stops when he realizes she's crying. "What's wrong?"

"He won't stop crying," she replies with a chuckled sob.

He stares at the woman rocking back and forth on the bed. As he begins to approach her, he sees a trail of drops that begin in the bathroom and end in a pool on the bed. He kneels in front of her, between her stained legs, looking at her face wet with snot and tears.

"Why are you crying?" He places his hand on her shoulder. She continues to cry and he shakes her. He won't tolerate this anymore. "What's wrong?"

"It's the baby" she says pushing the blanket towards his face. He sighs. He doesn't need this, they talked about it. It's done. He rises pinching the bridge of his nose.

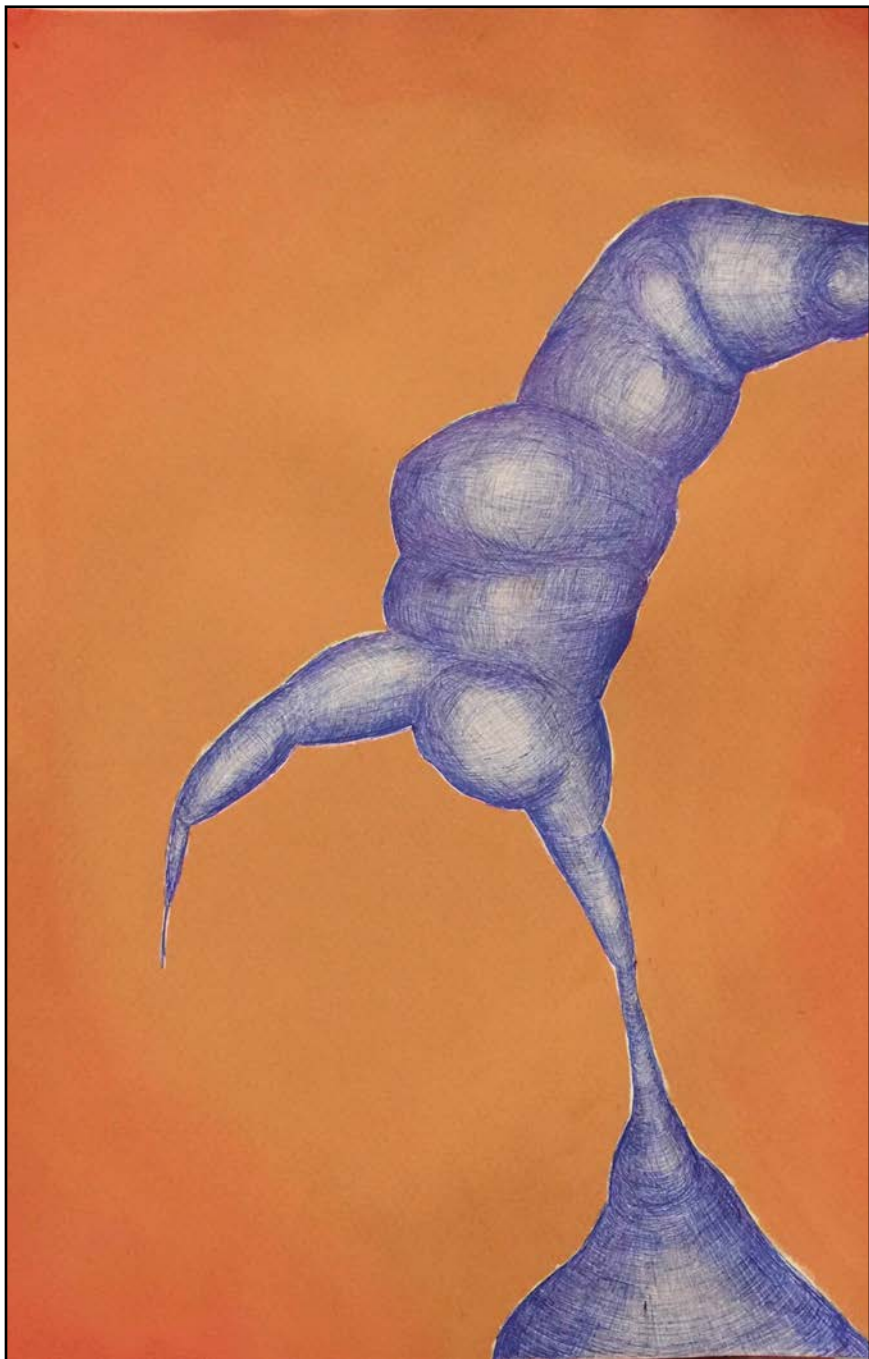
"Not this again."

"Here, take him." She pushes the blanket towards him, hoping he'll be able to calm the baby.

He snatches the blanket away from her, smashing it to the ground. "Stop this!"

She screams and runs to the bundle on the carpet. "Monster! How could you?" She pulls it to her face. For a second he softens, he feels for her, for the baby, but the moment passes. He sighs in disgust, throwing his hands up in resignation. He turns to leave. She whimpers.

"I'm sorry."



Untitled
Julia Caudle

Lump In My Throat

Ashley Ruiz Robles

When we lived in Puerto Rico my family didn't have money, so we couldn't afford to buy a refrigerator with an ice maker. All we had was a beige second hand fridge that didn't work well in the summer. If we wanted ice, we'd have to fill the yellowed plastic trays and wait, for what felt like days, for the water to freeze. My sister and I were forced to drink all of our beverages lukewarm because Pa was afraid we'd choke on an ice cube. But sometimes I would sneak into the freezer in the middle of the day, when Mami was outside hanging clothes on the line and Pa was in the yard fixing the car. I'd suck an ice cube, keeping it between my teeth and my cheek, until it was small enough to crush. I was in charge, until one day I wasn't. I'd been hiding, in my secret nook under the porch, when the cube slipped. I squirmed on the dusty ground and lifted my hands to my throat, gasping for air. It was scarier than any asthma attack I'd ever suffered, even the ones in which my chest felt so tight I couldn't eat my dinner. That's how I feel now, except it's worse because the waitress serving our table, during this awful family reunion, is waiting for me to translate our order. But this lump's not melting and my sister and I will never agree on why our family separated: our rebelliousness or our parents' strictness. My father frowns, as my mother stretches her jewel adorned hand across the table. I rise from my chair and run outside, into the snowy night, where I can hide my hateful tears from those familiar strangers.

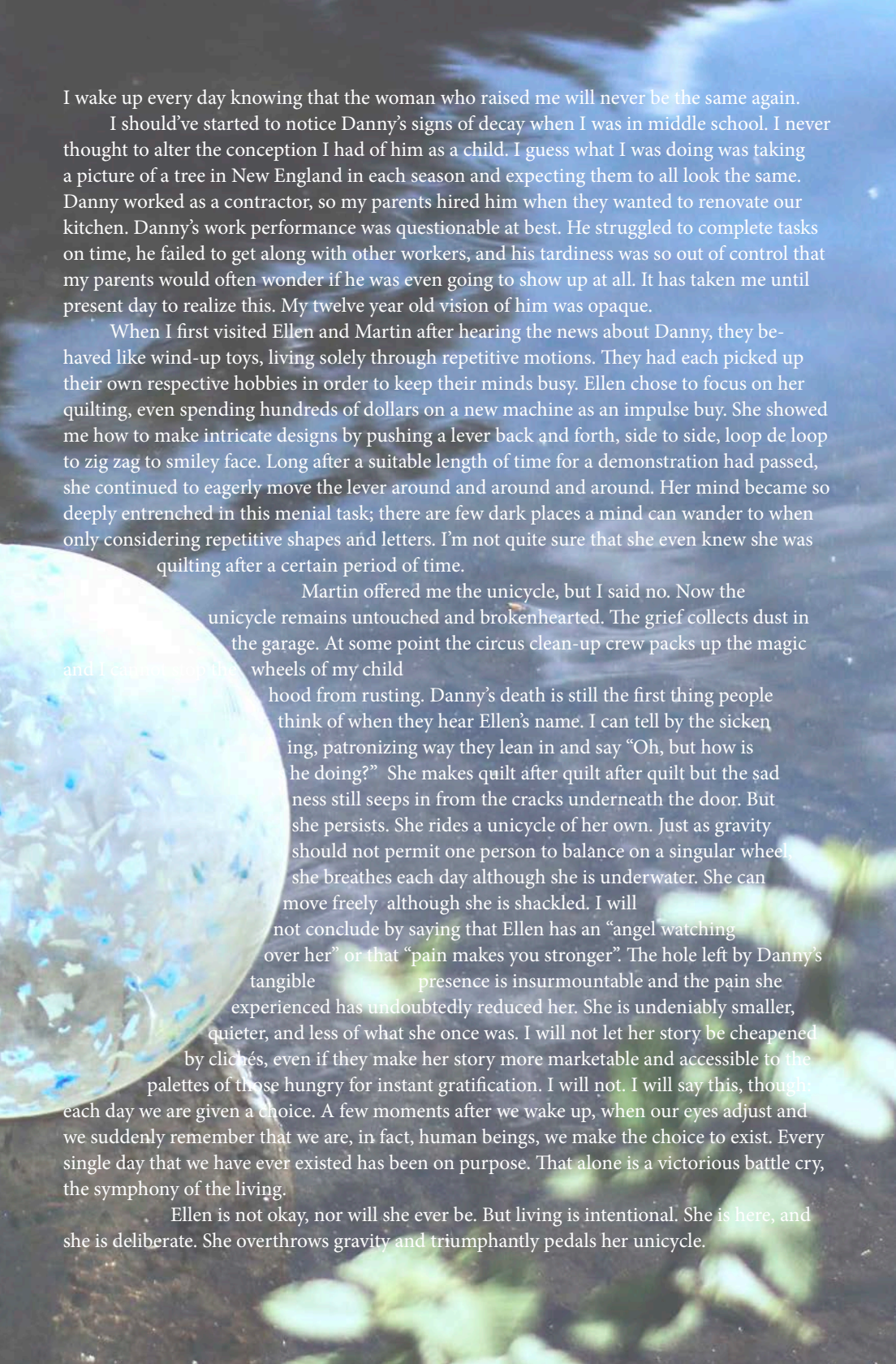
Danny rode around on a silver unicycle. He could do tricks on it and ride around me in circles. He whistled happy melodies and had a smile that seemed to illuminate every other feature of his body, particularly his eyes that glowed every time he found something amusing. His brother, Martin, was fun too, but he was just the opening act to the spectacle that was Danny O'Leary. I was five when they were in their twenties. They were just being kind by helping their mother, my nanny, look after me. Of course I didn't see it this way at the time. I saw Danny as a valid marriage prospect.

Danny could make any dog fall in love with him. It was a talent. My own dog, Lilly, would jump on him and frantically lick his face every time he entered our house. There was something about him that was so inherently dog-like that he could not help but form these bonds. Maybe it was the way he would smile as he drove around in his truck and felt the breeze encompass his face. Maybe it was the way he would flop down on the couch and sprawl out after a long day like he never wished to leave, but then jump right up again each time a new person entered the room. He had unlimited enthusiasm for greeting people. Either way, his energy was so pure that he attracted every canine within a five mile radius. He was also great with babies. He loved to laugh at their fat thighs and fat stomachs; he loved the way they could laugh at their fat thighs and fat stomachs, too. He would sing to them, and they would always have the same laugh: light but shrieky, bubbly but meaningful. He was a spectacle, that Danny. He gave us a thrill each time he sang the song of my youth from atop his shiny unicycle.

Thirteen years later his unicycle crashed and came to an abrupt stop. I stood in their kitchen with Martin and stared at the sympathy cards with Danny's face. Flowers covered the room, trying to fill the void of a human life with their colors and fragrances. So many kind gestures, but I would never un-hear my mother's choked up voice as she told me that Danny hung himself. But he was so dog-like. This couldn't be true. I didn't know that maybe he only loved the wind on his face as he drove because it reminded him of the heavens, an existence free of pain. I guess that the way he slumped on the couch in between greeting people was actually caused by an overdose of socialization. I knew that these things happened, but not to Danny. I guess what I had assumed at the time was that if you made enough people laugh, you would never die. I thought that the wheel of his unicycle would continue to spin and spin and spin.

I was visiting Martin and Ellen, Danny's mother/my nanny, with my mother. I had never seen adults cry as much as I did then. I thought that time would eventually dry out your tear ducts. I thought that age was a desert. Ellen was a woman raised by hardship. She grew up in Germany during World War II. She gave us rations of Skittles every day and taught us what survival was before we were old enough to comprehend it. Ellen reminds me of childhood trips to the beach; she is the groovy rock produced by years of erosion from the splashing waves. She is the remaining sediment that refuses to be worn down by the persistent waters. When I was young, I had yet to see a geological process. Ellen could not withstand. Then Danny's loss became her tsunami. Everything before that had been a gentle stroke of the hand from soothing waters. Because of Danny,





I wake up every day knowing that the woman who raised me will never be the same again.

I should've started to notice Danny's signs of decay when I was in middle school. I never thought to alter the conception I had of him as a child. I guess what I was doing was taking a picture of a tree in New England in each season and expecting them to all look the same. Danny worked as a contractor, so my parents hired him when they wanted to renovate our kitchen. Danny's work performance was questionable at best. He struggled to complete tasks on time, he failed to get along with other workers, and his tardiness was so out of control that my parents would often wonder if he was even going to show up at all. It has taken me until present day to realize this. My twelve year old vision of him was opaque.

When I first visited Ellen and Martin after hearing the news about Danny, they behaved like wind-up toys, living solely through repetitive motions. They had each picked up their own respective hobbies in order to keep their minds busy. Ellen chose to focus on her quilting, even spending hundreds of dollars on a new machine as an impulse buy. She showed me how to make intricate designs by pushing a lever back and forth, side to side, loop de loop to zig zag to smiley face. Long after a suitable length of time for a demonstration had passed, she continued to eagerly move the lever around and around and around. Her mind became so deeply entrenched in this menial task; there are few dark places a mind can wander to when only considering repetitive shapes and letters. I'm not quite sure that she even knew she was quilting after a certain period of time.

Martin offered me the unicycle, but I said no. Now the unicycle remains untouched and brokenhearted. The grief collects dust in the garage. At some point the circus clean-up crew packs up the magic and I cannot see the wheels of my childhood from rusting. Danny's death is still the first thing people think of when they hear Ellen's name. I can tell by the sickening, patronizing way they lean in and say "Oh, but how is he doing?" She makes quilt after quilt after quilt but the sadness still seeps in from the cracks underneath the door. But she persists. She rides a unicycle of her own. Just as gravity should not permit one person to balance on a singular wheel, she breathes each day although she is underwater. She can move freely although she is shackled. I will not conclude by saying that Ellen has an "angel watching over her" or that "pain makes you stronger". The hole left by Danny's tangible presence is insurmountable and the pain she experienced has undoubtedly reduced her. She is undeniably smaller, quieter, and less of what she once was. I will not let her story be cheapened by clichés, even if they make her story more marketable and accessible to the palettes of those hungry for instant gratification. I will not. I will say this, though: each day we are given a choice. A few moments after we wake up, when our eyes adjust and we suddenly remember that we are, in fact, human beings, we make the choice to exist. Every single day that we have ever existed has been on purpose. That alone is a victorious battle cry, the symphony of the living.

Ellen is not okay, nor will she ever be. But living is intentional. She is here, and she is deliberate. She overthrows gravity and triumphantly pedals her unicycle.

To a Daylily Friend

Mariam Taleb

We reach the peak, a temple, in silence, and find shallow ponds
where frogs breathe frightened
or exhilarated at the surface and only I see them.

She says her mother would call her a frog or a monster
if she knew.

I say not to confuse the three, it would be
too sober a way to worry about the light
on my teeth or my skin
or her teeth near my skin.

She tells me she loves me
or my belly, or my breasts,
and she is not sure, but she is sorry.

The daylily rips itself open in the morning
drops away wilted, a peachcolor tissue
each night.

It grows here, unnatural along paths; does not
belong on this green-thick summer mountain.

I am, sorry, too. She I think, is not sorry to me, but
sorry that down at the bottom of the mountain
in her mother's old car
she will be a frog or a monster
and I'll still be bubbling
at the pond's surface,
dragonflies gliding over head.



She
Mariam Taleb

Loss of Enchantment

Ashley Ruiz Robles

My parents gave me America
along with a one way plane ticket in 1999
My parents gave me their dreams
read from gold bound books
while living in cockroach infested
one bedroom apartments
My parents gave me language
and a tube of original chapstick
so that the words
I was learning in kindergarten
wouldn't burn my lips
My parents gave
until I no longer remembered
the melody of the coqui
the stem of the recaó between my fingers
the cleansing drops of the evening aguacero
or the rolling of my r's
Or that regardless
of how far away
of how long ago
of how much I tried
I would always be Puerto Rican.

Stop Calling Me When You're High

Jacob Phillips

Late night talks form rocks in my stomach—
Formidable enough to match the ones you smoke.
You joke like it's funny, then you light a stogie,
And I'm stuck with the telephone's echo.
I pace the room while you giggle and gaggle
And hack up bits of yourself en masse.
For pleasure, I measure the time not in ticks,
But in breaths I hold silent in hopes there's a god
Who will save you. I'm telling—not asking or begging
Or crying. We're not doing that again.
We're older now; I've grown out of pants
While you've grown out of yourself and run out of plans.



Untitled
Zulay Holland

In a meadow wildflowers sprung from the damp Earth, joyously craning their necks together, proclaiming with pride their victory over winter. But not everyone could join in the celebration - a patch of flowers, eight feet by eight, had been muffled, trampled by the assault of a red and white checkered blanket.

The vanguard oaks stood huddled together in a grove, gossiping about the scene they saw before them. Two humans, strange creatures with too-long arms and constantly squawking mouths, sat on a blanket. But these humans were silent, although they sat close - close enough to be familiar, but too far for the approval of the oaks. Why don't they just tangle their roots. It will make them both stronger against the wind and the rain, they agreed.

A herd of white-tailed deer ambled among the trees. A proud buck, magnificent in form and sure of his power, clashed with a young challenger, antlers locked in a primordial dance. When the proud old buck emerged victorious, the herd moved on without ceremony or consolation for the young buck. His era of pride would come. As he dashed through the forest, he saw the young human buck sitting next to a doe, and wondered what great fight he'd lost.

The young human male sat on the blanket and counted the checkered squares of distance that lay between where he was sitting uncomfortably, sweating, and where she lounged, toying with her soft thick brown hair, looking at the mountains in the distance, somehow perfect. He nervously fingered the note he'd written. Wondered if he should just say it. If the courage he'd been training like a drill sergeant for the past week was strong enough. He analyzed the things she'd said to him - what she said, what might have been said, each word a gift so precious he could not believe such a being would bestow them upon him.

On a crystal lake two swans swam near the shore, watching. They watched as the male seemed to drift without moving, as if repelled by the immense gravity of what lay before him. And they saw with keen eyes the glance, so hasty, so thin on the thread of fate, that the female shot in the direction of the male before coming to rest in their well worn occupation of pretending to admire the skyline spilling orange. And one swan said to the other, Imagine if we'd been that way. And they shared a beautiful private lover's laugh and paddled away, necks curving together, twin wakes melding into one before dissolving into nothingness.

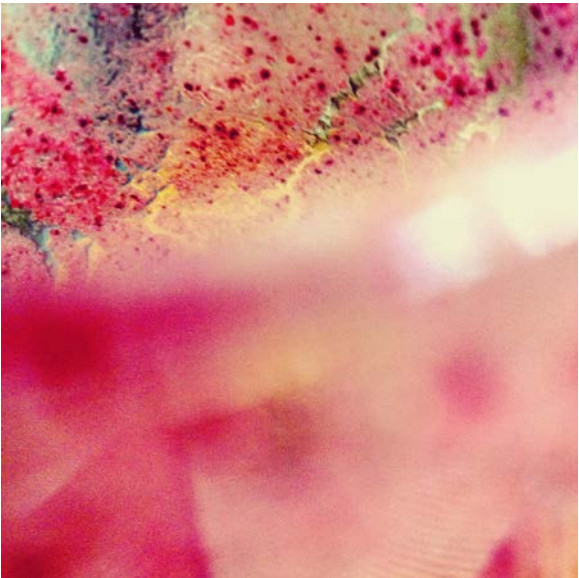
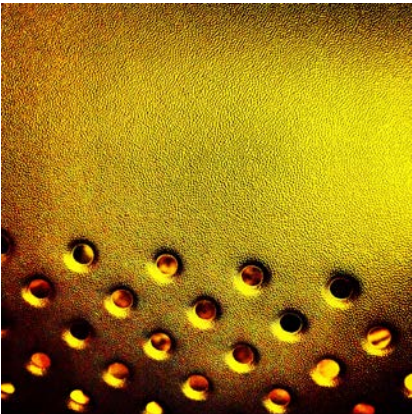
On that red and white checkered blanket in the center of the universe, one of them must have mentioned the sun was going down, and it was getting late, and they should really probably be getting home now. And as they both got up to leave, each paused; and the oaks held their leaves still, and the swans turned back to look - but the two stammered goodbyes, and began to walk, separate directions. As they walked it was as if a cord, a golden shimmering brilliant thread was stretched taut between them, tightening, each step drawing them backward with gathering force like a rubber band - but still they walked. The thread grew tighter and more desperate, pulling frantically as it began to tear, and the pair could no longer ignore the will of the pull as their pace slowed nearly to a stop, but neither dared to look back. For a moment, it seemed as though they would sway back like a pendulum at zenith, an oak in a storm, until - one shattering step -

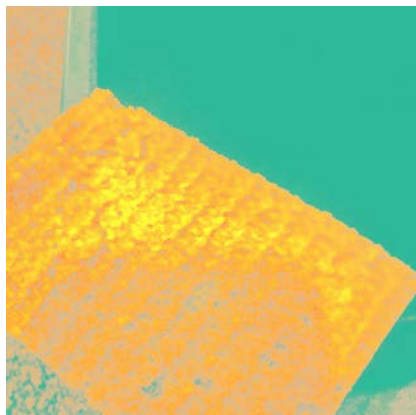
They lurched forward and hurried away, heads bowed. And the fairytales were lies, and a world was razed, and the oaks screamed, and the swans shared tears.

As he fled in the failing light, the grass lost a shade of green, the oaks bent apart, and the swans had flown away in different directions.

And he could only wonder if she felt the same.

Decontextualized_____A photo series by Nathan Frontiero





I wanted to explore the idea of ripping an object out of its context to create an engrossingly indecipherable image. How much can you transform something ordinary just by manipulating a tightly framed picture of it, and in what ways might you elicit interest in that new space—in the new colors and contrasts, the newfound abstract?

"I want to draw your eyes right now."

MaKayla Allen

Say you better do it quick.
Currently not much to them.
Always packed in my knees' ends,
ready to sink
to the earth and
empty the gathered
sediment.
Push aside the snow to establish
the age-old connection.
Smeared myself in mud as a
kid and learned
to
shade my drawings with incessancy
rather than classic
thumb-end
blending.

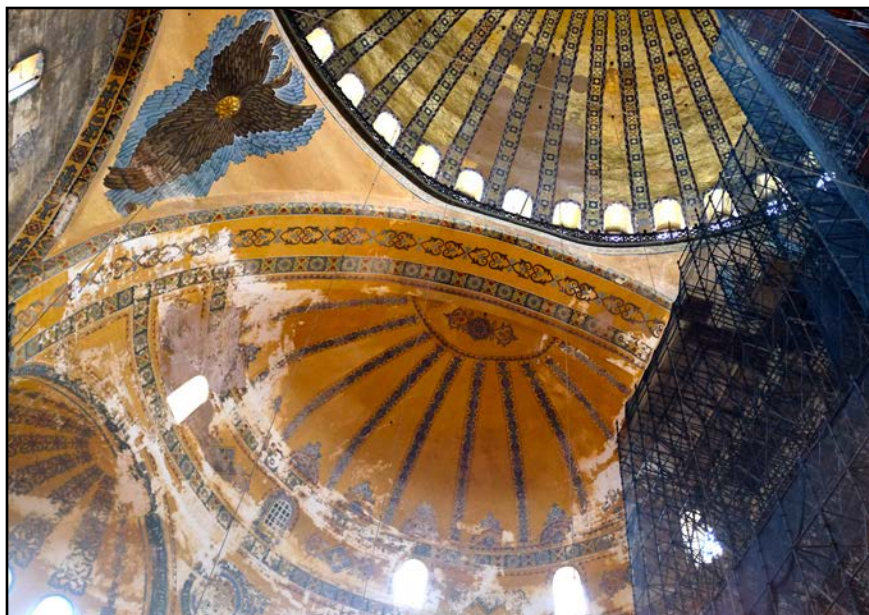
Because
you're blue
I'm green.

Thank you, Please Come Again

Nathan Frontiero

Maybe the best policy
is to keep your body
open during normal
business hours

and your heart under
construction and
closed until
further notice.



Reconstruction
Yelena Rasic



Smam
Erik Nickerson

The Idiosyncrasies of Magic

Elizabeth Riezinger

Sebastian Quigley could not figure out how his life had ended up this way. He shuffled down the boardwalk, head barely held high enough to keep his top hat atop his head. His shoes made an empty, hollow noise on the wooden slats of the boardwalk as he stepped. He no longer cared for magic. It didn't exist. Perhaps it never really had.

He was remembering that very morning, the hazy way the light filtered in through their windows and the sound of Jacque's lazy laugh from the bed after biting into a peach; a peach that Sebastian had pulled from his magician's hat and tossed to him with a flourish as he got dressed that morning. The juice ran down his lips and stuck to his mustache as they continued joking together throughout the morning, getting ready to part ways for the work day. Sebastian had always said that making Jacque laugh was the only magic that had ever mattered.

"Well, not anymore," he supposed.

He decided to walk once more down the boardwalk and through the carnival where he had performed nearly every day of the past few years. The ocean sighed under his feet. He heard the laughter of children as they climbed atop merry-go-round steeds and his face softened at this, the hint of a smile hid in the corners of his lips. Sebastian passed brightly swaying balloons, trash bins overflowing with half-eaten hot dogs and depressing melted puffs of cotton candy, and a child hurriedly licking at a Creamsicle that dripped the same orange as the setting sky. He furrowed his dark brow once again, looking down at his feet as he walked. Sebastian thought about all the days and sunsets that would exist now without Jacque, and it made every day and sunset that they had enjoyed together seem like it had never happened at all.

They're sitting on the cold sand; the sky is an honest evening blue on the cusp of nighttime.

"We live in a paradise." Jacque says, leaning back on his elbows, legs crossed, exhaling cigarette smoke. It swirls around his face before disappearing into thin air.

"Or is it all just smoke and mirrors?" Sebastian jokes, looking out at the horizon.

But he really wondered. He was surrounded by smiling children and adults but day after day their joy was ultimately awarded by deceiving them, tricking them. Taking their money in exchange to baffle them. To supply wonder with no redemption for their curiosity. As the years went by, less and less people approached him after his magic tricks. No one wanted to know the secrets behind them anymore, it seemed. People were getting lazy, or less astounded. And Jacque already knew all there was to be revealed. But the world is lonely for people with secrets no one wants to know.

“Leave it to the magician to be a skeptic.” Jacque scoffs, but smiles. He sits upright and crosses his legs again, a cigarette loosely hugged between his lips. He looks at Sebastian with mischievous eyes. Sand sticks to the sweat of their clasped hands.

“You need to relax and enjoy life. Look at us! The world is, magical, if you will.” He says with a wink, then rocks forward in the sand to stand up in one calculated, muscled motion. He bends over to snuff out his cigarette in the sand and flicks it away from him before running towards the waves, taking off his shirt and surrendering it to the sea breeze where it flies briefly before dying to the sand. Sebastian watches him and chuckles, unfolding his long legs and jogging after him to the foamy edge of the water. He liked the way the sand felt shifting under his feet, giving way to the footprints he would leave behind. Jacque dives into wave after wave, sometimes pausing in-between to grin back at Sebastian on the shore. The spray erupts over his broad shoulders with each dive, his muscles rippling with effort. Sebastian was familiar with the taste of salt left behind on his skin after these excursions. Salt water didn’t always taste like sadness. With Jacque it had tasted like, well, magic.

The ocean becomes serious after the sun sets, its waves tame and quiet, a soundtrack of sighs. Jacque is still out there, now floating on top of the water staring at the sky. Sebastian stands tall at it’s edge and closes his eyes, trying to feel the immensity of water in front of him. Even then, it had only felt like a mild suffocation.

A young girl ran from booth to booth in excitement at the possible prizes then stopped to tug on her mother’s blouse, pleading for extra tickets to play the ring toss at the chance of winning a giant grinning stuffed bear. Her mother smiled and stroked her pigtails before reaching into her purse and giving her the desired tickets. Soon, he knew the teenagers would take over the night scene of the carnival and unswept corners of the boardwalk would be littered with cigarette butts.

“This is the way of the careless summer... When you know you have what seems like a thousand more.” Sebastian thought. But he knew better.

The wind had picked up subtly and now flirted with his magician’s cape. Sebastian unhooked the clasp at his neck and allowed it to fly behind him momentarily before collecting in a heap on the boardwalk as he continued walking, never looking back. The carnival was behind him and the Ferris Wheel waved an infinite goodbye as he walked down to the end of the pier. The sun had finally slipped below the horizon and a perceived stillness was beginning to set over the water.

Sebastian stood on the very edge of the pier and remembered a time long ago when his mother and father held his small wrists and swung him back and forth over the edge. He had been delighted and terrified, sure that he would be let go and swallowed by the dark waters. Now, without any familiar hand to hold, he was doubly terrified.

Sebastian thought about how he had ended up here, about the realization he came to during his brief trip to their apartment a few hours earlier, after he had gotten the news. He hadn't known where else to go.

Wine glasses from the night before stood abandoned on their small dining table, encrusted with loneliness and lip prints of the recently deceased.

"Jacque shouldn't have even been drinking wine." Sebastian thought, smiling incredulously and shaking his head. But Jacque didn't follow anyone's rules, and he really, really liked wine.

Sebastian hadn't even known Jacque's heart had irregular and numbered beats, or that he had made the choice not to reveal his ailment to anyone. When questioned once, he had joked that the prescription medication he took nightly was Viagra. They had laughed a good deal about it and neither of them mentioned it again. Sebastian hadn't thought it was important enough to press upon. He hadn't given it very much thought at all, really.

Now, he sat on the edge of their bed, propped his elbows on his knees and buried his face in the palms of his hands. Their bed was impossibly recently left unmade, the sheets a deflated twisted mess from their combined tossing and turning during the night before. A t-shirt, probably one shared between them, was thrown over the back of a chair, rejected from either's outfit for the day. He knew where and why all of their shared belongings lay, and pondered about the hands that last held them.

Jacque's hands. The hands that held countless trays of food, full glasses, and cradled warm cups of coffee while he waited tables at the café down the street. The same hands that had stroked Sebastian's dark hair in the middle of the night. The hands that delighted in a fistful of pizza dough and a glass of wine while they cooked dinner in their kitchen. Sebastian felt like a stranger there now, in the small dilapidated apartment they knew and loved. Jacque's shoes were missing from the mat beside the door, his cap gone from the hook of their coat rack. But the paint was still peeling off the corners of the walls against the ceiling, exposing red brick against a peeling pine needle green. The couples' love notes and meager grocery lists were still pinned to their refrigerator, some writing indiscernible between the two. The notes were so ignorant of the change of their meaning in light of new absence.

"Love notes and grocery lists," Sebastian thought, vaguely amused, "are the basis for an entire relationship."

Notes scribbled in a rush before running out the door, simple afterthoughts that now spoke volumes about the life they shared. Sebastian stood and walked over to refrigerator, pausing to pick up a fallen note from the floor. "Milk, coffee, eggs, tpaper" it read, the edge stained with a ring of the probably near depleted, black (due to lack of milk) coffee. Sebastian passed his fingertips over the impression of the words, the grooves caused by Jacque's heavy handed writing. He leafed through the papers on their counter next to a collection of perfectly ripe peaches to find another he remembered reading, a joke left for him to read before he went to

the pier to perform:

What do you call a dog magician?

he flipped it over to read:

A labracadabrador. Ha! love you, -J

Sebastian smiled, sadly.

He had usually read the notes quickly and left them where he found them, while Jacque pocketed the notes left for him, and Sebastian guessed that a few would be crumpled at the bottom of Jacques backpack, maybe one or two stuck to the inside of his wallet, wherever they were now.

"The hospital," he guessed, absently.

A few of the first notes from when they first moved in, scribbles of poetry and "I love yous" were taped to their dresser mirror, some tucked between the mirror and wooden carved frame.

"At least I know it was all real." Sebastian whispered to himself.

He felt a resignation, a calmness like the clear overnight sea. He had never identified with the ocean before now, and it occurred to him that it was the solution he had never considered. The salty waters were indifferent to his own ocean of suffering; it only knew the constant washing away. Sebastian decided to leave a final note, leaving it where he knew his lover had known to look:

See you soon. Our love is eternal. -S

Taking a few steps back on the pier, Sebastian let out the breath he had been holding and closed his eyes. His dark, top-hatted figure would have looked impressively curious from the shore, but there was no one watching him in the end. And despite living by the sea his entire life, Sebastian Quigley had never learned how to swim.

It was a sunny early morning a few days later when a child happened upon it. Searching in hope for seashells or other curious treasures, he found a peculiar-looking hat. Without hesitation he picked it up, poured the water and bits of seaweed out of it, and giggling, placed it on his own head where it fell down over his eyes. A moment later he removed it from his head to further investigate its insides. The young boy stuck his whole face into the hat and was instantly confused. While it smelt like the salt of the sea, there was also something else. The boy sat wondering in the sand, his head stuffed in the hat until it came to him. It smelled of peaches.



Untitled
Caitlyn Hatch

Fantasies

Zak Russell

1. We sit in my bed. You are very close and my head is full of mud. I turn to speak to you, but instead of words the mud spills from my mouth onto the pillow. You flutter your wings gently and look away. The moon looms low and red outside the window.
2. I dig my fingers into my flesh only to discover that I am made of clay.
3. I take a pomegranate from the fridge and cut it in half. I give one half to you. You disembowel it with your fingers and smear the juice on your lips. You look at me and I disintegrate.
4. I wake up in a pool of blood that is not mine.
5. Mountains burst out of my eyes and pierce the clouds.
6. An angel claws his way out of my stomach and falls to the ground in front of me. He stands up and recounts everything embarrassing I've ever said and done. I stare at him, confused, then at my intestines lying on the ground. I ask where he came from. He smirks and vanishes.
7. I stand stark naked in an alleyway. A graffiti artist covers me in spray paint and leaves the wall behind me untouched. I never move again.
8. A three-legged spider rests on the ceiling above my bed. It had dragged itself out of the dark in the corner of the room, beaching itself in the light from my lamp. Are you alright? I ask. The spider says nothing. What happened to you? What made you like this? Unborn tears punch their way up from my stomach and well behind my eyes. What do you know? A larger spider darts out from an invisible corner, an extension of the shadow it sprang from. It takes the three legged spider in its jaws and runs from the light. I stare at the empty ceiling and leave my lamp on.
9. I make eye contact with you across a busy hallway. You quickly look away, but by that time something inside me had already detonated. Melted chrome drips from my eyes and stardust billows from my open mouth.
10. One night, all the stars fall to the ground. Water droplets in a metal bucket. Nothing survives.

Candor

Michael Baker

I lie,
In a bed too small,
in a room too small,
with a mind too small,
for the chaos contained within.
More Importantly,
I lie
To Myself.

Knock Knock
Eyes light,
ears perk,
and the concrete walls cease to inch
closer and closer to me.
The box I confine myself within
opens to reveal
I am not in solitary.

The knob shakes
And the door steadily swings open.

I see the smile,
(muscles tighten; locking up)

A gentle wave and a
“hi”

(Paralysis)

**How beautifully unaware
she is**

**Of the cyclone within
my minds eye.**

**“When will the deliberate
Ignorance subside?**

**The looks I give,
the talks we have,
the lack of subtlety.”**

**Both knowing
how the speech ends
“I love you.**

**In this sea of billions
Having you**

Makes me individual.”

(Reanimation)

The conversation continues

Like any other,

Every other.

One half oblivious,

The other through

Gritted teeth, and

Bitten tongue.

I then hand over

the roll of masking tape

she asked to borrow,

jokingly reluctant,

as if to have a few

extra precious seconds

in her midst.

The walk back to bed;

Debilitating

Suppressing emotions;

Exhausting.

As the walls begin to

close again,

The world continues

to turn.

And I take to the notebook.

Emotions must flow through the pen

before they can take to the sky,

and soar for everybody to soak up

the tranquility,

serenity,

of a man at inner peace.

A man willing

to give up self-loathing

for the sake of another.

A man willing

to give up self-deluding

to the fact that

she is just another

he can get over,

no matter how torn up and

tattered his heart may become.

Another heartbreak not willing to pursue.

Platonic.

Catharsis:
The liberation of a soul,
a soul in peril,
a young soul
not having yet learned
to properly plead for help.

Misconstrued cues hidden in
Self-deprecation
And
Self-destruction.
The difficulty that some can have
In recognizing
Internal nightmares
Of another individual.



dis•so•ci•a•tion

/dɪ sōSHē ʼāSH(ə)n, dɪ sōsē ʼāSH(ə)n/

Zulay Holland

Smokey Anxiety

Natasha Charest-Ciampa

Swollen thoughts feed thirsty hearts
disembodied, sprinkled with glitter
Lavender oil smeared across my cheekbones
Only Aphrodite holds my fate

Kinder hearts have done worse deeds
And just how kind is mine?
The hill is teeming full of steam
My lungs are suffocating
Smoke snakes by my anxious eyes
I think I may be dying
and if I am, so what of it?
In hell I could be thriving.

El Diablo

Madeleine Jackman

I lost my watch dancing bachata
I couldn't keep the time - like 1, 2, 3
1, 2, 3 I wanted to spin into infinity
But you grabbed my wrist and pulled close to me

And instead of the hands of a clock ticking
I saw your hands wrapped tight round my wrist
"No tiempo estar nerviosa" the man hissed
And I would have seen the moon if the ceiling didn't exist

So my dress dragged like clouds across the Andes
I hope hiding the times I landed on your feet
"Estoy nerviosa" fluttered my heart from its ribbed seat
On the floor, in the corner, my watch tocking to the music's beat

Write Me Something

MaKayla Allen

Asked you to write me something and you wrote up Sonnet Twenty Nine with a fountain pen and sent a low quality pic.

Okay to fool yourself up to the point
of someone fooling you:

Carefully waited to enjoy this music until I left the ex who
said I was “a fool” if I didn’t.

Our greatest evolution has us pissing in cups/ sex makes a life as easy as it can ruin one/
your body is your body as long as someone wants to/can/would like to
fuck.

Am I “glorious” or glorified by distance?
Will not respond to “what’s good”
“sup”
or “hey there :p” texts.
Will not say “sorry” when I meant:

You only listen when I’m responding/ hell with the music/ hell with the kings.

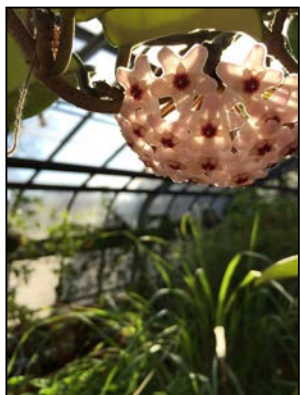
Olympus (Lethe II)

Madeleine Jackman

Take me up to that thunder cloud.

Twist my raincoat in your hands and as I fall,
I’ll wonder how the rain suddenly stood still
And you’ll catch my belt as the lightning strikes down.

By the time your fingers stroke my scorched braid,
Our spark will have made the bolt look like shade.



Sun Tricks
Erik Nickerson



Sux
Erik Nickerson



Plant Eye
Erik Nickerson

The Theatre Troupe is Performing a Reimagining of Titus Andronicus as a Damning Indictment of the Public School Lunch System

Christopher Pitt

Performed at the same time as the PTA meeting that I am no longer allowed to attend, I can promise that my new play will be a passionate yet logical, stirring yet relatable, blatant yet subtle, full on assault on the public school lunch system at P.S. 187. The ungrateful PTA should be thanking me, really. I mean, they will never find someone who is both a seething cauldron of righteous fury and a playwright who has been described as “possessing the snappy dialogue of David Mamet, the political savvy of Sophocles, with just a pinch of the flamboyant street smarts of Jonathan Larson” according to my daughter, who may be seven, but is very wellversed in the seminal playwrights of all time. And Elmo.

As for the play, it is a classic of the form refitted to match the demands of a modern audience, and speak to one of society’s cruelest ills: public school lunches. I will be playing the part of Titus, the returning hero bringing with him the Queen of the Goths, Principal Karen, as his prisoner. Upon the victorious return of a conquering hero, played by an actor with a strong jawline that says “danger” but soft eyes that say “love,” he chooses to remove Karen’s oldest subordinate, Vice-Principal Sterling, from office through a dangerous letterwriting campaign. This enrages Karen and she swears vengeance on him, not with words, but in a more subtle way that only our hero notices.

A lot of other stuff happens, ripe with symbolism of course, and our hero finds himself in an advantageous position. To combat the dreaded scourge of the lunch room he decides to make an example of those who conspire to raise prices by 15 cents (to a sum total of \$2.65) yet offer no noticeable improvements in quality of food or life. To this end he takes the treacherous school board and bakes them into pies. He sings during this, a lovely duet with a beautiful woman who loves him despite his continued obliviousness to the depths of her love. We’re in talks right now with Helena Bonham Carter’s agent for that part. Together they make the meat pies and sell them to the good citizens of London -- I mean Rome -- for the original price that lunches were, back before Karen’s tyranny was established.

Then he serves Karen the pies made from the school board (at the cost of \$2.65 per pie, as a taste of her own rotten medicine). He reveals that she has eaten school board pies and Karen proceeds to break down. This was a revelatory experience for her and so she chooses to return the price of lunches to the original rate, and much rejoicing is had. Our hero marries Helena Bonham Carter and they do not invite his ex-wife to the wedding, but post the pictures on Facebook so she can see them.

Also the PTA lets him back in, and they start answering his calls again.

Breakfast Tendencies

Mohammad Rahman

Maelstrom

Divination gone awry

Yesterday was chilly

Plumes of dragon smoke

As I spoke

But all is calm today

The tendency to overshoot

Neutrality lends me a hand

Sits me down on the ground

Tells me to simmer

Dementia

Christopher Gonzalez

Constellations every night feel fake and insecure
Because they're cut with shaky knives of names to make meaning
Once they're given shape they are ashamed and unsure
Wished on, reached for, by self-serving beings.

I wish you were your city night again and didn't know

That a synapse drips its embers and embarrassed, sputters out
Or that Recognition is a blazing neural branch that frees my name
Now you're cold as an old damp stump and I'm stupid
We know our self again, we know our self again, sure.

Now my flood tide's flung from your tongue twisted moon
and my dancing name is doused to the ember of your glance
Your deeper roots reach for the knowledge of the sun
But the name won't come, the flames recede into the branch.

I wish you were your city night again and couldn't see
All the shapes above you spinning ignorant of what you want
I wish the star fell from me and that you didn't have to know
what could you do, after you, but forget and glow?



Crossing
Brynn Stevens



Pause
Brynn Stevens

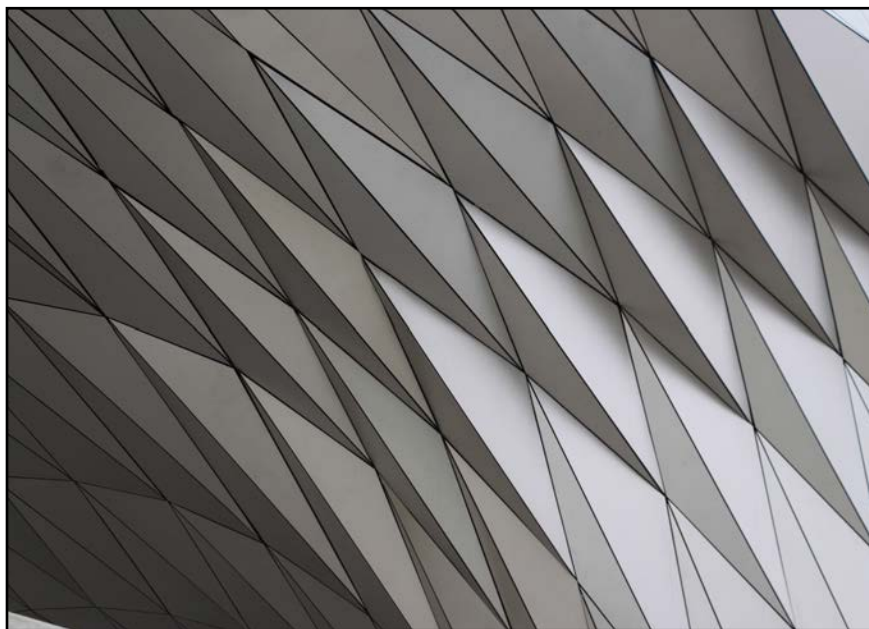
What to do in case of a hornet in your new home

Mariam Taleb

You put your clothing into our dresser,
but I make paper mache out of my spit
and build boxes. Just in case, I say.
you call me a hornet
and you ask in case of what?
I can barely hear you through
your thin mouth
and my hornets' ears and over the sound
of me spitting and shaping the thin paper
around all our belongings.
just in case the last family
has been hiding in closets, been
watching us and next Wednesday
they will pop forward and will
yell that I have been on candid camera,
I answer.

When I am not looking
or when I cannot see your thinness
blending with the wood paneling
you make two grilled cheese sandwiches.
I, too, am growing thin and crisp
and bread smells sweet.

I want fresh pesto—
you used such crisp crusted bread.
I check the closets, then allow you
to unpack the food processor
(which is the hornet's favorite kitchen appliance).
This, for you, is enough of a victory today.



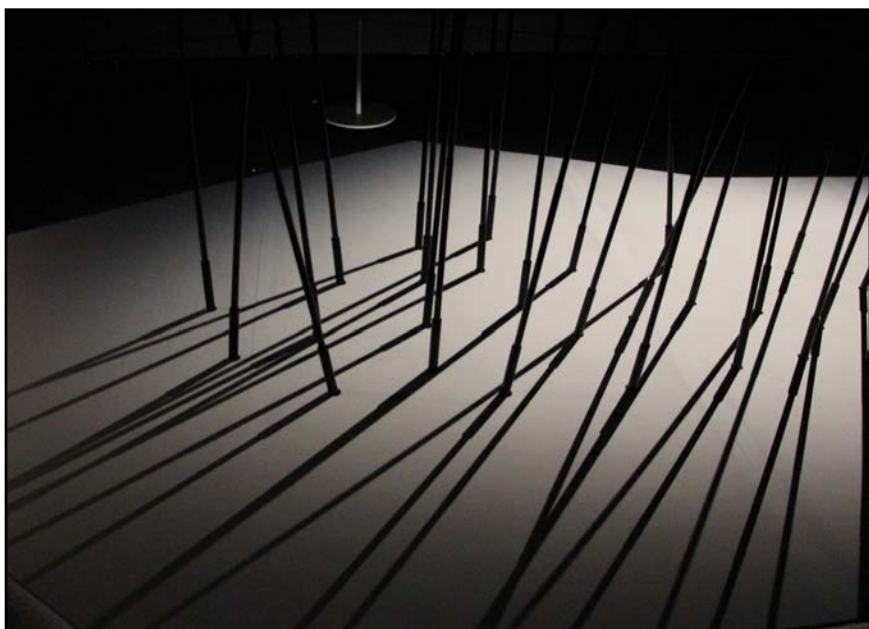
Untitled
Brynn Stevens



Damp Focus
Brynn Stevens



Listening to Sand
Brynn Stevens



Paths of Shadows
Brynn Stevens

I Sing the Body Electronegative

Katherine Kolbert

Books of higher-order academia, reclaimed with mold and rot,
teeming with life and life itself.

I

Conjugated bonded ring of members:
mirror-image, fractal angles, carouseled
energy of the world.
We pass around pure spark to balance
a force that is shared,
stability and dependance incarnate.
I yell to the heavens of my self-reliance but
covet the defiant anti-logic of holding another's hand.
You cannot rescue yourself off of a cliff.

Lend me an electron,
please.

II

Stand by me a separate strand
for we are complimentary equals,
parallels in position,
but opposites in signal.
A balance of sense and anti-sense.
Our bond is perfect but fleeting, yet somehow
we are the backbone of a code eternal
and always will be.

I love you.

III

Liken us to the growths on ancient trees,
lichenous growths at the base.
I do not look like myself anymore.
When I look in the reflection of dew drops
I am your projections embracing,
lovingly bound since our synthesis.
I benefit you,
and it is relief,
I would be lost without this home.
When rains fall,
I need you to catch the tears,
and I pour into you my
saccharine creations of sunlight reduction.
I need you to keep me here.
I need you to keep me here.

I need you.

IV

I trusted you.

You made yourself at home
my kindred symbiont.
When you changed you did not leave,
you grew and grew
and replaced who I was
and what I needed.
You demand my energy
and take and take
until you filled me with poison.
You froze me in stasis,
your demands were my grave.

I trusted you.

V

Incisions for my health made
serrated and deep and
I ran brilliant red.
Far from this abandoned place and
down my face exposed and raw.
Your acid on my alkaline sores.
The seeds I sowed with your shared hand
are set ablaze.
Barren land lined with detritus mourned,
but survivors will rise.
Coagulation of vessels stop me dead in stride,
or patch up gashes.
When scales are unbalanced and tides pull
aside all considerations,
concentrations equalize.
Balance is restored over time,

in life and life itself.



Abbess Mariam and Luka -- Dzegvi, Georgia
Yelena Rasic

7 Hours Straight

Christopher Gonzalez

For Ernie

We were best friends through the wars and in the attrition,
Sending fragments of recognition we packed together
In frag grenades and tossed at each other, laughing
Realizing we were children. When we heard boom
We became our mother's children and now sit in this room.

So as you hear the words grow from the microphone
To where you feel most like yourself I ask you to ruminate
On what it must have been like when I caused your death
Or when you caused mine. I ask you to forgive me
As I forgive you, for I know that I have been a difficult person.

In gratitude I write you this poem. To mar trees like "Roslind!"
So that when we meet in a million years from now some place else
We won't feel so forgotten if we've forgotten ourselves, since then,
Now. I assemble the words in simple sitting Samadhi to extract
Elixirs that leaves the lips and let us share the same body. Again.

Like when we were frozen and homeless in the harbors of my negativity.
reading poems back and forth for 7 hours straight. Under icicles that dripped
with hypnotic repetition counting stanza's as shingles of Flamenco Sketches
Fell off of our fingers and on to our faces we sung slowly grinning in revelation.

Now I am at the stake screaming my last spells before a silent crowd.
Feel my naked flame on your skin. Sweat stranger nostalgia.
Let your molecular cell structure be bewitched to support this ancient addiction
and I promise our dependency will have us as poets again.



Untitled
Yelena Rasic

Somewhere Between Broken and Beautiful

Nathan Frontiero

Love is a curious, amorphous thing. Easy to idealize, hard to find, it is a fundamental element of human connection embedded across innumerable works of literature. As Vladimir Nabokov, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie collectively convey, love is a malleable substance in fiction. It is capable of illustrating pain and the perverse. It can reveal deep tensions between people in its decay, or provide catharsis in its consummation. Love is by turns a broken and beautiful bond between individuals, and it exists in endless permutations across a broad spectrum. Through *Lolita*, the title story of *Interpreter of Maladies*, and *Americanah*, Nabokov, Lahiri and Adichie offer a diverse sampling of the shapes love can take.

Vladimir Nabokov threatens to trick the reader. The exquisite language and syntax in *Lolita* pull the reader in and nearly seduce them to align with Humbert Humbert—to believe that the man’s pedophilic obsession with Dolores Haze is genuine love. To label the novel a “love story” without apprehension is to conflate love with rape, abuse, and murder. Nabokov muddies the waters by trapping the reader inside Humbert’s perspective for the entire novel. Given that magnitude of prolonged interiority, the reader cannot help but develop an understanding of the man’s passion. Nabokov introduces Humbert’s twisted vigor with the first of many intricately crafted passages: “Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta” (Nabokov 9). If *Lolita* is the novel as test, then Humbert Humbert is its self-conscious proctor. Nabokov lends Humbert his “fancy prose style,” and this snippet exemplifies that intensely manipulative language (Nabokov 9).

The prose flows in a smooth but strictly controlled rhythm. Humbert names Lolita, then describes her in two endearing hyperboles that contain syllabically identical prepositional phrases. The sentence contains consonance of four repeated ‘l’ sounds and assonance of the thrice-repeated ‘i’ sound in “light,” “life,” and “fire.” The next sentence contains more consonance in its twice-repeated ‘s’ sound. Humbert’s description of the pronunciation of the name repeats the hard ‘t’ nine times, the ‘th’ five times, the ‘p’ four times, and the flat ‘a’ four times. Then he repeats the individualized syllables of her name once more. The tremendous frequency with which Nabokov repeats whole words or smaller sounds or syntactic parts offers a perfect portrait of Humbert’s particularly skewed headspace. The sheer multiplicity of specific sounds signals to the reader that the narrative voice is not to be trusted.

Indeed, Humbert Humbert is untrustworthy. His narration is so internal that the literal events of the plot are sometimes hidden beneath the details. Slightly less than halfway through the novel, Humbert describes a passionate union of sorts with Lolita. For multiple pages he dives into his own thoughts and consequently

obfuscates the physical actions taking place in the scene. It is only afterward, when a sassy remark from Lolita provokes Humbert to stop and consider her for a moment, that he directly identifies what has transpired. “This was a lone child, an absolute waif, with whom a heavy-limbed, foul-smelling adult had had strenuous intercourse three times that very morning” (Nabokov 140). That previous florid rush of thought is here revealed to have taken place during aggressive sex. The quoted sentence occurs unassumingly within a larger paragraph on the page, and sucker punches the reader with the visual truth of the prior scene. Humbert admits shortly thereafter—as he reaffirms throughout the text—that his illicit hunger for Lolita remains unsatisfied. “And let me be quite frank: somewhere at the bottom of that dark turmoil I felt the writhing of desire again, so monstrous was my appetite for that miserable nymphet” (Nabokov 140). He does identify a sense of insecurity, even regret, over his lack of tact in “[realizing] a lifelong dream” to sleep with Lolita, but here states that beneath those feelings is the desire to relive the dream. The reader is kept mindful of Humbert’s carnal yearning for Lolita even though he will continue to phrase and frame himself as innocent. The many defense cases that he makes for himself are always juxtaposed with the reader’s now-explicit knowledge of his explicit consummation of illicit lust.

In this way *Lolita* functions as a dark subversion of the love story. The manner in which the narrative directly addresses the reader, coupled with the fact that Humbert makes occasional literal references to a jury, suggests that Humbert is presenting his defense live for the reader. This also situates the reader as a member of the team of citizens performing their civic duty in court. Humbert’s innocence hinges entirely on his ability to convince the jury to empathize with and believe his version of events. As Nabokov does not provide the voice of the prosecutor, and the novel’s foreword provides only a brief contrarian framing for the balance of the text—a framing which the reader may forget beneath the lush prose that follows—Humbert’s voice has the most pull. He reaches for the reader and jury’s trust, so that he can be absolved, but he still outs himself as a rapist in the snippet quoted above. Admitting that he had sex with Lolita is disadvantageous for Humbert—he is indicting himself—and because of this the reader can believe that he actually did. Nabokov prevents the reader from accepting the novel as a conventional love story by cementing *Lolita* as a narrative of the perverse.

Humbert Humbert is a genial, cunning, even endearing narrator. He wants his plight to be pitiable—for the reader to understand that he is simply at the mercy of uncontrollable passions that have haunted him since his own early childhood. But a warped and extended case of sexual frustration is not justification for serial rape and murder. The connection between Lolita and Humbert cannot be classified as love. Affection, perhaps—they regard one another with a similarly persistent extent of sentimentality—but not true love. And Humbert’s affection is polluted by his obsession and domineering, abusive behavior.

In the novel’s final paragraph, Humbert addresses Lolita as he puts the finishing touches on the meta *Lolita*. He expresses the hope that her husband

“will always treat you well, because otherwise my specter shall come at him, like black smoke, like a demented giant, and pull him apart nerve by nerve” (Nabokov 309). In threatening to enact supernatural violence, even if he means this remark to read facetiously, Humbert shows his unwillingness to let go. His final remark, and the novel’s closing sentiment, affirms this. “I am thinking of au-rochs and angels, the secret of durable pigments, prophetic sonnets, the refuge of art. And this is the only immortality you and I may share, my *Lolita*” (Nabokov 309). Nabokov here casts Humbert as a ghost fating himself to haunt Dolores Haze under the guise of protecting her. The intensity in Humbert’s words, in his specific desire for living forever with *Lolita*, evokes a dark crescendo of minor string arpeggios at the end of a sinister composition. As the curtain falls on this tortured piece of literature, Nabokov draws a line between this tale and the rote romances whose contrivances it demonically apes. *Lolita* is not a story of love, but rather one of a madman desperately attempting to apply the benign label of love to his atrocious acts of violation.

With “Interpreter of Maladies,” Jhumpa Lahiri pens a yarn of love kept unrequited by the superficiality upon which it is built. As Mr. Kapasi leads the Das family on a tour to the Sun Temple at Konarak, the two parties make unintentionally dismissive acknowledgments of each other’s cultures. Mr. Das wants to simply stop and take pictures of everything rather than glean more than a tokenized understanding of India. And Mr. Kapasi explains his understanding of an American custom—placing the steering wheel on the left side of the car—by referencing *Dallas*, an American television show. Mr. Das and Mr. Kapasi each shirk the effort to genuinely bridge their cultural divide, in favor of, respectively, mediation through technology and a cursory sample from the entertainment industry.

The mutually reductive perspectives of Mr. Kapasi and Mrs. Das prevent them, more specifically, from initiating some kind of romantic relationship. Mr. Kapasi does not realize that Mrs. Das ignorantly exoticizes his vocation as interpreter of maladies, and he begins to idealize the possibility of a deeper connection growing between them. “She had also used the word ‘romantic.’ She did not behave in a romantic way toward her husband, and yet she had used the word to describe him” (Lahiri 53). Mr. Kapasi feels a lusty attraction to Mrs. Das—he ogles “the strawberry between her breasts, and the golden brown hollow in her throat”—and he begins to romanticize her after she compliments him (Lahiri 53, 54). Kapasi tells her more stories about the patients whose maladies he has interpreted, and after eating with the rest of the Das family gives her his address.

She only requests his address for sending him copies of Mr. Das’ pictures of him with their family, but he imagines that a continued correspondence will develop. This fabrication thrills him, and he continues to let his mind conjure enticing potentialities. “He would explain things to her, things about India, and she would explain things to him about America. In its own way this correspondence would fulfill his dream, of serving as an interpreter between nations” (Lahiri 59). He toys with the fact that he and Mrs. Das are both dissatisfied with their marriages, and wonders if this shall come across in the letters he fantasizes

exchanging with her. Ironically, the moment at which Mrs. Das confides in Mr. Kapasi about her specific trouble with her marriage begins the longer interaction that irreparably destroys any possibility of them continuing romantic discourse after the trip.

Mrs. Das confesses that one of her children is illegitimate and, after detailing the stress that has weighed on her shoulders, expects Mr. Kapasi to “suggest some kind of remedy [...] as an interpreter” (Lahiri 65). Mr. Kapasi hesitates, questioning her conviction, since the issue she feels need not be subject to interpretation, but reconsidering. He asks her, “Is it really pain you feel, Mrs. Das? Or guilt?” [...] and she stopped. It crushed him; he knew at that moment that he was not even important enough to be properly insulted” (Lahiri 66). Mrs. Das was only interested in hearing some nugget of wisdom that she assumed was Mr. Kapasi’s job to give. Where before she had othered him and his job as mystically romantic, she here disregards him as insignificant person because he does not in actuality exist to serve her needs. Lahiri reveals here that love is impossible when the beloved regards the lover as a mere commodity, a convenience.

Americanah provides the most ostensibly satisfying love story of these three texts. *Lolita* cannot and should not be marked with that moniker, and “Interpreter of Maladies” stifles its potential love story when the characters’ reality ensues, but Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie does, in fact, depict a triumphant tale of romance. Adichie builds a sprawling and barbed social commentary on the foundation of this amorous narrative. Ifemelu and Obinze are modern social realism’s answer to the “star-crossed lovers” of Romeo and Juliet. They do not come from warring families, but rigid social hierarchies drive them apart. Ifemelu emigrates from Nigeria to America to pursue higher education and work, but the heightened racial profiling in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks prevent Obinze from successfully securing a visa to join her. Their bubbly high school love that grew in Nigeria is cut short, and they drift in and out of one another’s thoughts and contact in the years that pass following their separation.

Ifemelu’s experiences in America—namely, her first and enduring encounters with racism and the social stratification it perpetuates—inspire her to start an eventually successful blog. These entries pepper the text, and in one such example, her reflections hypothesize the relationship between love and race. “The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable” (Adichie 366, 367). This assertion evokes the commentary embedded in James Baldwin’s *Another Country*. Adichie references Baldwin earlier, while Ifemelu acclimates herself to her American college and finds the author’s works in the library. The implicit reference here invites a comparison between the underlying mission statements of Adichie and Baldwin’s novels.

All of the interracial relationships in *Another Country* fail. Baldwin’s novel of passions suggests that interracial love itself is impossible, that institutions of disenfranchisement and marginalization sutured into the heart of modern society snuff them out. The tensions that arise from interracial relationships in a racist culture simply erode the bond between lovers. As Baldwin illustrates

through *Another Country*'s bevy of doomed romances, these systematic societal issues are all too prevalent to ignore, let alone transcend. But Adichie does not attempt to paint transcendence of race with *Americanah*. Quite the contrary—Adichie's novel offers a searing, unflinching critique of both racism in America and racial tensions between non-American and American blacks. *Americanah* also indicts the American concept of colorblindness. When questioned about why a cashier did not simply ask the race of the clerk who assisted Ifemelu at a clothing store, her friend laughingly tells her "this is America. You're supposed to pretend that you don't notice certain things" (Adichie 155).

Interracial love fails in *Americanah* in a manner similar to that seen in *Another Country*, fittingly updated to comment on the allegedly more progressive times of the early 2000s. When Ifemelu dates Curt, a white man, all is initially well. He is attractive, wealthy, and interested in her. Trouble infects their love when Curt is unable to make an ideological leap to fully understand the issues with race that Ifemelu encounters. She later states, "They talked about [race] in the slippery way that admitted nothing and engaged nothing and ended with the word 'crazy,' like a curious nugget to be examined and then put aside" (Adichie 360). Curt's white privilege prevents him from growing out of the comfort zone in which "nice liberal friends" hide, and he becomes Ifemelu's "Hot White Ex" (Adichie 360, 366).

While Adichie does not offer tremendous hope for breaking down institutionalized racism, she does offer hope for love. When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria, she briefly rekindles old flames. She calls Blaine and Curt, and by happenstance encounters Fred. When they sleep together, she remarks, "As they lay naked on her bed, all pleasant and all warm, she wished it were different. If only she could feel what she wanted to feel" (Adichie 587). Adichie breaks up the page with a dash. The next passage—the novel's last—begins "And then, on a languorous Sunday evening [...] there Obinze was, at the door of her flat" (Adichie 587). He expresses his love for her, his desire not to perpetuate an inauthentic marriage with Kosi, and his intention to "chase" her. "For a long time she stared at him. He was saying what she wanted to hear and yet she stared at him. 'Ceiling,' she said finally. 'Come in'" (Adichie 588). Ifemelu's use of his pet name, which she started using when they dated in high school, affirms this reconciliation.

In the end, love does not conquer all, but it conquers enough for Ifemelu and Obinze to resolve their troubles. Love brings these two people back together, despite the circumstances that have divided them across time and nations, and in their reunion they find solace.

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who we are

**elizabeth
riezinger**

when she's not crying about dogs, Elizabeth is a junior studying English. This is her third year working on *Jabberwocky*. Her other interests include: spear-fishing, donuts, and trying to figure out how to be an adult (wine has something to do with it, right?).

**emma
hayward**

is a junior English and STPEC major. Some say she emerged from a hollow tree in the forest to teach the humans how to dismantle capitalism, but that might just be because of the strength of her eyebrow game. She probably wants to talk to you about cats.

**lauren
romag**

is a senior English and History double major who, when she isn't reading *My Immortal*, has a dream to become the first beekeeping librarian on the moon. A lot of preps stare at her. She puts her middle finger up at them.

**kaitlyn
d'angelo**

is an English and WGSS student somehow getting away with writing about the internet and feminist punk for academic credit. In her spare time she likes watching gay movies, marathoning Bob Ross videos, and crashing the mall like she's Avril Lavigne. Her mission statement for fiction has always been "keep it weird."

**taylor
devlin**

is a senior English major studying creative writing. When she isn't penning sad poetry, you can probably find her crying outside of Bartlett Hall.

**wandy
pascoal**

is a super senior Architecture major and Gender Studies minor, who often wonders about the theory that states that the universe may be a computer simulation. She willingly lets these thoughts keep her up at night.

**irina
grigoryeva**

is a proud Hufflepuff and pajama set collector. If found, feed pancakes and entertain with puns.

