

# ***CORADDI***

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*Coraddi represents the art and literary community of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and has been published, in various forms, since 1897.*

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Coraddi is pleased to offer six equal first-place cash prizes to select works published in the magazine. Awards are judged anonymously by members of the UNCG community.

Writing, co-judged by Jennie Thompson and Matthew Armstrong, both graduates of the UNCG MFA in Creative Writing program. Jennie currently is a member of the English Dept. at Guilford College and Matthew is a member of the English Dept. at North Carolina A&T University.

**Plans While Writing a Poem My Self-Proclaimed Post-Modern Peers Will Appreciate, Like Really, Really Appreciate.** by Colton Weaver

**In Brooklyn** by Dallas Bohannon

**The Girl Who Would Never Grow Up** by Dallas Bohannon

Art Pieces, selected by Sam Peck, who is currently adjunct faculty in the Art Department teaching Printmaking and Design. He recently graduated from the department with his MFA in May of 2010:

**Encumbrance** by Amanda Nicholas

**Aguacate** by Christian Durango

**Approaching Limbo** by Kendra Hammond

Anyone may submit to Coraddi, but only non-staff members are eligible for the contest.

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***Writing***

## Old Man on Bicycle

Tristan Brooks

I jump to my numb feet,  
rub my eyes, sweep my coat and fix my hat to meet you when I realize  
there's no one here.

1:58 AM

I yawn, shuffle, warm my hands.  
I look up from the step and squint.  
Pace a little.

2:00

I'm tracing stars with one finger when it starts--  
at first just a something  
out on the edge of my ear,  
it resolves to a clicking  
floating,  
faint through the darkness, but  
quickly it widens,  
spreading metal rattle it rises,  
clicking to chirping, laced metal chattering,  
January locust-song, sliding  
louder, closer, 'til

He's here! The source  
comes slinking out from the shadows,  
two-wheeled, street-bound skeleton suspended,  
sallow, sagging, singing-spoked.  
left-and-drag-and-right-and-drag-and,  
louder, higher, whirring, buzzing,  
left-and-drag, his green-tooth grit,  
his morbid frame -and-right- conveyed by  
pulse and plod, -and-right-and-drag- un-  
thinkable old legs are pushing,  
old eyes bats in sullen caves, on  
whirring, whizzing, spinning pedals--  
Charles Bike-kowski's spoke-tones swell!  
and then pass by,  
then start to fade.  
That bastard slides away--  
his song dissolving where I stare.

2:02

I tug my gloves, sit down,  
stand up, the stars are small.

2:03

I sit down  
and cross my arms and look up, out.

2:03

I start to wait again.



We were genius and naïve,  
our brilliance wasted away on cheap cigarettes and black and white movies,  
on leather couches, satin sheets, and unwanted clothes worn just for losing.  
Just the same as those bright smiles we spent, meant for nothing but false proving:  
we had pretended to have no regrets, new ideas, and big dreams,  
so our masks stayed always moving.  
And sleep was our façade, our only escape,  
a futile refuge that bade the same claims of  
the feeble castles of faces we made.

We never tried to stop, never wanted to (never would)

Days passed between oceans of stories we'd hoped to forget.  
The sex was good, but not the best, we'll insist,  
so as to sound a bit more secure, a bit more composed than this.  
But brick by brick our walls will fall and all the lives we faked  
will find themselves left exposed.  
This time, we tried to let go, left  
only to crawl back to conceal our shattered souls  
in what we know will numb the pain longing (needing) to grow.  
What other way is there to be whole?

We never tried to stop, never wanted to (never would)

So tonight,  
(in fruitless hopes to hide the voices inside ourselves we can no longer seem to find)  
we'll close the shields to our eyes  
now, before night's fall, before the sun's departure,  
and its chaotic, noisy slumber,  
in hopes that this sleep will hide this person I made,  
this person I thought I was avoiding  
by the conformities of not conforming...

We never tried to stop, never wanted to (never would)

But with today's sun's rise, I'll at last open my eyes to a terrible truth waiting inside:  
this was never my life.

I scream, for once, of something real:  
I am lost, too. I am broken here.  
I dare not say more — you know this is the truth:

This was never my life.  
It should have belonged to you.

## Untitled

Ross Brubeck

i can sink a half dozen egg shells  
in the trash can from across the room,  
and i can pour a stream of water from  
a pitcher three feet above a cup  
through a ring i make with my  
pointer and thumb  
i can form this ring before or after  
i start pouring, whatever you like  
i'll make a perfect meal  
recipe-free  
and i can chop a log straight down  
the middle  
or call it each time, "left of the knot" etc.  
i can split a log three inches wide  
standing up straight down the middle  
with a full wind-up,  
which, to be clear,  
is a twist of the hips away,  
a twist towards and a full arc  
of the axe overhead  
and send the two pieces into two  
baskets on either side  
i occasionally "raisins" "grapes" on accident  
but that doesn't matter too much in the  
long run  
if you toss me something i'll catch it  
midsentence, hardly bothering to  
look  
left-handed, or right-  
I AM PRECISE  
MATE WITH ME

## The Food of Love

Jessica Vantrease

welcome to the august-warm kitchen  
blank pages and clean silverware  
glistening in the glow of the hob

villanelles and sestinas shiver  
in the fridge with last night's butter pie  
but today i feel creative

so we'll make a fresh batch of sonnet, which  
will be great with those rolls you brought  
and away we go to the hiss of the dishwasher

a little of this and that never hurt  
assonance and alliteration raining from a salt-shaker  
rhymes twist like aromas above our heads

and where did the garlic press skitter off to  
if i don't find it we can forget about iambic  
pentameter - oh there it is, good

mix well, keep an eye on shakespeare  
remind me to glaze it with metonymy, and bake  
and stop snitching the flaky crust - don't think i don't see

now we can relax - pour me a glass of that  
garnet-black merlot mom sent me and keep your voice down  
so we can savor its rhythm

well said, immortal earring-sporting bard  
play on, liling luscious labors of love  
it's just us and the kitchen to hear you.

## A Beloved Mind

Jessica Vantrease

are you in there  
brown eyed thinker  
gears are in there  
twisting turning  
your cool hand  
placid on mine  
mind anything but

i think you're there  
brown eyed thinker  
adding composing  
writing subtracting  
drawing calculating  
analyzing erasing  
your lips barely part

how the cogwheels  
turn and turn and  
turn and turn but  
i don't hear them  
in your sharp mind  
past eyes clear brown  
ideas die unsaid

are you in there  
do you love me

are  
you  
there

## Musquash

Jessica Beebe

A November star fell over ocean sound  
tonight. You promised not to write  
just to make me feel good about  
myself. I tried and caught the tail  
end of falling light that others  
usually wish on.

There was a rustling  
that played out like blue on a sky  
line. Sun and everything came  
crashing to an orchestrated  
halt. By then, you would have no part  
of telegrams or sentimental snap  
shots of what could have been.

It was too late, the musquash  
had bitten through wire covering  
that lined our tool sheds. And we  
were working hard to catch falling  
stars at the end of autumn  
in the belly of an ocean.

*"What if the mightiest word is love?"  
Elizabeth Alexander*

Most days I don't go about  
business. I am lucky to catch  
a stranger's eye and I don't even

believe in luck. Who cares  
to mention noise? It is snatches  
of silence that deserve worship.

Mother dresses her daughter  
in pinafore and shackles. Where  
did she learn to imitate like that?

Stepfather tries to makes things  
right but no one was there  
to tell him you don't touch

your new wife's daughter. She  
will not recover as well as you  
do. I'm not about to look

you in the eye. I don't even  
want to speak. I am just looking  
for a place where I can be safe.

I don't encounter you anymore  
in words than on a narrow trail  
cutting its way to the other side

of town. I'm not sure anyone died  
for this day but I have sat up  
nights mulling things over

at the fold, a loosely hanging  
hem, on the cusp, asking myself  
am I ready to go forward in that light?

I.  
When her husband pulled over to help another  
On the Brooklyn Bridge—  
His hand's prerogative to protect even air—  
He did not see himself becoming  
An empty-handed trapeze swinger  
When the eyeless Jaguar fumbled in the rain,  
Its spotted quarrel whirling  
Like a manic katydid killer.

No one would remember the molten sparks,  
Wild like wasps  
Beneath the man's heel  
As the car devoured steel and girder cable  
In a primal leap—  
No one would remember the man  
He tried to help,  
Caught between the monster's teeth—  
And few would remember the man  
Whose swan dive stole every breath;  
The flash of tourist smiles and cameras blinking,  
While a child on the bridge  
With her rainy day bear and licorice straws  
Pointed and began to cry.

In the whistling wind and snare,  
The man heard laughter escape from his wife's curving neck,  
The flower tattoo on her wrist,  
And the muscling play of lovers in their cramp.

II.  
The water broke in her bed—  
She woke to sea sounds on the white noise machine  
And the brush of baby hands within her womb,  
Fingers spread like sea stars,  
Gentle as a lover's first kiss—  
Then hard like a hammer.  
The stained white sheets rippled like fallen clouds to the floor,  
While the dragging of knee and bone drowned out  
The pounding of a cop outside her front door.

The woman found a phone, but could not speak—  
A salty liquid emerged from the crest of her lips,  
And boiled in her throat.  
The phone slipped from her fingers  
And rolled along the wooden floor like thunder.

She trailed blood along the stairs,  
And along the railing her fingers stuck to  
Like matted sugar.  
Her screams became the hurricane  
That drove the cop to kick the door in,  
Showering his silhouette with splinters.

For a moment, she saw her husband emerge through the shards  
Of wood and white light,  
His green eyes holding her—  
But the officer's eyes turned blue:  
He came to her, the maelstrom of his eye churning—  
And she knew.  
She cried out and fell to the floor where the  
Doorframe became the cradle,  
And the siren became a song to separate  
The widow from the wife.

III.

The lotus flower on her wrist seemed to wilt  
When the lab coat came and told her  
The babies were in critical condition, and her son  
Would likely die:  
His heart rate fluttered like a moth in the rain,  
And in the time it took the doctor  
To wheel her to the NICU  
He was gone.

His sister breathed with tubes attached  
Like acupuncture needles,  
Curled in her bed like a sphynx—  
But the woman held her son and would not move.  
She rocked him in her chair,  
And kissed each baby finger.

Her daughter's vitals surged  
Like seismic waves on trace paper,  
And the doctor urged the mother to listen:  
But she only heard the lullaby in her throat;  
The quiet hymn of God;  
Her husband, speaking to his babies  
Every night before bed;  
The subtle soccer kick from the baby on the right  
That made his father cry.

She turned her head to the doctor,  
Whose eyes were a cold gray tile,  
And whose lips were gentle waves that  
Begged her to hand him the child  
And comfort the girl,  
Dying to know where her mother was.

But the boy—  
He had her husband's curls,  
His cleft chin and pointed ears—  
His skin, the color of melted caramel,  
His lips, beginning to darken—  
The pink under his eyes browning,  
And the warmth from his body turning cold.

The doctor held out his hands.  
The resistance was not great,  
Not after whispering in her baby's ear  
A name  
No one would ever call him by again.  
And when the woman reached her hand  
Inside the incubator,  
Her daughter's vitals softened like a blown-out candle,  
Like Brooklyn being sung to sleep.

# The Girl Who Would Never Grow Up

## Dallas Bohannon

Blackberries are sweet. The first blackberry I tasted was from my grandmother's garden, a year before she died. She picked the fruit from its stem and twirled it in her fingers before offering it to me. I backed away, but she insisted I eat it. The berry looked like Daddy's under parts. Little hairs tickled my tongue and hard palate. The berry tasted better. I didn't tell Grandmother what it reminded me of. Daddy told me never to tell anyone.

The berry burst between my back molars and felt cold. All the other berries I would eat Mother made me wash in the sink. She said they were dirty. But I like them dry. The friction followed by a sweet flush of juice is what I remember. That, and the smile my grandmother offered me before taking one herself.

Daddy finished and kissed my head goodnight. He told me he was sorry, like he always did, and brushed my hair behind my ear. It felt late, and the moon hid its eyes from me. I could still see its shadow. I lied shivering while Daddy kissed Mark and Grayson on the forehead. Their beds were near the window. I knew they weren't asleep. I waited until he left and crawled into bed with them.

Our mother was sick and slept an average of eighteen to twenty hours each day. Daddy hired a nurse to look after her while he was at work. Her name was Millie. She often smelled of bread. I loved the way she smelled. Millie came in the morning time and would wake us up with her sourdough kisses and curly locks of a yeasty yellow color. I was frightened by her kisses, but only for a moment. She opened the window in our bedroom, and I liked to imagine the glass panes as wings. She pushed herself out into the dawn, and the glass disappeared, revealing chimney smoke and sunlight bright as a lion on fire. Grayson was in love with her. Why did Daddy have to love me?

It wasn't difficult to fall in love with Millie. She would read us stories once Mother took her medicine and went to bed. Daddy would come home late from house visits sometimes, but Millie didn't mind staying late. Things got so bad with Mother that Millie was hired full-time and stayed in the spare bed no one used in the basement. Millie stopped smelling of bread so much when she lived with us. She became our nanny and watched my brothers and me after school. She would tidy our rooms and clean our sheets without asking first. One night, Daddy made me bleed on the bed sheet, and it leaked through onto the mattress. I worried during school, wondering what Millie would say when she saw it. But she didn't ask any questions. I came back and the sheet was replaced with a cleaner, whiter one. How could she not ask me why I had bled? I was only eleven.

Millie didn't leave the basement after nightfall. If something was wrong with Mother, a bell was rung and Millie found her way upstairs. Otherwise, she did not stir. I asked her what she did in there at night and she told me, "Laurie, I pray." I asked her what praying was, and she showed me. She got down on her knees by my bed and closed her eyes.

I didn't understand. Daddy made me pray and I hated it.

Mark didn't come to school one afternoon. He woke up with a cold the sun could not cure, and Millie sent Grayson and me on without him. When we came back, Millie was preparing a lamb pie in the kitchen, and I saw blood on her apron. She wiped a streak of sweat from her brow and blood soaked into her bangs. I wanted to touch her hair and rub the blood into my fingertips and under my nails. I wondered if all blood felt the same. Mark was in his bed crying when Grayson and I walked in. He wasn't wearing any underpants, and I sent Grayson outside. His bed had a blood spot like mine. Mark writhed like a newborn kitten and smeared the blood in further. He said that Daddy sent Millie into town to get lamb for supper and asked him why he wasn't at school. I switched my sheets with his and held him until supper.

Mark got a present from Millie a few days later, once his fever had broken. It was a picture book with Indians and pirates, green jungles and oceans. There was a girl who looked like Mother on one page, and I nearly cried. Mother was in a picture book and she could walk again. The page called her Wendy, and the green boy flying above her was named Peter. Millie read the three of us this story many times by the open window and altered her voice for the different characters. Grayson loved it when she read for Captain Hook, her fingers closing into a fist like a startled hermit crab. Her upper lip twitched as she curled her imaginary mustache with a loose finger.

Night came. Again he loosened me up with his finger. I wanted to scream, but I couldn't. He held my mouth closed with his hand and told me he loved me. Mark and Grayson looked at me from across the room. I saw Mark apologizing with wet lips and a wet pillowcase.

Daddy told Millie we weren't allowed in Mother's room. He sat the three of us down and told us that Mother needed her rest.

"You do want your mother to get better, don't you?" he asked. Mark and Grayson nodded their heads, but I couldn't. Daddy was looking at me when he asked this, and I didn't know what to say. His eyes were sharp. He asked again, and I said yes.

Mother didn't talk much. Talking made her cough. There were days when the bedroom door was cracked and I could see Mother lying on her side with her eyes open and moist. The door would creak, and her eyes would follow the sound. And yet, there were days I would say her name and Grayson would climb on the bed like a wounded spider and tug on her hair without as much as a sound from Mother. Mother told me she liked to sleep on her back because it made her less likely to cry while falling asleep. I asked her why she cried, and her only reply was a smile. Her front tooth had blood on it.

The three of us fell asleep in Mother's bed one afternoon. Millie came in to check on Mother, and found me with my eyes open. The sheets tightened in my fingers when I saw Millie. The softness in her eyes told me not to fear her. Millie held her hand out to me. I followed her to the kitchen; she said she had a surprise for me. Wiping her hands on her apron, she handed me a date coated with syrup. The bowl of dates on the counter smelled sweet and looked like a swarm of cooked honeybees. I was fearful to try one, and told her so. She asked what fruits I liked, and I told her I liked the black ones.

"You mean blackberries?" she asked, and I nodded my head. Millie frowned and told me they

were no longer in season. She did know a woman in town who froze baskets of them to sell during the autumn months for a hefty price. Millie wiped the date syrup from my lower lip, and told me my grin was infectious. Millie promised next time she went to town she would barter with the woman, and buy me my very own handful of frozen blackberries.

Mother joined us for supper, but could not keep her food down. I yelled for the boys not to stare when Mother coughed up blood on the tablecloth. I focused on the glass of water before me: I saw Hook's poison splatter the crest of Pan's medicine. It sank like a red pearl. Millie was the first to wipe Mother's mouth. Daddy continued to eat, dipping his slice of bread in the stained gravy.

Millie stayed with Mother that night. It was the first evening Daddy did not kiss us goodnight. Mark, Grayson and I slept in the same bed, breathing the same air. I left the window open for Peter.

I went to school the next morning and found a letter written from Daddy inside one of my schoolbooks. He said he was sorry he couldn't say goodnight to me, and I burst into tears. My teacher Mrs. Turner hunched over me and asked what was wrong. Her glasses were massive and nearly fell off her nose. Her voice was softer than chalk on skin. After class she told me not to worry, and she sent me to the principal's office.

I did not show my principal the letter. His voice was gentler than Daddy's and did not frighten me. I was sent home with a hug and a brother in each hand. Grayson and Mark told me about their day through the scarves wrapped around their mouths. I smiled.

Millie greeted us at the door when we came home from school. She smelled like Christmas. The grin on her face told me something good was going to happen for us, and I hurried the boys off to their room. Millie took my hand and together we went to the kitchen. She turned her back to me for a moment, returning with a cloth filled with iced blackberries. Millie said she had to beg the woman for them; she was almost out. I asked Millie if I could have one, and she hesitated. I was supposed to wait until after supper, when they had thawed. She handed me one without looking. "It doesn't count if I don't see you eating it," she said. That's why I loved Millie.

Millie ate her supper after feeding Mother in the bedroom. The rest of us ate downstairs. Mark, Grayson and I felt angry that Mother couldn't eat with us. The potatoes and roast were filling, though I made sure to leave room for dessert.

Millie came downstairs from helping Mother and gave me a wink. I told her I was ready for my dessert, and she nodded. Together we went for the fridge, and she rubbed my back with her palm. But the berries were gone. The shelf showed remains of a stained red cloth, ice crystals, and little black hairs where the berries once had been. Millie pressed her hand harder into my back and kissed my hair.

When he came to me, Daddy's tongue tasted like blackberries.  
I wanted to bite it off.

Was Peter afraid of loving Wendy? I looked at Mother, and I saw Wendy. I looked at Mother, and I saw myself. Then I saw Daddy, and I wondered: why did Peter never come for Mother?

I put the book down and looked toward the moon from the window. It was late, and Grayson whispered to me from his bed. He was cold and asked me to close the window. I told him no. How

else would Peter come for us? Grayson spoke with a slurred tongue and tiny hands, asking if Peter could fly when it was snowing outside. Until he said something, I hadn't noticed it was snowing. Mark once told me when the moonlight is so blue that it changes the color of night, the moon is missing someone. I woke up Mark and told him, "The moon misses you, Marcus." Each snowflake looked like a little piece of the ocean.

For the next week, we lived in a white city. Millie gave Mark, Grayson and I each a nickel to buy some Christmas cookies at the bakery. I took Mark and Grayson to the building where Millie's father worked. He said hello and offered each of us a cookie in return for the coins, and an extra cookie if we gave him a hug. His hands were covered in flour and left marks on our clothes that helped us blend in with the snow outside.

On the way home, I saw a boy with dirt on his cheeks and in his hair. His lips were pouty and his eyes were brown. I wouldn't have noticed him, or even cared to notice him, had he not stopped in his tracks to look at me. I had cookie crumbs on the corner of my mouth. He had holes in his clothes. When he took off running in the opposite direction, I followed him. I yelled for Mark to look after Grayson, and I flew down the street with my shoes kicking up hard snow. I cornered him in an alley and asked why he ran from me. He said I was pretty. I asked him if his name was Peter, and he shook his head.

I offered him my jacket. He snatched it like a warm loaf of bread and ran off again. When I met Mark on the street corner, he looked betrayed. He didn't even care to ask me about my jacket. But Daddy did.

Where was my Pan?

I spent nights calling out to him from the window ledge. I received no reply. Maybe he was too far away; maybe he couldn't hear me from Neverland. When night came, I hid behind the open bedroom door, my back against the cool wall.

"My window is open, Peter," I whispered in the dark. Daddy's footsteps grew firm and near. I gripped the doorknob tightly and pulled it close.

I imagined Daddy was Peter one evening, when he snuck in and didn't wake me before he started. I woke from the dream and saw a jungle boy leaning over me with leaves in his hair and the earth in his eyes. He held me close. He held me gently. He asked if it hurt, and I said no. It felt good. I closed my eyes and felt my body lurch upwards in a curve.

Something happened that night. I felt sick and threw up on the covers after Daddy left. Mark and Grayson crept over to me and held back my hair. I didn't bleed anymore, but I was wet. I pulled my gown over myself and rubbed it dry.

Something happened to me. Inside. I began to want it, long for it, but not with Daddy. I had an itch, a chigger creeping beneath my skin. I scratched my thighs and pulled on my gown and gnawed on my pillowcase. Dried blood nestled in my nails. I felt the pressure between my legs. I wanted it. I cried when I got it.

Is this why Pan didn't want to grow up?

Two days before Christmas, Daddy took the train a couple of counties over to visit his sister. He told Millie she was ill and needed his professional opinion before calling on a doctor she didn't know. But when he left and kissed me goodbye at the front door, I noticed he had none of his medical equipment with him. I was with Millie when she told Mother why he left. Though she could barely move, Mother's upper body began to shake, and she sobbed with more force than I knew she had. Millie helped Mother raise the handkerchief before her coughing fit started. Red spots grew like a living mold on the white cloth, and I closed the bedroom door.

I took the book from under my bed and asked Mark and Grayson to trust me.

Millie brought Mother into the living room early Christmas morning. The logs in the fire were cracking, and the tree smelled like sap. She helped Mother out of her chair and onto the couch. The open curtain behind Mother gave her a view of the porch. Mother felt the sun on her neck for the first time in weeks. Her eyes were gray and her lips were chapped. Millie propped a pillow behind her head. Mother didn't have the strength to keep it leveled. I pitied my mother, but I loved her more.

That was when Mark, Grayson and I performed a play. Millie and Mother stared in amazement as we acted out our favorite scene from the book we were given just months before. Pirates gathered on deck with the lost boys, whose wrists and ankles were bound with a dry rope. Grayson held his teddy bear close and cried for Wendy as water came spilling onto the ship's deck. Within seconds, his frown curved into a smirk full of baby teeth, and he began to laugh—Grayson twisted his upper body in a dance and grin.

"You're supposed to be sad," I whispered to him, pinching the cool skin beneath his pajamas. His frown quickly returned, and the scene continued.

I was Peter Pan: I held the dying Tinkerbelle in my hands. Her light faded into my open palm. My anger twisted the sky. The lost boys needed me; Wendy needed me. But then I looked up and saw that Mother was crying.

I forgot my line. I walked over to Mother and was the first to see a smile. Her teeth were translucent. She wiped her nose with the back of her hand, and laughed with another pained smile. I asked her if it hurt, and she crumpled her eyelids and sobbed. Millie didn't seem to know if she should get up or stay seated. Mother held my face in her hands and said, "No, baby, not anymore."

Daddy came through the door with gifts under his arms and ice on his shoulders. I wondered how long he stood practicing his smile on the porch before coming inside. When he saw what we were doing, the skin around his eyes tensed. His chin shook. Mother let me go and coughed blood onto my nose and lip. The ice on Daddy's clothes melted in seconds. My little eyes followed the packages as they fell like daggers to the floor. He ordered us into our room. Once upstairs, Mark said our mother had taken him aside and thanked him. He wiped the blood from my face with his Indian feather and it tickled.

Mother stayed in her room for the afternoon and would not come out. She did not come down for supper and would not allow guests to come in and see her. It was like she was waiting to die.

I found Daddy in our room that evening holding the book in one hand like a weight. Daddy

pointed the spine at my face like he would a sword, and I turned away. He cornered me against the wall, and I felt tied down: a prisoner bound with rope, a mast at my back, and the rolling sea beneath me. The rope tightened as the Captain's voice grew more violent. I looked to the sky over Peter's hideout and saw billowing clouds that spread as far as the sea.

Peter was coming.

Daddy grabbed my hair and yanked my head back. He asked me where we got the book. He disappeared with Millie downstairs shortly after. My brothers and I waited in the living room across from the kitchen and basement door. His steps were heavy. He came out shaking his right hand like he had water on it. Millie rounded the corner with her hand on her cheek. She sounded like she had a cold. When Millie turned to the three of us, she immediately removed her hand, and smiled.

Daddy burned the book in the fireplace after putting Mother to sleep. His vest was unbuttoned, and the white sleeves of his shirt were frayed. I heard fairies screaming, children falling into the sea like stones. I heard a metal hook carve my name into wood on a ship, rocking above the children's bodies. Pan was dead. The pirates were cheering, aiming their pistols high, and I stood alone, barefoot, on the ship's deck.

Night came. I dreamed that Mother could walk again. She came into our bedroom like a ghost in her white evening gown and sat by the open window. She called us to her and pulled out a charred book from her sleeve. Snow whirled inside with the breeze and landed in her hair. I knew she wasn't real because the snow didn't melt on her scalp. But when she read to us, I held onto her arm and knew everything was going to be okay. And when she came to the page with Captain Hook's ship, I closed my eyes. Mother's voice calmed the seas, and Peter Pan rose up with his Wendy from below the ship. Pan laid her gently in the company of the lost boys before unsheathing his sword and staring the Captain in his eye, saying—

Mother paused and we held our breath. She looked into our hearts. She smiled. "To die," she whispered, "would be an awfully big adventure."

Mother died in the morning.

Two days later, Daddy fired Millie. We were walking to the church for Mother's funeral, and I held my brothers' hands tightly. I overheard Daddy and Millie talking ahead of us. His voice was calmer than the breeze. He said Millie could stay for two weeks in the house before she was to leave and find work elsewhere. Grayson started to cry, though I hushed him before Daddy could hear. Mark, Grayson and I were far enough behind them to grieve in our own way. We didn't want to see the grave. Millie walked close to Daddy like he owned her. I think she could feel us staring at her from behind. She turned to us on our way inside the church, and smiled with a nod of her head. The black shawl on her shoulder was our mother's. She didn't know. But Daddy did, and so did I.

Night came. I dreamed that Hook had Daddy's eyes. He brushed my hair behind my ear with his hook and bit my neck. He drew blood. The rope that tied me to the mast fell like a serpent at my bare feet, and Hook dragged me by my hair to the plank. It wobbled underfoot. The winds were fierce; my nightgown nearly carried me away. I turned from the man's sword and scurvy teeth to a violent flash

of lightning behind a mountain in the distance. I heard a ticking clock in the water, the harsh slam of a heel, and felt a splinter enter my foot as I flew off the plank and into the sea.

I woke up screaming with Daddy's hand on my shoulder. He was clothed, sitting on the edge of my bed with Mother's handkerchief balled up and peeking out from his fingers. He looked as if he had been crying before I startled him. He tucked the cloth into his shirt pocket and left for the door. He turned around once before closing it behind him.

Night came. Pan asked me if I believed in fairies. He looked horrified when I told him no. Believing in fairies won't bring Mother back. Believing in fairies won't keep me from getting wet when Daddy hurts me. Believing in fairies won't keep the pleasure away, the sick pleasure, the good feeling. Believing won't keep my brothers safe, won't keep me from crying. I will never believe in fairies.

Daddy took some time off from work to look after us. He said I was old enough to have my own room now, and once Millie left I would live in the basement. Millie counted the days she had left with us. Her cooking became tasteless, and she once again smelled like bread—like an old, sour loaf someone forgot to throw out. She did not shower, and she did not smile.

I asked her why she was sad, and she told me not to worry myself. I told her Daddy touched me too, and her face called me a liar. I showed her the bruises on my body, and she touched me between my legs. Her apologies hit me like hard kisses. I asked her what we would do, and she said, "We will make your father a pie." I asked her what kind of pie, and she said, "A blackberry pie."

Night came. I had no dreams. I waited for Peter but he never came. I waited for Daddy and he didn't come either.

There was a snowstorm the night Millie made the pie. It knocked out the power to our house, and Millie lit candles in the kitchen. Daddy wouldn't be home until morning, and Mark and Grayson were asleep upstairs. I asked Millie if I could help, but she refused. She said I could watch, but not help her. Millie shaped the crust with butter in her nails. The blackberries she bought were preserved in a can and oozed out like mush into the bowl. I could tell she wanted fresh berries, but these would have to do. Millie added sugar, lemon peel, cinnamon, and almond extract to the bowl before mixing.

Millie dipped her finger in the pie filling and let me taste it. I cried because it tasted pure. She held my head to her chest and rocked me in the candlelight. She whispered that we had to hurry.

Millie removed a vial from her apron and emptied it into the black.

When the police came to take Millie away, I held my brothers firmly at the top of the stairs. Officers had already come earlier in the afternoon to remove Daddy's body from the kitchen table. One man lifted Daddy's face from the pie by a handful of hair, and shined his flashlight inside Daddy's mouth. He stumbled backward into another officer before running out of the house. Two officers carried Millie out the front door by her arms, and another officer walked behind her. Millie peered over her right shoulder at us kids with a smile and a nod of her head.

Mark asked me what we would do. I told him Peter would come for us, and that we would

wait for him by the open window. I took Mark and Grayson's hands in mine and we walked into our bedroom lit by the moon. Grayson lifted his pale blue fingers toward the window and asked Mark if the moon missed Daddy. Without words, Mark looked in my direction, and I opened the window to the city before us. The white curtains danced without sound. I told Grayson yes, and it was okay for him to miss Daddy too.

We left the window open for Peter.

## wakeup

Hannah Bodenhamer

there are little eons  
between my snooze button alarms  
as i lay in one reposing  
forgotten nightmares imposing  
a certain solitude onto my day,  
i think of the taste of fluoride  
seeping though like the in-tide  
and wonder what happened  
to all the thoughts i left behind  
as the summer peeled my skin away.

## "The Zookeeper"

Candace Owens

I find my repose laying on my back, staring at the ceiling rather than wrapped in someone's arms. my limbs like to stretch and lie as haphazardly as they please. they make it look so fucking lovely in the movies...two lovers fall asleep, limbs entwined, and so ends the scene. but in real life, his breathing keeps her up, her head cuts blood flow from his heart to his arm. her hair on his face makes breathing difficult, his legs trap hers from any movement whatsoever. a human cage is created. lovers long to break free.

and I was never one for being in captivity.

## On a Park Bench in April, 1919

The white suited man  
Hands you an ice-cream  
And you try  
To eat it just  
As fast  
As you can  
Pull the soft cream  
From the crisped waffle--  
Made just  
For your welfare.

A brilliant star high  
In the sky, seen behind  
Windows, breaks  
Yellow-dusted  
Broiled air and  
Does not care  
For iced sweets  
And you cannot  
Consume enough

Cream before it slips through  
Your hands and  
Sanguine stained gauze,  
Wrapped in a mess  
Around the chest hole,  
Mended just like how  
That sweet woman showed  
You during the fortnight  
In London, to keep  
Blood from running,  
Falling to tarnish red dust  
Beneath your tanker boots.

## Finding on the Parkway

David Wall

Two woke as the sun realized it was dawn,  
Waited for radiance to become known  
To Appalachians, who still marveled at how high,  
How distant Virgo was from the ground, as stars danced

Along with night's remaining minutes,  
Aged lavender fell away from ebony,  
Lost control, and pair broke ties to climb  
Over the armrest to empty front seats.

Orange broke through drawn shades  
To tumble over unclear windshield glass  
As she clicked her seatbelt and they drove uphill  
To find out where the sun was climbing to.

## Oh, Autumn

David Wall

I thought I knew you  
Once. Your sweet smell  
Decaying blushed apples  
Lying upon carpets of desiccated grass.  
Your threadbare, gray blanket tossed  
Over the sky, shading my day.  
How trees would sway  
Under your timid nudges, shedding  
Leaves- often I was not sure where fell.

Then one day, you did not  
Show. I dropped to my hands,  
Searched the warm, red clay  
For your chilled boot-prints but  
You had not been by.

I waited throughout the year,  
Hands shivering against snow--  
Fall, and sweating under  
Sunbeams. Sometimes I checked  
Behind florid clouds for your early dusk  
Or under stacked kindling  
For brisk air, just to assure myself  
I had not missed you.

Where do you hide when Summer  
Forgets his leave and the widowing  
Winter shoves her way into the sky--  
Blowing frosted tears into dried eyes?  
You always were shy.

## Deliver Me

Caroline Myrick

Burgundy interior with a ripped out stereo  
system  
The smell of greasy lo mein drilling into  
my nostrils  
You drive with your knees, and your eyes  
off the road  
And I've never felt safer.

Rolled up Ziploc inside the steering wheel  
shaft  
I join in on your shift for free, so you don't  
charge for therapy  
We deliver take-out as if our lives depend  
upon it (They do)  
A #12 combo at my feet

Speckled sky, stars and raindrops just above  
the dashboard  
Reviews of books and religion lead to reviews  
of our lives  
Windshield wipers on low with a swish and  
a bit of a tick-tock  
Nothing but us. And rain.

Curly brown hair – like mine, but better –  
sitting on his head  
His heart in the hands of a pretty little thing  
in Ohio  
She moved on, but I stayed, as I would until  
the year  
that we split like a single-celled organism.

## Hey Elephant

you walk on eggshells hearing voices  
forcing your trunk around aerosol cans  
as you tarry down country roads  
counting footsteps of past lovers who ditched  
your tuskless contour and now  
you do that elephant dance  
to shake off noxious gnats  
but they stay  
heavily weighing on the comfort left  
in the womb of the dead mother  
you never met

## My old man in the kitchen

Ashlin Soltys

stops to look out the window  
and compliments the day  
like he used to  
compliment his wife's Sunday dress  
as she fluttered around the kitchen  
rummaging for honey to put in her tea  
that was cold by the time she paused  
to admit she was leaving.

## There is a Temple Three Miles Away

Cassandra Poulos

I spoke once or twice  
of a forest.  
A forest that grew with malaise and melancholy,  
where the water  
that aspired to nourish the foliage  
never found the greenery.

Instead,  
it rained  
in a salt water lake three minutes away.  
The lake tasted bitter, and made the fish bright.  
The lake turned violet, as the fish changed their scales  
to greet the welcome rain.

This forest I spoke of,  
you took us there. You walked

three steps ahead of me,  
like  
a holy trinity. And you were my  
holy  
ghost, wearing all white. Like the clouds,

three minutes away, that rained salt water  
on a salt water lake.

You defied nature,  
like white clouds. On a good day,  
your tears tasted of salt. The life of the earth.

On a bad day,  
they tasted like rain. Pure  
and wonderful.

When we found the forest,  
you wept innocent tears. It was a bad day  
and the forest grew with your melancholy,  
with your  
malaise.

I held your weeping body as the life poured from you.

The trees are bleak,  
I find your hand,  
I try to lift your heavy heart.  
On the third try I succeed.  
I take you to the salt water lake,  
three minutes away,  
where we will skip stones across the water,  
because it is a good day.

## For the Sun

Walking in the sun  
I live for little moments  
In the shade of trees

Muriel Irvin

## In the Cards

Jana Koehler

Olivia wants to wait until the person who drives the silver Lexus leaves. We're parked in front of the house of Madame Marie, the fortune teller with the gaudiest ad in the Vineland yellow pages. The street lights have just begun to pop on in the subdivision next door. So we sit in my car and wait.

"Have you ever had your cards read before?" Olivia asks as she slides her hands along her curly hair and twists it into a loose bun at the base of her neck.

"Yes. It's a fairly simple combination of inference and good luck on the fortune teller's part. Tell the people what they want to hear and you can make a living out of it."

Olivia shakes her head. "Way to take all the fun out of things, Clara."

I shrug. "It can still be amusing. I'd be wary of buying into it though."

"I think I'm gonna ask her about James." Olivia unbuckles her seat belt and unfolds her legs over my lap, her beaded anklet ticking my thigh.

"Why am I not surprised?" I jerk my knees up, and Olivia wiggles off me.

"But he's cute, right?"

"He's not really my type." I shrug again and look out the window at Madame Marie's small front porch. Madame Marie runs an at-home business tucked away in a cozy neighborhood outside the city. The only clue on the house that indicates she possesses supernatural powers is a blinking neon sign that says 'Psychic' in bright purple letters surrounded by blue crescent moons and yellow stars. The mercury vapor in one of the moons sluggishly courses through the glass tube.

"We're going out to Ruth's Chris Steak House on Friday."

"That's a fairly expensive place."

Olivia smiles. "Yeah, I know. But I guess Starbucks must pay pretty good, right?" She sits up in her seat.

"Oh look!" She points to the last customer, a man in a grey suit, who slides around Madame Marie's screen door. He smooths his tie over his white shirt and hurries down the porch stairs.

"Olivia, don't be so obvious." I glance down at the piece of paper in my hand, rubbing away the graphite that spelled out the psychic's address.

"Well hey there, good lookin'. I wonder what you've been doin' in there." She says in a low southern accent. "I bet he's cheating on his wife or something." The car door slams, and soon the Volvo exits the gravel lot. Olivia pokes my arm. "OK. Vamanos."

I tuck the address into a cup holder and follow her.

Below the 'Psychic' neon sign on the front porch, there's an intercom button. I look at Olivia who shakes her head and points her finger at me. I sigh and press the button.

"Have you come for a reading?"

"Yes," we say in unison. There's a metallic click, and the front door slips open. Olivia grabs the door knob, and we walk inside a dim lit room. Immediately in front of us sits an older woman at a kitchen table covered in a purple felt cloth. My disappointment grows when I see that she's not wearing a turban, but I'm slightly pacified when I see that she does have a wide array of gem encrusted jewelry on her fingers and neck. Madame Marie gestures with her hand. We slip through a beaded curtain hanging

over the doorway and sit down on two kitchen chairs facing the psychic.

"I sense great things for the two of you," Madam Marie says as she glances up at the clock behind our heads. She drags a deck of Tarot cards in front of her and holds them out to me. I surprise even myself when I shake my head. I had been secretly looking forward to this, but suddenly I'm reluctant to see what the cards have in store for me.

"You don't want a reading?" she says.

"Yeah, I thought we were both going to get our cards read," Olivia says. She nudges me under the table with her foot.

"I'm not really in the mood right now. But Olivia here desperately does." I smile at Olivia who rolls her eyes.

"Olivia," Madam Marie says as she hands the cards over to her, "that's a pretty name."

"It was my grandmother's name."

"Ah I see. You have a very loving family, don't you?"

Olivia looks from the cards to me. "Yeah, I guess I do."

"Is there anything specific you wanted to ask the cards?"

Olivia laughs. "Well there's this guy..." Of course she actually asks about James. She met him in the supermarket checkout line last week when he commented on the fact that she was buying Yuengling for the house. Apparently this brilliant discussion led to her giving out her phone number, a practice she does all too often.

"Ah, I see." Madam Marie chuckled. "Think of this young man while you shuffle the cards."

Olivia does so and hands the cards back to the psychic. She leans forward as Madam Marie deals the cards in a cross shaped pattern. The psychic grins as she places each illustrated card on the purple table cloth. "What do they say?"

Madam Marie points to the first card. "This card, the Page of Cups, represents your past. It tells me that things haven't always gone as you've often hoped. You've had a lot of disappointment in your love life."

Olivia nods her head. "I can vouch for that," I say and laugh.

Madam Marie slides her finger onto the center card. "This one represents you. It is the Empress. This card tells me that there's something you want now."

"You bet I do." Olivia laughs.

"She also tells me that if you pursue that desire you'll have great success."

"Oh don't tell her that," I mutter.

Madam Marie glances at me and then back at Olivia who is obviously engrossed in the reading. "But the cards don't lie," she says.

"Tell me more," Olivia says.

"Well," Madam Marie taps the next card, "the Ace of Cups confirms this reading. You'll get what you want if you work at it. Now this," she moves her hand to the final card "is your future. It's the Ten of Cups which tells me there will be a great romance in your life. Possibly," she stares at Olivia; I watch the lines around her eyes crinkle as she smiles, "the love of your life."

Madam Marie proceeds to expound upon the insights that the deck has to offer Olivia. I watch as she twists a strand of loose hair around her finger. She lets it go, and it bounces gently by the side of her

cheek.

When the cards are finished, Olivia sits back in the chair and starts bouncing her foot against the ground. "Are you sure you don't want your future read?" she says to me, smiling.

"Oh I'm sure. How much does it cost anyway?"

Madam Marie frowns. "I only take donations for my services. But the typical price is \$65."

I whistle. "Damn. That's a steep price for reading the future."

"Don't be impolite, Clara," Olivia whispers as she pulls out her wallet from her purse. "I think it's only fair."

Madame Marie takes the money and tucks it into the folds of her skirt.

"Thank you, dear. Would you be interested in anything else?" She gestures to the cabinets behind her.

"I could give you some candles to better attract that young man you were asking about..."

Olivia begins to answer, but I cough and stand up. She sighs.

"Maybe not today."

"Well you're welcome back any time," she says as we leave her home.

"I'm sorry you got ripped off back there," I say to Olivia as I pull out of the gravel drive way. "But it was kind of interesting, huh?"

"Yeah," Olivia says as she stares out the window. "I had fun."

"Good," I say. "That's all that matters."

The rest of my week is filled with exams and tutoring, so I don't see much of Olivia. Usually when I have a busy week, she tends to get slightly mad at me, saying I ignore her. On Friday after school, I fix a pot of tomato soup and walk over to her open bedroom door. Inside, Olivia is standing on a four foot ladder situated by one of her bedroom walls. The ladder isn't tall enough to touch the ceiling, so she has to stand on the top rung to reach it. There's a shiny puddle of push pins and old Tarot cards in the paint tray. As she bends down to grab a pin, I want to rush forward and hold the ladder's legs to steady her, but this would only throw her off balance. I can't imagine how she hasn't fallen. How long has she been up there? Instead, I wait until she's steadied her hand against the bedroom wall and punches what I recognize as the Page of Cups into place before I clink my soup spoon against the plastic bowl I'm carrying. She shudders at the sound, and push pins rattle in the tray as she turns to look at me. I smile.

"What're you doing all the way up there?" I ask and cup my hand over my eyes.

She slides her hand down the naked wall and grasps the ladder with her other hand, planting each foot on rung after rung until she's standing on the floor, pushing hair from her eyes and frowning. "Nothing."

"Doesn't look like nothing to me," I laugh and decide to ignore the obvious, feeling like I'm on thin ice for ignoring her for school. "Want some soup? There's a ton more in the kitchen."

"No." She looks up at the rows of cards already tacked into the wall. "Are they even?"

I squint and take a step forward.

"I think so. I can't really tell from this angle."

"I think they are."

"Sure," I say and slide the spoon against my bottom lip. "There's going to be a lot of holes when you take those down in May."

"I won't." She continues to study the Tarot pattern on the wall. She sounds annoyed.

“Where’d you get the cards?”

“I went back to Madam Marie’s.”

I stare at her and wonder why she didn’t invite me. “Why?”

“I just wanted to make sure about James. She sold me these packs.” I frown. “She’s a really nice woman, Clara.”

“Do you hear how crazy you sound right now? You’re obsessing about a guy you’ve been on one date with.”

“I’m not crazy.” She looks at me and then up the wall. “Besides, we’ve been on more dates than that.”

“When?”

“This week. He came over to the house the other day, but you were tutoring.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Because I knew you’d act like this.”

“OK.” I tap the spoon against my front teeth. I decide to give up. “Well I’ll be in the kitchen if you need me,” I say, gesturing backwards with my thumb.

“OK.”

I walk into the kitchen and set down the plastic bowl on the counter harder than I intended. The sound reverberates through the walls, but Olivia doesn’t say anything. I can hear her rattling the pins in the tray and humming as she works.

I wander into the living room and settle into my desk to review the manual for my next lab session. As I examine various equations, I wonder when James was in the house. Did she show him to her room? Did they discuss baby plans? I shake my head and try to focus on my work.

Olivia doesn’t come out of her room all day. I sit cross-legged on my bed with my notebook on one knee and a cold bowl of ramen noodles on the other. All the lights are off in the house except for a desk lamp by my bed and Olivia’s spider lamp in her room. If I listen closely, I can hear her shuffling the cards and talking to herself.

I sit up and place the bowl and notebook beside my lamp. I think briefly about simply going to sleep, but then I think of her standing on the top of the ladder punching holes in the wall and wonder if she’s progressed to voodoo yet. I tiptoe into the hallway and knock on her door. Her talking stops.

“Hey. Can I come in?”

I hear shuffling.

“Come in,” she says after a second’s delay.

I slowly crack open the door and smile. She’s standing by the ladder with one arm laced through a rung.

“Why are you up so late?” I say.

“Why are you up so late?” she says.

“I’m just working on my research. Big day tomorrow.”

“Oh right.” She stares at me.

“Do you mind if I join you? I need to stop thinking about case studies and unwind a little bit.”

“OK.”

I cross the room to the wall perpendicular to the Tarot card display. She’s added more since I’ve last seen it; the pattern now reaches the bottom of the wall. She must have used multiple decks to complete it.

“Are you finished yet?” I ask as I sit down with my back against the wall, feeling the moon from the window above me pour down my shoulders and onto the floor in front of me.

“Almost,” Olivia says.

“What does it all mean?” I ask.

Olivia grins and begins to explain.

“Well, you see, I kept reading my future in the cards, and I kept coming up with the same reading. The cards say that right now I’m in a period of change.” She rises on her toes points to a card near the top of the ceiling. “That’s the Ace of Cups.” She steps back into the moonlight, her white ankles glowing in the light, then steps out of its reach towards the wall. “It means that something good will happen soon, but I have to work at it if it’s going to actually come about.” She smiles and rubs her hands over her arms. “I think it has something to do with James. Don’t ask me what it is,” she laughs, “but apparently it’s something good. Now this is the Empress.” She pries a pin from the wall and crouches down in front of me. It’s a card so worn that the edges are falling off. It looks like the same card from Madam Marie’s deck. “She stands for me.”

“I know,” I say. “I know all this. I saw this reading when we were at Marie’s, remember?” She takes the card back and jams it into the wall. “So why are you doing this,” I wave my hand towards the cards, “again?” I ask as she walks over to the black footlocker in front of her bed. She lifts the lid and digs around until she pops up with a black spool of yarn. She stands and winds the yarn around her right hand.

“Because,” she tosses the yarn ball in my lap which I hold steady as she climbs up the ladder, “this is my future. I have to stick with it. I have to keep it the same.”

I laugh. “But your future will be there even if you don’t have all these cards stuck in the wall.”

She doesn’t say anything but stops halfway up the ladder. She takes the yarn and leans to the side, tying it around the top of the pin holding the Empress. She continues up the ladder and ties another section of yarn on another card, this one the Seven of Pentacles reversed.

I toy with the yarn in my lap. “Does your future say anything that doesn’t have to do with James?”

She stops and turns on her rung, settling her elbows on the metallic ledge. “Why do you hate him so much?”

“I don’t. At least he’ll keep you occupied when I’m trying to study Developmental.” I laugh, but she doesn’t. “Ok, I just think it’s a little weird, that’s all. I mean, you barely know the guy.”

“I know enough.”

I watch her for a few seconds. She’s scowling at me in a way she hasn’t in a long time. I stand up. “Whatever. I don’t care.” I start to walk out of the room, hoping she’ll call me back in.

“Shut the door,” she shouts from the ladder.

I slam it.

When I leave for school in the morning, Olivia is still asleep in her room. Since I know she’ll be later for class, I make her an extra cream cheese bagel and leave it on the kitchen table. She’s in the living room with a bowl of popcorn in her arms by the time I come back to the house.

“I thought you’d never leave your room,” I say as I slip off my book bag and place my books on the counter. I walk into the living room and slide off my sneakers, wondering if there will still be some tension

from the night before.

“But we always watch TV after your lab.” She holds out the bowl to me, and I grab a couple kernels, relieved that she isn’t holding a grudge.

“Sounds good to me.” I flop onto the couch, and she settles down beside me.

“So...,” she says as she tosses some popcorn into her mouth. “I’m going out with James tomorrow night.”

“But I thought we were going to do something together this weekend,” I say as she wraps the large red afghan that I made her for Christmas around her shoulders and covers my bare feet with the edge. Don’t be judgmental. Don’t be judgmental.

“Well, can we reschedule?”

I chew the inside of my lip.

“If you want to.”

“Great. James and I are going out to the movies.”

I grab the remote. “That’s cool. Let’s watch *Lost*.”

“But we’re going to a really early showing. Do you think that means he has another date afterwards?” she asks as she pulls the afghan closer around her, tugging it away from my feet.

“Now my feet are cold!” I say as playfully as I can and yank back the afghan.

“But I don’t think he’s like that, you know?”

The guide pops up on the screen, and I select our show. “Yeah,” I look over to her to verify my answer. She’s frowning. “I mean no. No, he’s not like that.”

“Maybe he has something really romantic planned for afterwards. ‘Cause, I don’t know, I just feel this connection with him, and—”

“Do you think we could watch the show now?”

“Fine.” She huffs and wiggles down between the cushions. “You’re no help at all.”

I press pause. “What do you want me to say, Olivia?”

“Why can’t you be supportive?”

“Because you don’t even know this guy and you’re acting like you do.”

“No, I’m not.”

“Have you shown James your Tarot display? What do you think he’d say about that? Did you inform him that he’s the love of your life yet? Or are you waiting for tonight?”

She frowns. “I’m sorry I actually want to have a life. Unlike you.”

“You’re right. You need a life. Because, you know, school and best friends don’t constitute a life.”

“You know what I mean.”

I really don’t. “Ok.. You’re right. Let’s just watch the show now.”

We sit in silence throughout the rest of the program. She doesn’t even want to discuss anything afterwards.

The microwave starts beeping just as I hear the first knock on the front door. I jump off my stool to answer.

I open the front door. A man in a light red button down shirt leans against the doorway. He straightens up when he sees it’s not Olivia. “It’s a pleasure to see you again, James.” I hold out my hand.

“Yeah, same.” He gives my hand a weak shake and looks around. “Is Olivia here?”

“She’s still getting ready. She asked me to get the door for her.”

“Oh. Okay.”

“Come sit down. My Olivia’s told me so much about you.”

“That so?” He laughs as he settles on a stool. “Good things, I hope.”

I shrug as I open the microwave and retrieve my cup of tea which had boiled over. “Sure. But you know how she is.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well you know.” I wipe away the water from inside the microwave. “She can be a little judgmental about people.”

“I haven’t really gotten that in person.”

“Well maybe she acts differently around you.” I sip my tea. “Would you like some?”

“No, no thanks.” He pulls back his sleeve and checks his watch. “Maybe I should let her know I’m here.”

“She knows.” I set down my tea cup.

He looked around the house. “You’ve got a nice place here.”

“Thanks.”

“You know we have a class together, right?”

I shake my head. “Which one?”

“Abnormal Psych. You always have really good comments.”

“Well thanks.” I smile. “So what do you think of the class?”

“It’s good so far. But her last test was killer.”

“I know! Thirteen multiple choice answers is ridiculous. I—”

“Clara, did you borrow those earrings with the—” Olivia steps out from her bedroom, one towel wrapped around her body and using another to dry her hair. She looks up, and her eyes widen. “James! I didn’t know you were here.” She runs over, clutching the knot of her towel between her breasts.

James stands up and wraps his arms around her. He steps back, running his hands along her sides. “You look good.”

She giggles and pushes his shoulder. “Don’t be dirty.”

I put down my cup on the table. “Olivia? Can I talk to you?”

“Yeah, sure.” She tucks a strand of wet hair behind her ears. “I’ll be right back.”

“You better.” James leans in and pats her ass as she walks away.

I wrap my arm around Olivia’s shoulder and lead her into her bedroom. I close the door and settle on her bed.

“So what do you think?” Olivia giggles. “Isn’t he great?”

“I don’t know.”

“What do you mean?” She picks up a wide tooth comb from her dresser and runs it through her hair, but it hits a snag halfway down.

“Here, let me.” She sits on the edge of the bed, and I slide the comb through her wet hair. I study the water drops along her back, the way the water magnifies her freckles. I hold a slick strand of hair and gently guide the comb through.

“He’s in my Abnormal Psych class.”

“That’s cool. Is he smart?” She turns her head. “I bet he talks a lot in class.”  
“Not really.” I gently tease out a knot. “Olivia, he just doesn’t seem like your type. Why don’t you just stay with me? We could go roller skating. We haven’t been roller skating in years.”  
Olivia looks at me over her shoulder for a moment. Then she looks to her tarot cards on her wall. I brush her hair from her shoulder so I can continue combing. A drop of water slides over her clavicle and soaks into the towel at her breast.  
Olivia stands up and steps into her closet. “I can’t.”  
“Come on, Olivia. Don’t waste your time on him.”  
She emerges in a black dress that just covers the slight muscle in her thigh. “We can hang out later, Clara.”  
“But—”  
Olivia grabs the hairdryer from the counter. She switches it on and turns to the mirror. The tarot cards sway on the wall beside her. I lie back on her bed and close my eyes. I picture them walking into the movie theater holding hands, sitting in the dark room and feeding popcorn to each other. A few minutes later, Olivia cuts off her hairdryer. I hear her slip on her heels.  
She leans over the side of the bed “Clara, I’m going.” She fixes the strap on her shoulder. “Don’t be mad.”  
“Fine. What time will you be back?”  
“I don’t know.” She walks over to the mirror and inspects her outfit. We stare at each other for a second until she walks to her door.  
“Bye,” she says.  
“Bye.”  
She opens the door and steps out into the hallway. James stands up. “Wow, you look great.”  
She fixes the hem of her dress. “Thanks. You ready?”  
“You bet.” He leans over and waves at me. “Bye, Clara. See you Monday.”  
“See you.” I listen as her heels click across the floor. There’s a pause and then the sound of the front door closing.  
I sit up on her bed and watch the Tarot cards sway on her bedroom wall. If only he was a jerk. I sigh and glance around. As I stand up, I see her Tarot book on her nightstand. I walk with it into my room and grab a highlighter from my desk. I flip through the pages of medieval woodcuts of jesters and queens. I stop at the Ace of Cups. The card shows a naked woman standing in a body of water, holding a gold chalice in her hands. I highlight and circle the description in bright yellow. Then I place it open on her pillow and wait until she comes back home.

## Saturday Morning, Farmers’ Market

Kate Putnam

I saw an old nun  
in a white habit  
buying strawberries  
from an old black man selling  
strawberries and peanuts.  
He had a peanut roaster  
at his stall. I was standing there,  
watching them turn.

The nun paid  
for the strawberries  
and then reached  
over towards the roaster  
without looking  
and picked up a bunch  
of spring onions.  
She didn’t speak.  
“And these,”  
her wrinkled old hands  
said, pushing out  
from her long white sleeves  
with struggling blue veins.  
“And those,” the vendor’s dark hands  
replied, closing with ashen  
marks of wear and peanut roasting  
around the wrinkled dollar.  
He put the dollar inside  
a metal box and smiled thanks,  
chapped palm rubbing at his darker chin,  
the sound of sandpaper smoothing ebony.

His hat was red, but also the color of dirt.  
The nun slid the onions into her tote  
and walked away  
with her box of strawberries cradled  
against her white habit,  
and her white sneakers kicking  
at all the dusty strawberry tops  
that littered the floor.

I wanted to take a picture, but  
felt it would have been obscene.  
Later, choosing a white daisy for my mother,  
I could still see the snowy peaked corners  
of her wimple, floating  
above the unadorned, unanointed heads  
of the market.  
I wanted to follow her,  
but knew I would never  
have anything to say.

## I am yellow-gold sun

Marilynn Barr

I am yellow-gold sun sliding down the horizon over Riverside Park;

a wrought iron cage interrupted by stairs cascading down the blonde brick of a pre-WWI apartment building, the deep round echo of harbor horns rolling on the silver and gold laced Hudson towards Ulysses's alma mater, West Point.

I am the swish of rollers and the scratch of a broom stick on the pavement during a street shuffle board game; the winning weighted metal sound sliding across the sidewalk at the end-of-summer sculley tournament, and the whaling on every corner not understanding

"Oh my God, the President's been shot!"

I am the aroma of *arroz con gandules*; a cobalt blue, mosaic-framed doorway wafting fresh pizza, and a "dirty dog" in a stainless steel bath under a yellow umbrella.

I am roasted chestnuts veiling the entrance into Macy's on Herald Square; custard ice cream that lures children from their mother's grip in the subway, and the ketchup on a knish.

I am pixie, heggies, and butterfingers; groovy, cool, beatnik, and hippie.

I am Miss Mary Mack and Georgie Porgie puddin' and pie;

hood, hip, square, wipe out, and what's up.

I am mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa, far out, funky, fuzz, and gimme some skin.

I am a life lesson learned when caught by a Woolworth's security guard with Roundy Rachel, while pocketing a plastic toy watch;

the swoosh drawings of Motown singers on paper that spilled from Myra's left hand; and the finger-tapped kiss onto Sheryl's *mezuzah* before we snuck into the synagogue.

I am lonely, rugged blue jeans with turned-up cuffs carefully dodging cracks (not to break my mother's back) always moving towards the yellow-gold sun sliding down the horizon over Riverside Park searching for a smile to call friend.

# Plans While Writing a Poem My Self-Proclaimed Postmodern Peers Will Appreciate, Like Really, Really Appreciate.

Colton Weaver

start  
set the scene...  
somewhere enclosed, close and closed  
like a bed  
(tight, restricted like, uh, the world all around me, how fitting  
now it's political)  
on a morning  
and maybe the sun will be rising,  
or setting–yes–to represent the ethereal dusk of my cognition,  
Say I'm with someone–don't identify whom–it's meant to be a mystery:  
unfinished, left.

it could be you

and I'll search the dictionary  
for words to make my pseudo-philosophical, imagist, absurdist poem obfuscated, esoteric,  
tanquam yet favillous; beyond recognition  
So that it sounds like Dr. Seuss,  
that is, a Dr. Seuss that knows Althusser, Derrida and the early writings of Flaubert.  
add some random enjamb-  
ment. cut out the capitalization and spacing. start a sentence;  
end it. Section break

Oh, I'll need more words, you know, to remind my peers of my intellectuality,  
-out of place words that don't actually mean anything:  
Specificity or  
literati  
that's good. Now, to end-

bring it to a close in one all-encompassing word:  
(to be read over-dramatically)  
pretension.

The pot was boiling over, water pouring out over the edges, slowly moving its way off of the stovetop, finally topping on the dirt-stained linoleum on the kitchen floor.

“Shit,” Mom said. She worked quickly to wipe up the water with her foot. “Max!” she called. Her ten year-old son, Max, was not paying attention, not doing anything really, just standing idly while his mother cooked in the kitchen. Slowly he made his way into the kitchen, dragging his feet on the hardwood floor of the long hallway that joined with the kitchen, his footsteps echoing noisily to the very end.

“Stop that,” she said.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Take this towel to the laundry room?” He reached out to her, pinning his nose with two fingers as if protecting himself from some smell that simply did not exist.

“I don’t understand,” he said, returning from the living room, elbows propped up on the island in the center of it all.

“Don’t understand what?” Mom asked.

“Why is Marcela coming to live with us?”

“I know, I know, I know, Max. We’ve been over it a hundred times. It’s not an easy answer, Max, but it’s something that we need to do.” But how could she know? How could she possibly understand his confusion? This was a choice for her: Mexican student has no place to live, smart girl, really knows her shit, illegal, no parents, working under the table full time to pay cousin, sure, let’s put her here. But here Max was left in the background while his mother made plans and cooked dinner.

“Hand me the holey bowl,” she snapped. The Holey Bowl. The big metal bowl riddled with holes. You couldn’t fill it no matter what you did or how hard you tried. Max did everything. Max tried real hard. You just couldn’t fill it.

“What are you making?” he asked, searching the cabinets next to the sink for the bowl.

“Macaroni and cheese,” she said. His favorite. She knew that. Any other night he would have loved it, but tonight the orange dinosaur on the front of the package didn’t make him happy. The dinosaur wasn’t smiling, sharing his joy for the delicious contents within. No, he was mocking him, taunting him, because for the first time he would have to share the coveted meal with another.

“Why?” he asked.

“Marcela’s never had it. I figured the transition would be easier for her if we included her in all of our favorite things. I thought including her in what we love would help her, you know, adapt.” she said.

“But macaroni and cheese is my favorite,” Max said.

“Exactly,” she said. “Other people love it too, honey. Why not let Marcela?” He loved it more though. She didn’t understand that, nobody did. Well, nobody except for Frank the Lizard, but he was dead now.

“I don’t know why she would want to live here,” he muttered, poking small fingers at the sides

of the Holey Bowl. They used to fit. One time they got stuck. Dad had to use butter and soap and water and pulling and yelling to get them out. Now only little pink tips mashed through the edges.

“Don’t do that, Max,” she said. She grabbed the bowl and began to pour the noodles into it at the sink.

“So when’s she getting here?” Max asked.

“Soon,” she said. She poured frozen peas into a separate dish and set it in the microwave.

“How long is soon?”

“Soon, honey, soon,” she said. She sighed as she mashed the buttons of the microwave, beep, beep, and Max watched as the bowl swirled around.

“I don’t like peas,” he said. “They make me sick.” Mom shrugged her shoulders.

“Lots of things make you sick, Max. You want me to keep track of all of them?” He shrugged his shoulders. She didn’t notice. Of course she should keep track. That was her job. She was supposed to know and remember that he threw up when they moved five, six, seven, eight times...

“Max, can you help mommy out and set the table for dinner?” When they took long car rides up to the mountains...

“Please?” When Caspian the German shepherd ran away and got hit by a car on the side of the road in front of the pawn shop...

“So is that a ‘yes, mommy, I love you’ I hear?” When Skyler the Calico cat died of Cat AIDS, whatever that was, and dad buried her in the back yard in an old shoe box...

“Max?” When Frank the lizard couldn’t adapt to his new home in the plastic box. He got too hot. He dug down to the bottom of the box deep into the dirt.

“Are you listening to me?” Dirt got all in his eyes and his mouth

“Max!” His tongue was black. There weren’t enough air holes in the lid.

“Goddamnit, Max!” She slammed her fist on the counter. Frank the lizard couldn’t adapt. It wasn’t his home. But Mom wasn’t thinking about Frank or adaptation or Caspian or Cat AIDS, whatever that was. No, she was glaring at Max. She was angry, red faced, clenched fist, bared teeth, gritting together.

“Yes, ma’am?” he asked.

“Set. The. Table. Now!” Oh, and the peas in the microwave. Yes, peas made him sick.

“Yes, ma’am,” he said, and retreated to the dining room.

It wasn’t until walking into the dining room while thinking about peas and dead lizards that he really realized how big the house was. It really was quite massive. Split-level. The kitchen started the long trail of the wood floor for miles until it reached the living room. Mom called it a bowling alley. Dad was indifferent. Max really thought it had at one point been used as one because it just stopped with the fireplace, and that seemed like a perfectly reasonable spot to stand the pins up. When Caspian was a puppy, Dad used to yell at Max when he spun him around in circles on the freshly swept and mopped floor and then slid him down the alley. It was never as successful as he had imagined before actually trying. Caspian would nip at his wrists and fingers. He’d snarl and twist and turn while flopping around mid-bowl, his claws scratching helplessly at the slick paneling under him, which in most cases led to him getting angry and dizzy and sleepy and sick.

But the house, yes, the house was immense. Max had a room. Mom and dad had a room. Dad

had an office. Stuff that they would store away and never use until they packed it up again and moved had a room. Granddad's books had a room. The dining room. The garage. The alley. The living room. The den. The attic, which wasn't so much of an attic. Furnished with hand-me-down furniture, it was actually a more comfortable living space than any other room in the house. Too many rooms, not enough people to fill them with. The hallways used to echo pretty badly. It was impossible to sneak around at night. Mom and dad always woke up. Usually mom, though, because dad snored so loudly anyways.

But now Marcela was coming to live here. Max would have to tell her not to sneak around at night. They'd hear her. He'd tell her not to go into Dad's office. Nobody was allowed in there except for Dad and sometimes mom when she went in to talk to him about money or the car or the messy house or another house they'd make messy again. Most importantly he'd have to tell her to stay out of his room. That was essential. He'd have to tell her everything about being ten and why it's so much different than being fifteen. He'd sit her down in the beanbag in the corner of his room. He'd pull up the roly chair, sit in it backwards, and with carefully chosen words, tell her the rules:

"See, Marcela, when you're ten you do many things that, for reasons unknown, you find yourself backed away in a corner, cowering, trembling, crying in fear for your life from dad's rough hands. Take it from me: you're going to mess up. You're going to lock your mom's keys in the trunk of her car, you're going to twist the leg of the dog and make it yelp, you're going to throw cut-co knives at the doors of all of the kitchen cabinets, and you're probably going to rub large magnets against the screens of dad's television and computer. It's not your fault. Dad will probably say you have no common sense, yeah, you have no fucking common sense at all, and you'll be lucky to grow some later. Yes, don't try to explain these things away, because you can't. They simply are."

And she'd thank him. She'd hug him and tell him that he's a good big brother, that he's someone she looks up to. He'd tell her, "you're welcome," pat her on the back, make her feel like she belonged in the mixed up family. But he'd tell her to stay out of his room. It was messy. It was his. It was all mixed up.

But everything in the house was all mixed up. She'd most certainly point that out. They were truly mixed up enough without having Marcela there. Crosses on the walls, a small statue of Buddha in the living room, candles, chandeliers, family portraits, self-portraits, wooden chairs, metal folding chairs, woven placemats, plastic placemats, solid colored napkins, cloth napkins, paper napkins, paper towels, hand towels, bathroom towels, kitchen sink towels, all of it incongruous and completely conflicting with one another in the same space at the same time for the same family. It was safe to say they were mixed up enough without Marcela.

"So when's soon?" Max asked, setting the table, woven placemat, plastic placemat. Mom was in the kitchen, probably microwaving more peas.

"What?" she yelled, cloth napkin, paper napkin.

"You said she's getting here 'soon'," Max said. "So when's soon?" fork, knife, fork, knife, spoon, spoon, spoon.

"Who? Marcela?" she asked, as if he could possibly mean anybody else.

"No, the other Mexican," he said, spoon goes on the outside of the knife. The knife faces inward. A bowl clanked to the floor. Maybe it was the peas. Peas made him sick. Mom walked into the room. He didn't even hear her come in.

"What did you just say?" she asked. He knew it was best to say nothing, especially since she had really heard what he'd said before. It was a trap, clever, but overused at that point.

"Max!" she barked. "What the hell did you just say?" Max said nothing.

"Nothing." It was dangerous to lie. She would catch on right away. She'd be able to tell, and even more dangerous still was the prospect of repeating it. She'd lose it.

"Bullshit," she said.

"Marcela," he said, and pointed to the hallway between the alley and the kitchen. Marcela stood there quietly. They hadn't even heard her come in the house. It was probably for the best that she could move in and out of rooms so quietly. He'd have to ask her to teach him how to do it later, but then he thought if only she had come sooner.

"Hello," she said. Her face contorted with some forced, sheepish half-smile.

"We'll deal with this later," mom said through still-bared, gritted teeth, like an angry ventriloquist pissed off at the dummy for only saying the wrong things and always getting away with it.

Dad walked in, and everything was better for the moment. Mom hid her angry face and walked into the kitchen.

"Hola!" she said, hugging Marcela. It was a tight enough embrace that the bags in her hands drooped down and fell to the floor altogether. Marcela looked uncomfortable. Max was uncomfortable. Discomfort sort of hung in the air just long enough for Dad to feel the tail end of it as it brushed past him and out the open window of the steamy kitchen.

"What's wrong?" he asked mom.

"Oh nothing," she lied, smiling, giving a slight nod in Max's direction.

"What'd he do?"

"Nothing, David. He just needs to learn appropriate behavior, and fast, before I kill him." She released Marcela and wrapped her arms around Dad's neck, pecking him on the cheek. He looked over at Max and frowned as he usually did for one reason or another.

"Max, finish setting the table and go to your room," he said.

"Hi dad, nice to see you, too, love you, mean it, bye," Max muttered under his breath.

"Excuse me?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," Max said.

Max went back to setting the table. The placemats didn't match. There were never really any matching sets of silverware. The glasses were all different sizes and shapes. The napkins were the same, though: white cloth, maybe silk. But to make the setting more appealing than it really was- he didn't quite know the reason, maybe just to distract from the mixed-upness of it all- he slid the napkins into small, plastic, golden napkin rings that they used for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. It really was all mixed up.

"What the hell, Max?" mom asked. She was in the doorway holding a dish in her hands, the sides of it brimming with peas.

"What's wrong?" dad asked.

"Well, Dave, look at the table your son has set," she said, turning back to the kitchen. Dad entered the room and immediately left. They heard him sigh heavily from the kitchen.

"Max, go to your room. You've done quite enough in there," he said. Max said nothing. It

wasn't his fault, but he could not explain that to them. They had no real desire to understand.

"And don't slam anything or give me any attitude or you're grounded!" he yelled as Max trudged up the steps. But his warning came too late. He had already begun to methodically and deliberately drag his feet, letting each footstep thump against the wood before he had said this, and he knew he was done for.

Max ran the rest of the way, quietly, and gently shut the door to his room. All noise from that point on was unacceptable. He took his shoes off and slid to his usual shelter underneath the bed, with the shoes and the apple cores, staring at the wooden boards beneath it, squinting, blurring the swirls of brown into shapes and figures of people he'd met or made up before, silhouettes of animals, real and unreal alike, dancing along the wooden beams, and he remembered that he was not as alone as he once had been. Marcela was here now. Max squinted even tighter to make out exactly what she was doing in the attic this very moment. The rings in the wood swirled and danced as Marcela practiced salsa dancing to some odd Mariachi band she'd seen in Mexico before she left. They danced and clapped in a joyous rapture that surely only she would know how it felt. Marcela was now dancing in small circles, clutching her belongings tightly to her breast, smiling as she placed them along the walls of the attic. Maybe a book or two, a cross like my mother's, a soccer ball and a sombrero would be on the floor. A ladybug or a cockroach would climb it, hopefully finding shelter from the clanking heels Marcela danced in. She would welcome the bugs. She'd make friends with them. She'd recite Spanish poetry to them, make them laugh, make them cry. She'd tell them the secrets of Mexico, and they would love her and she would be okay. Marcela would be okay. But Max wouldn't. He was determined to be anything but okay. Mom and Dad would see that he wasn't okay, and she would have to leave.

"Max just isn't comfortable with you living here," Mom would say. "He says you keep him up all night with your dancing and your poetry, and we can't have that Marcela." Marcela would tear up. Salty tears would fall down her brown puffy cheeks. "I'm sorry, Marcela," Dad would say. "But you have to leave." She'd pick up her bags and her sombrero and her soccer ball and she'd say "adios" and walk out the door. She'd drop out of school. She'd work fifty hours a week, and she wouldn't be okay. Despite how much better he would feel with her gone, something didn't feel right about it.

"Sacrifices must be made," Mom had said.

"Why? Why does she have to live here? Why us?" Max had asked.

"It's the Christian thing to do," Mom said.

"It's more than that," Dad said.

"Then what is it?" Max asked.

"It's not something you can understand, Max," he said. "You're ten." And that was that. Sacrifices must be made. Where was Marcela's sacrifice? She got a room. She didn't deserve it. Sure, it was an attic, but there are a lot more deserving kids that would die to live in the attic. After all, it was Max's. He'd earned it, slept in it, killed the bugs that lived there before. She had to go, and Max had to crawl out from under the bed and tell her.

The attic was silent. There was no mariachi band. As far as he could tell, she was not dancing around in heels so he knocked on her door.

"Who is it?" she asked. Max jiggled the doorknob. It was locked.

"It's me, Max," he said.

"Just a minute," she said and unlocked the door and stood behind it as he entered the room.

"Yes?" she asked, but he did not answer. He was distracted. The room was all, it was all mixed up. On her metal desk in the corner a laptop. Next to it, a portrait of an old woman. She was old and Mexican, beautiful still.

"My mother," she said, following my gaze. Next to the desk was her dresser, its surface littered with bottles of perfume. So many bottles.

"Why do you have so many?" he asked. She looked at the dresser, raising her hand in the air and then letting it graze the tops of the perfumes.

"Why do your parents have so many crosses everywhere? Why does your mom have a statue of Buddha in the living room? Why so many candles?" She knew. She knew it was all mixed up- they were all mixed up.

"I don't know," he said. "We've always had them. It's always been that way, every house, every time."

"But why?" she asked. He didn't know.

"We just do," he said.

"Exactly," she said. She smiled. At Max, she smiled, a beautiful smile. Green eyes. Frank the lizard was green. Peas were green. He felt sick.

"I have to go," he said. She stared at me. "You should too." Max ran out of the attic and slammed the door.

"It's time for dinner!" Dad yelled, and Max ran downstairs.

Dinner was quiet. Dinner was boring. Mom was scowling at him, exchanging glances between him and the placemats, all of them different from one another. Hers was woven, oranges and blues and reds sprayed the surface. Dad's was the same. Max's was plastic with a turkey in the center holding a fork and knife, and Marcela's was a white plastic with a yellow and red border. They were both plastic. To help her adapt and all. Max shuffled peas to the side of his plate, not wanting them touching anything else on the plate.

"So how was your day, Max?" Dad asked. Max shrugged his shoulders.

"Marcela said the funniest thing in class today," mom interrupted. She'd told Max about it on the way home from school. He didn't care, something about confusing "cheap gas" with "chip gas". It was just kind of funny. Not the funniest.

"Chip gas," Marcela said. Dad roared back in his seat with laughter.

"Chip gas!" he yelled, raising a hand to his eyebrow, wiping away sweat and tears that weren't there to begin with. Mom laughed too. Shrill. But it wasn't that funny.

"Not really," Max said. It slipped. Mom glowered over at him.

"Not really what?" she asked. It wasn't really funny, but Max couldn't tell her that, not with Marcela staring right at him.

"Not really... so bad," Max said, shifting peas onto his spoon. Marcela watched as he scooped the tiniest bite of peas into his mouth. Peas made him sick, and he made no attempt at hiding it. Marcela laughed.

"What's so funny?" he asked.

“Nothing, white boy,” she said. Mom and dad laughed.

“Oh yeah?” Max scanned the table for some kind of defense. “How funny is this?” he asked, reaching across the table and snatching up the golden napkin rings, stacking them on top of one another, and building a small 2 x 2 wall between them.

“There,” he said, “I have built a wall that you can never get through!” Mom and dad stared at the wall then at Max then at the wall again. He couldn’t tell if they were mad at him or amused with the grand structure standing proudly on the table, but it didn’t matter because Marcela picked up a grape from the bowl in the center of the table.

“We don’t have to get through it if we can climb it!” she said. She took her grape, held it in the air saying, “To the U.S!” and mounted it over the great wall of rings.

“Oh yeah? Well if you do get over the wall we have a border patrol to get you!” Max said, poking at her grape with his fork.

“Well, we’ll just dig a tunnel under it!” She began to slide the base of the wall apart with her fingers, threatening to bring the entire structure down.

“You better be quick about it then, because we’ll blow you up with dynamite!” Max laid his head close to the top of the table. She too ducked down looking through the holes of the wall at him. Mom and dad just laughed. Dad wiped sweat that did not exist from his brow. Mom shrieked. Shriill. And Marcela slid her small brown fingers under the wall of rings and flicked them upwards, bringing down his last defense.

“Too late!” she yelled, and the three of them laughed. She was funny. She was too funny, and Max was hurt. She was taking them away from him.

“Oh yeah?” he shouted. The laughter waned then faded altogether.

“Yeah!” she shouted back, smiling, laughing mocking.

“Well, no matter what you do or how you get in, you’ll never be welcome here!” The table fell silent. Marcela stared at the plate, her peas shuffled off to the edge, her eyes welling up with tears.

“Damn it, Max!” Dad yelled, “Go to your room! When the rest of the family is done with dinner, you can come back down and clean the kitchen. By yourself!” He was furious. Mom was silent. Marcela’s eyes were welling up with tears, and Max didn’t like the way Dad had said family.

Max stormed up to his room without Mom or Dad yelling at him and slammed the door. How could they treat him like that? He was their son, the one who belonged there. Why was she so funny now? What was so funny about stupid chip gas? She just talks funny. Mexican girl just talk funny. Why did Mexicans talk so funny? Why? Why did she have so many perfumes, and why was she here? She was brown. She was different, and for some reason that made her special.

Dad called him downstairs, and he washed all of the pots and pans and the grease and the muck and the stench of peas and brownness and the sound of laughter and the sweat that wasn’t there. He didn’t understand. Mom and Dad were so mad. You can’t understand, and it’s not important, they said. Why was not important. Why was meaningless. She’d almost cried at dinner. She had laughed and mom had laughed and dad had laughed and Max was scared. She was stealing them, but they were never his to take from. And then she almost cried. Could have sworn she had died that night. It was a lot like looking at death. It looked like death. But she withdrew. She stood down- I made her stand down.

Max went to his parents’ room to say goodnight, to say I’m sorry and that I’ll learn to behave and that

I’ll learn to share.

“Goodnight, Mom,” he said through the cracked door of their bedroom.

“Go to bed,” Dad interrupted. He was still upset. Max shut the door and went upstairs hearing the faint protests of, come on David, he’s only ten, he’ll grow out of this, but it didn’t matter, Max has to learn how to act appropriately or I’ll kill him. Max shut the door to his room and crawled into bed with nobody there to tuck him in.

And that night as he slept, he dreamed. He dreamt there was a classroom. Desks of charcoal, children of soot. A cat sat at the foot of the teacher’s desk licking himself, legs arched behind his ears. The teacher took attendance and called for Max Kensington, asked if anybody knew where Max Kensington was today and where the hell has he been all goddamn year, and nobody answered him. No, nobody knew Max Kensington and the cat kept licking himself. The door swung open. Marcela swung the door open and scattered the ashes of children. The teacher collapsed into shards of glass, and the cat kept licking himself. The glass dissolved into tiny grains of sand, and Marcela emptied her purse on the floor. Bottles of perfume, bottles upon bottles of perfume clanked onto the tile floors, and the cat stopped. She began to scoop the sand into her purse, and the cat crouched over the pile and said sorry but I need your sand. Marcela began to cry, her tears falling to diamonds and blackened and then greened. Her tears fell to peas, and the boy woke up holding his stomach. It was Max. Max was dreaming of Max sitting on a stool at the front of a classroom under the teacher’s podium. He was looking for his cap. He couldn’t find his cap and the teacher laughed at him because he didn’t know what the capital of Earth was. Marcela raised her hand and said, “Me.” Yes, he said, and Max began to cry. He told Max no one had stolen his cap, and Frank the Lizard was eating dirt in the corner of the classroom, and everything turned to peas.

Max woke with a start and threw up all over the bed. It was green and mashed up. It was all mixed up and Max hated peas. He got up from the bed and took the blankets down to the laundry room placing it in the bin labeled “Coloreds Only”. Walked to the kitchen. Coffee maker read 12:46 AM and got a class of water. The moon gleamed from the counter through the edges of the glass. Mom used to read to him at night. Goodnight Moon. Used to. Dad snored upstairs and Max wished he could have moved more quietly through the house, wished he had asked Marcela to teach him. Footsteps came down the stairs. It wasn’t Mom. It was too quiet to be Mom.

“Hola,” a voice said from the stairs. It wasn’t Mom.

“Hello?” he asked. The footsteps came closer and the light of the moon shone on two tiny brown feet at the end of the kitchen. It was Marcela.

“Oh,” he said.

“Can’t sleep?” she asked.

“Bad dream,” Max told her.

“About what?” she asked. It was glass and cats and soot and sand and you and perfume and Frank the Lizard.

“Peas,” he told her. She laughed quietly.

“What?” he asked.

“Nothing,” she said. “The moon is bright tonight.” The moon was bright. Brighter than normal.

“The sun is only hugging the moon,” she said. “Just a hug,” she said. “Just love.” The sun is

hugging the moon. That was her reason. That was her best way to explain it all. The only way she knew. She knew why. She was Marcela, had no mother, knew no father or brother or sister and had no land. She had almost cried earlier. She had cried in his dream, and she knew why.

“The sun is hugging the moon,” Max said.

“Si,” she said. She smiled at him as he took another sip of water and poured the rest down the sink, watching it swirl around the bubbles left from washing the dishes.

“Well, goodnight, sweet pea,” she said.

“Buenos noches,” he said. She laughed and silently disappeared into faint footsteps on the stairs. Max put his glass in the sink and went to bed.

# Artwork



**Encumbrance**

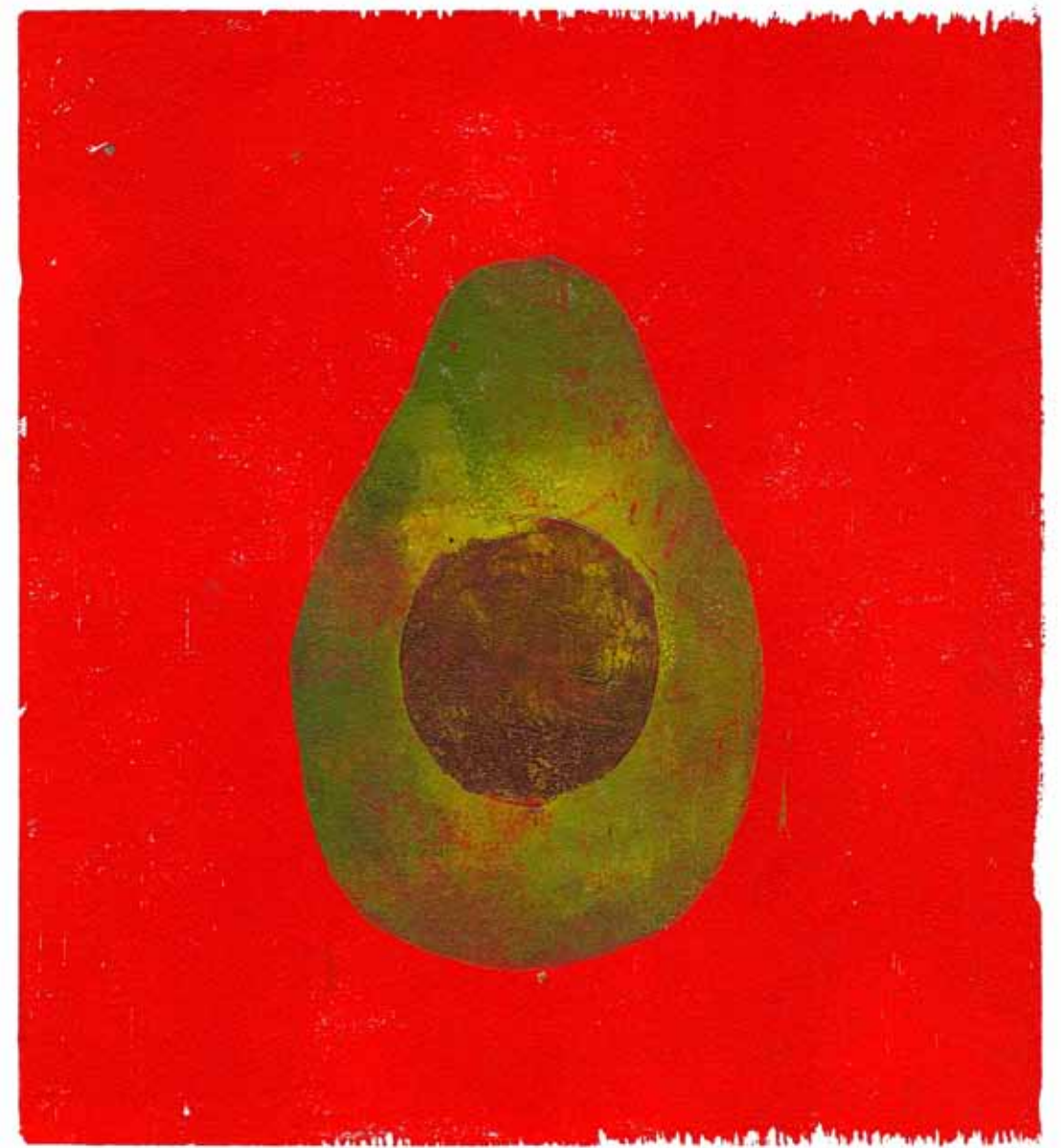
Amanda Nicholas  
*(previous)*

**Aguacate**

Christian Durango

**Natural Burial**

Christian Durango  
*(following)*

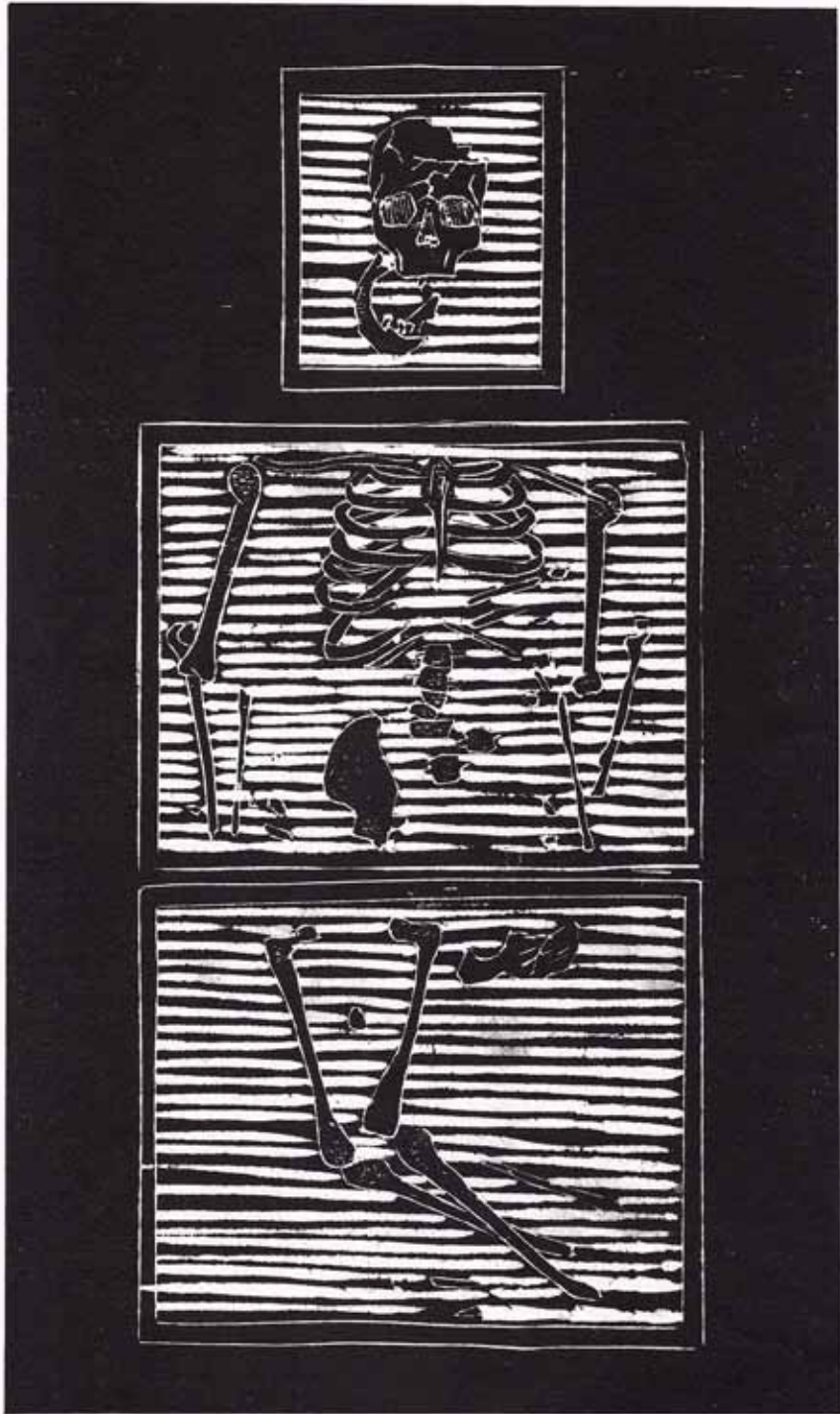


2/4

Aguacate

Christian Durango

'10



Crying Burger  
Jolie Day

I found my summer school lunch in my  
bag today  
Jolie Day



3 am  
Evan Crews  
(right)





Gouache



Collage 9009



Skins  
(previous)



Swappin' Spit  
and  
Sisters (right)

Janie Ledford





Approaching Limbo  
Kendra Hammond

Quagmire  
Laura Kathryn Weigand



Charlie



Bread and Butter (top)  
and  
Cosmic Eagle (bottom)





Untitled (previous)

Holy Mountain (right)



Alexa Feldman

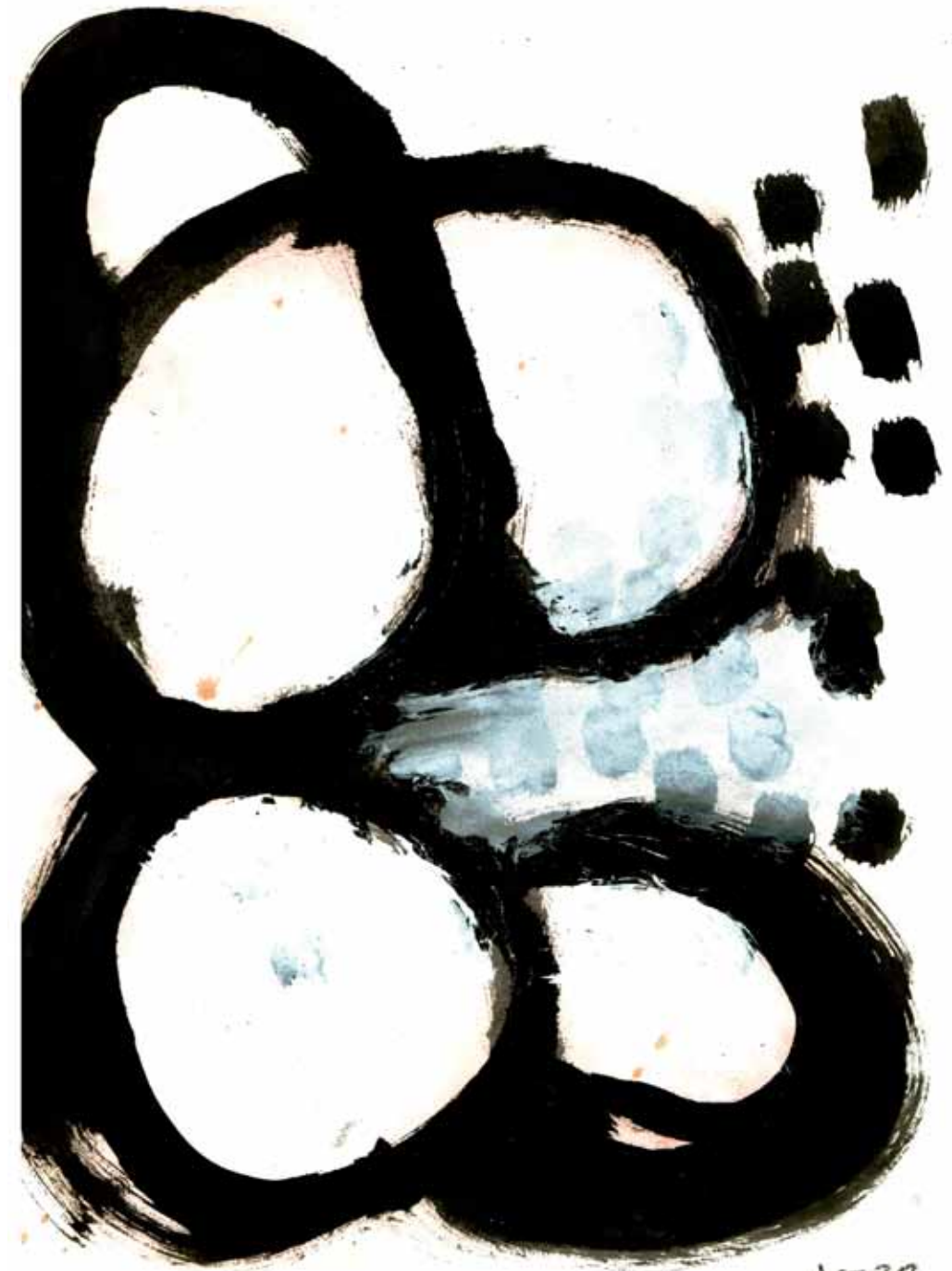
Untitled

Harry Swartz-Turfle  
(right)



Kemal & Co.

Paul Vincent



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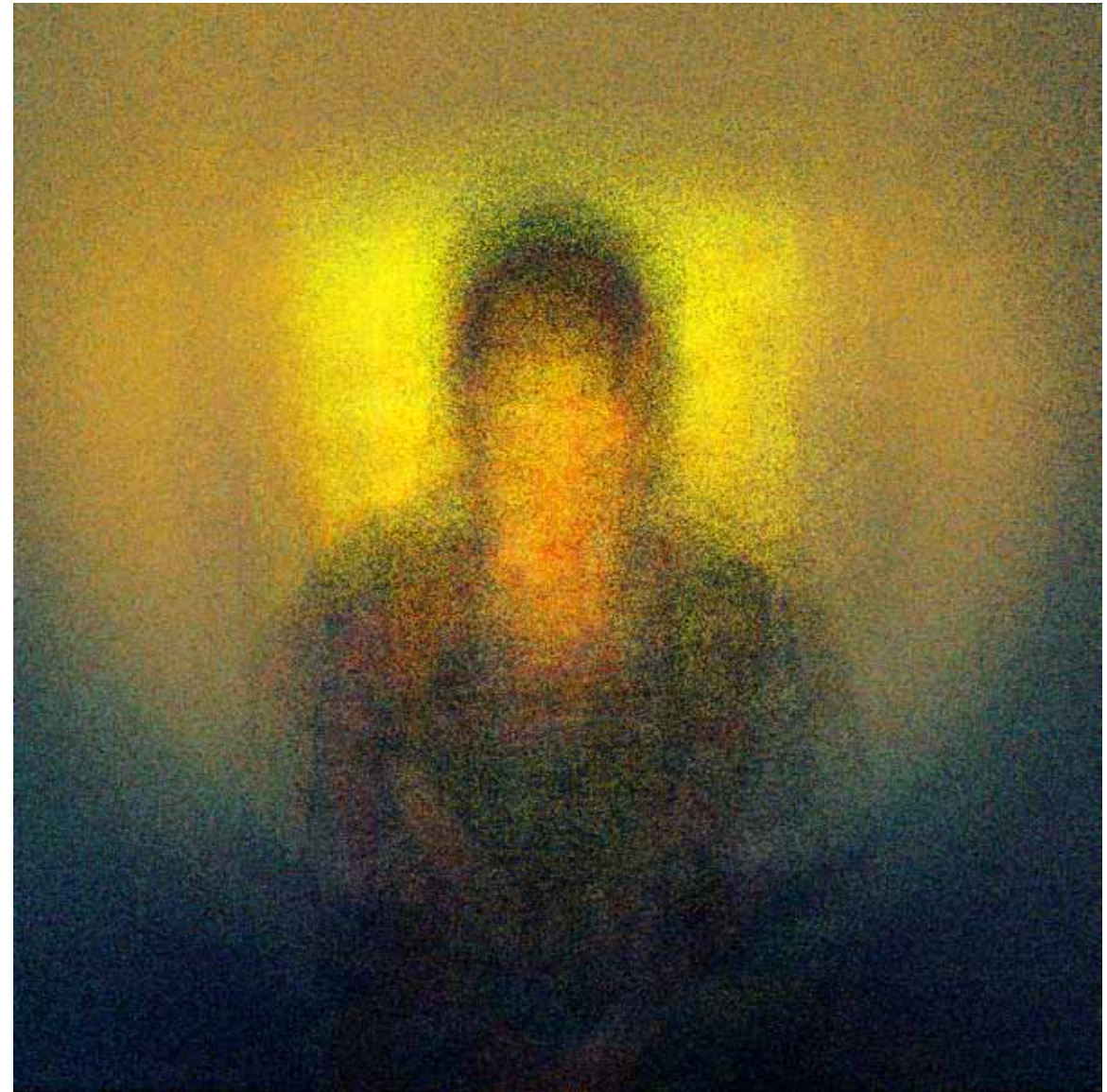
Untitled (Triumph)



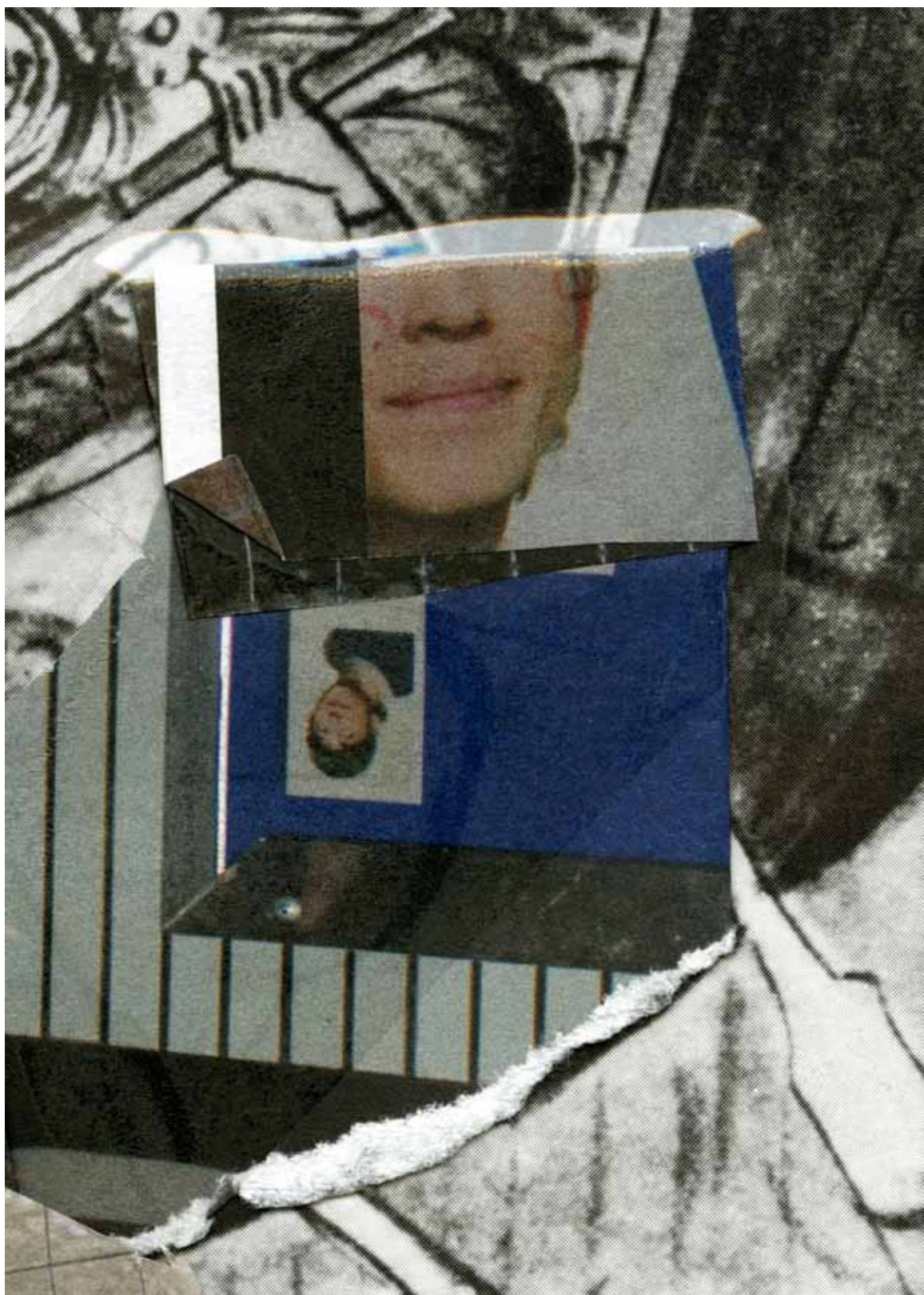
Untitled (Halcyon)



Dignity



20 Portraits



Immigrate  
and  
Structure #3  
(previous)

Composition #16  
Blaine Wyatt Carteaux  
(right)

Je Veux Te Voir  
Maurice Moore  
(following)





# C O N T R I B U T O R S

Maurice Moore is a Graduate Student at The University of North Carolina Greensboro. He is currently finishing up his Masters of Fine Arts Degree in Art and his MFA Thesis Exhibition will be instilled at the Weatherspoon Art Museum in May of 2011. He is very excited about this accomplishment in his life. He has shown work at the Lee Hansley Gallery in Raleigh North Carolina and The Center for Visual Artists in Greensboro North Carolina. He was also awarded a residency at the Penland School of Crafts this past summer and the Herbert & Virginia H. Howard Scholarship while at UNCG. He also loves to draw, watch True Blood and wants to marry James Franco someday.

Amanda Nicholas is a second-year grad student at UNCG. Her work involves plein-air landscape, which entails lugging easel and art supplies into the wilds of Greensboro. It also means that when she first started she broke a lot of spiderwebs... with her face. Hundreds of spiderwebs later, she knows when to duck. She has been huffed at by deer and great blue herons, and fondly remembers the day the four-and-a-half foot black snake crossed behind her chair. Amanda likes manga and chinese foodstuffs, and is a recent convert to ginger tea.

Kate Weigand? Who? The white-haired barista with tattoos at coffeology? Oh, ok.

Blaine Wyatt Carteaux is always unsatisfied. Plagued by his eternal hunger, he is constantly switching mediums and styles. His main interest as an artist is meeting the gap between conception and composition. Blaine is DEATH FACED, and if you have to ask... you'll never know.

Paul Vincent has made it a mission of his to remain at the right place at the right time, despite the odds. He also knows nothing about nothing.

Evan Crews is a Junior Art Major at UNCG, and enjoys spending his free time wearing moon boots on his trampoline- reaching furiously for the sky.

Jolie Day is a sophomore at UNCG. She is currently getting her BFA in painting. She is a sweater enthusiast, hula hooper, and worrywart. She loves dried fruit, Jean Goddard films, and pop surrealism.

Kendra Hammond a junior at UNCG and studies communication and outdoor leadership/recreation. She loves coffee, sunlight, and small creatures, particularly reptiles and amphibians.

Alexa Feldman firmly believes that there should be a Cosmic Cantina in Greensboro. She is in love with Special Agent Fox Mulder but she doesn't mind spending lots of time with her number one pep pep. She might be a junior at UNCG.

Janie Ledford's dog doesn't like Josh Decker.

Ross Brubeck is a filmmaker currently living in Asheville.

Caroline Myrick is actually using her linguistics degree. Can you believe it? She spends most days ranting and raving about morphemes, glottal stops, and the Great Vowel Shift. When she's not eating cereal, Caroline enjoys discussions with her boyfriend about UFOs, Lady Gaga, and other unexplained phenomena. Caroline is currently avoiding the real world via grad school.

Jessica Beebe is just hoping people know how to pronounce her last name.

Dallas Bohannon is a senior at UNCG. He will graduate in December and utilize all of his time watching horror movies and wiping espresso stains off his manuscripts. Dallas writes and writes and writes in the hopes that one day, Stephen King will like his work, and fly out to his book signing and bow at his feet. Oh, one can dream.

Hannah Bodenhamer is rather obstinately herself.

David Wall is very popular, and his keen wit and incisive satire earned praise from critics and peers. Upon his death he will be lauded as the "greatest American humorist of his age", and William Faulkner called him "the father of American literature."

Abby Owens is a sophomore at UNCG. A recent transfer from State, she is majoring in Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies, and plans to move to New York after graduating and let the city take her in. As for now, she is enjoying settling into Greensboro and spends much of her time in the library, browsing through collections of clothes she can't afford.

Ashlin Soltys is a senior at UNCG majoring in Anthropology and Spanish. She is currently researching the acts of commemoration in a Mexican town affected by natural disaster, which completely takes over her ability to write anything clever about herself.

Muriel Irvin is a student. She enjoys immensely the sensations of buying, smelling, touching, and eating cheese. (She also likes cheesy songs and movies, but she doesn't admit to that as readily.) Her favorite past time is knitting while watching *The Lord of the Rings* with her best friend.

Marilynn Barr, a UNCG senior, is finally at the end of a patchwork journey laced with detours, marriage, parenthood, divorce, remarriage, and the plain ol' business of living to complete her undergraduate degree in Studio Art. Throughout it all, her passion has been figurative work—from life, imagination, and memories. Barr believes she is living a charmed life with an amazing opportunity to step out of her comfort zone and create a body of work that will tell rich stories about women.

Jamison Hackelman is a junior at UNCG. His kitten's name is Fuego, which on most days he simply substitutes with "little bastard" or "Mother f\*\*\*\*\* that's my foot." Most of his stories are half-finished and he is a middle child. He is naturally offensive, leaves the kitchen cabinet doors open, and will generally finish the box of cereal you were planning on eating. He happens to like *The Godfather: Part III*, thank you very much, and would like someone to return his belt to him. If you find it, please give it back.

Tristan Brooks is a freshman. His poems are music.

Colt Weaver is a back talker, liar, arguer, non-recycler, polluter, Facebook creeper, cheater, debaser, belittler, sleep-with-you-and-not-call-you-backer, criticizer, forger, consumer, glutton, narcissist, sinner, meanie-head, and a hater but a good person at heart.

Brian Thompson is terribly existential, and yet still unwaveringly hopeful about life and its (potential) freedom. He is not a writer. He is a dreamer. His works are the products of experiences not had, but rather experiences wished about late at night in vague attempts to avoid doing his homework.

Jana Koehler is a senior at UNCG, double majoring in English and Women's & Gender Studies. She lives according to the words of Bruce Springsteen.

Kate Putnam has a very cunning hat.

Harry Swartz-Turflle is a graduate student at UNCG. After attending the Spence School in New York City, he moved to California where he attended the University of California in Santa Barbara, majoring in Art History. He soon quit, realizing it was not his passion. He began acting in the Williamstown Theatre play "Picnic," with his mother, before going on to fill many award-winning roles. He enjoys the TV show "Unsolved Mysteries."

# **C O L O P H O N**

This semester's issue includes selections of art and literature from UNCG students submitted between September and October 2010.

Body Text is set in *Adobe Garamond Pro* 10 pt.  
Titles and logo are set in *Van Condensed LF*, while all other text is set in *Neutraface*.

This magazine is distributed FREE throughout the UNCG Campus.

# **C O N T A C T**

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