

Z A U M

Tony Alioto
Mary-Madison Baldo
Brennan Beck
Melissa Binari
Ahimsa Timoteo Bodrán
Zane Erhardt Boehlke
Nathan William Bollig
Holt Brasher
Jacob Boulais
Kate Cumiskey
Nicole De Leon
Devlin Donohue
Valen K. Dudley
Michael Eliscu
Lindsey Garrison
Robbie Geiss
Joel Gonzalez
Joshua Gray
Katie Johansen
Sasha Kasoff
Kevin Kauker
Ariel Lockshaw
Alexis Lum
Kaitlyn Lyman
Ellyn Percoski
Jacob Pruett
Dianne Turgeon Richardson
Jude Roney
Jon Skahill
Brian Strauss
Kati Teague
Matthew Walsh
Leah Warren

Z A U M SEVENTEEN



S E V E N T E E N

ZAUM

SEVENTEEN

ZAUM SEVENTEEN
THE LITERARY REVIEW OF SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
2012-2013

Senior Editor: Michelle Buzas
Managing Editor: Stephanie Schmidt

Art Editor: Taylor Gallagher
Prose Editor: Kaitlyn Lyman
Poetry Editor: Gabrielle Knock

Editorial Staff: Victoria Barnett, Joshua Cantu, Annie Clark,
Lisa Cronomiz, Jamilya Dozier, Hassey Gascar,
Inga Harned, Emilie Hechanova, Brian Hunt,
Dimitri Nicholson, Ashley Prado,
Matthew Robertson, Andy Sauro, Ricky Solomon,
Benjamin Trospen, Lauren Wagner

Faculty Advisor: Gillian Conoley

Cover Art: *Lace* by Nick King

A publication of the students of the English Department at
Sonoma State University. Thanks to Associated Students and
Instructionally Related Activities for their support of *Zaum*.

Student submissions for our print magazines are considered August-November and submissions
for our online issues, *Zaum XS*, are considered January through April. Submission guidelines
may be found on our website: www.zaumpress.net
All manuscripts/artwork can be sent to our email: zaummag@gmail.com

Contents

<i>Poem #1</i> Devlin Donohue	1
<i>again</i> Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán	2
<i>Weed</i> Sasha Kasoff	3
<i>Just Like My Mother Said</i> Kaitlyn Lyman	4
<i>Fast Forward</i> Katie Johansen	11
<i>Shadow Boxer</i> Joshua Gray	12
<i>Excuse Me Ma'am, Please Fasten Your Seatbelt</i> Kaitlyn Lyman	13
<i>Geometry in the madhouse</i> Kate Cumiskey	17
<i>Holy Trinity</i> Jacob Boulais	18
<i>A List of Lists</i> Kevin Kauker	19
<i>Ryan Manor (Monroe, LA)</i> Holt Brasher	22

<i>reflex-ions</i> Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán	24	<i>Book Wyrn</i> Leah Warren	57
<i>Stuck in the Suite</i> Joel Gonzalez	26	<i>Co-Dependence</i> Kati Teague	58
<i>Ode to Parkinson's</i> Brian Strauss	27	<i>Untitled</i> Kati Teague	59
<i>ON TV</i> Michael Eliscu	28	<i>Mapping</i> Lindsey Garrison	60
<i>War</i> Nathan William Bollig	29	<i>Untitled</i> Alexis Lum	61
<i>Remember, Remember, the Fifth of November</i> Brennan Beck	30	<i>Technicolor in Noir</i> Mary-Madison Baldo	62
<i>Desire is Dead</i> Valen K. Dudley	39	<i>Some Time, Somewhere, That Isn't Anymore</i> Ariel Lockshaw	63
<i>The Projector</i> Jon Skahill	46	<i>Molluscum Contagiosum</i> Robbie Geiss	64
<i>Actual Note to a Bulimic Friend</i> Devlin Donohue	47	<i>Biscotti</i> Nicole De Leon	65
<i>The Meat Rack</i> Brian Strauss	48	<i>Offering</i> Kate Cumiskey	66
<i>You don't know Jack</i> Joshua Gray	50	<i>Basin and Range</i> Dianne Turgeon Richardson	67
<i>The Admonition of Eve</i> Jude Roney	54	<i>Woman Waiting for the Bus</i> Jude Roney	68

<i>Faceless</i> Jon Skahill	69
<i>Mul-tay-cul-trahl-izm</i> Zane Erhardt Boehlke	70
<i>Untitled</i> Ellyn Percoski	81
<i>Advice</i> Tony Alioto	82
<i>Aesthetics (Monroe, LA)</i> Holt Brasher	83
<i>We're In Lust</i> Melissa Binari	84
<i>Goodnight Moon</i> Sasha Kasoff	87
<i>Whippoorwills & George Orwell</i> Matthew Walsh	88
<i>The Law</i> Kevin Kauker	89
<i>Willows</i> Matthew Walsh	90
<i>Postscript</i> Jacob Pruett	91

Poem #1

Devlin Donohue

how does one prepare for poetry?
the same way one prepares for death:
with the awkward emotions of schumann,
clumsily beating out beauty like the silverworks
of ancient indigenous peoples;
with the distortion and sexual ennui of Nirvana,
churning like iron ore in the mantle of the sacral chakra;
with a cup of absinthe and an incredulous disbelief
that it is killing you, however slowly,
giving you just enough time to blow the railway and maybe change the war;
with the same helplessness you feel in a summerhouse
on a day where there is an impossible instance
of nothing else to do;
with life.

again

Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán

for my parents

when i was a child i used to reach up to the stars with both hands outstretched
standing on the very tips of my toes my fingers would fatigue my head spin
pins and needles head rush till i was dizzy from lack of oxygen
and would sit down thinking

next time they were so close next time

you came outside disapproved
and knocked me down kicked me from behind my knees
said i was foolish a dreamer book smart and common sense stupid
my legs calloused and used buckled and bruised they went out from under me

i fell

years have passed i have grown moved away become a man
my arms they are stronger now my legs thick with muscle
my reach is greater stance wider

i have learned how to walk again
with pain less air in my stride less spring in my step
the burden that was my bondage has become the foundation neath my feet
earth so strong and firm unyielding that tremors neath my skin move me more

now i stand here again look around and reach up again to the stars
eyes high on the sky feet firmly on the ground

*thank you for all you did and did not do
hard knocks never produced a finer cadet
thank you for all you did and did not do*

this time i will not fall

Weed

Sasha Kasoff

I do believe
If I was to be a flower I would be a weed
Tough and strong
Growing anywhere
My yellow flowers dotting the land
It would be grand
To stand unafraid of being crushed
Knowing that I am growing all over the world
And even when I die
And all my bright yellow fades to frizzy grey
As I see my last day
The last in the flesh
At last
To become a wish

Just Like My Mother Said

Kaitlyn Lyman

The drought lasted all summer, turning what was once a lavish green field into patches of dried brown grass. I froze as the hardened blades crunched beneath my boot, my silence broken. Up ahead five blurry figures kept running toward the abandoned chapel, still unaware of my presence. Off in the distance, I heard the ringing of the school bell and tightened my grip around the straps of my backpack, knowing full well that the emptiness of my desk has caught the attention of my history teacher's watchful eye. Only minutes before, I had slipped through the metal gates that surrounded the high school and followed Joey into this deserted field, not knowing what I might uncover.

I don't quite know why I had followed him, but I think I wanted to save him.

I met Joey one day in an empty tunnel down by the old railroad tracks when we were seven. His shoelaces were untied and the bottom of his jeans had been ripped to shreds, giving the impression he had outworn them years ago. The freckles on his face blended into the golden glow of his sun-tanned skin and his brown hair lay flat on one side, the way it does only after sleeping for too long.

I was so out of breath when I rounded the corner of the tunnel that I instantly doubled over, my head hanging by my knees, panting. I hadn't noticed him, though, sitting with his back against the dirty wall.

"What are you doing?" he asked, stepping out of the shadows.

"Hiding."

With the palm of my hand I brushed off flakes of dirt from the white lace trim on my red summer dress. My mother hated it when I came home dirty; she scolded and said, *it's not lady-like*.

"From who."

"My sister. Want to play?" I asked. "We should be fine for a few minutes." I stopped, trying to steady my breathing. "But once she gets here we have to run back up the hill to the cherry tree. If she doesn't catch us we win."

We had made it to the cherry tree, with my sister close behind, and rejoined my nanny who sat on a yellow picnic blanket underneath the shade. The game was simple, and we were young, and after that day Joey became the closest thing I ever had to a best friend.

Joey's house was blocks from mine, but we had our bikes and our imaginations and the distance between us grew shorter everyday. Late one evening I dropped my bike on the front porch and walked into my house. My mother called me into the kitchen, where she stood over the counter slicing little triangles into her homemade pumpkin pie. She said it gracefully, and she said it without hesitation.

"Sweetie, you can't play with Joey anymore. He's trouble."

But I was only ten, and I didn't understand.

I was eleven the first time I tasted rebellion. The smooth, white wrapping of a cigarette rested between my pale pink lips as I sat slumped on the rusty tracks of the old railroad. I didn't light the cigarette, but I felt fearless nonetheless. Joey sat next to me; his was lit and burning quickly. Smoke escaped from his mouth in cloudy puffs as he brought the cigarette away from his face; his cough raspy and uncontrollable. We had no good reason to be smoking, and we had never done it before, but the pack fell out of Joey's father's coat pocket as he stumbled out the front door. And with nothing else to do, we simply picked them up. Joey's father was a chain smoker, constantly engulfed in a cloud of smoke that made him insufferable to be around. Normally, he would have noticed if even one cigarette fell from his pocket, but today he was just too drunk. I had asked Joey once, why his father drinks so much, but he just shrugged his shoulders and looked down at his untied shoes.

"What does it taste like?" I asked.

"Nothing good."

I dug into the pocket of my denim jacket and grabbed the oatmeal cookie that my mother had given me when I had pretended to leave for piano lessons. I had gotten pretty good at lying to my mother, and she made it rather easy. She was too often at book club or bunko nights, escaping the boredom of the stay-at-home-mom generation, to check on my every whereabouts. Not to say she didn't care, though; she pried into my life the way all caring mothers do. And everyday she would ask me how school was, and everyday I would say *fine*. I would tell her about my spelling test, and about Alice and Kristin and Nate, and everything else. Everything except Joey. She still insisted he was trouble, and would get me into trouble too, but I didn't believe her. I knew she was wrong.

Breaking the cookie in two, I handed half to Joey. He ate it gratefully and we laughed. We laughed at ourselves for thinking cigarettes would make us cool, and we laughed at Joey's father who actually liked them.

Another summer came and went, and we started the first day of eighth grade like every other year before that. At lunch we sat on the end of a wooden picnic table. I handed Joey half of my peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

"One of these days he'll remember," Joey said, taking a bite.

I nodded my head, thankful that my mouth was full. I didn't believe him, but I didn't want to lie either. I knew better than to think his father was going to get his life together any time soon, let alone remember to pack Joey a lunch.

We sat alone at the table because Joey didn't have any friends and because my friends didn't like him. I told them to give him a chance, but they refused. They said, "He's not like us, just look at him." So I did, and all I saw was a boy in the corner who needed a friend. All they saw was a loner in a raggedy old t-shirt.

He led me through the cemetery, one day after school that year. We weaved in and out of headstones, wilted flowers decaying on the grave-covered ground.

"Joey, where are we going?" I asked, taking extra big steps just to keep up with him. "Why are we here?"

He stopped, without answering, and looked down. My eyes traced the path of his gaze. A soft ray of light bounced off the gray marble stone in front of us, and I read the inscription.

"Your mom?" My voice was weak, and my words were whispered.

Joey had never mentioned his mother before, and I never asked. There were no pictures in his house of her, no hint that she was ever there at all. I knelt down next to him, watching as his hands sifted through the small pile of dirt clumped between the grass and the stone. And in the five years I'd known Joey, I watched him cry for the first time. I wrapped my arm around his shoulders, not knowing what it must feel like to be that sad, and not knowing what else to do. We sat there like that for a minute, in the silence, until he scooted away. He turned to face me, with his back against the stone and his knees tucked to his chest. It wasn't until his eyes met mine that

I realized I was crying too.

"I can still picture her face," he finally said. "And sometimes I think I can hear her voice, in the night, when the wind sweeps by my ear."

"What happened?" I asked.

"It was raining that night. My dad answered the door, and flashing red and blue lights flooded our living room. I didn't know what they were talking about, my dad and the police, but I remember they just kept saying *I'm sorry, I'm sorry.*" Joey stopped. I didn't say anything, then he said, "Someone ran a red light, they didn't see her."

I stared down at my feet, fidgeting with my shoelaces, trying to hide my trembling fingers. Mad at myself for not knowing what to say, I couldn't bring myself to look at him. Not yet, not until I found the right words. A deep pressure swelled up in my chest, I felt it pang beneath my skin but I tried to not let it show on my face.

I had never been to the cemetery before, and I had never known anyone who died. For some reason, I just assumed Joey hadn't either.

We were only twelve; we were too young for that.

Only a couple weeks after our trip to the cemetery, I felt Joey slowly start to slip away. I sat on the bench of our lunch table waiting for him to show, but he never did. And then I stood by the bike racks after school waiting for him to show, but he never did. This went on for days, but I just kept waiting.

I saw Joey, a few days later walking through the hall in a huddle of boys, but he walked right by without saying a word. I recognized the boys he was with, even though I didn't really know them. The boy leading the way was Cameron Houser, a notorious troublemaker. The rest of the boys were Cameron's followers, trailing behind him like a pack of dogs, picking fights and causing problems. Now, it appeared, Joey had become one of them. And so it went on for months, the fighting and the lying, the skipping school, causing nothing more than the trouble my mother warned me about.

I tried to confront Joey, one day before school when he was finally alone. But the person staring back at me was a stranger, someone I knew only in a past life. His face was hardened and cold; it caught me off guard. The emptiness of his eyes looked right through me, making me feel

like I didn't have the right to be asking those questions, the questions that would explain what was happening to him, and to us.

As I rode my bike home that day, down back alleys and over cracked pavements, I caught Joey and his new friends smoking cigarettes and lighting trash cans on fire. I rode by quickly, not wanting to be seen.

When I got home my mother was in the kitchen. She asked how my day was.

"Fine," I lied, heading to my room without looking at her.

It was harder this time, to lie to my mother. I'd spent the last few years lying to her in order to prove that she was wrong, wrong about Joey and wrong about him being the trouble she accused him of. But now, as I stormed up the stairs, frustration fumed from my every pore at the thought that maybe, just maybe she was right.

It wasn't until the summer before our freshman year of high school that Joey's alarming extracurricular activities started to border on the illegal.

For the fourth day in a row, the entire town suffered under the blanket of an unbearable heat wave. The sky above was a hazy gray; evidence that even the sun had sought shelter from its own blistering breath. Like the rest of my friends, I had spent the majority of that summer splashing waves in the community pool near the north side of town.

As I walked home from the pool, my wet feet flapped against the rubber of my flip-flops and water dripped from the strands of my loose ponytail. From across the street I heard Joey's voice. I turned to face him as he shuffled into the drug store, the hood of his black zip-up jacket pulled up over his head. There had been rumors floating around that Cameron and his followers were stealing beers from local shops and drinking them over by the edge of the lake.

But those were just rumors, Joey wouldn't do that.

I stood, cemented to the ground, watching. Only seconds after Joey disappeared behind the walls of the shop, Cameron slithered in behind him.

I knew the owner of the store, Mr. Clayton. He had chalk white hair, an old wooden cane, and sagging wrinkles that reminded me of my grandpa. He told stories from his war days and cursed the Germans, and gave me the candies that my mother swore would lead to cavities. Just the thought of anyone stealing from Mr. Clayton sent my body into shivers, but if there were anyone cruel enough to stoop that low it would definitely be Cameron Houser. As I stood on the

sidewalk, eyes glued to the door, I tried to process what I was seeing. I tried to tell myself that the rumors were just getting to my head, that they were probably going in to buy soda or a bag of beef jerky, that I was just being paranoid. Then I tried rationalizing with myself, and decided on staying until they came back outside. If they had brown paper bags I could rest easy, if they didn't have bags then I'd know it was true, all of it.

My body remained immobile, drops of water trailed down my neck, then my back. The water inched, slowly, down my spine, clinging to my shirt. I forgot about its cold touch on my skin as soon as I saw Joey and Cameron escape across the store's threshold. Their hands were empty, but their sly grins and bulging jackets made me think they weren't entirely empty-handed.

It wasn't until I was crouched down behind the fence that surrounded the old, abandoned church that I grew worried. I had no real plan, and no idea what was going to happen, but my heart told me this might be my last chance to save Joey. And even though my brain disagreed, my heart had dragged me a mile away from school, like a fugitive in the night, into the eerie quiet of this desolate field. The windows of the church were boarded up, covered by wooden planks hammered in place like nails on a cross. The church stood alone, crucified by the overgrown weeds and cobwebs that dangled from its flakey, chipped paint.

They were inside, Joey and Cameron and them. I didn't have much evidence as to what they were doing, but I had a pretty wild imagination and could assume that, whatever it was, God certainly wouldn't be happy they were doing it in his house. At the same time that I heard the clanking of bottles from inside, I heard the rumbling of footsteps approaching behind me. In my crouched position, I ducked behind an unruly bush, hidden from sight by its brown, dead leaves. I turned to find a group of boys, unknown to me but looking to be about my age, head for the church door. Holding my breath I remained still, afraid that even the sound of my breathing would give me away. Through my coat I felt my heart beat, a loud thump pounded in my chest, beating faster and faster. They were dressed in a mess of dark colors, blacks, grays, and reds, with callous smiles drawn across their faces. The sight was unnerving and it shook me down to my bones. One boy held a baseball bat, swinging it effortlessly with the twist of his wrist. He swung freely at the air, making a whooshing sound with his mouth. The other boys laughed, their echo burning through my ears. I waited until they went inside to start breathing again, wondering what was going on.

Fast Forward

Katie Johansen

He came to me in
his father's coat, tails
trailing behind him,
tiny feet trying
to hold onto shoes
twenty years too large.
Hands deep in the sleeves
reaching for mine. He
puffed himself up in
an effort to fill
a man-sized shadow,
the weight of which brought
him to his knees. Still
he reached. I blinked, and
where he'd been, a man
stood, glowering and
accusing. Pointing
the finger of his
strange man's hand,
now at the end of
the cuff of his
perfectly fitted coat.

Inside, the clanking of bottles was met by an abrupt silence. Whether this was an anticipated gathering or an uninvited intrusion remained a mystery, but the immediate shattering of bottles and low growl of fighting told me this meeting was anything but friendly. After a few minutes of listening to the scuffling of boots, the cheers, and the cries, I got up. They sounded like animals in the wild, barking and wailing. My palms were sweaty, tears swelled up in my eyes and I wanted so desperately to leave, to get up and leave them behind forever. Almost on cue, a shrieking symphony of sirens blasted down the street, growing louder and louder with each passing second. Tires screeched on the asphalt as they turned the corner, and I bolted away from the church, back toward the school.

Whether the police were really headed toward the church or just speeding by, I didn't care, I just kept running, running and hoping my knees wouldn't give out from under me. At that point, as I fled from the police and from the abandoned church, the hopes I had of saving Joey disappeared.

By the time I snuck back into school the day was almost over. I made it into my desk before the final bell and spent the remainder of the hour haunted by the taunting sounds from inside the church, ignoring Joey's empty seat in the back of the room.

Once I finally got home, I swung the front the door open and dropped my backpack on the floor. I heard my mother's voice from the living room.

"How was school today, sweetie?"

"Fine."

Shadow Boxer

Joshua Gray

The arena lights burned brighter and hotter than ever. His gloves were heavy with sweat and years as the stronger man beat him round after round. Each blow dulled the pain of a thousand before; each open wound gave a new opportunity to heal. In twenty years, he had never seen the towel of surrender; this fight would be no different.

He still moved well, in the memorized, instinctual way of a champion fighter resisting the end. Muscle memory shot his fists out at the right time, and he would gladly take a punch in order to deliver two. His greatest strength was his iron chin; he had never been knocked down and the enemy's punches stopped hurting him many years before.

Somewhere after the eighth round, the sound of the crowd faded into a numbed silence. The white hot flash of every solid punch against his head blinded him, sent him quietly into moments of his life, into realizations he could not face normally. Uppercut – He sees his son, twelve years old, shadow boxing in front of the TV while a father defends the title. Left-hook – His first close decision, which began the twinge of regret for missing 18 birthdays, 3 graduations, and never once being the tooth-fairy. Overhand Right – A new urge to feel the canvass overwhelms him, and he readies himself to see the bloodstains of so many faceless opponents.

He can sense the coiled back arm of the challenger who is no longer the enemy, but the one who will bring an end to the numbness, to bring the pain back so he can start living. In a moment of clarity, he focuses on the face of a thousand fighters, the face of his son, and his own face in front of him. They all blend into one and he starts to hear the crowd again. They chant his last name in perfect unison, knowing that this is his greatest battle. There is sadness in the stadium, the kind that is mixed with enough victory and pride that tears run down as if the roof had opened and a rain washed in.

Even that last punch came full with tears, smashed into an old champion's face like it was practiced a thousand times. The challenger had waited twenty years to give that final blow as the old man bobbed and weaved a predictable routine, going through an old sequence that finally exposed his battle-worn face like a ready piñata. Then, with more mercy than any white towel could ever provide, the leather from the younger met clean with the face of the older. The chanting from the crowd changed quickly into an exasperated moan, the kind of moaning that brings about a new era.

But no one could see the smile behind the blood swollen lips of the old champion as he struggled to rise. And nobody heard the soft pleading from the challenger as the count came close to ten. "Stay down, Dad. Just stay down."

Excuse Me Ma'am, Please Fasten Your Seatbelt

Kaitlyn Lyman

The rumbling of the plane violently shook my seat, colliding my head with the window and awakening my sleeping body. The lights of the plane were still turned off, in deference to the other passengers who were lucky enough to be sound sleepers. I looked over at my best friend Riley enviously, her eyes closed and her chin tucked between her shoulder and neck. Six more hours, I thought, looking at my watch, or maybe seven. We had changed time zones so many times the numbers were all jumbling up in my head as I tried to do the math. I counted on my fingers until I ran out of them and gave up. I turned to something less mentally straining, but the bright glow from the screen on the seat in front of me blared painfully into the darkness of the plane and into my eyes. I quickly turned off the TV. Even though every seat in the plane was occupied, in the silence I felt peacefully alone.

I relished in the moment, the moment of realization that I, for the time being, was getting everything I had ever wanted. It was a bug that had bit me a long time ago, before I ever had any reason to want it. I simply wanted to travel; I wanted to see the world, and to experience it not through what others had told me, but through my own eyes. And now, with lashes dipped in mascara and curled to perfection, my curious hazel eyes looked out over the Atlantic Ocean for the first time.

I'm not an adventure seeker, and I rarely try new things. Once, I had vowed to eat sushi, but then I picked out everything and only ate the rice. Rollercoasters make me queasy and I hate steep roads and dark alleys, but I had an unstamped passport and a sudden need for adventure. So exceptions were made, suitcases were packed, and I swore to myself, *live like you were dying*.

In my seat, I tucked my legs up close to my body and fidgeted back and forth in restless discomfort. Impatient anticipation was quickly filling my body, like water rising in a river, and I was drowning for excitement, fighting to stay afloat. But I forced myself to wait; after all, I had already been waiting for twenty years, another six or seven hours wouldn't kill me. Besides, patience is a good skill to have. Most of our lives consist of waiting: waiting in line at the grocery store, waiting in an over-sanitized chair at the doctor's office, and waiting for the slimy frog sitting across from you in the driver's seat to magically transform into prince charming. Luckily for me, I was no stranger to waiting.

Sleep overcame me eventually and I rejoined my fellow travelers in their silent slumber. This time, however, I awoke to the flight attendant's voice as it crackled over the speakers to an-

nounce that breakfast would be served in a few minutes. The lights turned back on and I watched as everyone sat up from their slumped positions, stretching out their stiff necks. Across the plane a mother pulled out a stuffed bunny and bounced it up and down to calm her child's crying. I watched as the baby's eyes became glued to the bunny and the crying subsided. In the seats in front of the mother, a young boy wrapped his arm around the girl next to him, and she scooted closer to him. They couldn't have been older than seventeen. He whispered something into her ear, I assumed it was something flirtatious because she blushed instantly and giggled to hide her embarrassment. I turned away, suddenly feeling like an intruder on their intimate moment.

The tired flight attendant faked a cheerful disposition as she handed me my muffin and orange juice, her eyelids drooping heavily over her brown eyes. I guess I wasn't the only one who had trouble sleeping. I gave her a polite smile and she shuffled away. Through the gap in the seats in front of me, I watched the rhythmic drumming of a man's fingers on the armrest. Light from outside the window glistened on the man and reflected off his gold wedding band as his fingers moved up and down. It was exquisite, and I stared at its glimmer as if I could absorb some of its beauty. The man was staring out the window, at the white, fluffy clouds that blanketed the sky, and I wondered why he was going to Rome. To meet his family, perhaps, at their summer vacation house, or a business trip, maybe. But I'll never know for certain, because outside the walls of this airplane's confining space we were merely just passing strangers, all of us.

From across the plane the baby started screaming again, except not like before, this time when she opened her mouth out came a loud shrill that made my entire body shiver. It was a cry that trembled with fear. And before I even had time to look over at the child, the plane jerked, abrupt and aggressive. I clung my hands to the armrest, waiting for the plane to steady itself out again, like it had earlier. But the longer I clung to the armrests the tighter my grip became. The jerks grew more and more frequent and the force behind them grew stronger; I pressed my feet into the floor, the weight of my body wanting to free itself from the seat. Plane crashes and total disasters, they can't be real, those were just things I read about in the papers. It can't be real life, this can't be my life, I pleaded to God, I'm not prepared for this, I'm not ready. I could feel us spinning, spiraling downward and out of control.

The squeal of the flight attendant's voice projected from the speaker and rang in my ears. She was giving us instructions of some sort, but the words were inaudible over the cries of the

passengers. I looked over at Riley, her face white, her eyes bulging with horror. A flashing light appeared overhead. A picture of a clasping seatbelt blinked through the light. My eyes became glued to that blinking light, as a way to distract myself from the spinning, and I thought if only it were that simple. Board a plane, put on the seatbelt, take a nap, put on the seatbelt, exit the plane. Millions of people do that very thing day after day after day, and yet there I was, with my seatbelt strapped around my waist, falling into a rapid descent.

My hands trembled; sweat from panic was causing my grip to weaken. I knew I couldn't hold onto the armrests for much longer. My mind raced, trying to remember what the instructional video said about oxygen masks and floating seats, if only I had paid more attention. But I couldn't remember. I couldn't concentration with the sound of screams piercing through my ears and the blur of panicked passengers as they sat there, helpless. The whole thing was happening so fast, yet it felt as though we had been falling forever, and I didn't know which was worse. We kept spiraling, downward and downward. I had only seconds to make a decision, any decision at all, but time seemed to have suspended itself and everything froze. I too was helpless, and we just kept spiraling.

I didn't know how I got there, in that cold, dark water. Nothing but my head was free from the sting of the water as it pelted my skin like ice. Salt water splashed into my mouth and I tried to spit it out, trying not to choke as my head bobbed above the surface, thrashing in the water. I told myself, just open your eyes. It's over. You're alive. But it became hard to breathe, though, when I realized it wasn't over and that my eyes were already open. Darkness surrounded me and my body was immobile, paralyzed by fear. Pictures flashed through my mind and took me back to the faces of my parents and my brother; their bright smiles whenever my dad told one of his corny jokes, or when my mom would surprise us with our favorite desserts. Did I tell them I loved them? Do they really know? It was a ridiculous question, because of course I did; it was force of habit I was glad to have picked up a long time ago. But now, in the darkness that engulfed my every wish, my every desire, my every regret, it doesn't sound so ridiculous. No matter how many times I had told them I loved them, no matter how often, it still wouldn't be enough.

It didn't take long to realize I was trapped, I just didn't know by what. I screamed out into the black space hoping I wasn't alone, praying I wasn't alone. But the only response I got was the

Geometry in the madhouse

Kate Cumiskey

Just fifteen, but this is the safest place for her—
three bolted steel doors between Kathleen and parents
who come to blows over who must house &

feed her. In math, she said, *it's all right angles everywhere*
I look right angles wall parallel to wall books windows
tables! So she begged for an acute, even obtuse, one

a leaning wall, a door ajar, a broken branch or a hand to hold.
Obsession allowed one terminus, the nurses were inflexible.
Don't worry, they crooned, *it's only a matter of degrees*,

and strapped her down, baring one round buttock for the straight
hot flush of stupor, her legs in leather locks a perfect V, slack
shoulders thirty degrees from bound wrists, from limp hands.

echo of my own voice. The voice was tense and afraid, so shaken with fright that I hardly recognized it. I kept screaming, hoping someone would hear me, but my screams died in the silence. Riley, I thought, horrified. I wiggled in the water, trying to swim out in any direction. My attempts were in vain, there was something holding me back. I could feel the water rising, and I fought to stay above it. The air around me grew unnaturally warm, the water on my face dried instantly in the heat. Tears poured down my cheeks and I squeezed my eyes shut, hoping that when I opened them again I would have awakened from this nightmare. My heart sank, and the pang in my chest told me there was no waking up from this.

It was getting hot, too hot. A flame flickered in the corner of my eye, giving light to the darkness but was too blinding to see. I had to get out, now. I tugged at my leg; something under the water had a hold on it, weighing me down and I remained unmoved.

The water continued to rise, slowly inching its way up my chin, and then my nose as I struggled to break free. Time was running out. Now, only my eyes were above water. I couldn't breathe. My mind flashed to the crying baby and her mother, and the two teenagers, young and in love, wondering if they, too, were fighting to stay afloat. I could feel my face burning red, heading pounding, desperate for the air that I couldn't reach. Before I knew it my whole body was underwater, imprisoned by a force I couldn't escape. Slowly, my life started to drift away from me, gently, out of the body that once housed it, and all consciousness vanished into the darkness of the cold, deep sea.

Holy Trinity

Jacob Boulais

There are three,
walls. and a window.
The rain

drips, droops, and drops
to the stone bleached floor.
ivy grows
in the window,

next to the pale dove.
Father next to Son
the latter dying.

Creator watching Creation deteriorate,
like the sun
inching through the miles that separate death
and inevitable life

People creep by in the shadows
poking, prodding, and asking
How's the pain?
I'd give it about seven and a half

Broken bodies sing the blues
Here comes the blue note
Rolling into town on his morphine wagon.
La de da- sings the ivy
sprouting from his arms

A List of Lists

Kevin Kauker

A list seems to be a simple thing; a number of objects (objects being a loose term, one that represents not only physical objects (forks, knives, antidepressants [Lexapro, Zoloft, and Prozac], and glue) but emotional objects as well (memories, feelings, ideas) placed into a certain order (or a certain disorder)). There are an innumerable amount of objects (the loose term again, not the constricting literal definition (literal definitions are for the weak)) which can be listed; when receiving the request to make a list about anything, rather than giving myself the parameters of every object known and unknown, I choose to give myself the parameters of every known category an object could be in. That is correct Reader, I am about to do what the title states, a list of lists. You may say the deed is impossible, that I may hurt myself in the process, and that my life is in fact on the line. My response to that is, "The deed is not impossible, it is in fact possible that the only perils of this list are paper cuts and ink stains (it would be a different matter if I was writing this in a perilous environment, but alas my room isn't so) and are you high (because death is rarely an objective given)?" Now, where to begin?

Groceries. I could make a list of groceries, a list of the food I eat, the drink I drink, and the consumables I consume. I could list the stores I frequent, (Urban Outfitters, Oliver's, 7-11, El Rancho Taqueria), or my chosen modes of transportation (planes, trains, and automobiles). I could even make a list of movies whose titles can be used to make puns or puns that could be used to make titles of movies. I could make a list of the dreams I dreamt and the dreams I dreamt of dreaming, of the people who I want to be, and the people I fear I'll become. I could list my strengths, my weaknesses, my neutral traits (which no one pays attention to (neutral traits in general, not my particular neutral traits)). I could list my likes (comedy, the smell of citrus, a warm patch of sunlight) and my dislikes (root beer, black liquorice, being stabbed), the words I use, and the words I choose not to use.

I could make a list of my favorite vowels (O is on the top of that particular list, Y on the bottom (Y doesn't have the guts to even be a full-time vowel!)); my least favorite consonant (curse the wretched C (it's too greedy of a letter, look at how many uses it has! It can be soft [as in cite]

or hard [as in cat], it replaces the K and the S when it sees fit [like in the spelling of Karl/Carl {KARL STARTS WITH K}. HOW DARE IT?] C needs to learn some respect for the other letters. Just because C wishes to be known and common does not give it the right to be a jerk about it. Though C isn't going to change if the other letters continue to stand by and let C walk all over them! Letters need to stick up for each other. The J's, F's, and K's all need to let the bigger letters know that it is their time to shine. No longer will they watch as words like garage, cancer, and pheonix are robbed of their glorious presence!), and of words that don't exist but should (like schnibble (a slightly larger nibble)).

I could make a list of the people whose hand I touched today (my manager Steve, who has a firm handshake, my friend Jon, whose hand shakes are a lot less hand and a whole lot more shake (in simple terms, they're inside jokes), and my own, whose hand never knows rest nor relief [now that could be misinterpreted as many things, I am here to tell you that my personal matters are none of your business. Unless of course you're my therapist, then my personal matters are in fact your business. But the fact of the matter is that you are probably not my therapist, because it is impossible for my therapist to be the sole reader. However, if this freak case does present itself and my therapist is indeed you, the Reader, then all I have to say is this: "Hello Doctor, thank you for reading this. You're doing a great job, and I appreciate you." {I most probably wouldn't say this, my dialogue with her is a lot more awkward <as it should be because most personal matters, in regards to myself, are in fact awkward.>} Now for the point of this parenthesis, my hand never knows rest because it always shakes. My hand always shakes because I fear inactivity, I fear lack of movement. Also, I have epilepsy. If given time I could list every seizure I've had and every moment I wish I didn't have them.]).

(Now Reader, you have gotten this far in my list of lists, and I beg of you to continue just a while longer. We are near completion of this essay and I am trying to keep my parentheses to a minimum. I thank you Reader for entertaining this brief heads up. Now back to your feature presentation.)

I could list the stars, the moons, the cosmos, and even the gods (for they may be powerful, but even they cannot escape the grasp of a list). I could list the grains of sand in the oceans of past and present, I could list my former and current obsessions. I could list the amount of periods I have used in this essay up till this point (thirty-three) or the amount of shoes I own whose color rhymes with orange (two).

In fact, my listing abilities are so darn spiffy that I could even list the hours it would take to finish a list of lists (an infinite amount (unless lists never existed then the list would be finished before it even began)). However there is one list I can not list (and you know how well I can list), and that's a list of people who successfully completed a list of lists. So I bow out here, knowing my list is unfinished, but also knowing I'll be forever adding this to a list of unfinished lists.

Ryan Manor (Monroe, LA)

Holt Brasher

The night slowly begins to fuse with morning,
And a dimly lit lamp is the only source
from which we all can see.
We all are huddled around a tiny television,
an evangelist spits his spiel on the
scrambled and faded screen before us.
Laughs slowly roll out of our stomachs,
thundering and bellowing, the loudest mine.
I, the only drunk in the tiny, enigmatic apartment,
the rest of my friends;
high.

Their eyelids hung low like the curtains,
their smiles dripping off their faces slowly like syrup.

The times were wonderful in this moment,
none of us had a care in the world and our minds
were silently at peace in the maelstrom of life.
Together, we were in the same spots every night,
commotion radiating through empty hallways
of smoky apartments littered throughout the city.
Riding in the black car was a religious experience,
my head soaking in the cold air as music
seeped out of the cheap stereo system.
Basking in the ambience, no one uttered a word,
as the lights jumped and skipped off
the buildings surrounding us.

I would not trade these memories,
even the vomit and the headaches.

reflex-ions

Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán

daddy i know you never touched me
(at least not like that)

but you don't need to touch someone
in order to make them feel uncomfortable
in their own home

daddy those times when we used to lay together
in your bed in our underwears
(like spoons one cupping another)

they still with me

those nights you'd come home alcohol on your breath
how your elastic watchband would catch the hairs on my head
and pull them out

one

by

one

even as you tried to pull away

(how you'd always apologize for being so clumsy)

it's why i still flinch whenever your hand comes near
why i stopped drinking three years ago

(well that and the rape
and the fact that i started saying i "needed" a drink
instead of saying i "wanted" one)

it's why i'm always sober now
and why i want to know exactly what's going on

at all times

wherever i am

whoever i'm with

daddy i want to come to you with open arms
but these fists are cramped
they won't uncurl

Stuck in the Suite

Joel Gonzalez

The scars across the palm show a map
that leads to a drunken lunacy
a type of banter
that is only understood by the genius
and the suicidal.
It wasn't my fault
I had my eyes focused on the star glaze.
I should have listened to the subtext
(I'm okay if you are)
it can't stay like this forever
fashion comes and goes
this will lead us to another destination
Hell
(Vegas).
I stay petrified
(drunk)
in the suite that looks above the heartless
(people)
I ran out of credit
(soul) and I have to make life out these chips.
I take the pen
(sword)
and my shield
(brain).

I recarve the new scars
and find the map that leads me back home
(you).

Ode to Parkinson's

Brian Strauss

I sat alone
In the darkness of the morning fog
And I lit a cigarette.
It felt much too thin between the tips of my fingers.
Smoke trailed off,
Copulating with the mists of emergent steam.
My hand stayed steady, momentarily,
Giving into the uncontrollable urge of movement.
I watched my fingers tremble,
With a mind of their own,
As if belonging to someone else.
Maybe they did.

ON TV

Michael Eliscu

Drifting through never ending
Dawn and dusk, the school
Bus bears old glory.

Three shots wail, disappearing,
The tear-dyed triangle
Dampening a heartbeat.

I promise I'll
Wait.

Every green zone points
To heaven like a paper
Boy's route.

My colors don't run
You see.

I dreamt long walks, holding
Hands, honor, being a Man.

Pay the mortgage, understand,
I can't shake the taste of sand.

They won't see All
You Can Be, They'll never
see my homecoming on TV.

Take a chance take a chance
Take a cha-cha-chance
Take a chance on me

The bus won't stop
You see.

War

Nathan Bollig

Home was stale-gray uselessness and the fields: wilted away. Time stood nearly still there, moving like a glacier, carving out emptiness; a dark nothing inside helpless figures who watched the flames cast shadows on the crags. The loved were out there, off to fight again, never to return.

What a time to die. To grow old was worse. To live in sickness unto death. A curse spat out by the sounds of springfields. The shells of ammunition falling to the ground with a deadening thud. A grimace from a man whose bullet tore through skin and bones. It pierced the heart of what?

Humanity in winter. They all sang carols and still continued to bleed out. Red became an irremovable stain. And now, the purest of white bed sheets still smell of gunpowder and gasoline; damp, dingy, sullied by tender sores on backs of men who spoke of nothing anymore.

Remember, Remember, the Fifth of November

Brennan Beck

I first killed a man when I was nineteen.

The day started off like any other day in Iraq. We woke up before dawn, prepared the vehicles by checking the fuel and oil levels. We loaded up the weapons and ammo. We cleaned the interior of the Humvees and replenished the supplies of drinking water and mid-mission snacks. We checked our gear, making sure our weapons were oiled and the batteries in our equipment were good. And then we waited.

On the patrol schedule we were assigned a morning patrol, but for some reason that was canceled. So we sat around our Humvees and Bradleys waiting for some sort of word. We smoked cigarettes, talked shit to each other, shared stories from back home, lied and cursed at each other. Anything to kill the time.

I was listening to my best friend, Private First Class (PFC) Ryan Andrews. He was teaching me how to use the gunner's turret in the Humvee. This was my first day as a gunner, and even though I had some training in the turret beforehand, he wanted to go over some last minute drills with me. He had me get up in the turret and sit in a fighting position. My ass sat snugly on a small strap hung under the turret as a makeshift seat. My right hand wrapped around the machine gun's grip, my index finger rested on the safety switch. My left hand was held around the turret crank and I was rotating it clockwise and counter-clockwise. I was getting adjusted to which way the turret turned depending on which way I turned the crank.

PFC Andrews was calling out directions so I would quickly turn the turret to face the way he called. "Gunshots, six o'clock!" And I'd twist the turret crank and rotate the turret to the rear of the vehicle, weapon aimed to kill. "Gunshots, three o'clock!" And for a second I turned the crank the wrong way, moving in the wrong direction. I quickly readjusted and faced the right way, but Andrews shook his head. "You can't be making mistakes like that in the real thing, Cooper. Out there, every second counts."

Andrews was the same rank as me. In fact, I'd been in the Army a whole week longer than him. We went to different basic training companies but got to our unit in Germany around the same time. We became roommates and best friends as soon as we met. It's strange that we became such great friends, though, since we were so much different from each other. We were the same age, both tall and skinny, and left home right after graduating high school to join the Army,

but there were a lot of big differences between us too. I, for one, was very religious growing up, was active in the church, and strongly believed in God. Andrews, on the other hand, was an avid atheist. Not only did he not believe in God, he made it a sport to badger and question those who were religious. There had been many nights back in Germany where we'd stay up for hours just lying in our bunks and going back and forth on whether God was real or not. He always tried to convince me He wasn't. I always tried to convince him He was. We never got anywhere.

Andrews was also a huge partier. When I first got to Germany I hardly drank and touched tobacco. Andrews must have seen my good-naturedness as a challenge for him to corrupt me. It wasn't long before we were going out to the club, a Vodka-Red bull in one hand, a lit cigarette in the other, on a Wednesday night. Andrews was also known to pick up a on a lot of skanky German girls. He didn't care if they were young, old, fat, skinny, or ugly. It was all free game for him. Even though I enjoyed going out to the clubs with him, I didn't share that interest. I was more the relationship-type. Pretty foolish looking back now. Looking for a relationship in a club.

Even though we were so different, especially upon first acquaintances, we became great friends. We always worked together on duty and hung out with each other when we were off. I'd never had a best friend that I did everything with before. It was a new type of relationship for me, and it was great.

One of the hardest things for me was having to say goodbye to Andrews when he left for Iraq and I didn't. About three weeks before our unit was scheduled to deploy, my appendix erupted. I thought I'd merely gotten food poisoning and checked into Sick Call but they quickly determined it was something worse and rushed me off to a German hospital. Hospitals are scary enough as is but imagine being emitted into a hospital where hardly anyone speaks your language. Before I knew what was going on I was being gassed and operated on.

I spent eight days in that hospital. I was in incredible pain but thanks to the meds I pretty much dozed in and out the whole time. They hardly fed me any food. I got a piece of bread and a yogurt in the morning and survived mostly on tea throughout the day. I lost twenty pounds that week.

On the second or third day Andrews came to visit me. He wanted to tell me they were all preparing on deploying and that that he wished I was going too. "I need you there to have my back." I almost cried. I wanted to go too. I didn't want to be left behind. What if something hap-

pened to him?

After eight days they let me out of the hospital. I was a hair over 150 lbs., and at 6'3", that's not much at all. When I got back to the barracks all of my buddies were still there. They all laughed and poked fun at me.

"I thought they closed down all those German concentration camps after WW2!"

"You're skinnier than my dick!"

"You probably faked it to get out of the deployment!"

They were all just giving me a bad time. And I let them. In less than a week they'd all be in Iraq. I was scheduled to go on convalescing leave.

The next day I was on a plane flying back to California. I spent two weeks with my family, mostly just recovering. When I got back to Germany, I was feeling a lot better. I ran back to our barracks, which were clearly empty. Hopeful, I ran to the room Andrews and I shared on the third floor. I unlocked the door, swung it open, and almost expected him be there sitting on his bunk. But the room was empty. He'd left with the rest. He was in Iraq.

I spent three months in Germany "recovering". All the while the rest of my unit was in Iraq fighting. We'd get word back every once in a while. It was clear that my company, Charlie Company, was in the deepest out of our whole battalion. Word was they were getting in firefights every few days at least. About a month in they lost their first guy. Staff Sergeant (SSG) Bennett was shot and killed by a sniper. I didn't know Bennett very well; he was in a different platoon, but I talked to him once on a firing range in the field. It felt unreal. I had a hard time believing he was actually dead.

Three months later, I was on a C130 aircraft flying from Germany to Kuwait. PFC Duncan was with me, another First Platoon member like me. He deployed late because he got to the unit only a few days before everyone shipped off. He still had to go through additional training in Germany before he was deemed "Combat Ready". So here we were, flying across the world, neither of us feeling very ready for combat.

We spent a week in Kuwait. It was pretty boring. The only memorable thing that happened was one day I got online at the Moral Welfare and Recreation Center and found out Charlie Company lost another guy, this time someone I knew pretty well. Sergeant (SGT) King was the Truck Commander for a Humvee that was hit by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). The blast killed

him instantly. I knew SGT King from when Andrews and I first got to Germany. For a little while he was our team leader and prepared us for being in the unit. He was kind, attentive, and squared away. We both looked up to him. He was the kind of guy that inspired hope. The kind you'd gladly follow into a firefight. And now he was dead.

My gut sank. My pulse weakened. My knees shook. I couldn't believe it. King was one of the best soldiers I knew. I couldn't believe he could be killed. But that's war. It's unpredictable.

I didn't sleep that night. I just lied in my bunk and remembered back when King was my team leader. I remembered all the things I learned from him. All the advice he gave. I tried to remember his face. I didn't want to forsake him by forgetting.

The next week Duncan and I were flying to Iraq. We were to land in Baghdad International Airport and then get on a helicopter to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Loyalty. We got to Loyalty at the crack of dawn. We reported to Headquarters and they directed us to where our platoon was staying. They also told us First Platoon had been on night missions all night so everyone was likely sleeping. We headed over not expecting anyone to be waiting up for us.

I was wrong. Upon walking up to the old, partly bombed out building First Platoon had called "home", I saw my best friend's smile. Andrews was sitting on the front porch, his .50 Cal machine gun disassembled in pieces in front of him. He appeared to be cleaning it.

"About time you showed up."

"Got here as quick as I could."

He got up and we hugged. It was a good hug. A brotherly one. I was glad he was okay. I didn't know what I'd have done if something happened to him.

After a bit of catching up Andrews gave Duncan and me a quick tour of the building. He showed us where we could bunk up and where to put our gear. Everyone else had been sleeping.

"Why aren't you asleep?" I asked him.

"I heard you were on your way. I wanted to be up to welcome you to Hell." We both laughed.

I helped him clean the rest of his machine gun while we caught up. He told me about some of the firefights the platoon had been in. I asked if he'd killed anyone yet and he reluctantly told me no.

“I almost did once,” he explained. “We got shot at from the window of this building. I turned my machine gun before anyone else and fired. Only one round came out. The damn thing jammed. By the time I got it unjammed, every other swinging dick in the platoon was blowing the crap out of that window. I missed my chance.”

I laughed at that. In a way, I was glad he didn’t get the kill. I was afraid it would change him if he was a killer. Maybe he’d change, like some people do. I just wanted him to stay my best friend.

He told me stories for the next few hours. I listened intently, hanging on every word. It was just great being able to hang out with him again. I really missed him. I could tell he was exhausted, staying up after a whole night of patrols, but he didn’t want to sleep. We had too much to catch up on. Later that day our platoon packed up and left FOB Loyalty to Combat Outpost (COP) Apache, a small compound along the Tigris River. It was where we’d be operating for the majority of the deployment, in the heart of one of the most dangerous sectors of Baghdad: Adhamiya.

The fifth of November was one week later. Andrews, who usually always gunned on the Humvees, decided to switch me spots that day. I’d been a driver and a dismount on other missions, but never a gunner. I was excited, but nervous. That’s why Andrews was showing me the ropes.

I was just getting the hang of which way to turn the crank to rotate the turret when we started hearing gunfire from the city. A lot of gunfire. It sounded like the whole city instantly broke out into a violent riot. The Humvee’s radio went off, ordering us to load up in the vehicles and prepare to move out. We threw on our gear and loaded up.

SGT Stewart was the commander for our Humvee and jumped in the front passenger seat. Andrews got in the driver’s seat and started the truck up. I loaded the M240B Machine Gun, locked back the charging handle, and placed the weapon on “Safe”. Silently, I said a quick prayer.

Stewart had been in a briefing all morning while we were waiting near the trucks. Apparently that same day was the trial of Saddam Hussein back in the States. The verdict was in. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. This news quickly traveled back to Baghdad and Sunni militants all over the city were revolting in anger, which explained why our sector suddenly erupted in gunfire.

“There are reports of multiple hostiles roaming the streets.” Stewart took a can of Copen-

hagen from his pocket and stuffed a fat wad of chew in his lower lip. “Tons of them. Over fifty!”

“You lucky son of a bitch. I’m gonna be pissed if you kill someone before me!” Andrews swung back and punched me in the leg. I laughed nervously.

“We’re gonna let two of the Bradleys take the lead. The Humvees will follow. We’ll be the fourth Humvee in the convoy. SSG Turek’s Bradley will pick up the rear.” I felt a little better knowing we’d be in the middle of the convoy. The Bradleys would see most of the action, as they should. They were pretty much mini-tanks, equipped with a 25mm repeating cannon, a 7.62mm machine gun, and reactive armor to protect against bullets and explosions alike. In our eyes, they were indestructible.

Moments later we were driving out the front gate. We followed the dirt path parallel to the Tigris River. We didn’t get a hundred meters out of the gate when we started taking small arms fire from across the river. There were militants firing AK-47s at our vehicles. The convoy stopped and immediately returned fire. It was overpowering. The Bradleys and Humvees were simultaneously firing their machine guns. The Humvee in front of ours, our Platoon Leader Lieutenant (LT) Harris’s truck, had PFC Stone as the gunner. He was manning the Mark 19 automatic grenade launcher, a beast of a weapon notorious for jamming at the worst possible moments. For a second I was in awe as I watched Stone pump round after round of grenade ammo into the buildings across the river. The destruction was breathtaking.

Suddenly I realized something was hitting my leg beneath me. SGT Stewart and Andrews were both screaming at me to fire. Stewart was punching my calf. It was as if I was suddenly awoken from a dream. I stood up in the turret, pressing the butt stock into the pocket of my shoulder, and squeezed the trigger. I couldn’t see any actual targets in the buildings across the river, but I could hear the gunshots. So I just guesstimated where they were coming from and started pumping rounds in that area. It felt good, powerful, to fire my machine gun. I was scared but firing my weapon gave me some power, knowing I was also capable of sending bullets out.

The entire convoy of vehicles continued firing for a few more moments until LT Harris ordered all gunners to cease fire, and then to move our convoy out into the city. Stewart handed me a fresh box of ammo, which I linked to the belt of ammunition already fed into my machine gun.

“Be alert up there, Cooper. Keep your head on a swivel. Be sure to check windows, doors, and alleys. Rooftops too. Don’t shoot civilians. Make sure you have positive identification before

firing. If you see a weapon, shoot them. Stay alert, stay alive!”

SGT Stewart kept sending up advice but his voice kept cracking. I think he was just as afraid as I was. That made me feel a little better, knowing I wasn't the only one afraid.

As soon as we got into the city we started receiving small arms fire from multiple directions. Because our vehicle was in the middle of the convoy, I didn't actually see any of the fighting. My turret was aimed to our vehicle's 3 o'clock, the right side of the convoy. That was my sector of fire and it was my duty to kill any enemies that appeared in that direction. I didn't see anyone in my sector but I sure heard a lot of gun shots from the other side. Bullets whizzed right overhead, buzzing by like killer bees. I heard a few ding off the Humvee's armor, which made me sink down in my turret a bit. I had a layer of armor protecting me to my rear and sides and a small shield attached to the front of the turret for protection, but I still felt vulnerable up there being shot at. Especially since the shooting was coming from behind me. I wanted to turn my turret and blast whoever it was shooting at me, but I had to guard my sector. PFC Stone was gunning the Humvee ahead of ours and was firing his Mark 19 at whoever was shooting at us. I just had to trust his aim was good.

The convoy continued to push forward through the city. It seemed like everyone in the convoy was engaging in the firefight besides me. I kept searching every alley, every window, every doorway, and every rooftop, but I didn't see anyone. The further we pushed into the town the more dead bodies I saw littering the streets. Some had AKs resting on their corpses. Some were missing limbs. One body I saw was literally blown in half. Amongst the blood and gore I noticed he had a checkered Shemagh tied around his neck. I wondered if that was because of his religion or a symbol of his militant group.

I rotated the turret just enough to see an IED blow up on the lead Bradley ahead. Dirt and debris shot up but it didn't seem to faze the vehicle one bit. Then an RPG was shot from an alley and collided with the reactive armor on the side plating of the Brad. The reactive armor was designed to fire off a counter-explosion upon being hit with a rocket or IED in order to blow kinetic energy back and away from the vehicle, and it did just that. I couldn't believe it. That Brad was just storming through everything they were throwing at it. It was indestructible!

Our convoy had fought all the way through our sector. We went to the end of the main street and turned the vehicles back around to head back to base. By this time most of the mili-

tants had been killed or run off. There was still some shooting, with the occasional hand grenade exploding, but it was a lot quieter than only a few minutes prior. I still hadn't fired a round other than when I aimlessly fired across the river.

We'd turned around and were heading back towards the COP when we started getting shot at again. It seemed what was left of the enemy force decided to regroup and give it one more go. Once again, I was facing the other direction from the firefight.

PFC Stone stood up in his turret ahead of us and attempted to fire the Mark 19 down an alley. True to its nature, the weapon jammed and he stood vulnerable trying to unjam it. Andrews saw this from the driver's seat and yelled at me to cover him.

“Cooper, cover Stone! 9 o'clock!” I quickly turned my turret and aimed down the alley. “Watch that red door. There's a guy around the corner.”

I saw the door he was talking about. It was about 75 meters down the alley. I didn't see anyone down the alley though. Stone was still standing in his turret struggling with his weapon.

“Watch that red door,” Andrews reminded me.

Then I saw him. An Iraqi with an AK-47. There was no denying it. He stepped around a corner into the alley and lifted his AK to fire at Stone's Humvee. Unfortunately for him my machine gun was already aimed, my safety was off, and my finger was on the trigger. I squeezed my index finger and controlled the recoil with my weight. Round after round pumped down the alley. My first rounds landed low, flinging dirt and rocks up. I let the recoil lift the muzzle as I shifted my weight over. The rounds traveled up, hitting him in the hip. Then up into his chest. His body flew back and down. His AK47 pointed up and fell back behind him. He hit the dirt in the alley. Lifeless. I stopped firing.

“Holy Fucking Shit! You did it! You killed him!”

I just stood there for a moment, frozen, trying to register what had just happened. For some reason I thought it would change me. I thought I'd feel different. That I'd be a Killer. Maybe I was now, but I didn't feel any different. I was just doing my job. Protecting my friend.

“You son of a bitch! I can't believe you got a kill before me!”

I switched the safety on my weapon back on and looked over at Stone. He'd fixed his weapon and was giving me a thumbs up. I rotated my turret back to the other direction and started scanning that sector of fire. A moment later we continued back towards the COP.

Desire is Dead

Valen Dudley

My body melting into hers, the light from the streetlamps outside our window sheds just enough illumination for me to see our legs, entwining, and warming because we're so incredibly close. There is nothing in this world I would rather do except sprawl across this woman, her hands running themselves across me and her hair brushing against mine as it tumbles down across our shoulders.

It's as if we're one person, the absence of clothes serving as a sort of leeway, some kind of chance for my weight to press against her body and her weight to press against mine. Like we're fading into one; dripping our bodily desires into one glass and pouring it out a unified liquid, a running tap of our now serious relationship.

I wanted to feel the suddenness of being a couple, spending one originally insignificant night at a hotel room in San Francisco, spending one single night spending large amounts of money and sleeping in beds that are not my own.

Her fingers are threading through my hair, every curve of her body I keep reminding myself is pressing, leaving an emotional imprint on my back. I wanted a conclusion, an answer to my dreams unlikely to be fulfilled and I got it all in one evening, a terrible evening of self-exploration and personal growth that I will try very hard to forget.

We aren't even speaking, that's the boggling part. We have no desire to talk, no need to exchange words. I have no desire to tell her of the excruciating soreness that is unmistakably my love for her.

How fast we get to know ourselves. How quickly a single night of manic frivolity can turn into a utopian love affair. How filthy and delicious and sinful I feel, this woman feeling something she already has.

How terrible and perfect this night has been.

Andrews didn't shut up the whole way back. He kept cheering and cursing my kill. I couldn't tell if he was more proud that I'd done it or pissed that he hadn't. He kept saying he shouldn't have let me gunned that day, that it was his kill. I just laughed.

Back at the COP everyone got out of their gear and swapped stories.

"I killed six dudes!"

"I got three kills from across the river!"

"Bullshit!"

"No really, I saw it clear as day!"

"You don't know shit. Everyone was shooting over there. You can't claim that!"

"I cut a guy in half with my machine gun!"

"I ran over a guy with the Bradley!"

And on and on it went. Andrews slapped me on the back. We exchanged a smile. "You did it man. Boy am I pissed." I just shrugged.

"You'll get yourself a kill. We still have a long deployment left."

"Yeah, you're right. I'm just pissed you got one first. Shit dude, you just got here last week."

It had been a week. My seventh day in Iraq and I'd gotten my first kill. "Popped my cherry" as the guys called it. It took most of us at least a month, sometimes longer, to get that.

"The Fifth of November. A day I'll never forget."

We both stood there smoking cigarettes and going over what happened. He told it his way, I told it mine. We even got Stone over and he told us about his kills. We all laughed and smoked and cursed and lied. It was what we did, how we coped. We were only nineteen, and killers.

"You'll get a kill, Andrews. Don't worry about it."

"Yeah, you're right. But I'm not letting you gun anymore until I do."

"Deal!"

Andrews never got his kill. In less than a month he'd be dead.

The events of the past hours play themselves in my head; every moment my mentality exaggerates and turns over until it understands, until something pushes itself into place.

I love this woman, and there is nothing anyone can do about it.

“The sun will be up.”

Her voice startles me, although it shouldn't. I am not a neophyte concerning the art of the affair, not a fledgling in the joys of temporary love. But there is something about directing your own wants onto someone of the same anatomy, something to be said about the strange simplicity that is homosexuality. I didn't expect her to be the first to speak.

“Where do you want me to go?”

Her perfectly melodious voice is like home grown marijuana, filling me with quick memories: rock concerts, red eyes, driving home starving and the pure relief that is a doughnut. She wants to know where to go and I can't even begin to tell her.

“Wherever you want.”

I keep my words safe. It's still dark and I desperately want to see at least her face in the sunlight; the quick events of the night before are cloudy, yet still in my mind. Vaguely I remember a nightclub, a taxi to the hotel, all in the blanket, caped darkness that is palpable during the small hours of the night.

“I should let you think about this. Give you your space.”

I want no space other than that shared with her. The simple frivolity of the hours before have lapsed and deformed. I have a sudden desire for the signing of a lease agreement for a gorgeous beachside cottage, the buying of a double bed as well as the coarsely ironic joke that mono-

grammed “Hers” and “Hers” hand towels will pose on unsuspecting dinner party guests using our bathroom.

“You don't have to leave.”

“But I should.”

“Why should you?” My response comes subsequent to a near gasp. She has moved me with the ease of a piece of paper and is on the side of the bed, the curve of her back perfectly dramatized by the light, but her face remaining nebulous in the darkness.

“This is already too much for you.”

She turns, my eyes travel up and down her body like a biological scanner. I want to remember this; something tells me I'll never have it again.

“Hell, this is already too much for even me.” She reaches forward and brushes the hair out of my eyes.

“You look tired.”

“I'm not.”

Her words send me into an impossible level of self-evaluation: was I terrible? Does she want more? Less? Something else, is my body not perfect enough for her?

“I just think...”

She begins, but doesn't finish, and I can't find any sort of an answer in her eyes or anywhere else on her body. She's rising and taking her shirt off the floor and I realize this will not happen again.

It scares me, her buttoning and me just staring, intensely engrossed.

“I want you again.”

I’m not aware I’m speaking, until she shoots a knowing look in my direction and I’m suddenly sore, tender; preparing for her response because for some strange reason I know that I will never have this again.

“It’s San Francisco.” She defends herself.

“I don’t care!” My voice is like an angry child. “I don’t care where we are.”

“It’s the city and people are countless here. You need to understand that people just won’t hang on like you want them to.”

“But I love you.”

Tears escape from her eyes, streaming down her face more quickly than I could imagine. She pulls her shirt down, covering herself.

“When exactly was the last time you did this?”

A flush of memories, like a blush only deeper, flood my mind, polluting it with all I’d come to this hotel room to forget. A man with a touch like discordant acupuncture, his very glance a mental stab to the heart. My own loveless marriage attacks me along with its terrible shameful denouement of events, the only answer being to drastically redefine the aspects of how I fulfill desire.

“You have no idea.”

“I’m not a lover.”

She takes her shoes then remembers her pants, frantically she darts around the room while I watch her from bed.

“I’m not even a friend or an acquaintance.” She degrades me by cutting herself out of my life, and it makes me fearful, fearful of where I’ll be tomorrow.

I continue to understand that I am merely a tool used by all for their own climb up the psychological ladder. I am a stepping stone in people’s lives; from my darkened heartthrob of a husband to this brief conquest of someone far more emotionally mature than I am.

“I’m no one.”

The sun is up and it gives the illusion that her eyes are fire; the sun reflects itself off her dress shirt and to her legs, long and unpolluted and rubber, as if you could tie a knot with them.

“I’m no one, okay?”

What comes up must come down. This feeling of aftershock echoes through the room with the familiar condescending hatred of a junior high bully. She dresses in the light from the window, her spontaneous tears drying. Sounds of the city: the streetcars, the footsteps of tourist after tourist and the earsplitting chatter of those below in the parking lot are drowning out the swishing of her legs as they glide into her pants. But I can just hear it, her skin on cloth, barely there while I stare at the television, even though it’s not on. She sits on the end of the bed and the unfair one-sided reasoning of what can only be my undeserving spouse plays in my head. I told you so. I told you so.

“Please don’t make me feel bad. You couldn’t possibly think I loved you, right?”

“You have no idea how much I need you right now.”

“We met at...” Her voice fades and a look of insight, as if she’s just reached a conclusion, invades her as she leans forward, close enough that I can hear her whisper, “We met in a desperate place, and I’m not about to start a desperate relationship.”

I am a desperate woman, and sadly it only took one single lesbian to turn my world upside down.

I let her leave. I let people have their lives because it would bother me if it were otherwise. I let myself out of my hotel room and onto the street and I can already feel my skin breathing free, the smell of her washing away as I’m cloaked in car exhaust and the smells of various restaurants nearby cooking their breakfasts. I am stoic, yet despondently changed inside.

There is nothing in this world I wouldn’t mind facing, and this gives me a vague sense of optimism.

I return, after barely two blocks, unable to think straight. Everything is how I left it, she’s taken her belongings and quietly slipped out of my life and I’m thankful, if only for a moment, that I can leave all this, drive aimlessly down a freeway and let it all blow away like the ashes that fall so carelessly from a cigarette. I can feel the weight of marriage on my shoulders like a small child on my back, the mental jab to my heart is harder and harder and I must sit down, I must allow myself to think about everything.

I feel him already controlling me and I’m nearly an hour’s drive away.

So I pack, emptying drawers and trying not to leave so many towels on the floor. I pity custodians, and I let the sudden feeling that I am leaving something in this room come over me.

I must learn to forget so I can strive with absolute temerity to remember.

I have no idea how I managed to pack and leave and pour myself into a taxi without remembering much at all, no idea what exactly those last two hours in the city of contemplating paired with

anxiety and teenaged grief I hadn’t felt in so many years had actually meant. Telling whoever in the lobby that, unfortunately, I would be leaving early. I am always keeping myself up and never letting anyone know me too much.

I unlock my front door with a sense of unconsciousness, exhausted and perspiring from the sunlight. I walk past my bathroom and feel the indescribable need to shower, to wash myself of the unimaginable desire for something better.

My entire body reddens, the water is scalding, my eyes are burning with the coolness of tears and I step out of the steam, angry and crying.

The door clicks, the dull thud of footsteps is heard and I’m still standing there, dripping. What can only be described as my worst nightmare is in seconds walking towards me, smiling with the cruelty of manic longing. My body stiffens and I become cold, my hair hangs in heavy tresses dripping down my back. There must be a puddle on the carpet. A man is walking closer and closer and I want to run away.

“Missed you so much.” He speaks as if he’s telling a joke, his broad shoulders seem to block out the daylight. “Couldn’t stop thinking about us.”

It is my husband, and there is nothing I can do.

The Projector

Jon Skahill

one;

tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic,
focus
tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic,
focus
tic tic tic t
it stopped
what can i do

the rhythm is gone
i cannot learn
tic
tic
tic
what makes you when you are off

two;

smash, smash, smash, smash, smash, smash, smash,
mad
smash, smash, smash, smash, smash, smash, smash,
mad
smash smash smash sma
all over the floor
what can i do

the face is gone
i cannot fathom
sm
a
sh
why do we when we are green

three;

fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck,
focus
fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck,
focus
fuck fuck fuck fu
everywhere everything
what can i fuck

the fuck is fucked
i cannot fuck
fucking
shut
up
please
and thank you.

Actual Note to a Bulimic Friend

Devlin Donohue

Do not define yourself by your sickness.
If you must, be sick with love,

And mostly, love with yourself.

Do not fool yourself in thinking
that because you are failing only when you break
all your failures are purged in this one act—
this exhausts the truth of your preliminary theory.

It does not take rage to beat this,
only knowledge, knowledge of yourself
and your strength.

You are alive, and by this fact
one can draw that all sicknesses are recessive--
if they are there at all;
they play against the natural order.

Death is no sickness,
but an urge for it is--even a small one.

I know you, you are a giving person;
do not martyr yourself on so small a cause,
you can carry a heavier load, and your cross
can be burned for warmth of fire longer after you're gone.

They say that moths drink the tears of sleeping birds.
You are making the moths cry.
And in their idleness the fabrics of time and song are left
undigested by the natural world.

The Meat Rack

Brian Strauss

High-top sneakers squealing on the feet of a queer walking by
thunderously crashing to the ground with each step. Strange-
like gracefulness to the stride though, almost floating
above the crash of the rubber to the pavement.

Some spick, dancin' in the moonlight
thinks he's real hot-shit the way
he moves his feet, really shuffles those fuckers,
glaring up at me with a flirtatious snark.

Light a cigarette; watch the smoke trail off like a
blinding rail of light reflecting against the droplets of sunshine
that hadn't completely washed away from the sky
as the moon perched itself high above the edge of reason.

Slide my hand across the table, gently over hers
and feel that warmth emanating, a hot coal in my grasp.
Give her the chance to pull back, then hard and firm,
remember you're a man. Act accordingly.

Look at the way she fiddles with her hair,
the way she chews her nails, and looks at her feet.
Take notice of her nervously biting the corner of her lip,
tender pink pillows, luscious and moist.

That little spick's still there swayin' his hips
like pendulums of flesh swinging
to some unheard pulse, some soundless rhythm.
Keep your eye on the girl, lean in close.

Don't jump the gun though. Pull back and light another
cigarette, make her really want it, let her build it up
in her own mind. You won't disappoint, you know that.
You're just... looking for a bit of attention.

You don't know Jack

Joshua Gray

The most incredible customer I ever worked for only had half a brain. I mean he literally only had half. I'd lived my whole life to that point without really pondering the incredible nature of memories, or spent much time at all thinking about our brains in particular. I hadn't wondered whether it would be possible to survive without major parts of our brains, let alone half of them. But it is possible, and Jack taught me something about myself the day I met him nearly ten years ago. I will never forget my shock when he opened his door to let me in. I was there to install windows, but what I got instead was a lesson about life and the miracle of adaptation.

When I knocked on his door I was ready for business and about to start the normal routine: Good morning. Are you ready for new windows? Do you have any pets I need to keep inside? Is there a room you would like completed first? But when the door opened I was standing face to face with a smiling, happy man with the right side of his head missing. My mouth almost dropped open, and a gasp should have come out, but instead I just froze up. I had to re-boot my own mind, and simply introduced myself as Josh the window guy.

That first minute there at the door lasted a very long time. From the front, his head looked as if a giant ice cream scooper had removed at least a quarter of it away. He stood and waited for me to recover, and then acted like nothing at all was peculiar.

"Hi Josh, I'm Jack. Want to look around? Come on, let me give you a tour," he said and turned around.

From the back I could completely stare at his head with my mouth open. Jack walked ahead of me and held a cigarette in his hand, and as we walked through the living room I saw an ashtray with another lit cigarette burning. He saw it too.

"Oops," he said and chuckled awkwardly, robot like.

Throughout the house there were full ashtrays on every table, most of them smoking, some threatening to catch fire. I had to start opening windows because I was getting light-headed. Just walking through the house I felt like I'd smoked a pack of cigarettes.

I was stealing quick peeks at his head the entire time as we walked around. It was shaved

clean and looked completely normal on one side. But from the front and back there was a huge chunk missing. That void was perfectly rounded and concaved, and reminded me a quarter pipe that a skateboarder might do tricks on. The skin inside and around the missing parts was normal, and I couldn't figure out if he had a birth defect or if something traumatic had happened to him.

After the house tour I got some tools and started my project. He smoked cigarettes and watched me work while listening to a radio broadcast about people selling things on the air, like a radio yard sale. Occasionally we made small talk. He apologized in case he said the same things over again, and how that happens sometimes.

"On account of my missing brain," he said with an awkward looking a smile. "I forget things all the time."

I couldn't stand it anymore, and decided to ask what happened. He didn't mind the question, and said matter-of-factly that he was shot in the Korean War.

"Only thing that saved me was that I wasn't wearing my helmet. Got lazy and poked my head out of a bunker at the wrong time and that was that. Ever since then the brain I have left over's been fixing itself. I have memory problems, ya know, so I have to keep notes about everything. I knew you were coming because I had it written down."

He went to get more coffee and then came back. I was working on the living room window and kept listening to him as I put it in. He kept smoking and drinking coffee, excited to have company I think.

"You know what's incredible is that I remember the day I was shot, and most of my life before that day too. Got shot right here and the bullet plumb cleared this side out." He pointed to the empty side of his head and passed his fingers through where his brain would be.

The fifty caliber bullet did quite a number on him, with surgical precision. He was de-brained in an instant.

He told me more than ten times about the minute he was shot. Over and over I heard about that Korean bullet and the miracle that happened that day. I could almost hear the bullet as

it hissed before entering his head. So many times I listened to how he felt it go right through and how his life changed forever. After an hour of that I felt like I had been there when it happened and was tempted to have him write a note saying that we'd covered that part already.

"What happened after that?" I asked again, hoping he would move on that time.

Finally he did get past that moment in the bunker and told me about being hauled off a steep mountain on a gurney. He rattled off some names of his friends and fellow soldiers who looked at him in horror when he was brought back to camp.

"They came to see me and to say goodbye cause I was headed home. Sergeant Calhoun couldn't even look at me when he said I was on the next flight. That was the last I saw of those guys, and after that day I can't remember much."

I apologized for being caught off guard earlier at the front door, and admitted to my being shocked too. He said it was no big deal, and that he actually finds something comforting about the shock he sees on people's faces.

"Makes me feel like I'm still here, you know?"

At lunch he proudly showed me his movie collection, which was incredible. He had two cigarettes lit and was literally holding both and smoking them at the same time.

"I really like collecting things," he said while exhaling an incredible amount of smoke. "It used to be coins, and I had a pretty big collection, but they were stolen a few years back. Now I collect movies, and that's good because after a few weeks I don't remember that I've seen one, so I watch it again."

He showed me his rating system, and all of the little tic marks that meant he'd watched it more than once. I stood there for ten minutes talking with him about movies and then he forgot what we were talking about. Even though I didn't make a big deal out of it, I could see that he was getting nervous about losing his train of thought. Right after that he asked me to leave for a little while so he could call his sister. So I put some tools away and went for a walk to a nearby park. I needed to clear my lungs out anyway.

When I got back his sister was there and she met me at the door. She seemed very con-

cerned about something, and wondered why I had left.

"Is everything okay?" she asked, and sort of cornered me there on the porch.

She was nice, and looked a lot like Mrs. Cleaver from the *Leave it to Beaver* show. We had a long talk about Jack, and she apologized if he was at all rude, and questioned me about any outbursts he might have had. I was confused, because Jack seemed very polite. He was awkward, but polite. I told her that Jack and I had interesting talks and I never felt uneasy, except about the fact that part of his head was missing. She was surprised that he was so well behaved. I learned that she was supposed to be called when the window project started because Jack had the potential to be erratic and abrupt. My boss hadn't called her or told me there were any special circumstances about the project. Typical.

She kept me on the porch and wanted to know everything Jack had talked about. I got the feeling she wanted to be sure he didn't tell me his bank account number, or sign over the deed to his house. I assured her everything was fine, and that I had to get started finishing the windows before it got dark. His sister told me what I had already known, that he had serious memory problems. Go figure.

I was putting my tools away at the end of the project, and the sun was going down so it was hard to see as I tied down the old windows. A final walk around the house looking for debris or stray tools always wrapped up my jobs, and I went in to say goodbye. I shook hands with Jack and he looked at me like I had just arrived. His sister told him he had written a note earlier in the day about me, and he should read it before I left. He picked up his notebook and flipped through the pages, which were filled with tiny, printed handwriting. After a couple of minutes he found the note, and read it out-loud.

"Josh is here to do the windows. He is nice. He is doing a good job. I like him." He looked at me again and shook my hand to say goodbye. "Good to meet you Josh. I'm sorry I won't remember you."

"That's okay Jack, I will remember for the both of us."

The Admonition of Eve

Jude Roney

I hadn't thought the tale would spread like sand
swept up to a frenzious storm, but then in the desert
words wet men's lips and keep the tongue doused.
In tents of woven black goat hair the men sat
on their side of the wall concocting a story
they hoped would help our nomadic tribe
brabbling with farmers for land rights.

I say they should have consulted the women.
We Chavah would've set them all straight.
I'd died by then, but we would have put the word truth
on parchment; placed it into their mouths.

Moses, often a luftmensch and egged on by Aaron,
agreed to scribe their nonsense to scroll—
an exaggerated account based loosely on myself,
Adam, and two of my sons—

I wasn't the first woman, and Adam certainly wasn't the first man, not in my life anyway. I'd had a
few before him,
but he had a large herd, a way with words, and charmed
my father for fifty more goat, myself, and four cookpots.
In exchange he gave five hard seasons of labor.

And a garden? There are no gardens here, but the headwaters
at the Tigris are lovely in springtime; and El Shaddaielle
only knows why Aaaron told Moses to write we were kneaded
and shaped into loose formed husks like a golem
for more razzmatazz in their yarn

and, I'll tell you, I've slaughtered and dressed many a goat,
set men's bones back in their places, and oiled the dead;
I ask, who doesn't know both male and female each have twenty-four ribs? Older brothers can be
wildly convincing.

The apple (or was it a pomegranate?), my guess, must have been Moses' idea. He was still peeved
at Miriam for stirring up trouble over him marrying that Cushite woman who declared herself
also a prophet. Moses wasn't one to share holy limelight, especially with women, and a scapegoat
can always prove itself useful.

As a shepherding family there wasn't time to re-name animals;
we had enough with our own herd of two hundred;
and the only reptile I ever saw was a false-tooth
snake which I didn't linger to speak with, and Lilith was only a myth added by Rav Ashi and
Ravina centuries
later in effort to keep women beneath them in bed.

We had many children, Adam and I, as most in the desert
do(more to tend flocks and milk goats as they say),
and pain during childbirth? Let me tell you, women
have always had pain since we stepped
out of the trees and hip bones narrowed
so we could walk about on two feet.

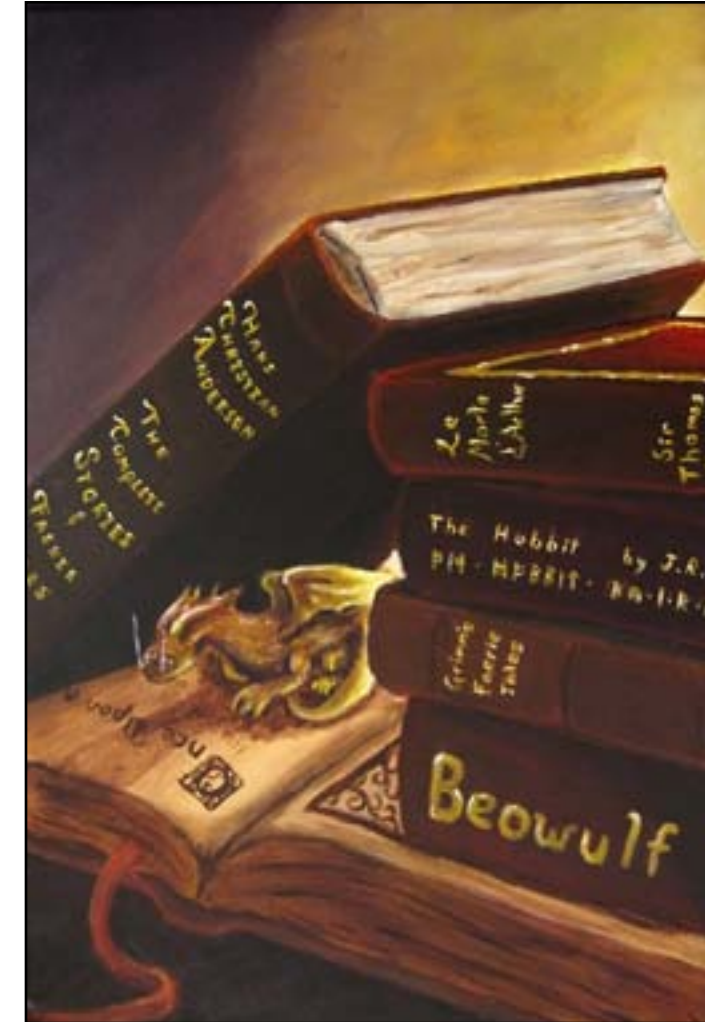
My elder son Cain, to his father's chagrin, became a tiller
of soil and joined in with the land-holders. Abel, my tempestuous boy, was an apprenticing shep-
herd who disfavored
restriction for grazing the goats. Cain and his farmers approached Abel to point out goat-trampled
fields
of barley and flax. Abel threw rocks striking his brother

who threw only one back, mortally wounding the boy.

Cain felt such shame he went east to Nod, built a city and lived well; a pity Moses portrayed him a shtunk and as cursed; the boy was a sweetheart, hardworking and good.

So there it is—an accident between shepherd and farmer, brother and brother. I didn't think such propaganda would stick—and the only mark put upon Cain was the scar from a thrown stone—what kind of people I wondered would believe El Shaddielle would care if a gift were of lamb meat or wheat?

But since then I see in paintings I've grown flaxen hair and blue agate eyes which is wrong; I'm dark like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. I am Hebrew, of the sand and the dust, the pasture and hills—the sun's tanned me deeply as I walk the seasons of the Sinai with our herds and my children—and the door of my tent flutters to the wind of the desert while I hold the parchment with *truth* in my hand.



Book Wurm
Leah Warren, acrylic on canvas, 18" x 24"



Co-Dependence
Kati Teague, oil on paper, 18" x 24"



Untitled
Kati Teague, oil on paper, 18" x 24"



Mapping

Lindsey Garrison

Mixed Media: Plywood, Silver gelatin prints, Photo transfers, Tracing paper, Graphite, 3' x 2'

60

ZAUM SEVENTEEN



Untitled

Alexis Lum

2011, acrylic, 17" x 24"

61

ZAUM SEVENTEEN



Technicolor in Noir
Mary Madison-Baldo
8" x 14"



Some Time, Somewhere, That Isn't Anymore
Ariel Lockshaw
oil on panel, 3.5' x 5.5'



Molluscum Contagiosum
Robbie Geiss
oil, resin, and scratchboard, 20" x 80"

Biscotti

Nicole De Leon

sugar
eggs
anise
flour

yellow bowl
aged hands

two days
three-hundred fifty degrees
forty-five minutes
twice baked

splash of brandy
in the mix and in the glass

Offering

Kate Cumiskey

Your brother left a mango on the scarred face
of the worktable. Eat it today,
he told you, staying only a moment.

I arrive home to learn you've never had one;
married sixteen years in April, you
are a mango virgin.

Its colors slide across my palms;
the magenta and golden skin enjoys
an Indian summer. By midnight

I am beyond ready to slip through
the slumbering house, past the humming
refrigerator, the nightlight, to pick up

this token and warm it against my chest.
You are right where I want you, sprawled
out contemplating sleep when I open

the fruit whose juices drip
slick, sweet as my own,
over your lips, your fingertips.

Basin and Range

Dianne Turgeon Richardson

Tacked onto the loneliest highway
in the middle of Great Basin Desert
is a greasy spoon famous for its burgers,
secret recipe Thousand Island sauce,
and alien memorabilia. But more famous
in my memory are the 8x10 photographs
of torn and crumpled truck fenders speckled red,
flipped cars, and cows that look
as though they've been bombed –
the dizzying yearbook of a two-lane slaughterhouse.
Amid the mangled bovines the message, "Speed kills.
Watch out for free range cattle." Someone grumbles,
"Wonder if that's where they get their hamburger meat."
I push back my plate, stare out the window
at the sagging trailers of Rachel, Nevada,
and think of peaks and valleys.

Woman Waiting for the Bus

Jude Roney

She's impossible not to notice:
coffee-washed skin
and hair all attention
to the slant
of early morning
light breezes
and humidity fluff
it further than she expects

she sits with urgency,
on the edge of the bench,
road dust at open toes,
as she waits
for the southbound
bus to Cocoa.

She braces herself,
leaning forward,
with forearms resting
on gathered knees.
Her hands grip a bouquet
of apricot-colored roses
nestled in green
tissue paper
like apologies,
little fervent kisses,
or sleeping babies,
exigent misplaced thoughts,
or each a please get well
enveloped
in their delicate,
wordless,
wrapping.

Faceless

Jon Skahill

winds. pockets of	air	constantly drifting.
to be where	they are:	free,
flowing; they have no	reason to lie;	how could they?
it will be cold	today, wear your jackets	and hats
and do be	on your merry way, sir;	what the fucking
hell is	that on the wall there? oh,	nevermind.
time?	it has no methods, really	and we are simply
a system of numbers	mixed with the occasional	letter, making business
and fucking pleasure;	pleasure of the	noses and ears
and lobes; always	with the	lobes, you crazy fuck. with
your hands that are rude; always	pointing,	never ceasing.

Now then, where was I?

Mul-tay-cul-trahl-izm

Zane Erhardt Boehlke

“Mul-tay-cul-trahl-izm.” He pronounced for us in his soft, midwestern drawl. The class of malleable faces and minds bent to the rhythm of his voice.

“Mul-tay-cul-trahl-izm.” he intoned again, testing the luke warm syllables against the roof of his mouth like a snake charmer.

Several weeks into the semester and I still had no more knowledge about the the idea and use of multiculturalism than before I had heard the term used. Sure, I understood things like diversity, social justice, even the anthropological-Americanism of placing difference on a column of importance to be studied and weighed against normality and then discarded for the next “flavor” of the month. But, I was paying thousands of dollars to be taught a concept that was alluding me and my classmates. Was it escaping our professor and school? Our community as well?

It had been near impossible to miss the rows of banners lining the campus walkways, waving in the breeze like the pennants that line the home town avenues of some championship sports team. They all were different, but the focus was clear: **‘Change Through Diversity,’ ‘Be Inspired by Difference!’** Like a ticker-tape parade of the non-existent ethnic mosaic mandated by the state, the banners and signs proclaimed what we wished were true but what many were too lazy or busy or both to do much about. Within our high-tech, technologically social world where anyone can connect and thrust their face-time and voice into anyone else’s world, our school was segregated. Not in the same sense that Alabama was segregated leading up to the Civil Rights Movement, and I’m not sure segregated is the right word to describe it. In my mind, it is the word that best connotes a feeling for what I witnessed, and felt and sensed. It describes the minutiae of my deep-pitted, sickening emotional space, like the absence of love from a family member in a time of great need. It was a feeling that all the banners and ‘Gypsy’ singers performing next Thursday in the quad could not remedy.

And now, here I was becoming a teacher and following the guidelines prescribed for me by the California State Government. Mandates for surrogates of knowledge that meander against time and compress the needs of real-life social action and diversity. Teaching in a Multicultural

Setting.

I certainly wouldn’t need the training to teach 99% of the students in this class which was the most “white-bread”, albeit, good-hearted group of students on campus with Mr. “Mul-tay-cul-trahl-izm” droning on in a voice that reminded me of my middle school wood shop teacher, Mr. Gregg.

Apparently, Mr. Gregg had a minor heart attack the year after I left when one of his students accidentally sawed off their fore-finger and thumb while making the mandatory bird-house.

“Do heart attack victims survive in their own culture?” I wondered absent mindedly.

The thought was all I could do not to explode through the banality of our daily discussion; our professor standing at the front of the room writing on the white-board as we shouted out “cultures” that we perceived while observing high school classrooms.

-India

-Vietnam

-Africa...?

The list began to resemble that of a world history class discussing geography.

I rose my hand amongst the white sea of fingers and the professor moved his slow, puppy-dog eyes towards me and pointed, eager for another addition to the geography lesson.

“How the hell do we know about ANY of this?” I asked as academically as possible.

“Scuse me?” he squinted down at me from the front of the room. His face shone red instantly and the pressure of the room seemed to shake him to the core after the white hands fell like plummeting meteorites.

The silence had been broken.

Now we’re getting somewhere, I thought.

“How-the-FU** do we know anything about these cultures. What good is reading and

discussing them. They're not here!" I spelled out for him, again attempting to sound so sincerely academic and proper that the girl behind me let out a short, snorting giggle.

"I'm not sure I understand you." he stated flatly, his flat words rolling over the flat desolate world that the classroom had become.

"What I mean is, well look! At us! We need voices in here. Other angles." Crap. I was getting over-excited, but it was too late now. "I can't begin to tell you about a culture I know nothing about. Why bring them up?" It probably wasn't the most strategic way to earn a good grade. In fact, I'm pretty sure I saw the words 'YOU WILL FAIL' cross his eyes like some cartoon character might do when really upset. But I was fed-up and couldn't stand being force-fed this thousand dollar meal of insoluble knowledge with no context. I continued despite stares of wonder and amazement from classmates.

"Why not just say: 'Hey, there's a lot of different people out there', then teach us how to be patient and observant enough to realize them. It seems like making inferences on each culture's behalf is wrong."

He waited, then smiled because, knowing that he was the teacher and he was right (god-damn sophist) he said, "Well, I believe you are wrong."

I sank into my desk, humiliated.

This isn't learning. I thought. *This isn't even real. This is institutionalized time-wasting, money changing hands....*

I vowed never to speak in the class again, a promise I knew I would break to myself.

After the jarring silence our little exchange had garnered, the class resumed its usual asinine monotony and I pulled the orange bill of my Giants cap down below my brow.

I was too angry and confused to talk or see another person as I packed my belongings and schlepped them towards the door.

"Hey!" A younger woman caught up to me as I continued to trudge down the corridor and towards the stairs of the building.

"You know, I think you're right."

I looked curiously over at her, but remained moving. She continued, only slightly perturbed by my indifference.

"What we're doing in the class," she elaborated. "It's no good. He should bring some people in." I was still a little too upset to be flattered. "Diversity!" she added awkwardly after a moment.

Her enthusiasm was refreshing and I relaxed the growing knot between my shoulders considerably.

"You should tell Mr. Mul-tah-cul-trahl-azm." I said, mocking our professors tiresome drawl. We laughed and looked over our shoulders at the same time as we continued walking. I took a fleeting moment to look over and place a face with this kind voice. For the first time I recognized her deep olive skin and remembered the tight, bouncing curls of her dark hair which I had noticed in class.

"My name is Bianca." she said emphatically.

I stopped suddenly and outstretch my hand.

"London Larson."

We shook hands and I took the tranquility of the moment and abducted it, unsure about the boundaries I might be crossing and yet sure I was on to some kind of growth that was true. I cautiously asked what her culture was, hoping that smile wouldn't diminish.

"You mean my ethnicity." she corrected, still smiling out of the side of her mouth.

"Yeah, sorry. You know. Mind's still in it and not in the right way." I extended a thumb over my shoulder towards the classroom we had just left. We both laughed again.

"My dad is Mexican. My mom's white. Pero, soy de Norte Americana!" she stated proudly. I struggled to translate, looked down embarrassed at the time it took me, then looked back with an idea that eliminated my flushed cheeks. It was something to do with even asking the question I just had and I slowly became aware of myself, my thinking, this hallway, this new

person and who she was in a way that seemed to detach vision from my physical body. The idea would change the dynamic of what I had always considered as education. It was a quick, almost instantaneous shift in the conversation for me and I felt giddy with the prospect of it.

“What if we did our own project...no, screw that. What if we presented something to the class...hijacked it! Take over the class for one day!” I was getting excited, maybe a little ahead of myself and I think my lack of transition was scaring her. She also seemed lost, which was bad since I felt like I needed her support, so I calmed myself. I dropped my heavy briefcase and gave her a severe look. We were still on the 4th floor of the building and I took a guilty moment to notice the flyers dotting the walls of the hallway around us. *Audre Lord Book Reading, Antonia Flores Gypsy Singer, Diversity Day!!* Bianca returned my steely gaze.

“What I want to do is get more voices in there, that class. Its the most white-bread bunch I’ve ever been a part of.”

She seemed to be brooding. I could practically see her dark eyes becoming aware of this idea, taking it in with small sips and testing it against the palate of her mind. Then, her features lightened.

“I’m going salsa-dancing at this place in the city tomorrow night. It’s in the Mission District. Maybe you could come?”

Now she was the one lacking in transition, but I saw her reason for bringing this up to me besides the typical formalities of wanting to get to know a peer. There was a wanderlust in me that this class was only deepening and she recognized it before I could put it to words. The concept of the class was a tease that couldn’t be fulfilled with mere conversation within this community.

San Francisco, I thought. My body was already pulsating with Latin rhythmic elation. The city held a different kind of relationship between its people. Groups were not just steam-rolled and processed, packaged for material consumption and made into banners of ambiguous diversity slogans. Ambivalent, cockeyed reasoning for a day or a month of parading a culture

around that had to be paraded around, had to be recognized, because the mere fact that it was different made it hard to accept.

Not in the city. I thought.

We shook on the date and made plans to carpool the next night.

I’ll admit that I felt slightly overdressed as we parked Bianca’s car on 23rd Avenue in the Mission District the next night. I was self-conscious of my pressed pants and button up petticoat as we passed by dimly lit bohemian hangouts and heavy metal bars that lined the avenue and spilled out over the corners of Mission and Valencia Streets. Places like The Revolution Cafe, The Make-out Room with pierced and tattooed youth milling about amongst open containers of alcohol, the bitter-sweet stench of weed and the staggering homeless hoping for handouts of either. Everyone smoked cigarettes, or so it seemed, and there was an endless sea of butts in the gutters outside these places, the mounded refuse of the homeless sitting until they were washed away by street cleaners or the first torrential rains of the season.

Finally we reached the place. An old dance hall with a folded wooden sign out front next to a tall, black clothed door man with a black, ashen face and long dreaded hair. The sign had painted letter that read:

Live Music Tonight!

Cumbia

Salsa

Merengue

\$10 cover

We handed over our I.Ds and the front door was opened, releasing a suppressed orchestra of laughter, rattling bottles and sweat that seemed infused with the sultry up-beat Latin music from within.

I was surprised when the cashier, a huge man nearly 350 pounds perched on a small

stool, gave Bianca a hug and she proceeded to lead me past him without paying. We approached the bar and grabbed some Coronas, then picked our way down the long, thin vaulted hallway that made up the bar room. The raucous scene seemed to echo around the tall ceiling and back against itself in a splendid blending of music and conversations that were far too loud. Past the regulars and the creaking barstools at the end of the bar, which I mistakenly attempted to lean against in order to get a better view of a lecherous old man in a cowboy hat reaching for a quick footed waitress, was a baby Grand piano, beautiful and blue like nothing I had ever seen. Around it was a railing of fine mahogany wood, ever inch of its top which was covered with beer and cocktail glasses. I marveled at this offsetting blue instrument and Bianca caught my wandering eye with a wave of her drink past my face.

“They only play it when it gets slow.” she said, then added, “He used to be some famous jazz musician.” She motioned towards an old, freckled faced Latin gentlemen with a jutting chin of white bristles and a tailored zoot-suit. “He plays every night for free.”

Admittedly, I was more excited to see this architect of jazz from a time gone past tickle some ivories, but it wasn’t in the cards for this particular evening. My attention was soon drawn from the piano and the musician to the dance hall that spread out before us.

It was a large, domed room with colored skylights that were open yet failing to allow fresh air to filter down past the various party lights above the dance floor to the enchanting dancers below. Their bodies glistened in the lights, spinning and thrusting hip and shoulder, heads thrown back in serious growls or smiling gestures of delight for those few that remained off the floor to live through vicariously. The nearly vacant tables that surrounded the dance floor and the sweating band drenched in the spirit and vigor of the night completed the scene.

I suddenly caught a wisp of some memory from a friend of mine many years removed. Something he had said in jest as he was accustomed to doing before he died.

“Mexican people can dance, man.” I don’t know where that came from, but I smiled and acknowledged myself getting caught up in this moment.

Though I wasn’t certain they were all Mexican, I was absolutely sure they could dance. It was a dance unlike anything I had seen before. A mixture of elegant formality and passionate romance. Grinding and spinning. Steps and slides. When the band finished with a flurry it was not unlike the crashing of a wave and the silence that ensues from the gust of wind it produces as it bellows past you. The audience was getting their fill and showing their gratitude...and all left the floor...

After many had returned to their seats, Bianca told me it was alright to find a seat of our own. To my surprise, everyone had left the dance floor by this point. Was the band flopping? Hadn’t they enjoyed it? Weren’t they dancing and beating their feet and bodies in rhythm to a the sounds that were slowly moving the foundations of the building?!? Nonetheless, we settled into a table which was against the side wall and watched as the band took another moment to let the floor clear.

“Everyone leaves?” I asked.

“Yeah.” she said, as though it were obvious. She turned her attention back to the young man who was giving her the eye. I wouldn’t be put off without more explanation. My insistent look drew her back to face me and she sighed deeply as though it had been a struggle.

“The men, they stand on the outside, see?”

I could see the men who had been swirling and escorting the women on the floor now clearly gathered in groups, laughing and speaking animatedly amongst themselves with drinks in their hands. I also noticed that I was surrounded by all women seated at the tables. I grew slightly embarrassed and angry with Bianca, but she was again drawn to the dapper young man across the hall who was slowly tonguing the straw in his whisky and coke while looking at her.

“So they change partners every time?” I asked like a jackass, trying to get her attention again.

Before she could answer, a young vibrant man came bounding over and bent his head low, his face coming to our eye level.

“Bianca! You lovely thing!” His accent was thick and his face shown the lines of a night filled to the brim with the prospect of drink, lust and life. He wore a pair of black slacks, shiny black loafers and a perfectly pressed white-knit dress shirt and gray vest that was soaked through with perspiration. His black hair was slicked back and flecked with various colors from the party lights overhead. He was mesmerizing as he stood over us, the color of the lights illuminating his rakish grin, the smell of whiskey fresh on his thick breath. For a moment, it was as if he were frozen, a portrait of a man perfectly in-tuned with his surroundings. The twirling lights and women, intertwined passions and music all around him. Bianca rose and kissed his cheek in a familiar embrace.

“Who is your friend?” he asked reverently, motioning towards me.

“Larson, this is my cousin, Antelamo. He’s in my credential program Temo.” We shook hands and he wasted no time to slyly hand me a flyer.

“If you’re interested,” he said with a blatant raise of his eyebrow, “my band plays here next thursday.” He smiled softly. Against my bewildered attempt of a smile, he must have struggled not to laugh. I accepted the pamphlet, unsure if I should explain that making the trip would be more than out of my way.

“Chingada!” Bianca yelled at him, pushing his shoulder roughly. “He lives too far away. You’re still with those bums?”

Just then, the young man who had been trying unsuccessfully for the past minute to continue giving Bianca the eye came behind us and tapped Bianca, extending his hand to her. His cologne overpowered even the acrid stench of sweat that permeated the hall and his eyes, like a predator, were set on her face and only her face. She smiled sweetly and looked to me. I gave her a vacant expression and she looked strange, then slightly annoyed, she turned and nodded to the man.

“Come with me. I’ll buy you a beer.” Antelamo said, raising me from my seat with a subtle gesture.

We caressed the bar counter with our stomachs and one beer turned into many. He was such a hospitable host, that I got lost in the extravagancy and delight of the scene. The flirting waitress and the lecherous old men who were too slow to catch her, but still dared try for lack of days in their lives. The incessant cow-bell in several of the songs and the appearance of elder men dressed well and the smiles that young women gave them as they allowed themselves to be courted by these suave gentlemen. The terrible and lovely motions that made ugly women beautiful or more ugly on the dance floor, transexual women taken to smoke breaks by loose, large, long-winded men with harrowing laughs. The bartender poured us each a shot of tequila and a Fernet shot for himself, as is the the standard drinking practice in all bartending culture across ethnic lines.

What amazed me was not so much the authenticity of this Salsa dancing, Latin bar room culture, but the things that transcended it: Courtesy, hosting, friendship, lustful romance and deep-rooted love expressed through dance and closeness and affection. It was culture, as authentic and wrought with life’s worthy moments as ever it should or could be. Nothing prescribed, nothing forced. Just people. I, one of them for the night. A lingering impression of what true culture is.

When we met in class the next week and the dehydration from the hangover I had experienced finally subsided after a few days, I was intent on challenging my professor again. Throwing some life in his face. Explain that the only way to really know cultures, to be a “multiculturalist”, was to experience culture, if even for one night to be weighed against a semester of chatter. All the essays, books, and discussions could not replace or trump the experience of life, the immersion into culture...Sharing a beer and real emotion and human thought with someone different from yourself.

But, I didn’t have to.

Untitled

Ellyn Percoski

Bianca had beat me to class, along with her friend, Antelamo, as dapper and vital as that night I met him. In his hand he held flyers from the club for Thursday night. Behind him Bianca wrote in big, block letters on the black-board:

LATIN AMERICAN SALSA DANCING CULTURE

I breathed a sigh of relief.
“Finally.” I thought.

a
spear
to pierce
the abyss;
the glitter of
my glorious Glitz.
a bright body of Light to fight the fear of night
when uncertainty surrounds to spur a frown.
my Sparkle will never darkle; it Shines
with hope to guide souls lost, frost
and tossed. they need to be Glossed:
their icy hearts smoothed warm with bliss.
they will see, the many reasons in life to survive:
much better days left to pursue. This is why I Bling.
something to seek
a Luminous
source
eyes
c

Advice

Tony Alioto

when you find yourself on a usual day
oddly alone in a crowd
think
how will the others recall this moment
 years from now, when they're feeling nostalgic
my friend,
 if you can't find yourself among their memory
i believe it's time to go

Aesthetics (Monroe, LA)

Holt Brasher

You,
You're an absolute beauty.
The rock that drifts with the tide
In a small river, slowly traveling
Amongst the pebbles at my feet.
Entrancing, I see myself in those
Eyes, staring back enamored. Your
Smile, a hammock upon which one
can rest their head, and feel their
Troubles drift back into the moors
of reality. Dance towards me, take
me into your arms, and let's disappear.
Rocks flow over my feet, leaving
A small cut on the top of pale skin.
The blood creates a pathway back
To you, the hesitant recipient of forever.

We're In Lust

Melissa Binari

From young, we were taught how to love but not how to stop.

Nothing about love was ever evanescent, and that was what begot such dreadfulness. Love was always a ruthless unstoppable force and that was what gave birth to such fear and intimidation within me the most. Why love so deeply and passionately and intensely when you can never harness it? Love is the only tragic aspect featured in your life that you have absolutely no authority over. Love refuses to abide by any rules, neglects all aspects of common sense, and shuns any mention of self control. Love is nothing but a tornado of emotions just waiting, yearning to chaotically spin and twist out of control, destroying everything that dares to stand in its path. I had spent my whole life scrambling madly away from love, only to hope it would stumble into me, blindly running from the other direction. That way, I could have a reason to say that falling in love was never my fault. I ached to believe that love always found me, not the other way around. But that was never the case. Any imbroglios love would toss my way, I intended to hastily dodge. I acted as if love came across as some sort of odd coincidental serendipity, as if I had been searching for something completely different, when all the while I desperately craved to be guided by the tender touch of Eros. I pretended not to look for love, hoping it would accidentally fall into my hands. You fell into my hands so easily, it was the painful withdrawal that was the troublesome part. I still have yet to acquire the knowledge of how to let go, how to loosen my grip and let the minuscule grains of what is left of us slip between my fingers and fall onto the floor, too little and too fragile and too broken to ever be found again.

I can recall perfectly and effortlessly that first time your hand fell onto my shoulder, and there was something so becoming and lovely about the tenderness of your touch. My shoulders were covered by wild and untamed bristles of hair. Effortlessly, you slowly and meticulously moved the sumptuous strands of thick dark hair from the nape of my neck, hesitating slightly for a moment and smirking, as if to frighten me into briefly believing your touch could be gone on a whim. Being able to touch my bare back captivated you, and you loved the sensation just as much, if not more, than I did. You traced letters, numbers, nonexistent patterns and shapes with the

tips of your fingers onto my porcelain skin. You would lean over and whisper quietly into my ear, words that were so soft and warm they would cover my whole body like a blanket of unconditional comfort, and yet still cause me to shiver in pure frozen ecstasy. Your soft remarkable voice was always more outstanding than Chopin's finest scherzo and Mozart's finest sonata. I adored the gorgeous simplicity yet complicated and alluring nature to your voice. Each syllable you so mellifluously and rhythmically pronounced; your words gracefully playing a small imaginary piano in my mind, hitting every ivory key at just the right moment, creating a symphony of the most beautiful and obscure melodies. You were always such a spectacle. This mystifying piece of artwork whose beauty somewhat haunted me as I dreamt.

And in those kinds of moments, those slow intimate surreal moments of pure love and adoration, we knew there was no stopping us. What we would evolve and change into would become the inevitable. One day our love would ripen into an idea as constant as the moon and as full of change as the seasons, and what we shared was so powerful the seasons would refrain from changing until we urged them to do so.

In the summer we would be in love, encompassed by our halcyon lifestyle and wrapped within the warmth of the summer sun as it baked into our skin while we sat along the patio sipping sweet tea and talking about matters so ridiculously unimportant. The unimportance of the topics discussed would be the most important, because their insignificant nature would allow us to focus on the embrace of each other's company, and fully appreciate the essence of just being there. Just the pair of us, sharing nothing worth sharing and appreciating everything worth appreciating, basking in the sun's balmy cradle and the wind's refreshing breeze.

In the winter we would be utterly enamored with each other, wanting nothing but to sit by the fire hand in hand, staring at each youthful ember as it gently sparked, fizzled, and floated to the ground. We would quietly compare them to the sparks that internally flew every time our hands unintentionally grazed past one another's, or every time our toes curled playfully next to each other's, or every time our bodies brushed up against each other in a rush of intimacy.

Goodnight Moon

Sasha Kasoff

Oh moon
You are all teeth tonight
Your smile is too wide
Popping through the clouds
So bright
You cast a rainbow ring
The Weasley's headlights
Suspended beneath you
Flying slowly through the night
As the rain starts to whisper down
Muttering against the ground
Kissing the world with tears
Goodnight Moon
But do me a favor?
Look to my lover
Alone with his dreams
And carry my thoughts
On your grinning moonbeams

In the spring we would feel unbearably impassioned towards one another as we would watch the efflorescence of the butterfly garden to the left of our cottage. We would remember when our eyes first used to catch each other's glances, and how we would always attempt to make it appear to be an accident. But alas, it was always on purpose, always with the intent that the other's eyes would meet our own. Our minds would be filled with such desperate hope that when our eyes met, the other's heart also fluttered in the same way — a fluttering in such contrast to that of the butterflies in the garden; being more so a kind of intense speechless feeling filled with anxiety, hope, and desire.

In the fall we would experience an inescapable amatory connection between one another. The leaves would change colors one by one, from a passionate green to a yearning yellow to a lustful red. The transformation of the trees would be a constant reminder of the first time we were physically intimate with one another. In that everlasting moment we were both infinite. We closed our eyes in such genuine bliss and the colors swirled so elegantly and attractively; the greens and the yellows and the reds all blended together as we cried out, a violent explosion of colors and emotion. And then all at once, they gently and ever so softly faded to black.

But, this is all we will ever have. Pure imagination and false hope. Two things that are so beautiful when separate, and such a travesty when combined. All we will ever share together is a collection of memories that only exist in our minds and will cease to be etched into the history of our unmemorable futures. A kind of sempiternal affection and passion that will never be explored in reality, yet instead unfairly experienced solely in the discomfort of our own lonely beds as our minds wander and picture every what-could-have-been and what-shall-never-be. You were everything I would never have, leaving me only to romanticize of our conflation throughout time in a never-ending whirlwind of love and intimacy.

You were always such a spectacle.

Whippoorwills & George Orwell

Matthew Walsh

Maybe you've heard I`m drunk
On George Orwell. Well, then I admit
that under the pines with the whippoorwills
that I am filled by George Orwell. I should
work on my cookery. Cook porridge
for George to gorge his gorgeous
mouth on—but I might lose
this spot in the pine with my old
George Orwell. What a dream
my poor will makes me dream.

Under his whip or will
I`d be defenseless (or, well
at least kind of kittenish) &
have the urge to present him tea
that I pour well. Well,
I`d climb down to him if I were Juliet
(his words at least would sound like practical
sense). He`d persuade me to come
down to the Limehouse and smoke
one with him---but I`ll have to settle
to have him under this pine
with the whippoorwills.

The Law

Kevin Kauker

I came
I saw
I was promptly arrested for trespassing on a scene of a crime

Willows

Matthew Walsh

See the Wiccans wander wondrous
in a daisy-chain around the willows.

See the willows waken wildly in the wind,
for their true love is the wind, not Wiccans.

We wallow in the shallows of a wade pool
wishing we were wise as willows, less wide-eyed.

Allow me to mildly insist this: be watchful of willows,
of water because while they can't bring themselves to love
us, they are there for us just the same, and beyond us.

Postscript

Jacob Pruett

i blunt the pointed
argument of your nose
eyes looking over a waterfall
—another day
never mind the patriots
and the soul savers
i would rather like
to sleep past noon
while you go on to
measure the worth of a life,

i begin to nod
you think im agreeing with you
i'm really half asleep

Contributors

Tony Alioto just completed his final semester at Sonoma State University with a degree in English Literature, and is very excited to be a part of *Zaum 17*.

Mary-Madison Baldo is an artist, poet, writer, photographer, and filmmaker currently residing in Rohnert Park as a freshman at Sonoma State University. She dreams of one day publishing a novel or directing short films for a living.

Brennan Beck served four and a half years as an Army Infantryman with Charlie Company, 1/26 Infantry Regiment, in which he completed two combat tours in Iraq. After leaving the armed forces, he decided to utilize his earned educational benefits in order to obtain a higher education. He's currently a Junior at Sonoma State working on a Bachelors in English and hoping to one day teach English courses at the college level.

Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán is the author of *Antes y después del Bronx: Lenapehoking* and editor of an international queer Indigenous issue of *Yellow Medicine Review: A Journal of Indigenous Literature, Art, and Thought*. A previous contributor to *Zaum*, he is an American Studies Ph.D. candidate at Michigan State University.

Zane Erhardt Boehlke has been writing stories for most of his life and has continuously attempted to push the boundaries of his writing and his life to and through the borderlands of culture in Northern California (most notably San Francisco).

Nathan William Bollig, born in 1989, is a scholar-teacher from Tempe, Arizona currently seeking his MA in English Literature at Northern Arizona University.

Jacob Boulais is an English major at Sonoma State University, on the track to getting a teaching credential. He hopes that he won't get stuck teaching at a middle school because being a college professor and published author seems way more fun.

Holt Brasher is a BFA graduate from the University of Louisiana at Monroe in Printmaking.

The time he doesn't spend working on his art is used to create poetry in which to further speak his views of the world and the moments that occur within his life. Though he has shown his art in galleries, this is his first published poem, and he hopes to continue to share his consciousness with the world that influences him while still finding time for video games and a nice drink or two.

Nicole De Leon is a co-founder of *Burning Daylight Scholarly Journal* and served as the inaugural editor. She has the navigational prowess of her ancestors and once fought a bear with a single flashlight. She is an SSU MA candidate and avid whiskey enthusiast.

Devlin Donohue grew up in a desert and wanders as much as a cliché. There are many, many things and you are one of them and so is he.

Valen K. Dudley is a student at Sonoma State University majoring in English with a minor in Liberal Studies. She pulls inspiration from contemporary authors including A.M. Homes, Chuck Palahniuk and Augusten Burroughs. Writing fiction is a passion in her life and has been an interest from an early age.

Michael Eliscu majors in English at Sonoma State University. His interests are life, family, and writing.

Robbie Geiss has a difficult time accepting his finite limitations as a mortal. He enjoys a vast list of contemporary and timeless human sort of things, Hannah, and always writes biographies in the third person. You may contact him via email at robbiegeiss@gmail.com, or view his website at robbiegeiss.carbonmade.com.

Joel Gonzalez currently attends San Francisco State University, and is seeking his MFA in poetry.

Joshua Gray attends Sonoma State University as an English major, with a focus in Creative Writing. His poetry work has appeared in several literary magazines, poetry contests, and song lyrics. Josh will continue to write poetry, but his goal is to produce a memoir by the end of 2013.

Melissa Harrington-Binari is an English Literature major at Quinnipiac University. She is passionate about prose writing, surrealistic art, and thrift stores. She is an Ernest Hemingway aficionado.

Katie Johansen is currently pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona. She finds the mountains perfectly adequate.

Kevin Kauker thanks you for your time and patronage. He bids you adieu.

Nick King is from San Diego, CA and has been practicing photography for a little over eight years. He hopes to someday travel the world with little else but a camera and a keen eye.

Ariel Lockshaw is originally from Orange County, CA, and is studying Painting in the BFA program, class of 2014. Her website can be found at www.ariellockshaw.com

Alexis Lum is currently a student at University of California, Berkeley studying Integrative Biology with an emphasis on Human Biology and Health Sciences. She has always had a strong passion for the arts and appreciates all forms of it.

Kaitlyn Lyman is a senior at Sonoma State University and is an English major with a concentration in Creative Writing. She hopes to one day become an editor, but until then spends her time reading fiction novels and writing stories of her own.

Ellyn Percoski is a fifth year undergraduate student double concentrating in Creative Writing and English Single Subject. She suffers from Magpie Syndrome.

Jacob Pruett is graduating.

Dianne Turgeon Richardson is an MFA candidate at the University of Central Florida and also holds degrees from the College of Charleston and the University of South Carolina. Her work

has appeared or is forthcoming in The Hollerbox, Blue Fish Digest, and on the Jasper Magazine website. She is one half of the tweeting duo The Awesome Sisters (@TheAwesomeSis).

Jude Roney grew up in Chicago, an only child of a single working mother, and often relied on stories to comprehend the world around her. Today she finds inspiration in the coastal region near her home, and is a graduate student in the MFA program at the University of Central Florida. Her poetry was selected by UCF for the “Outstanding Senior Undergraduate Poetry Award,” in addition to being nominated by UCF for the 2012 “AWP Intro Journals Award.”

Jon Skahill is an aspiring creative writer who draws from his background in performance & theatre arts; he hopes to continue developing his craft in poetry and in playwriting as well. Jon would like to thank his friends & family for their constant support.

Brian Strauss comes from the picturesque scenery of San Diego. He has been actively writing poetry for the last few years and recently completed his first novel. He is 20 years old.

Kati Teague is an art and language major at UC Santa Cruz. She hails from different areas of Los Angeles, has spent a year abroad in Japan, and identifies as synesthetic and odd. Kati paints with a gas-mask on because she is allergic to her own solvents, and she thinks this a felicitous arrangement because gas masks look cool anyway, and now she has a reason to wear one.

Matthew Walsh is a writer of short fiction and poetry. His poetry has been published in By-words, Kazoo Kazine, Polar Expressions publications, and has been a featured reader for November at Toronto’s EW Reading Series. He is planning on releasing a chapbook later this year.

Leah Warren is a newly married English Literature Major who has a passion for Fantasy/Sci-fi and who loves to paint. After she graduates in May, she hopes to work at a publishing house as an editor. Currently, she is self-employed as a housekeeper and nanny who does freelance editing on the side and sells the occasional crochet hat.

Many thanks to the sponsors of
Zaum Seventeen!

College Readers • Digital Printing • Color Copying

Welcome Students & Faculty!

DIGI-TYPE thanks you for your continued business

SSU Students & Faculty receive a 15% discount!

Fast • Friendly • Reliable

Digital Printing & Imaging

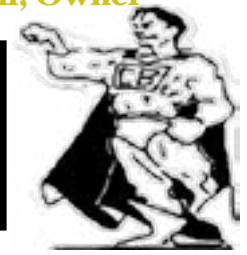
DIGI-TYPE
1726 E. Cotati Ave.
across from SSU @ Wolf Den Plaza
Phone: 707 527-0873
Fax: 707 527-0837
www.digi-type.com

Signage • Scanning • Laminating • Mounting • T-Shirts • Binding • Fax • Mail • Graphic Design • Brochures • Business Cards • Flyers • Posters • Banners

Now Comes the Comic Book Box

Comic Book Box
195 Southwest Blvd, #189
Rohnert Park, CA 94928
707-792-0100
Kathy Bottarini, Owner

Hours
Monday: Closed
Tuesday-Friday:
12pm-6pm
Saturday: 10:30am-5pm
Sunday: 12pm-5pm



VISIT US ON FACEBOOK: VINYL PLANET/VITAMIN PLANET

The UPS Store
979 Golf Course Drive
Phone: (707)584-1515 - Fax: (707) 584-3777

<u>Notary Public</u>	<u>Custom Crates & Boxes</u>
<u>Mailboxes</u>	<u>Faxing</u>
<u>Printing</u>	<u>Passport Photos</u>
<u>Direct Mailing</u>	<u>Scanning & Emailing</u>

Serving Sonoma County And Parts Beyond For 18 Years!!!

...And More!

See All Of Our Services At:
www.theupsstorelocal.com/1356



PRINTED TEES
LOGO'D
APPAREL &
MERCHANDISE

1330 Commerce St.
Petaluma, Ca 94954
(707)762-2280

Visit our website: www.headgearplus.com

PEDRO CHAVEZ
ELECTRICIAN

PO BOX 1596
FORESTVILLE, CA 95436

707 843-8890
LIC #8838662

CAPRARARA'S PIZZERIA

"At The Grove"

707-664-1515

Party Special

10% OFF any order over \$100

Pizza • Pasta
Burgers • Ribs
Wings • Salads
Beer & Wine
Take & Bake

Lunch Delivery
Tues. thru Fri.
Dinner Delivery
Nightly

\$1 OFF Medium Pizza
\$2 OFF Large Pizza
\$3 OFF X-Large Pizza

Open Tuesday-Sunday
Closed Monday

Coupon for Drink and Take Out Only.

10101 Main St. Suite F, Penngrove, CA

Swirl Time
YOGURT BAR

Swirl it your way today!

Dellectable Frozen Yogurt
Fresh Fruits
Wide Variety of Delicious Toppings!

1781 E. COTATI AVE,
ROHNERT PARK, CA 94928
707) 795-7900

Check us out on Facebook!

