

literary and artistic journal

tobeco

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## Notes from the Staff

We are always grateful for the trembling of words across a page. It seems more and more sound that our journal debuts in Spring-- rebirth spells out so much, don't miss it. Our collection of your work is intended to inspire, pause a breath, spin a stir in your skin, maybe even in your bones. Enjoy.

-- Jennifer Hetrick, Editor

Words are amazing to me. It makes me so happy to be part of an organization such as this one, which promotes the use of words in creative and unique fashions. I am happy to be on the editing staff. Why, you may ask? As part of the staff, I get more contact with beautiful pieces of visual and literary art, and nothing could please me more. This year has been a wonderful experience, and I hope that all of the readers out there have as much fun reading it as us staff members had editing and picking the best pieces. Keep on writing (and submit next year)!!!

PS, Don't touch my hair.

-- Adelina Malito

Choosing pieces for publication is always a good literary time. This year's journal is chock-full of great pieces, and I'm glad to have been a part of it. And Matt, I expect to see the poem you need to write about your friend getting kicked out of class for farting.

-- Nate Reed

Life is like Fun Dip! Whether you're in the mood for a bedazzling blue-razzle-berry, sour razz-apple magic, or if you just want to stick with the basics, the essentials of cherry-yum-diddly or the ever so gracious-grape, it's your wand, your sugar stick, so dip!

Dip a stick, take a lick, and remember what life is all about: choices, voices and the art of expression. Thanks to everyone at Clarion for finding their favorite flavors of life! I am outrageously impressed with the savory souls that encompass this campus. I am so proud to be part of this luscious literary arts journal and always find it a privilege to work with those who love to lay tongue-twisted and tubular 99.9 percent of their lives!

Once more, thanks to those who found the desire to translate thought into ink, ink into pen, pen onto paper and paper into our world! Words are uncannily awesome and strictly super-human! Share the love and spread the hugs!

-- Matt Subel

I am so happy to be on the staff and see so many excellent submissions! It is too bad that we can't print them all. Thanks to all who submitted their artwork and writings!

-- Carole Vogel

I am pleased to have spent a second year on Tobeco's editing staff. I delighted in the work of those who submitted and in the intellectual company of my fellow staff members. Thanks to everyone who supported the printing of our journal, and congratulations to our featured writers. Keep writing and submit next year.

-- Ryan Waterman

# table of contents

## one : poetry //

3	my obi is always weighted	c. s. nitta
5	Jilly laughs (and I cry...)	Jenn Brooks
6	Bi-Polar Opposites	Lance Maybury
7	inky reasons	isobel mots
8	performance-love	Adelina Malito
9	the songs get louder when the engine hums more	lili bageln
10	got funk in yo' step?	Matt Subel
12	The Death of Silence	Vance Reed
13	Bed Bugs	Gabriella Mannarino
14	Twins—11 Weeks Premature	Nate Reed
16	Archetype	Monica Mellon
17	Recycled Barn	Faith Hartzell

## fiction //

21	Three Beer Cans and a Plastic Bag	Bryce J. Renninger
23	The Unbearable Itch	Josh Woodin
29	Phantom Hearts	Amber Hetrick

## two : poetry //

33	radio announces war	Valentina España
34	value and shade	michelle dugan
35	Banana Cat Bread	Amber Guyton
36	code v means varmint (at girl scout camp in white haven pennsylvania)	emily fields
38	Maslow, Inverted	Cantara Bouton
39	Papa Brooks	Jenn Brooks
41	Bees in Clover	Adelina Malito
42	Generations	Liz Peglow
44	what hygiene & manners are not	adrienne clifton
46	Ties	Nate Reed
47	Bored	Holly Button
49	Karaoke Queen	Faith Hartzell

## nonfiction //

53	Lucky Strike	Kate Wiant
57	Logan	Vance Reed
60	Woes	Adrianna Morrison

three : poetry //

65	Learning Boleros . . . . .	Valentina España
67	Glendalee . . . . .	Holly Button
68	things to be named : and I miss . . . . .	Don Raynor
69	Punishment for dead presidents . . . . .	Julia Perry
71	Epitaph for the Poor Mother with the Quiet Eyes . . . . .	Ryan Waterman
72	Peeking Around Corners . . . . .	Melissa Kraus
74	my anti-sheath . . . . .	isobel mots
75	<i>just take another drink</i> , she says to no one . . . . .	Gabriella Mannarino
77	Imitating Art . . . . .	Cantara Bouton
78	through my glasses, as a cellist . . . . .	emily fields
79	Prickly, tickly toes . . . . .	Matt Subel
80	Beam Me Up . . . . .	Lance Maybury

art and photography //

cover	fish face . . . . .	emily fields
4	Moments of Mindfulness . . . . .	Holly Button
11	Alex . . . . .	Kat Hall
15	Bound for the Sky . . . . .	Cantara Bouton
22	mmm...CHICKEN . . . . .	Jason Roberts
27	Peekaboo . . . . .	Cantara Bouton
28	la tomba sopra Firenze . . . . .	Ian Morrison
37	Contemporary Antiquity . . . . .	Monica Mellon
40	garden spent . . . . .	lili bageln
45	Gold Digger . . . . .	Monica Mellon
48	Schokolade Ist Gut . . . . .	Ian Morrison
56	setlist . . . . .	emily fields
59	B&B and Bedsheets . . . . .	Don Raynor
66	Steel Magnolia . . . . .	Holly Button
70	Tree of Medusa . . . . .	Matt Subel
73	Untitled . . . . .	Kat Hall
76	Untitled . . . . .	Sara Dixon
81	Volcan 'O Cream . . . . .	Matt Subel



one : poetry //





# my obi is always weighted

by c. s. nitta

there was some perfect  
line in my head. *we hadn't*

*french kissed in days.*

i kept gnawing on any  
possibility i might have

of unleashing myself

to fall in line, drinking  
sake and falling asleep

on pushed together scraps

of tatami. sometimes i still  
laugh thinking of when

we might have passed

in the street, my grey-eyed  
glance low, unnoticed. we

are always spinning away

from ourselves, from our  
districts, from kyoto.



Moments of Mindfulness  
by Holly Button

## Jilly laughs (and I cry...)

by Jenn Brooks

I.

Jilly's laugh is somewhere between  
a hiccup and a sigh  
teeth shimmering  
little porcelain cups  
like the ones  
I used in  
Victorian doll houses  
when I was five  
perfectly glazed and rounded.

II.

Her  
late arrival  
like a Picasso painting  
brightly colored  
flecks of roses and blues  
all feet and limbs  
flailing  
simultaneously  
in proportion to her belly.

III.

Yesterday  
she flew  
over a crack in the sidewalk.  
We had been eating  
wild strawberries,  
her fingers were dyed with them  
and her blood,  
it fell to the sidewalk  
in perfect red rain drops.

I think  
my heart stumbled  
in its puddle.

## Bi-Polar Opposites

by Lance Maybury

Nancy Sinatra was on the radio  
telling us about her boots,  
and how they were made for walkin'.  
When you tried to convince me  
that it was Patsy Cline,  
and not Nancy Sinatra.  
But it wasn't Patsy Cline,  
it was Nancy Sinatra.

That's when you decided  
to make the dispute personal,  
and said that you would know  
because you are a musician.  
Maybe I can't read music,  
or understand about scales, and measures,  
but I have an extensive knowledge of songs,  
and who sang them.  
For which you called me pathetic,

And told me I was going nowhere,  
and doing nothing with my life.  
Your boots were walking all over me,  
because you couldn't stand being wrong  
about who was singing the song on the radio.  
We've gotten over it,  
and now your boots only walk  
up to my apartment,  
so I can knock them.

## inky reasons

by isobel mots

tendersore whitman  
draws down my side: infinite,  
an ebony trail.

(marking summerdays  
as one-match fires and lightning  
at trexler.

my hand to that repainted latrine,  
through bolted doors i  
talk tampon insertion—  
*success!*

and womanlove is  
bright, bold,  
camp.)

## performance-love

by Adelina Malito

who needs love

*or even men*

when you have

batteries

*that are rechargeable !*

the songs get louder  
when the engine hums more

by lili bageln

only in a big silver truck  
would we have made it  
over those myrtle beach  
medians on king's highway  
to pick up a box of glazed  
donuts at krispy kreme  
because the neon light  
was lit, *fresh!* only as you  
parallel park, and i wear  
cheap pink heels, watching  
the brake lights flick on and  
off--do we have the key to  
a condo. a condo in which  
we broke the bed and an  
electrical outlet, left  
a box of jack--he's hungry  
in the pantry, living on  
the bite of carbohydrates.

## got funk in yo' step?

by Matt Subel

Got a little James Brown in my right,  
with a left foot full of  
P-Funk & Grandmaster Flash -

followed by a quick pep-me-up from  
the Furious Five,  
and a smooth, mellow finish of  
Jamiroquai.

The upbeat, jagged and  
dynamic dance of my heart  
will interfere with my ability  
to *synchronize* foot n' shoe,  
tap n' toe,  
clap n' hand.

Judging by the way  
my feet swagger today  
I would have to estimate the  
bluesy boldness of the King  
with the touch of the Monk.

Each one an element of funk.





Alex  
by Kat Hall

## The Death of Silence

by Vance Reed

How appropriate,  
I thought, when he  
learned to play taps—  
It was the death of silence.

He would come home  
with that thing,  
bright, shining, beautiful—  
except when he played.

When he played,  
it was a wounded animal,  
begging to be put  
out of its misery.

It was an air raid siren,  
blaring its warning  
for everyone to hear,  
warning us about itself.

My parents thought it  
would be good for him.  
Teach him a lesson about self-discipline.  
It was their way of disciplining me.

He was such an eager  
student, though, always  
practicing, hoping one  
day to be like Louie or Dizzy.

But he'd blow and he'd blow  
'til he was red in the face and  
everyone else was blue in the gills—  
and not one single sweet note.

There was only so much  
*skronk!! skronk!! skronking!!!*  
I could stand, so I turned to sabotage and  
subterfuge.  
My parents punished me accordingly.

Two years later I exacted my vengeance—  
by taking up the saxophone.

## Bed Bugs

by Gabriella Mannarino

Glowing red from the aftershock of it all,  
hair a mess and strewn from side to side across  
the faded red pillow case.

My lover and friend (confidant), looks about the bare  
white walls. Softly he breathes now, *inhale, exhale, repeat.*

Something briefly crosses his thoughts  
then those feelings flitter into the reality of the day.

*Will you forget me*, asked so softly at first  
I scarcely hear those words.

Repeat?

*Will you forget me*, now said while looking with big,  
green-blue, turbulent eyes (while the image of a  
helpless child passes through my mind).

How could I forget you?  
*And why in the world would I ever want to?*

I will reach over to touch him lightly  
upon the crinkly furrowed brow that I love so much.  
I can never forget you,  
Repeat,  
I can never (ever) forget you.

You moved inside of me.

The sound of your heart  
crossed into mine.

## Twins—11 Weeks Premature

by Nate Reed

His first day home  
my brother's son  
Elliot lies in his crib in  
the living room, wires running  
from his temples and nose and chest  
to a machine—sitting on a shelf  
of the liquor cabinet in front  
of Grey Goose vodka, Dewar's White Label,  
and Tanqueray Gin—a steady flash  
in time with his heartbeat  
and breath. Vance reaches down  
to him—cups the back of his head  
and body—lifts the 5  
pounds, and hands him to me.

I've only seen his brother in pictures  
hung from the fridge  
by alphabet magnets. Fluid-filled  
lungs in a Pittsburgh hospital,

a ventilator taped to his mouth.  
A skeletal frame,  
pure oxygen the only  
breeze in his plastic dome  
under a blue blanket sky.

I can't imagine worrying about  
losing a son before you  
know him. Reminders everywhere:  
matching car seats, bright circus themed  
dressers, covered with lions, giraffes,  
and ring masters; identical  
blue-striped pajamas with feet.  
2 sets of lettered plastic blocks,  
and an empty crib.

Curled in my arm, I raise  
my finger to his hand. It covers the space  
between my knuckle and nail.



Bound for the Sky  
by Cantara Bouton

# Archetype

by Monica Mellon

Willy Wonka gave me nightmares last night  
About suffocating in a sea of candy  
As an Oompa-Loompa sacrifice,  
And this morning, the almonds  
In my cereal won't let me forget  
The hair-slice between gorging  
And delicious death.

I descend the cave of stairs  
That isn't a dream,  
But is lined with carpet all around  
To keep sounds in or out.

To keep out the sounds of mourning below  
As kin and kindred spirits pay their last respects,  
Or to keep in the sounds of CSI above  
While school junk migrates across the floor  
That is ceiling to the embalming room.

Off to work I go,  
To my cubbyhole next to the copy room  
Where professionals take out frustration  
By chucking 4- (or 6-, or 8-) letter words  
At the gadgets that make their work  
Efficient, while others are

Sitting in cubicles, clipping cuticles,  
Or ordering lingerie online,  
Yakking for hours  
About last week's wrestling match  
Or the wacky things their kids said or did,  
Kids who are closer to my age than my coworkers.

But I still feel guilty  
Spending two minutes checking movie times,  
So much so that I close the browser  
Before the page loads  
And get back to work,  
The 40 hours of work that I do in 15.

Someone is chattering about the beautiful day  
That stretches beyond the mirror-window  
And gives Main Street a rare January twinkle,  
Not of snowflakes, but flecks of summer fire,  
But all I see are the walls of my cubicle,  
Which are anything but beautiful.

The mini "Creation of Man" I put up can't hide  
The green and beige mesh pattern on the padded walls  
Like a prison or asylum,  
Or maybe a dog kennel, considering the size:  
Just enough room to turn around,  
And no more.

After I serve my time,  
I go to see the new Underworld movie  
Laden with violence and bloodshed galore,  
Like the first one,  
But now with sex, too,  
To the point of awkwardness.

I leave the movie of the deaths of immortals,  
And return to the home  
Where lowly mortal deaths are honored,  
And ascend once more the cave of stairs  
From the melancholy levels of death  
To where I do my living.

## Recycled Barn

by Faith Hartzell

It doesn't die the way I want it to,  
silently settling down in a neat pile

shingles sliding into sorted stacks,  
barn stones, soundless pallbearers,  
neatly aligned along the edges.

Magnificent, stately, the barn  
stands square, sucking life  
from the dank air around it.  
Clinging like those cattle

sacrificed at this sanctuary  
while I hid in the farmhouse,  
face in a pillow, the music  
never enough to mute the gunshot  
as Grandfather turned Rusty, Buster

Taffy, Princess and Joe into meat.  
Is it the same? Will I be able to look  
once it staggers, groans aloud

that awful and accusatory tone,  
reels back on its haunches  
and collapses into something different

something more useful, but never  
quite as enjoyable? But the meat  
did not taste like sawdust.  
Will this sawdust choke  
my once-upon-a-time-grandfather  
who stands, a bewildered ghost,  
legs braced against the blast

balanced on the barn bridge?  
His single shot rifle is clutched  
close to faded red suspenders  
while around him, a cloud of dust  
mushrooms into the country air,  
hangs a moment in sudden stillness,  
then settles back on the rubble.







fiction //



## Three Beer Cans and a Plastic Bag

by Bryce J. Renninger

Delbert opened the first can of Milwaukee's Best. Lenny had just gotten back from peeing on a dead birch. He knew he was in a Wildlife Protection Zone and that pissed him off. He had just passed a group of three deer scampering away at the sight of him a few minutes earlier. The divorce was killing him, and he wished he didn't have to sell his guns to buy his modest new abode. Lenny was his only friend besides her, but still Delbert felt little for even this relationship. As Lenny went into his periphery to urinate, the natural landscape encroached upon Delbert, leaving him in a dreamlike state...being. He sat on a rock covered with lichens and began fiddling with the dirt at his side.

"Hand me one of them, Delbert," Lenny yelled, awaking Delbert from his euphoria.

Delbert pushed aside one of the folded-over sides of the plastic bag and took one of the cans out of the six-pack. His hand shoved the can in Lenny's direction, but his cold manner was involuntary.

"Should I have known that she and I wouldn't be together forever? I never understood all that mushy-gushy stuff she would always say to me. I just, you know, thought I should raise a family. That's just what I thought I should do, you know."

Awkward silence followed. Lenny abhorred all things having to do with that feeling he had never experienced -- love. He was unsure what to say to his friend who had made the same realization he had made as a twenty-something. He stopped thinking about it. Delbert stopped thinking about it and chugged his can of beer, finishing it. Their minds were blank, which wasn't particularly uncommon while they were here. This time, though, their quiet was spurred on by a forgotten awkwardness and not an individualized spiritual experience with their surroundings. It made a difference. The instigator was emotional and not ethereal. This silence was colored deep red in their minds' pallets. Delbert opened up his next can. He took a few swallows.

It began to rain. Pour. Lenny, stooping to prevent the drops from smacking his face, suggested they leave. Delbert took the three full cans from out of the bag and started running towards the pick-up.

Next week, when Delbert went back to that spot in the forest, he saw the three cans and the plastic bag, and he picked up the cans, ashamed, emptied the rainwater from them, and carried them, arms outstretched, to the bed of the truck.



mmm...CHICKEN

by Jason Roberts

## The Unbearable Itch

by Josh Woodin

Lester's toes itched. It wasn't the kind of itch that would dissipate on its own given enough time, or one that could be ignored. Lester's itch jolted like a panicked deer, up and down the back of his gigantic toe, covered with flaky fields of calluses. He couldn't push the thought of his burning toe from his mind however hard he tried. He tried thinking of women--that usually helped, but not today. He tried telling himself that the pain he felt was all in his mind, but the itch persisted, pestering him like an over-zealous Jehovah's Witness with his foot in the door. Finally, Lester could tolerate complacency no longer and bailed the blanket off the bed, and darting towards the source of the itch.

Without warning, an unwanted thought popped into Lester's head--the familiar voice of his mother bombarding his brain, "Now, Dear, please don't pick at it . . . you don't want it to get worse, do you?"

Lester quickly discarded the thought as he indulged his desire. Sure enough, the more he raked his callused toe, the more he had to itch it and the more it burned.

"This is getting me nowhere!" Lester shouted in tired exasperation. Lester instead turned to his mail, hoping to drown out the nagging itch with maybe a letter or two. He cycled through all the unimportant mail, lazily noting an overdue electric bill and a flyer filled with coupons. Finally his eyes hesitantly rested upon a letter from his mother. The letter remained unopened for days, its contents remaining unknown. He nervously shifted his eyes around the room, avoiding the letter like it was some holy relic that he was too impure to see. Around Lester, piles of musty laundry spilled over onto his scratched up coffee table. Plain white bed sheets kept the scorching sunlight from intruding into his damp, dingy den, where mushrooms would have grown had it not been 92 degrees inside. The black cat mounted on the wall read 3:45, its Pac-man shaped eyes pacing back-and-forth between Lester and the dusty, grass-barren road that lay behind his curtains. The cat always made Lester nervous, its beady eyes shifting anxiously from thought to thought. That cat had something to hide; that cat was Lester.

Living alone in the Arizona desert in a dilapidated ranch house, Lester had never talked to his mother much, nor cared to. He wanted a fresh start, to break away from his past that haunted him. Lester pushed away thoughts of abuse countless times before--not from his mother, she loved him too much to hurt him--but from his father.

Lester's father was no more a part of him than an unsightly pimple he wanted to squeeze away. Flashes

of the past always broke through Lester's defenses. He tried to fight them, but they were a mist that took no form, clouding his vision. He saw a fist through the wall, broken beer bottles, a sandwich that wasn't made to his liking, a bicycle thrown on top of the roof, a rough hand on his collar.

An image of Lester's father blazed through his mind and set fire to all his conscious thoughts. An abandoned, yellow Tonka dump-truck had been the cause of his father's fall. A half-empty bottle of Jack Daniels shattered on the green-tiled floor, propelling glass shrapnel and debris all throughout the kitchen. Lester could smell the rancid whiskey on his father's breath and heard his demonic curses spoiling the air like a plague. His father hoisted Lester up by the shaggy hair on the back of his head, shaking him like a rag doll in the air.

"Look what you did! Didn't I tell you to put away your shit when you're done with it?" Lester's father indignantly demanded.

"I...uh..." Lester's voice silently quivered, unable to add needed friction to the air traveling up through his windpipe.

"So, you don't want to answer me, do ya?!" his father raged on, exasperated. "Then you can just clean it up!"

Lester hesitated, worried about the sharp glass cutting him. His father took note of the fear and pressed Lester's face down on top of the jagged glass. Lester resisted, feeling the sharp shards ripping into his flesh. Finally Lester's eyes filmed over with water, his tears mixing with drops of blood dripping down from his cheek.

"I've had enough of you! Quit being such a baby! And I want to see all of this gone by the time I get back..." his father warned, stumbling out of the kitchen and into the living room, where he noiselessly collapsed on the couch. Lester's head bounced up towards the hallway to where his mother was standing silently, a statue. He knew she had been there the whole time. She was always too afraid to step in, to protect her own son, if it meant displeasing HIM.

Lester shook his head, dizzily coming back to his ranch house in Arizona. Lester's thoughts still lingered on his mother. *Why? Why did you just stand there? Didn't you love me? I was too little, too scared...*

Lester hated his mother for always defending his father, and he vowed to himself that he would never forgive her. Even after HE left and his mother sought help at rehab, Lester always saw the same neutral figure frozen in the kitchen, shedding stone tears as she with beer in hand nervously watched Lester being heaved against the wall. Even after he was told of her disease, he refused to allow his mother into his head again.

Now that he had finally moved away, he tried to forget about her completely, but she would always try to

send him homemade cookies or letters of adoration, apologies for a past that the locusts ate away. He usually piled them among his mounds of bills and advertisements; he would not make it harder for him than it already was. And besides, today his attention was on something else--the itch.

The itch was unrelenting and grew worse every minute he thought about it. He had had other itches before, but none could compete with the one he was wrestling that very instant.

Lester's thoughts suddenly drifted back towards the letter. He wondered why he was making such a big deal about her letters; maybe he should open it. He toyed with the idea, but instead opened up his electric bill. He perused its contents, his jaw dropping when he saw the grand total of 272.75. Fingers trembling at the sight, he shoved the paper back into the envelope, putting it into a neglected drawer. The itch was worse.

The thick silence of Lester's room was torn apart by the telephone beckoning him like a death knell. *Who could it be?*, Lester thought to himself, *no one ever calls here, and I don't talk to anyone*. Lester reluctantly picked up the phone, giving his sore toe a couple of good scratches along the way. In silence, Lester listened to the man speak. It wasn't good news.

"Your mother is worse," the doctor's voice echoed, trailing through the phone and into the dead, dry Arizona air.

Now Lester's throat began to swell, and he found it hard to speak.

"How ... uhh ... how much time?" he questioned.

"Maybe a couple of hours," the doctor replied somberly.

"Can I speak to her?" Lester pleaded, his bottom lip quivering.

"Sure ... Just a minute, I'll put you through to her room."

The phone rang in the receiver, and Lester's heart began to beat faster and faster, like a rabbit being chased down by greyhounds. He just needed to tell her that he didn't mean what he said about never wanting to see her again. He wanted to tell her that he meant to open the packages, but never found time. Most of all, he wanted to apologize; he wanted to say "I love you," even if for one last time.

Three rings. *What's going on??* Lester thought, his imagination a frenzy.

Four rings. Five. No answer.

Suddenly the doctor's voice appeared again on the phone, his tone more serious now than ever.

"I'm sorry ... your mother just passed away a few minutes ago. Is there anything I can do? I'm deeply sorry ..."

The doctor's voice trailed away, becoming as dull as a plastic knife and fading into the sound of the silence in the room. Lester dropped the phone and cried. His chest heaved in spasms as tears poured down his face,

forming puddles on his sofa. Slowly his eyes turned to the unopened letter, the last words of his mother. He traced the edges with his fingers and stopped on the back seam. The letter was a lead weight in Lester's hands. Gathering his strength, Lester eased open the envelope, pulling out its contents. It was a small tube of ointment with a note attached. It read, "I know it must get awfully dry up there in Arizona, and you with your sensitive skin and all. Here's a little something for the itch that won't go away. I love you - Mom."

Lester began to itch again. He wanted to scratch at it, but he knew it wouldn't go away.





Peekaboo  
by Cantara Bouton



la tomba sopra Firenze  
by Ian Morrison

# Phantom Hearts

by Amber Hetrick

The gloomy mist surrounded the dead, hollow trees under the failing light of the half moon. She crunched frosted leaves underfoot as she crossed to the illuminated granite in the center of the clearing. The man she loved waited here for her every night, faithfully devoted to their clandestine desires. She pushed back the hood of her woolen cloak, smiling at his chiseled facial features. She kissed his stern, unyielding lips, stroked his gray hair, and danced alone on the well-trampled dirt and lilies above his bed.





two : poetry //



radio announces war

by Valentina España

your face, touched  
my cheek, yours damp and green  
by the lamp's reflection  
as he  
mentioned  
God  
in his speech  
our deaths awaited or not  
as we clasped palms  
waiting  
to volunteer  
to clean up  
blood.

## value and shade

by michelle dugan

look there when your sunsets go gray  
the most brilliant gray you'll ever see  
your lips shadowed like pavement  
and the most brilliant spectrum of light and dark  
in your eyes, glancing over monochromatic sheets  
of a soul on paper, staves and scales  
on the ebony grand piano before you  
this world needs no color  
i'll live in shades forever  
as long as i can watch your hands  
gray as my metronome heart  
dance along black and white keys  
with but three colors to view this world  
one admires detail like never before  
even if i saw you as gray as myself  
your brilliance blinds me.



## Banana Cat Bread

by Amber Guyton

When the bananas get too ripe to eat  
spotted black like cheetahs at the zoo  
we cage them up in the freezer until  
we are ready to make banana bread.

New discovery in the Antarctic:  
frozen spotted cats with no legs  
and only one flexible tooth in  
our kitchen. The scientists ask:

*How are they so well preserved when  
they are missing legs and teeth with  
only their long lean bodies left?*

We shrug, and kindly ask them to leave,

as they are in our way. We let the frozen  
bodies thaw on the table, brown and black

instead of yellow. We cut off the teeth  
and squish out the guts into a bowl,

the furless skin still cold to our hands.  
The scientists are off getting funding  
to put the legless cats in a museum.  
From the bowls to the sugared pans,

then into the oven. Out to cool on the  
rack, and we've got banana bread to offer  
to the scientists if they ever come back.  
But they are probably in Antarctica again.

I have a friend who doesn't like banana  
bread. I think she would like cat bread  
even less. I don't think I would like  
cat bread either, so I'll take banana bread.

code v means varmint  
(at girl scout camp  
in whitehaven,  
pennsylvania)

by emily fields

the foul stench of the butt-bucket—  
*who set you aflame this time—*  
reaches across the lake and up  
to tent groupings in trail's end;

and in this new, aluminum kitchen,  
i imagine exaggerated velociraptors,  
clicking claws on tile; not peaches  
serving tomato soup for jill and earl.

our black unit walkie hangs authority  
from my back pocket, spraying another  
*code v, rhododendron trail*  
loosely across my girls' ears, then:  
*code v means bear, right?*



Contemporary Antiquity  
by Monica Mellon

## Maslow, Inverted

by Cantara Bouton

Raven's charcoal wing,  
chalked white with dust, stands  
awkwardly - trying to fly away  
without Raven's bloated  
body.

Charcoal soot chalks  
white lashes shading  
my ebony eyes as  
they dart across the dust,  
searching.

Tides will shift, with them-  
memories. Water  
dances around me  
like music in a  
morgue.

I do not know  
warmth. But I am not  
cold. My hand houses  
the silver band which  
nourishes

more completely  
than food ever could.  
They took all I had  
because I loved another  
woman.

All but a bit of bread  
where I hid my ring.  
They did not know  
that the real food was  
within.

*This ring is  
real.*

Raven has to  
struggle no longer  
in a land that  
makes living  
impossible.

*I cannot find my  
wife.*

You disparage my life of  
grime-encrusted fingernails  
where happiness can be a bird  
lying dead in the  
dust.

*I still have  
hope.*

## Papa Brooks

by Jenn Brooks

*Tu-ra-lu-  
ra-lu-ra*  
his baritone,  
breathy,  
wafts of Bushmills whiskey.

His skin, the dead leaves  
caught  
in a fall wind  
and mist  
on some random summer  
Monday  
that blanketed  
the rising  
monoliths of a  
slow town.

Hands  
of knotted oak  
sweat dirt  
over faded blue jeans,  
grasp an old gold tone  
pocket watch  
that flecked  
sparks,  
opened and closed.

The scent of  
those hands,

sea salt and grey flannel  
sweet opium pipe smoke,  
ephemeral  
apparitions caught between  
shifting rays of sunlight.

As he waltzed home,  
he would  
pick  
pennies  
off of the frozen tundra,  
one  
for each daughter.

Copper wishes  
blown,  
across their  
half carved palms.



garden spent  
by lili bagein

## Bees in Clover

by Adelina Malito

She held me tight, my mother.  
Because of one sneaky little bee,  
she held me while I screamed as loud as that fat bee was quiet.  
*It stung me!* I wailed into her shirt stained with tomato sauce and tears.  
My mamma told me, *It will be ok*, as she pulled out a clove of garlic  
and an enormously-sharp-pointy butcher's knife from its rack.

I started to wail and yell louder at her,  
*DON'T CUT MY FOOT.*  
I imagined her as cutting beef in two.  
My mother had to perform  
quick surgery to repair the damage. Even more terrified I was  
at the thought of running around footless for the rest of my life.  
She quickly cut

garlic into thick uniform slices and places them on my open, festering wound.  
Remembering I am a child she turns,  
gives some impromptu adult advice as she mops up my tears:

*That will teach you to run around barefoot.*

# Generations

by Liz Peglow

I.

*You will make a husband happy –  
you are smart and you are strong.*

My grandmother presses herself  
over the ironing board,  
shoulders folding into  
a gray skirt that I have never  
seen her wear,

and instructs me with short  
commands before  
shoving the iron at me, waiting.

I dip the hot metal over the skirt,  
carefully pulling at each end.

She shakes her head – brown curls spray  
around the creases in her face:

*You aren't trying,*  
she sings, glad that she has found  
something I cannot do.

\*

I sleep in my dead grandfather's bed,  
listening to him breathe  
beside me.

I stumble down the hall to my grandmother's  
room,  
and hang to her cool sheets,  
a child peering into a well.  
She shoos me away,  
wrinkled hand slapping my thigh.  
*Leave me be. I, too, am tired.*

\*

Weeks before she died,  
I find her balanced

on the edge of her bed, bare  
breasts sinking in the sunlight that squeezes  
through the blinds, a bra hanging  
from a fingertip – the graying  
satin swinging like a wiper blade in a storm.  
*Lizabeth, help me.*

II.

My mother teaches me how to scrub  
the kitchen floor until reflections  
ripple across it like  
a river. Her arms disappear



in the hot water that steams  
around her elbows.  
When I slide my sponge across the linoleum,  
her eyes roll.  
*You are not careful;*  
Her words charge toward me.

\*

During the year of nightmares,  
we all scream at night.

My mother climbed into  
my bed, hands smoothing  
the stiffness in my face.

She hums  
as the cars splash  
in the rain.

*You do not need a husband:  
You are smart and you are strong.*

\*

In spurts, I try to explain  
why I have to go away.  
Over the telephone,  
I see her head shaking  
through the kinked cord that  
slinks along my bedroom floor.

III.

On the way to work yesterday  
I saw my grandmother, my mother

peering into the rearview mirror  
applying black mascara  
with a shaking hand.

They live in the purple veins  
that seep across my thighs.

Their bodies are what I towel  
after my morning shower.

I hear their voices echo  
when I'm in my bed.

\*

I stand over the ironing board  
waiting for the hot water to fill up,  
spill over.

## what hygiene & manners are not

by anna charles

Girls in these dorms  
sit in bathroom stalls  
talking on their cell phones  
to friends or ones they  
name lovers or anyone  
who will listen to them  
jabber while they take  
a shit in mid-afternoon.

They perch on toilets  
partaking in their bodily  
business, thinking nothing  
ill of their actions. They  
flush and say a shameless  
goodbye, then hitting a  
button with their thumb  
to disconnect the shallow

conversation. As they  
unlatch the stall to leave  
no faucets of water are  
turned on. These girls  
open two doors while  
their hands forget what  
soap feels like, their noses  
not remembering the smell  
of cheap, pink liquid.



Gold Digger  
by Monica Mellon

## Ties

by Nate Reed

Last night  
I tied the ocean

to your knees,  
as birds, nestled

in the jutting A's  
of the Ramada sign,

watched. The sound  
of waves crushing

shells into sand  
(Your hips

are conches).  
A lick of salt.

Ankles draped in green,  
the seaweed tugging--

dragging us back down  
to the water.

## Bored

by Holly Button

Menthol sears my lungs as I try to breathe  
around your words, hotter than the cherry  
of your cigarette. Ash sighs to the red checker  
tablecloth. I smoosh it with my pinky,  
drawing lazy curly-cues diagonally  
across the blocks (white only) while you  
continue the current tirade, your words

spiraling towards the tiles along a lazy  
trail of smoke. I abandon my soot  
hieroglyphics and the tarry words spewing  
callously around the yellowed filter  
between your cracked lips.

Your forehead creases jump up and down,  
excited by eyebrows bumping and the fire  
flashing within your tawny eyes. I stab  
at the ice-cubes in my liquidless glass  
with a chewed up straw, trying to synchronize  
their plinking with your profanities,

wonder how long it took for you to learn  
how to speak with those sticks hanging  
precariously from your mouth, if they grow  
bored of your maw and kamikaze  
their way to the ground, preferring  
to be snubbed out rather than spend  
another second soaking in your saliva.



Schokolade Ist Gut  
by Ian Morrison

## Karaoke Queen

by Faith Hartzell

So who cares  
that the not quite Joan Jett  
tall barmaid blonde  
in taut jeans and tight boots  
couldn't carry a tune

in those painted fingers  
flexing around a long-neck  
bottle of Busch Light  
and that musty microphone.

She bays out her song  
with absolute authenticity  
every snarled note sincere  
*I Hate Myself for Loving You.*

I believe her.







nonfiction //



# Lucky Strike

by Kate Wiant

I watch them, farm boys acting cool, and I mimic them.

They lean up against the wall in a devil-may-care sort of way, taking out their combs, slicking black claws through their greased hair. Behind the schoolhouse, one flips out his lighter like Prometheus and lights the other's cigarette. His fingers hold it nimbly like a doo-wap king; he radiates confidence, Mr. Cool. He puts it to his lips lightly inhaling, and a ginger glow bops on the end of the white round crisp paper, tobacco smoke rolling from his nostrils like some great Minotaur. I watch them, these demi-gods of smoke. The girls in their poodle skirts point, whisper, and giggle. I am in awe.

While I look at them, I remember Dad, how he stands outside the five and dime sometimes, waiting for Mom. He rolled down the window of the old Ford with its round, blue hood and two chrome lined lights like eyes. He would pull the small, white rectangular box marked in a big bold red-as-an-apple circle. "Lucky Strike," it said. His elbow propped on the door, he takes long pungent breaths like a swimmer coming up for air. On hot days he would stamp out with his heavy feet and lean against the truck, holding it up with his bulk. His bright eyes would squint in defiance against the sun, commanding the weather, bringing clouds with the grey smoke, this shaman, my father. Mom would rush out of the store with her purchases like a flighty little sparrow and light next to me on the seat. Fidgeting, she would often tug at my pony tail or toy with my shirt collar asking me, "Why don't you wear that pretty gingham skirt on Sunday? You're not a boy, I don't understand why you insist on dressing like one, why don't we find some pretty ribbons for your hair? Stop biting your nails, and sit up straight like a lady." While I endured her scrutiny, Dad would take his time burning down the last of the cigarette, a flaming cherry, capturing it with his fingers, nimbly flicking it into the garbage can that accompanied the barbershop pole; Laurel and Hardy, they sat in a dumb pantomime watching him.

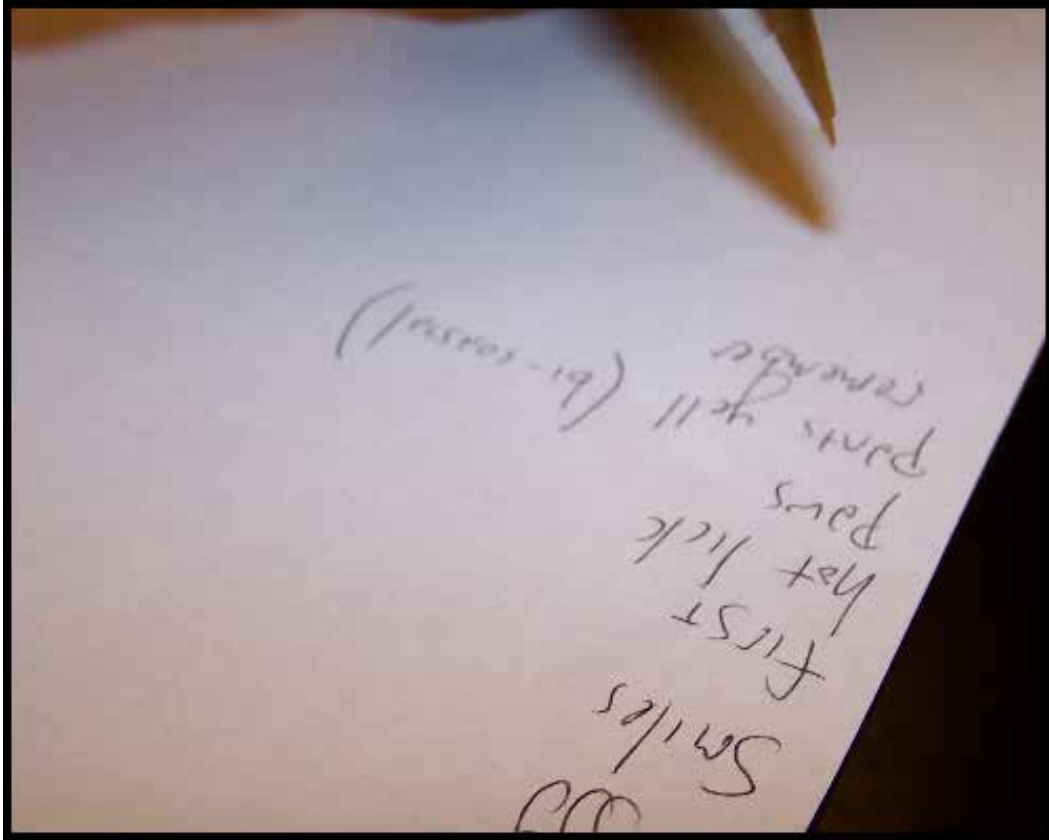
Blinking away the memory, I rub my eyes and unbutton the first few buttons on my plaid blouse. I use my short stubby fingernails, little jigsaws, to capture flyaways and cage them under sleek hair pins. I plod through the day in a damper, dreaming about burning my Peter Pan collars and asking for a leather jacket like James Dean. At the age of thirteen, the days inch by, I can think of so many fun things to do and school

is a drag . . . a DRAG. On the way home, the dust kicks up from my feet like that sweet hazy smoke that crowned the smoke gods' heads. I breathe it in choking and gasping, thinking their sweet incense must fill them with power, with cool thrilling power. At home, I sneak into Dad's room and filch one of his long brown cigars. Cigarettes often bejeweled the long thin fingers of actresses, but the bold thick cigar seemed to express the man who settled like an anchor in that big mahogany colored easy chair of which he was so fond. Cigars, the essence of a man, strength, and the match strikes, and the flame rises up like some great sun on the edges of my fingertips. I puff, puff, puff like I've seen Daddy-O do so many times and cough and gag the first few breaths from my lungs, wondering when the razor blades would quit cutting as each inhalation stabbed at my throat. I endure, sure that this has somehow strengthened me, inducting me into the hallowed halls of god-dom.

Dad appeared out of the doorway, a specter in his overalls, hay pinning his shirt with thick yellow bristles, salting his hair with a dusty haze. His eyes were drawn to the cigar I held in my fingers. "So you want to smoke," he said as my heart tattooed in my chest. I stood stock-still and watched him walk from the room, relief flooding me. *This isn't so bad*, I thought. Dad returned with four more cigars. "So you want to smoke, think you're grown now. Let's see how you like smoking." I stood still and watched him approach. He clipped the ends of the cigars, a baleful circumcision, and sat down next to me. He waited till I finished the first one and handed me another and another and another. My face creased with despair, while arched eyebrows pleaded. "You just keep it in there," his voice rose when he saw that I was about to spit the last one out. Hours later I was still vomiting. He lit up a cigar of his own, feeling that he had somehow taught me a lesson.

I can still remember the experience to this day. In the empty dim airport bar as I wait for a flight back to New York, I can't get my mind off the way he looked stretched out in the coffin. Lung cancer finally brought him down; my father, my idol. I think about tomorrow, the numbers, the shareholders, and the responsibility; rummaging through my purse, I slip out a thin, shiny gold compact and a tube of round red-

as-an-apple lipstick. The mirror displays my lips as I hold the thin tube between my nimble fingers. I put the makeup away and smile at how comfortable they look pressed against the silver cigar case lying next to them. Pulling out my Daurdorff cigar and decisively clipping the end in one clean stroke, I glance over at the svelte bartender who has been staring at my legs for the past half hour. He looks a little shaken as I lift my eyebrows and gesture for a light. He pulls out his shiny Zippo marked with a skull and crossbones, how manly. I smirk as I catch a glimpse of this macho insignia. I shake my head and ask, "Matches?" He fumbles with the package and knocks off the tip of the first match, and, a little steadier the next time, he produces a small orange flame. As he puts the flame to the tip of the cigar, I turn it to ensure an even light, and I remember those boys smoking behind the school so long ago, wondering if their fingers would tremble as they lit my cigar.



setlist  
by emily fields

## Logan

by Vance Reed

I remembered seeing the couple while we were in the other hospital. The main reason I noticed them, I think, was because out of all the couples that we had seen in the last few weeks, they were the only ones close to our age. Their names escape me now, but they were an attractive young couple. The woman, a slender little thing, barely showed signs of recently giving birth, and the husband, tall and well-built, seemed to be unable to contain his excitement of being a new father. I could sympathize with him; while my fiancé had two children from a previous marriage, I had just become a father a few days before he had. A mixture of exhaustion and anxiety was also on their faces, as I'm sure it was on ours. Feelings are often so heightened in waiting rooms that they are palpable.

-Is your baby alright?

-Last we thought he was doing just fine.

-Our son in the other hospital is just fine, but his twin brother wasn't doing as well and was life-flighted down here the day he was born. We spend a few days down here and drive back up and spend a few days there.

-Oh wow, that must be hard. I guess we have something to be thankful for, I mean we don't have two sick babies two and a half hours apart. I don't know how you two do it.

We had heard this phrase quite a few times in the last couple weeks. It generally came up any time we were in conversation with people, and we told them what had been going on with our boys.

-Oh, we just do what we have to do, we don't think about it too much.

-Our little Logan, he was doing just fine at first, but then he started having some trouble too. So they life-flighted him down here, but he was doing just fine by the time we got down here. We think he just wanted to go for a ride in the helicopter, see the city.

This was something that we had told ourselves, too. We made up stories of our son sneaking out of the hospital and going to the clubs, and of him getting the phone numbers of nurses and writing them on his diaper, only to lose them when the next nurse came in and changed him. In our minds he was a ladies' man and a heartbreaker, a cool cat clubber and a party crasher, and we had no misconceptions that these were coping mechanisms.

The husband's parents were with them too, and along with my mother, who had also come with us, it made for a crowded waiting room. After a bit of discussion we found out that our babies, Logan and the twins, were down here in this hospital and had been born at the exact same birth weight, one pound, eleven ounces. Everybody else then started conversing and showing each other pictures of their little ones, while I, being of a quiet nature, sat back and surveyed the scene. It's not that I try to be unfriendly or anything, I just don't do well with a large group like that.

Nearing the end of the conversation, we exchanged numbers with the couple, telling them that we knew exactly what they were going through, and they could call and talk to us anytime they wanted to. It would be nice for us too to have someone near our age that we would be able to talk to about our experiences, and would understand most everything we'd been through. We assured each other that everything would turn out all right for one another and said good-bye.

Two days later, as we were entering the unit to visit our more sickly son, we saw the husband's father pacing back and forth outside of little Logan's room. The look on his face was of a person whose heart was in the process of breaking. My fiancé, concerned with the wellbeing of the baby, inquired as to what was going on. The new grandfather informed her that the baby had suffered a severe brain-bleed, which was common for a child born that premature and that small, and he wasn't going to make it. They had taken him off of life support and the parents were holding him for the first time, for what little time he had left.

We went to our son's room, freshly reminded how delicate and fragile these babies in this facility were. Our babies had just passed the two-week mark, which is when the doctors are most concerned about brain-bleeds. We had been informed that if we passed this milestone, it was one less thing to worry about. It might seem irrational, but I felt guilty. Guilty that we had two babies, while this other couple would soon have none. Remembering their words, I thought that we had something to be thankful for. Even though our babies were in hospitals two and a half hours apart, we still had them. They never called us.





B&B and Bedsheets  
by Don Raynor

## Woes

by Adrianna Morrison

It is about nine o'clock, the usual closing time. At the front end stands one bored looking employee. This is what usually happens in the store; one employee closes up the front end and then joins the rest of the crew to clean up. The employee is a woman in her twenties with long dark brown hair. She is absentmindedly twirling around her register key, because the front end is bare and empty of customers and she has nothing else to do. She is patiently waiting for the signal.

“Leena can you hear me?”

“Ken, her walkie is broken, she can hear but she can't respond to you.”

“Thanks Keith, ok Leena, you can shut off the music and we will be sending the stragglers up to you.”

The woman at the front hears the static comments over her headset and a smile runs across her face. She briskly walks over to the control panel and turns the music from HIGH to OFF. This is the signal. There will be about five minutes until the store will be closing. Those five minutes pass quickly as there were only three remaining customers in the store. They had been approached by sales associates on the floor and hustled to the registers where Leena greets them with a smile.

“Hello, did you find everything today? You know that these socks are buy three get one free, you already have three would you like to go back and get one more? It is free! Sure, I can have one brought up to you!” Leena quickly presses the button on her emergency walkie from beneath the register, “Hey Amanda can you bring me up another pair of the buy three get one free socks—the ones with the little dogs on them. No, not the purple dogs, she wants the blue ones. Thanks Amanda, register three.”

The socks are quickly brought up to the register and when the transaction is almost complete, “Would you like to put this on your New Sailor card? It's a ten percent discount off your first purchases. And for every two hundred dollars you spend at New Sailor, Abyss, and Mango World you get five dollars back. It is ok, not a problem maybe next time then. Would you like a gift receipt with this? Thank you and have a nice night!!”

This is the last of them. Leena quickly picks up her broom and waves to the manager who is locking the adult and the children's side doors. “Great day!” she says as they pass her. Leena is sweeping up the

floor around the register bays, cleaning up the hangers, and changing all the garbage. As she starts to look to see if the bags need to be refilled, a few people are around the doors trying to get them open. One lady is holding a New Sailor bag in her hand. Leena tries to signal that they are closed, but the people outside, especially the woman, just don't seem to understand. She pushes her walkie button in one more time and says, "Ken, this lady is trying to get in; she just tried the kid's side door and now is trying the adult, like we forgot to lock one or something. Yes, I waved her over to the poster with our times listed on it. What more would you like me to do? Make her a sign? That was a joke, not to be taken seriously."

*Riiiiinnnnng, Riiiiinnngggg*, is heard throughout the store during this casual little chat.

"UGH...Ken do I really have to get that? Fine . . . Hello and thank you for calling Erie New Sailor, this is Leena speaking, how may I help you? Yes, we are still closed. No, yanking on that door, ma'am, won't make it open. Wait, what? Ma'am I'm sorry that we are closed, you just didn't make it in time. I realize that forgetting your son's...your *only* son's birthday is bad. NO, that doesn't make you a bad mother, ma'am I never said that. Uh huh...That isn't my fault ma'am, they set the time we close by corporate, maybe take it up with them? Now really, your son will not grow up to be a psycho just because he doesn't have a New Sailor outfit. You do realize you are standing in front of the glass window ma'am, I can see the gestures you are making through the window. If you would walk just five feet over you can see the sign where the store hours are listed. I'm sure that's when we will be open next. Have a nice night, and thanks for calling."

"Leena, did you just hang up on her?"

"Ken . . . yes I did. She was being mean and I have other garbage to attend to."





three : poetry //



## Learning Boleros

by Valentina España

Dad bought me a Guns n' Roses cd  
for my thirteenth birthday, and translated  
the lyrics to "Welcome to the Jungle"  
after my English teacher refused.

I'd lock my bedroom door,  
Pretend to be Axl Rose.  
Once, Dad went to Argentina,  
a business trip, and  
brought me back  
black-leather military-style boots  
to complete my secret impersonation.

Downstairs he listened to Paco de Lucía.  
I could hear their guitars,  
Papi's trying to keep up with Paco's.  
I, put my hands up in the air,  
and became Slash.

After fictitious finger cramps  
I joined Dad.  
*Listen*, he said, his eyes closed  
Underneath curtain-like

Gray and black eyebrows,  
*Listen to those guitars crying.*

I quickly learned lyrics to  
La Flor de la Canela,  
No need to master a new language.  
*You can sing*, he said.

Maria Dolores Pradera's voice  
seemed diseased, mutilated, lifted  
by the weeping strings.  
She sang of  
bones and flesh, of  
stolen kisses, and  
crosses left to drag  
after loving, and of  
alcohol being poured for a whole year  
due to heartbreak.

At thirteen,  
I didn't know the meanings,  
but I abandoned flowers  
for thorns.



Steel Magnolia  
by Holly Button



## Glendalee

by Holly Button

Snow clings to the mud  
hugging my green Stratus  
as oildrops leakdrip to pavement.  
The baby sways and bops along  
with his favourite melodies, amusing  
those who have congregated  
obligatorily for another rushed holiday.

Mum's feet roll stiffly under the weight  
of years not shown in wrinkles.  
She hides her age under blonde dye  
and collagen creams, defying  
white roots or telltale non-turgor  
to dare mention more than 40  
of her 65 years. Yet, an acquired  
gait betrays her secret, whispers  
obscurely the pain of degeneration.

Clips of conversation hint  
at inner stagnation, cynicism  
barely shades a bitter fear  
of becoming Elderly. Watching  
her wince at unexpected pains  
brought about by mere shifts  
on the faded orange couch  
I regret my lack of pride-worthy  
accomplishments, my abundance  
of decisions disappointing to her.

I bury premature grief with carefully  
constructed animosity; emotionally  
charged imitations of indifference.

things to be named : and I miss

by Don Raynor

humid heat  
and for drinking, powdered iced tea  
mixed in spring  
water bottles. thermostat warnings—

providing safe passage to Philadelphia (and)  
that August Tuesday—

11:39 am. Patsy Cline dancing with  
stubborn hair and here  
we brushtouch freshly mowed bellies,  
cold painted toes.

airport personnel searching luggage,  
us barefoot and  
smuggling lighters  
into the south.

parallel parking a house, listening to screaming  
Christians, a right arm blessed  
with your warmth.

    this is only the beginning.

## Punishment for dead presidents

by Julia Perry

It felt so fine to finger

washington in the pits of my pockets.

Shame on you george, for lying about that cherry tree.

I crushed a horny jefferson in my perspiring

palm till I got tired.

Shame on you thomas, for raping Sally Hemming.

I made a mental note to deface jacko

from my twenty dollar bill.

Shame on you andrew for the leading Cherokee on the Trail  
of Tears.

I kicked a soiled and tarnished

lincoln into the gutter.

Shame on you abraham, because your proclamation didn't  
even free my people.



Tree of Medusa  
by Matt Subel

Epitaph for the Poor Mother  
with the Quiet Eyes

by Ryan Waterman

Baby soft and full of roses  
your wide eyes  
gaze upon a concrete wall.

Your hands,  
too weak to shatter stone,  
are strong enough  
to bathe  
and bury  
babies.

And in your ease of movement  
can be seen your depth of understanding,  
and in your child's eye  
your pulse,  
your throb,  
and an indescribable beauty.

Starving,  
you know that there is love in nothingness,  
laughter in misery,  
and you teach your children  
one lesson  
to guide them:  
that the horizon  
lies eternally  
beneath their baby feet.  
That they may touch the sun  
if they wish to  
as it sets,  
and break the wall down  
in the wake of your lullaby.

## Peeking Around Corners

by Melissa Kraus

My grandmother stands before the high kitchen window.  
Gram rinses out her single cup of instant coffee—splashes, clangs—splishshsh.  
Crumpled, frugal, firm, she fascinates. Crystal-beamed rainbows on the cupboard  
soften the distance between us. She is marmalade and raisin bread. Cooked prunes.  
Old age and age spots. Her once-auburn hair raked blue-white  
with Alberto VO5. Her gooseberry eyes.

I am chattering, shifting my gaze from red to indigo to green.  
A ceramic Dutch girl with a basket nested on the corner shelf beside the sink waits  
to hold my rings when I do the dishes. A pewter cat with a ball of yarn.

We often make Jell-O in a rectangular Pyrex pan—the powder,  
the hot water, those precious cubes chipped from the ice box—  
stirred with a metal spoon.

Dropping it, seeing it gel, giggling.  
Pretending *What if...*

My sister insisting on tapioca pudding,  
curds bubbling in an aluminum pan, scum sticking to the sides.  
Everything being fair.

Thick-handled oatmeal bowls—yarrow yellow, clove pink, stone blue.  
Debbie getting dibs on blue, my settling for yellow.  
Squabbling.

Gram saying, *Girls, my nerves...*  
Her retreating outdoors,  
relaxing in housedresses without wearing underwear, listening to the birds.  
Morning glories trailing up the brick wall.



Untitled  
by Kat Hall

my anti-sheath

by isobel mots

undies over ankles,  
skin in repetition,  
i lean away  
to sud up the tub.

he stands—*urgent*,  
reaching limb  
toward thinnest rubber

(sans duck)

thrusting my  
flesh, my  
pink.



*just take another drink*, she says to no one  
by Gabriella Mannarino

a bottle, tipped to one side,  
red, filled with amber, is  
strewn haphazardly on the  
coffee table.

it helps her shut out the darkness.

smells of the past  
---walks, talks, and sweat---  
waft in the air (of her mind).

her fingers graze pictures of a past life  
*and time*.

pauses

blurring tears now cloud those  
    picture  
        perfect  
            memories.

she turns to watch them (with him in the lead)  
walk away.

gabriella feels, as part of *her* body  
separates itself from inside *her* world.

Her second soul is gone.

She is empty.



Untitled  
by Sara Dixon

## Imitating Art

by Cantara Bouton

We never knew that power  
should have been a normal  
piece of our repertoire until  
we read words from Audre  
Lorde, Lucille Clifton, bell  
hooks.

Never realised until Ani  
that anger was permitted.  
Alix and Eve taught us  
to take back cunt, to toss  
off shame, slide into life  
next to our sisters and  
stand up for our daughters.

When Ntozake Shange  
danced across the stage  
we remembered how  
luminescent black could be.

Feminism, redefined. Life  
trying to imitate its self-  
created art, circling back  
and discovering how the  
meek turn mighty once  
you teach them how to  
maneuver the mic.

through my glasses, as a cellist

by emily fields

in middle school,  
kate spelled warning  
in lunchtime breath  
(noodles, always):  
*never pick frames so thick -*

black plastic lining two  
clear shells:  
nerd versus wire.

\*

yet this university town's café  
perches against main street  
selling soy hot cocoa (mugs  
filled by browncurl boy)

and his eye sees dark smart  
in my outlined retinas.

his late kisses (and nose  
prints) smear the shine in my  
glassed face

but college calls him west  
where he meets erin:

another squinter,  
another cellist.

## Prickly, tickly toes

by Matt Subel

A woman's toes can tell all –

prickly, tickly and touch free,  
they tend to wiggle when relaxed,  
squirm when excited and  
twitch provocatively when enticed.

Whether dirty and dress free,  
small and sandled,  
round, tucked under and smuggled,  
or tiny, timid and tangled with love,  
they are...

the hidden expressway to emotion,  
doorway to desire,  
and the dance of delight.

They laugh when you sing,  
gasp when you fall,  
and ask where you've been.

A woman's toes tell all.

## Beam Me Up

by Lance Maybury

When I was a boy I believed  
when someone died, God  
came down to Earth in a rainbow colored  
hot air balloon  
and took them up to heaven.  
Now I am almost sure  
this is not what happens.  
But, I like to think God would fly them over  
their homes, and loved ones,  
so they could wave good-bye  
as they floated into  
the clouds.

He picked up my Grandmother  
when I was working, I hope  
they floated over me,  
wherever I happened to be.  
I bet when He came to get her, He brought  
along her husband and son. I wish I had  
looked heavenward to see them glowing  
as they ascended the cosmos. It would have  
made me smile to see them there.



Volcan 'O Cream  
by Matt Subel

