



THE
Mosaic

SPRING 2016

THE
Mosaic

(n): a combination of diverse elements forming a more or less coherent whole (Oxford English Dictionary)

*Marist Literary Arts Society
presents the Spring 2016 Mosaic:*

Executive Board:

President: Marisa Maccaro

Vice President: Katherine Maradiaga

Secretary: Julia Franco

Webmaster: Antonio DelVecchio

Mosaic Editors:

Jessica Bosak

Charlie Grippaldi

Faculty Advisor:

Prof. Lea Graham

Contents

The Eiffel Tower	<i>Tenley Feinberg</i>	6
Nocturnal Cognition	<i>Charlie Grippaldi</i>	8
Silence Makes its Sound	<i>Amanda Marlowe</i>	9
Out There Somewhere	<i>Daniel McFadden</i>	9
An Apologetic Letter, From a Concerned Friend	<i>Krista Picotti</i>	10
My Dearest Yawn	<i>Kaliyah Gardner</i>	13
The Love Letter Torn	<i>Dakota Swanson</i>	14
Serendipity	<i>Caroline Dewald</i>	16
El Rey de Puerto Rico	<i>Zach Racusin</i>	18
Electric Nothing	<i>Derek Rose</i>	20
Between 21 and 22	<i>Margaret Bruetsch</i>	24
Zen Week	<i>Anonymous</i>	25
With Out	<i>Michalyn Curran</i>	26
Walk Around	<i>Darriel McBride</i>	28
The Brain is...	<i>Janelle Solviletti</i>	30
Beware of the Bitch	<i>Bryanna Adams</i>	31
Under the Onion Dome	<i>Molly Scott</i>	32
Roots	<i>Kaliyah Gardner</i>	35
Santa Claus Isn't Coming Tonight	<i>Antonio DelVecchio</i>	36
Unnatural State of the Unicorn	<i>Molly Scott</i>	38
After the End of the World	<i>Margaret Bruetsch</i>	40
History in the Making	<i>Addison Donati</i>	44
Liminal Spaces	<i>Katherine Louie</i>	46
Jigsaw Success	<i>Amanda Marlowe</i>	47
Wait Up	<i>Nick Chhoeun</i>	48
Irises	<i>Emma Tice</i>	49
My Soul	<i>Kevin Hudson</i>	50
The Black Dog	<i>Logan Forsyth</i>	51
Three Poems about what Really goes on in a Fishery	<i>Bernadette Hogan</i>	52
A Toss for Love	<i>Charlie Grippaldi</i>	54

Based off of Komunyakaa's Addendum	<i>Emma Tice</i>	55
Portrait of his Hands from a Distance	<i>Sarah Kiter</i>	56
The Heart's Graveyard Shift	<i>Janelle Solviletti</i>	57
Dear Deadbeat, Make it Right	<i>Darriel McBride</i>	58
A Bowl	<i>Daniel McFadden</i>	60
Archatype	<i>Jammy Thompson</i>	62
Cento	<i>Christina Lupo</i>	65
Man, Have Mercy	<i>Sara Kiter</i>	66
Flintlock	<i>Antonio DelVecchio</i>	68
I am Primrose Lane	<i>Nick Chhoeun</i>	70
The Secret Keeper	<i>Marisa Maccaro</i>	72
Drew	<i>Chris Largent</i>	76
Hand in Unlovable Hand	<i>Marisa Maccaro</i>	78
Memories of a Man fom Corona	<i>Carmen Henriquez</i>	80
The First Supper	<i>Dakota Swanson</i>	82
Don't	<i>Bryanna Adams</i>	84
Home: The Trillionth Possibility	<i>Julia Franco</i>	86



Bernadette Hogan

Front Cover by Sara Kiter

Back Cover by Bernadette Hogan

The Eiffel Tower

Tenley Feinberg

A name represents a soul, represents a life, represents endless possibilities. Her name meant nothing to him.

She knew this, but followed him anyway. She would have followed him to the end of the Earth, provided he led her off it.

He came from a world of dark romance, drawn to morbid intimacy. She was nothing more than a small stop on his endless journey, nothing more than a drop in the mad tumultuous ocean of his twisted mind.

And she knew. She knew exactly what he was from the moment she saw his lips contort themselves into that sour smile. From the moment those shallow, flat words dropped upon her ears, so smooth they must have been said a thousand times, she knew that this THING standing before her was not a man but something far worse. He was the epitome of darkness and of fear. He was what nightmares were made of. And he was her final chance to do something right. She knew from just one word.

He asked her, suavely, confidently, if she would like to visit the Eiffel Tower with him. See the second balcony. Breathtaking view, highly illegal. It was the perfect combination of romance and danger. Who could possibly say no?

She smiled to herself as he asked his question. It was so romantic it was cheesy, so dangerous it was unoriginal. She wondered how many girls had fallen for it.

He took her hand as she stood up. Together, they left the room and walked in the direction of the Eiffel Tower.

She pushed on the door but it was locked. She felt him slip a key into her hand.

Briefly, she wondered how he had gotten it. Then she slid it into the lock and turned.

He led the way to the back stairs, the maintenance stairs, the "Employees Only" stairs. The elevators couldn't take you to the second balcony.

She climbed the stairs in silence and took his hand. She hadn't forgotten what he was. She didn't want him to try anything.

He stifled a gasp as she grabbed his hand. This had never happened before. This wasn't part of the plan.



Bernadette Hogan

Nocturnal Cognition

Charlie Grippaldi

Dreams

They make sleep

All the more worth

Being unconscious

Dreams

They are obscure

They break the rules

Creations of perfect worlds



Brian Lampert

Silence Makes it's Sound

Amanda Marlowe

My heart
Sinking to the knots of my spine
Once a lullaby
A dream to die

Eyes drift away
Iridescent pearls on a cloud
Lie with me here
Let the silence make its sound

Out There, Somewhere

By Daniel McFadden

Out there, somewhere,
She dances on a star-strewn beach.
Bending and shaping the earth underneath her,
Creating careless constellations with every step.

An Apologetic Letter, from a Concerned Friend

Krista Picotti

To the girl who lived across the street,

It's really not okay.

It's not O-fucking-kay.

Which is, in fact, an exaggerated understatement. It's practically a straight up lie. It's so not okay. In the sense that gods traveling of all ages and ethnicities with all accumulated powers would not make it okay. Allah would not make it okay. Jesus would not make it okay. Nor would Zeus or Ares, or Janus. Binge watching Netflix with cartons of ice cream would not make it okay. Ice and band aides and the entire hospital packed into a travel sized first aid kit wouldn't help at all. There is no word incredible enough that allows me to elaborate how not okay this is. Any of it.

And it's my fault really because I should have been there all along. When we were entering high school and your dad died, I should have been there the whole time. But instead I was in outer space, and that's not an excuse, but a fact. A reality. And I'm sorry because I shouldn't have taken a vacation so abruptly, but I was pushed into unusual circumstances and it is hard to pull yourself together without gravity. I am only saying this because I owe you an explanation for being so aloof, for dropping everything, for pushing you down ascending staircases and winding hallways, for vandalizing signs on roads, for everything.

I remember when you told me. I'll never forget it. Speak; you told me,

it was like the book *Speak*. And I wish you had spoken sooner. Your words spun in my mind as if them themselves were constructing fiction. If you had told me sooner, maybe I would have had more time to think, a little more to grasp the concept without perplexities. Maybe I would have called the cops, sobbed into your shoulder, ran and told my mother. I ran and told my mother, who did nothing. And told me nothing, because there was nothing I could do. There is nothing I can do, but sit here in art class and stare at the man who struck you, who pushed you, who demanded your rights be taken, who watched you struggle, and struggle harder. The man who tightened his grip the more you repeated yourself, every time you told him not to, he tightened his grip. Or at least that is how I imagine it, you being too paralyzed to do anything, but say that it is not okay. And it is NOT okay. You have a right to that.

I know he was your friend. You knew him well. Well enough to know how bad things were. You understood how the air he took in was strangling him. You know all the shit he's been through, but none of it makes it okay. And my heart bled when you told me. It took me awhile to believe you, not because I thought you were speaking in fabrications, but because I was convinced that you yourself were one and perhaps I was one too, and perhaps the whole thing was just a thought floating in the thick air. And you were looking at me, watching me, waiting for me to react and I couldn't. I couldn't find the words to.

You told me that it happens to everyone. It took me a moment to say it out loud, no, no it doesn't. And even if it did that would be a bigger reason why it is not okay. It's a reason to be mad, to be angry. You have the right to be angry. Not just for yourself, but for everyone before you and everyone after. And if you won't I will. Because you deserve better, you deserve so much better. It is not okay, and it never will be okay. But maybe, hopefully, eventually, you will.

Take care, from a concerned friend.



Sara Kiter



Bernadette Hogan

My Dearest Yawn,

Some higher power commands me to obey you; consequently, my jaw drops. I slowly inhale. My eyes close and flutter as I revel in the sensation you give me. I toss my head back; I know you love it when my neck is exposed. My body elongates and quivers, like the limbs of a tree in the vivacious evening wind. I peak!

As the tingling sensation slowly fades throughout my physique, I reestablish my proper posture and gradually open my eyes, feeling like a phoenix rising from the ashes after an abrupt, incinerating eruption. I have been reborn.

Only you can make me feel like this.

However, you are not a monogamous lover. An innocent onlooker is your next victim. I witness this person undergo the same bodily spasms you inflicted upon me just moments ago. You lascivious player, you! You now have the entire room under your spell. Not even the tenacious can resist you.

I love you.

You remind me to tend to my body. To sleep, perchance to Dream. An impeccable seducer, you are the perfect lover to fall asleep to.

You rest easy as I rest easily at your command.

Sweet dreams,

Kaliyah Gardner

The Love Letter Torn

Dakota Swanson

The first love letter I ever received I tore to pieces. The scraps of soaked paper clung to my fingers as their remains dissolved under the hot fury of my bathroom faucet. The smell of excess perfume lingered within the confines of my bathroom as the words of the letter seemed to sear within my head. I gagged as the smell wafted once again into my nostrils.

The letter itself was little more than the smelly culmination of an on again off again falsehood that had begun at a church youth retreat. Every "good" Christian tween looked forward to this retreat. A weekend away from home, deep within a mountain, where we could all gather and worship. These were "good" Christian tweens, the kind that pissed in sinks and hosted fight clubs in their dorm rooms.

I paid these kids no attention, to be honest; I paid little attention to anyone. While other kids were content in peeing everywhere and punching each other, I was headbanging to Christian rock, as my arms flailed around in a lame attempt at dance. The world was hidden beneath my shaking bangs as my friends sat back arms folded in disapproval.

As the music blared throughout the room, the pastor's voice bellowed at us to give our hearts to Christ. I took little notice of the curly haired girl sitting in the girls' worship section.

The rip of guitar strings drowned out the sounds of her and her friends giggling. And so I danced on, bangs wagging against my forehead, as I desperately tried to become saved.

Snow drifted down from the gray sky, clinging to the ground as their feet trampled toward the bus. My feet, my feet ran as the curly haired girl chased me. Her voice was shrill against the blotted out sky. I had glanced everywhere, and still she managed to arrive before me, her body standing before my passage to sanctuary. She had been chasing me ever since my dance, and still pursued months onward.

As she chased, I began to edge closer. Her arms enrapturing me in an embrace I tried to break, but secretly clung to it. I searched for her at every

Sunday night meeting. I lived on the fringe of an abyss that was beginning to consume my every thought.

From the very beginning I knew it was a lie, her arms around me as she screamed for me to dance. Telling me she was my biggest fan and that we were meant to be. All of it a lie, and yet as I ran from her embrace I knew I wanted her touch. I wanted my hand in hers, and to hold her close. The first girl to show me affection. A game unlike any I had ever played and I was in over my head because with every Sunday I drew closer to the nether that was her love.

As spring came, flowers sprouted from the ground as we were beginning to sprout into puberty. She walked toward me, as I swung high above the world, forced to screech to a stop as she stood before me. My feet inches from her face, my arms pulled back, bringing the swing to a stop. As the swing hung limply above the ground, I rocked my feet back and forth.

She smiled, as she stepped forward. Wrapping her arms around my neck, she took her seat upon my lap. Everything froze as I tried to hold back the thoughts, the thoughts that would make her hate me as our church had said. And so I thought of everything and nothing: homework, the flowers rising, how much I only wanted to swing, and any and every thought a young tween could think of while trying to ignore a beautiful girl sitting upon him. She rocked her ass against my lap, and for a moment I could feel the sweat on my forehead. She would think me a freak if I gave in.

And so she left. Removing her arms from around my neck, she rocked her tiny tween hips as she walked towards another kid. I began to kick, getting my swing in the air, but she never left my thoughts.

It wasn't till a week later that I had received the love letter. The recess that had been interrupted as the ninth grade girls came running up to me. The letter drenched in a perfume that could turn anyone's stomach. The words of her obsession seeped in before I tore it to shreds. I watched as the shreds of paper fluttered into my trashcan. Her words fading from all existence, yet lingering in my mind. That wretched perfume. A poison that only made me stumble deeper into the nether. The letter was a lie, her feelings were too, but mine had become real and in turn I had lost a game I never set out to play. When I was no longer amusing, when she grew bored of me, she shred me like I had her letter.

Serendipity

Caroline Dewald

My sweet serendipity,
Oh, love's gratifying punchline
never failing to spring the downward corners of my mouth
into crescent moons toward a twinkling sky
of dwindling Taurus constellations.

Time may not exist in space,
my jealousy weaves through the galaxies,
but it manifests in my world as a limitation for
feelings of splendor
as it took away the pleasure in oxygen I had selfishly gotten used to.

Foolish of me to believe I'd never feel those horns
pushing against my back
to thrust me off the face of the universe.
Silly girl, believing change and trust were not
friends of the stars I had only ever seen in perfect alignment,

and that time was endless for those on Earth as well.

Time was ruthless,
a severe perpetrator of my indecisive, messy mind
of jumbled stars that either exploded or died from time to time.
And, just as the stars above, those still on Earth
only noticed their deaths eternities afterwards.

Serendipity shows itself;
surrenders to our intergalactic game of hide and seek
and dances around my fingertips.
Independent entities, serendipity connected the dots.
A little girl screamed she could see the light through the telescope;
The instauration of beautiful friendship.
Relieved at last by the curls of my mouth
as I could have never escaped the image of yours.

El Rey de Puerto Rico
(The King of Puerto Rico)

Zach Racusin

I was walking from Isla Verde to Carolina

A warm December day in the capitol, trying to find my way

I walk past a ballpark off the main drag, kids

¡Vámo! ¡Rápidamente! ¡Fócate!

I hear the parents yell out to them.

I ask a father ¿Que es esta líga?

He rolls his eyes and blandly tells me por los niños

This man doesn't think I'm Boricua.

Subdued, I'm finished.

The right fielder uncorks a laser beam to gun a kid down at third.

Clemente I whispered. Suddenly the man next to me grabs my shirt.

“¿Conoces Clemente??!”

“Ay claro.”

One look in this man's eyes and I see

Su poder

His violent swing

Su rapidez

His graceful gallop

Su pena

The burden of his judgment

Todo junto

Bat flips and swagger.

El sacrificio último

The same way he lived.

Para mi gente.

They called him Royalty. Crown him.



Bernadette Hogan



Bernadette Hogan

Electric Nothing

Derek Rose

What the rolling pin sees:

The lasagna is flying! High above the kitchen, it pauses at the pinnacle of its arc weightless. The top layer of noodle clings valiantly to the edges of the pan; coils of steam rise from the ricotta. Now it begins descending. Slowly, sinking, faster. It meets the linoleum with a crash. Pyrex pearls skitter across the floor. The marinara hemorrhages.

Ms. Conroy lies among the wreckage, clutching her chest.

She's moving too much to be dead, that I know. Heaving, spasmic. It looks like she's trying to make snow angels in the sauce. (Er, like she's trying to make sauce angels in the sauce.)

But why doesn't she attempt a mad lunge for Telephone while she has the strength? Or why not cry out, even though no one is around to hear?

What a mess. It would've been a fine meal.

On any other day, the sight of lasagna on her floor would have sent Ms. Conroy into the same cardiac state. She often confuses the kitchen for an operating room. The fluorescent lights, the too-clean smell of disinfectant.

Wait, she's muttering something.

Hm? What's that? Speak up, Ms. Conroy. I doubt even Table Leg could you hear you, and you're right beside him.

The words seem to have jammed up somewhere in her throat. Now the panic begins to spread. Her breathing is jagged. Her eyes are flitting like two crazed goldfish. She stretches her hands into the air, grasping at nothing.

What a twisted sense of humor life has for the living: a heartless woman done in like this.

Well, at least she has us with her while she goes.

What the salt shaker sees:

Oh, goodness, I've really done it now. I'm positive I've killed her. What else could it be but the blood pressure? She has always fancied her salt. And to think how many years she has eaten alone now. So much seasoning for just one person. She's lucky her heart didn't stop ages ago.

Then again, maybe it did.

I mean, I like Ms. Conroy. Really, I do. She's always treated me well: never shaking too vigorously, never spanking the salt out too firmly. It's just, she used to be different. Back when there were more people around the table and more mouths

fighting to be fed, she was happier. Now I can hardly tell which of us is the living. But, I promise you—

Oh, for heaven's sake. She keeps trying to get up, but can't gain any traction in the sauce. Now she's dragging herself across the floor. Look at her go, slogging through lasagna like a member of the Triple Entente through the trenches.

Where was I again?

Oh, yes. I promise you there was life in her, though. Don't listen to Rolling Pin. He hasn't been here long enough to know how things were. Ms. Conroy's laughter used to ring throughout the house, full as church bells.

Her husband was a photographer, you know. He worked mostly for real estate agencies and newspapers, sometimes the occasional wedding. When he wasn't working, Ms. Conroy was his endless muse. I'd be surprised if they ever saw each other without a lens between them. She would wait in pose while he told her about shutter speeds and shadows. A tiny click, a burst of light, and the moment between them would be frozen forever.

I dream of having a love like that. What an experience it must be to bare yourself, petal by petal, to another. I've tried to meet someone for years—always flirting with Basil or dropping hints to Pepper—but it's a small kitchen, you see. The only suitor I've had is Cumin and, I'm sorry to say, he's just not my taste.

At times it's difficult to keep hoping, especially seeing Ms. Conroy the way she is. Then again, the thought of love usually outlasts love itself anyway. Or, so I've been told.

I once asked Dust Pan why people kiss and he said it's so they know they are still alive.

Ms. Conroy was alive once.

What the key rack sees:

She stops moving midway to the stairwell. Whether she has lost the ability to carry on or forfeited the will, I cannot say. Afternoon sun is falling slantwise through the kitchen window, casting a barcode of light onto her body. I now see how frail she truly is. I think raindrops could collect in the divots between her ribs.

Having known her longer than any item in the house, I should reiterate that she has not always been like this—she is but a mere quotation of the woman she once was. It is like time itself whittled her down, hour by hour, until one day she awoke and was incapable of feeling anything at all. I'm not sure what spurred the change, but I do know it began long before the children aged and moved away,

even long before Mr. Conroy fell out of love with her. Perhaps she just grew tired of life—buried its meaning, redacted its color. She has not left the house in so long that cobwebs are threaded between each of my pegs. We have been voyeurs to a vacant being.

I often recall the last time the whole family was here, the last time there was any life in the house. Each time I think back to it, the margins of the night become less important. The day does not matter, nor the time. It is the occasion that matters: her daughter's wedding announcement. It was in this very kitchen, at that very table. The clinking of silverware, a silence furnishing the room—save for some Van Morrison song lilting in the background. In that moment, I could hear everyone's heart beating. I have searched for my own many times since. After the announcement was made, Ms. Conroy remained impassive, idly gazing into the distance as if she had not heard anything at all. I think that's what finally did it. A fit of protest or even a roll of the eyes would have been better than that nothingness. Soon after, the kids stopped calling, stopped visiting. Then the day came when Mr. Conroy tossed two suitcases down the stairs, kissed his wife on the forehead, and turned out the door—his house key dangled like a pendulum beneath me.

There is a rumor amongst the house that she keeps every picture her husband took of her in a shoe box in her bedroom. (Of course, it was Armoire who passed that story along and we all know that Frenchman's penchant for the melodramatic. Tall tales are his *raison d'être*, if you will.) Nevertheless, I would swear Ms. Conroy was trying to make it upstairs to see those pictures one final time. It is getting late now. Through the window above her body I can see that shadows are keeping time. This has been my view for my entire existence. What a wonder it would be to step outside and feel the world upon me. To feel myself upon it.

I cannot say what it feels like to die, as I barely know what it feels like to live, but I have pictured it many times. I imagine it feels like lying down in a snow storm. Infinite bits of white fluttering and falling all around, softening everything until you finally rest. The snow must have begun falling on Ms. Conroy years ago.

I can hear the tide of her heart becoming slow. A rigid, blue vein knots and un-knots against her forehead. Everything is still, aside from the ringing that hides within a deep silence. It is only this soft hum, this electric nothing, that I can hear until Telephone begins to ring.



Carmen Henriquez

Between 21 and 22

Margaret Bruetsch

Somewhere between 21 and 22 I got lost,
and found and then lost again.

22 candles on the cake, "22" playing on the stereo,
Drinking too much whiskey the weekend before,
dressed up pretty enough to get into the club for free,
but you were still in the back of my mind.

Warm and cold, like the winter sun creeping through
my window. Comforting for a moment, before I realized the
warmth was just a trick. Coffee and Saturdays spent when I was
still too naive to know that men like you wait for
everything they want to come to them, like a cat preying
on attention. And when you left, I fell back into the ice cold water,
Living but numb, blaming myself when the ice refroze
above me, a crystal ceiling, harder than stone
trapping me underneath. And then the
summer winds blew and cleared the ice away.

It's easier to find yourself, when you're not counting
on someone else to do it for you.



Zen Week

Anonymous

There's an angel that lies underneath the surface in disguise. It screams and cries, trapped inside. Beautiful thoughts hidden from view, imprisoned by ignorance to the ever new knowledge that is happiness. Don't be so stressed. Get back to where you were before the constant duress that seems to possess your actions and hijack your thoughts. Who are you? Is it true you're scared? Are you sure you can't be repaired?

Overthinking is detrimental to the mental capacity of the human entity. The smile you fake is tragic. Don't lie to hide the pain behind your eyes. Trust is really love in disguise. There can only be a you and I. Understandably ashamed of the past, there's a reason why it didn't last. Here now and gone tomorrow, no need for extended sorrow. Take back yourself. Earn what's yours and mature from the amazing experiences we know are waiting. Be patient, don't fret. There is no regret.

It's hard not to be scared, I know. Just walk through the falling

snow and embrace its innocence. Strikingly white, walk through as dim street lamps illuminate contrasting beautiful fiery hues on the path to nowhere. Dark figures cast onto the white brightness, orange and yellow lighting only exaggerates your shadows likeness. The quiet solace is your one accomplice on this journey into peace. Let the snow fall, as it lands on your hair. Smile and stare, become aware, the sound of silence and subtle wind creates the harmony that only the heart can hear. The snow creaks under your feet, street-lights seem to meet in the distance as the quiet dim light orbs melt into one and become like the sun.

Bask in the glory that is the snow as far as the eye can see, your smile reflects the floating snowflakes that resemble angels. Identify each one, and familiarize yourself with every angle. In a sense, you walk on heavens surface. Analogies make plain experiences more perfect. Smile and wait, quicken your gait. Chase the sun and try to become more than what is, what might end up being because it's all that dominates what the mind's eye is seeing.

Here comes the sun.

With Out

Michalyn Curran

I was taller, sturdier
hearing you
regret mistrusting me.

But I changed nothing.
Pretended
I was happy-go-lucky, oblivious

because I needed
to see you on your knees:
I fucked up, exonerate
me from your supercilious
demeanor. Not until you
Say it; save us.

I live without
colored rose, see
bodies of calm

but you appear
from dark, at my
zenith.

& I remember
turbulent thought torment;
recall the indignation.

Why is pride
so easily demolished
by chagrined memories?



Carmen Henriquez

I decide to
take off, rid
myself of this

teetertotter mind.
To live without
wondering how

we would be different
if you only admit:
I fucked up. Stay.



Christina Coulter

Walk Around
Darriel McBride

Now as I walk around, I see a soft cotton candy
Sky with light pink clouds.
Hints of yellow and purple flowers.
And a dingy train
Moving along the musty Hudson.
It's rumbling in the distance.

Then there's me.
Standing at the top of this hill
Smoking God's Gift and Northern Lights
Mixed with a thick cloud of Blue Dreams
Traveling through my nostrils
Like smoke from a chimney.

Meanwhile,
My thoughts are crazy glued to the past.
Trying to retrace and alter the remains
Of my pain, like a palimpsest.

Searching for an answer
That doesn't want to be found.
Burying the truth
Of this guilty pleasure,
Six feet under.
Refusing to admit,
I've been smoking too much.
That it's the only thing
That puts my aching heart
At ease.

And stops the truth from bleeding out
From these scars.

Unable to remember
When all this started.
If it was the result,
Of the love I discarded.

Unable to remember
When smoking suddenly
Became a shoulder
To cry on.

Now here I am, rolling up
Another spliff.
But I did not sign up for this.

I'm just a good girl,
With some really bad habits.



Christina Coulter

The Brain is...

Janelle Solviletti

The brain is...
encrypted on tongue.
Wired fences that disengage
white and black matter.
It even tricks itself,
expanding beyond comfort.
Fading to gray, mist covers car windows,
Conscious, rational- a beggar
making his last rounds,
energies worth nothing.
Wires decompose, one second. . .
like raindrops soaking up my letter to you,
It starts with a slow fade D-E-
smudged in a black concoction.
I discover my second eye open
burning like a traveler
in the deep Sahara. It labors,
a majestic machine's malfunction plummets.

Beware of the Bitch

Bryanna Adams

And you will soon realize why they name natural disasters after people
 Wait until they name one after me
 With the capacity of Sandy, Katrina, and Irene
 Sounding like bombs over Baghdad, calling it justice
 Smelling a shaky hand, a lit match, and some gasoline
 Feeling like Fireball burning the cusp of your throat
I am the storm that made Dorothy click her heels times three to get back home
 to the wreckage she imagined I caused,
 though what I was thinking...was even better than that.
Because I brought the thunder, the lightning, and generations of anger boiling
 inside of me
 I
 am not
 the one.
You will understand why we see red, then bleed red.
You will understand Frankenstein's screams of terror because the monster
 makers never apologize for the monsters they make.
They never say that they're sorry for the beasts they have unleashed.
 So why should I repent for being what you created?
 Saying sorry for icy hands when you left me out in the cold...
 Saying sorry for disfiguration when I was the clay that you mold...
 Finally speaking up...not sorry for being bold.
 This fire in the pit of my stomach,
Rage: best wishes to you finding the red or blue wire to stop impending
 destruction...
 Eruption.
 Then erosion.
I don't know how many times to tell you I've been broken.
 So beware!
 Beware of the bitch.
She bites more than she barks because it's the only way to get your attention.
 Her anger -- it's the only way you won't forget to mention
 that a storm is coming.
 The storm is coming.
 The ones your name after women that hurt like I do.

Under the Onion Dome

Molly Scott

Grandpa comes in by way of livestock
On my favorite cow I nicknamed
Mother Russia
He takes snapshots with his camera
In sepia and gold,

Photographs of what it would
Look like if I grew up living the
Narrative of my blood,
With a silo in my backyard
And a different memory of "home"

My mother's Aunt Remo burns
a needle over candle flame; dips it in molten
wax and curls the heat over blown out eggs in
Folk tales and spirals. Babushka wraps mashed potato and cheese
In unleavened dough and asks if we want cabbage in
Our pierogis

From the skylight, it snows
A mixture of white and mud
As we write this pattern with Russian Vodka
And food coloring

And they tell me the stories of our home land:
Remember: the Virgin Mary's tears
Remember: what Protects us from

the wicked something that is chained
Pysanka keeps us safe

I finish my Ukrainian Easter Egg,
Written with beeswax in
Red, black, yellow and brown; effervescently gilded
In starlight and flower petals
Babushka hands me a slice of poppy seed bread.

In a different life I drop
store bought eggs
Into store bought dye
Letting them crack at the bottom of the mug

Through old home videos you can see me
And my brother trying to find *Carmen Sandiego*
My mom taking us from one universe
To the next
My dad letting me paint his toenails

And if you listen close you
Will hear the echo;
The molding of our being;
The narrative reminding me
Of Matryoshka dolls;
The ones I had when I was little.

And I remember the layers
I remember Home



Carmen Henriquez

Roots

Kaliyah Gardner

I sat in his car and gazed at the scenery as we glided carelessly through the 7a.m. traffic.

The trees were still dressed in their autumn attire,
But some stood nude,
Dancing in the morning breeze.

I appreciate the trees' autumn wardrobe,
branches adorned in vibrant marigold, saffron, and crimson plumage.
But...

I believe the barren bark to be more Beautiful.
I believe it is the souls of the trees that we see in the winter.
they cannot hide their true Nature.

The wood is twisted and contorted,
abused by the circumstances of Nature.

Some of the souls have split,
Some lay wayward.
Some souls stand on their tippy-roots, and
Try to touch the Sun.

Some do not care to notice.

But...

I see the naked souls of the trees in the winter.

I saw one tree,
had but only one leaf.
I think she could not
bare
to remove her lipstick.

I saw one tree,
One of few,
Still fully clothed.
Methinks she was afraid
For people to see her soul.

Eventually it all
tumbles to the
ground.
Let the leaves Fall
Wear they may
We will see them
next May. For now,
Lets take a peek at that
Beautiful Soul.

A Tree without leaves is still a tree.
It still has the ability to
Branch out and touch the Sky.

Santa Claus Isn't Coming Tonight

Antonio DelVecchio

Author's Note: for his privacy, I have replaced my freshman roommate's name with who I imagine will play him in the movie adaptation of this story.

Paul Rudd was my first college roommate, and he called me "Boss." I don't know why he called me "Boss," we were the same age, and he was taller than me by six inches, but he called me boss from the day I met him. He walked into the room with a lacrosse stick and his mother, and while I scrambled for my pants he came up with the name. "Good to meet ya, Boss," and that was that. He shook the hand I wasn't zipping my fly with. He didn't know, could not have known, just how good it was to meet him – just how many stories I would get out of him.

One of the first stories, one of the stories where you can get a glimpse at the real Paul Rudd, happened that October. He left for class at seven in the morning and came home from practice at five, but before he laid down for his pre-party nap, he hung his jock and his cleats in the window to dry. He would also sling his towels on his wall with hooks that I had left over from hanging Christmas lights. The way the lights

sparkled off of the drying rags and underwear was hypnotic. Boy, did he have a way of hypnotizing girls too. One night he brought back three. But not this Halloween night. This night, he went out as Santa Claus.

Well after I had turned in, head spinning and tired, he shuffled through the door in his Santa boots. I had just gotten back from a party, and he was just getting back from the bar. It was rare for him to come back alone.

"How was your night, Boss?"

"It was fun. How was yours?"

"Bad, Boss. Bad."

"What happened?"

He tugged at his Santa belt. I hadn't realized the costume was one piece. A one piece Santa suit doesn't need a belt. It should be noted that we had both had so much to drink that we were to the point of conversation. Besides our first meeting, we had only ever spoken when we asked each other to leave for the night. The only girl he didn't kick me out for was his mother. But there we were on the unholy of nights, becoming best friends,

sponsored by cool, refreshing Coors Light™.

He continued: "I got to the bar, and I was killing it as Santa. Killing it. Girls were letting me buy drinks for them, and one sat on my lap..."

"So I don't get what the problem is."

"Another Santa."

"What?"

"Another fucking Santa."

"No."

"Yes."

"What did he do?"

"He took them all."

"All of them?"

"All of them. They took their drinks, the drinks that I bought them, and sat on his lap."

"Jesus Christ."

"There were a lot of girls. Their drinks cost me two hundred dollars...and that's not even counting the costume."

"Jesus Christ! How much was the costume?"

"Hundred."

"No."

"Yes."

Paul Rudd stepped out of his boots and onesie. It really wasn't such an unimpressive costume, even if it did look like pajamas. He hung it limp on the wall and left the beer soaked boots to dry in the window.

"What was so great about that other Santa anyways?"

He turned away from the wall and looked at me with such sadness in his eyes. Those bright eyes that he'd greeted me with on the first day of school were gone, replaced by the eyes of a man who had seen too much: too much money leave his wallet, too many girls leave his lap. He opened his mouth and let it hang there for a second while the lights sparkled off of the red and white suit behind him. He said one word for the rest of the night:

"Beard."

Unnatural State of the Unicorn

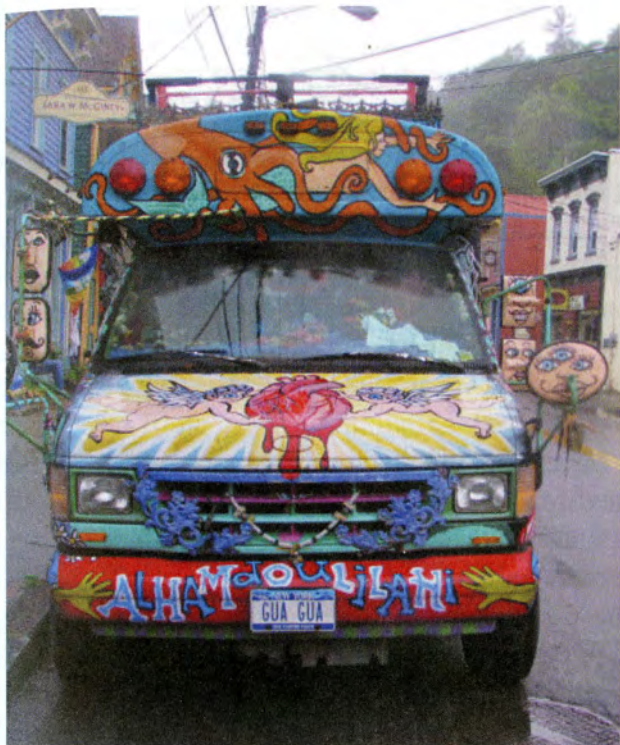
Molly Scott

Introduce me first as human.
Don't mention superficial
configurations
The world piles into neat stacks
Of paper on my forehead. I am human.
Sagging spine & sprawling legs.
Before knee length tea-skirts that lay
Flush against my skin & polished
finger nails,
Before word association & biological
determinism,
Before the pink in my skin,
In my hair, the back of my bare
Shoulders, I am human. I have broken
bones,
And religion- my creed & promises.
I've taken time for myself; dug the
graves
Of relationships I let fall apart. I am

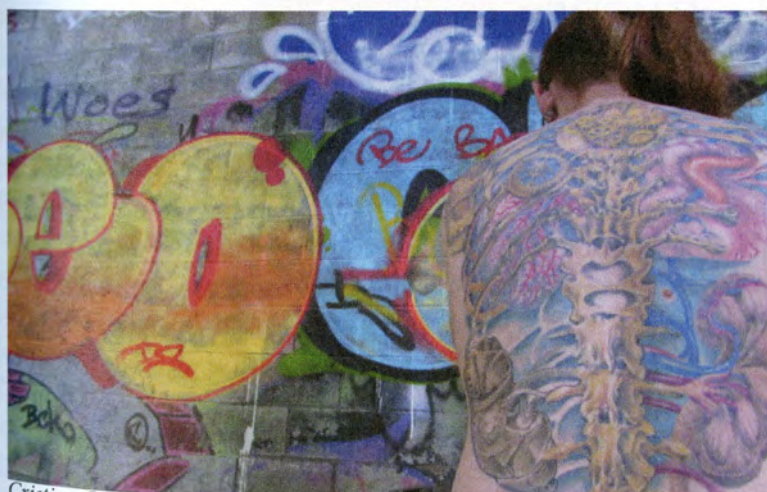
human.
No construct. I am nobody's honey,
honey; sweet
Tips of these lips won't lie for you on
the natural state
Of the unicorn. I have no part to
prove;
No label to claim, I tuck away polite
declines:
Don't fucking touch me, honey.
I am standing here, no socks; there are
Holes in the pits of my brother's old
sweatshirt;
I haven't washed my hair in three
days.
I feel the cold on my toes
The way people do.
And in this space I take for myself,
It's true that even unicorns bruise.



Christina Coulter



Christina Coulter



Cristina Coulter

After the End of the World

Margaret Bruetsch

I.

I can't remember the last time I saw a real person before today. But there she is, smiling at me. She's not real. She can't be.

"Yes I am, Jared," the woman sitting across the room from me says. But I know better. She isn't real; I'm the only one left. At least I think I am. "Speak to me, Jared, my boy," The woman's eyes flash in the dull sunlight. At least I think it's sunlight. She has her knees bent up to her chest and her cigarette swirls misty clouds in the air around her face. I wish I could figure out what color her clothes are, but the only color I remember is white and a dull beige. My clothes are like the latter, but the woman's pants and shirt are the nonexistent color I see when I close my eyes. Her hair is long, and auburn but I'm not entirely sure what auburn is.

There used to be other colors in the world, but it was a long time ago. My world now consisted of various shades of white and beige, but I'm sure that the sky used to be blue once. The type of blue that I remember from a dream of being a small child with my father, and staring up into sky during the early spring when the winter winds had withdrawn, and the daffodils were only just poking out of the ground.

"When was the last time you saw a daffodil, Jared? Far too long, I'm sure," the woman smirks as she puts her cigarette out against the bottom of her shoe. Her lips are as red as blood and she lets her smirk grow into a smile that sends a shiver down my back.

"The world outside ended a long time ago," I tell her. I was sure I was the only person left, but now even that is questionable. The only signs of anyone else existing are the meals that appear in my room at least three times a day. She must be the one who leaves them for me, "Who are you?"

"Who do you think I am?" She stands up in one motion and I instinctively push back into the wall, afraid of her movement, "There's no need to be scared, Jared. Drink some water, your voice sounds so hoarse. It upsets me."

I shake my head and keep my back pinned against the wall, "I don't know you."

"Of course you do, Jared," the woman picks up the cup on the tray and walks over to me. I can't go anywhere so I close my eyes, wishing her away,

"It doesn't work that way, Jared."

"You're not real," I murmur, "I'm all that's left."

"All that's left from what, Jared?"

"The end of the world," I whisper and open my eyes. She is kneeling in front of me with the cup in her outstretched hand; she smiles this time, and I feel suddenly at ease with her. My fingers brush hers as I take the cup. She feels warm, or maybe my hands are cold.

"Your hands aren't cold, Jared," she smiles wider this time, "You haven't touched another person in a long time, am I right?"

"What's your name?"

"What do you want my name to be?" she slides her feet out from underneath her butt, and seamlessly moves from kneeling to sitting. Her eyes are a weird color, purple like an iris.

Iris. What is that?

"It's my name," she giggles the type of giggle that a little girl would. Care-free and high pitched, with the ability to dance around in the air like dandelion seeds. I remember those, and I wish I could remember why as I close my eyes.

I can see a little dark-haired girl blowing at a dandelion and giggling as the seeds take off into the wind like little helicopters catching the sunlight and sparkling like glitter or snowflakes. The little girl turns to me and grins. She's missing her two front teeth. She cries my name and runs towards me, wrapping her arms around my legs. "I love you, Jared."

"What are you thinking about, Jared?" Iris' voice pulls me back and I open my eyes. She is sitting even closer to me now, "You know it isn't nice to think about other women when you're spending time with me."

"She wasn't a woman, she was a little girl," I murmur. The memory was fuzzy, like trying to see a family film through a fuzzy television or on an old videotape. What is a videotape?

"They haven't been around for years, Jared," Iris is next to me now and I jump back.

"Stop that!" I cry, "Stop reading my mind or whatever the fuck you're doing."

"I'm only here to have a conversation with you, Jared," she smiles sweetly and reaches out her hand. Her fingernails are painted red just like her lips, and she wiggles them as she tries to get me to come back to her, "Sit closer to me. I want you to talk to me."

"About what?"

"About anything," she grins as I slide back closer to her. Her hand reaches around the back of my head and she tangles her fingers in my hair. "Tell me about the world you remember."

She moves her fingers slightly to massage my scalp and I let my shoulders drop. It relaxes me, and I sigh enjoying her company for the first time since she appeared. She seems to sense that and crawls to straddle my lap.

"Where did you live as a child, Jared?" she whispers and the cadence of her voice mystifies me. It almost sounds like it's changing, and getting smoother. Mimicking a voice I've heard before.

I love you, Jared. Do you love me?

"Did you say something?" I ask her, and she grins at me.

She shakes her head, "You were about to tell me where you grew up. Remember, you said something about an orange house."

"I did?"

"Yes, and your mother hated the color."

"You're right. She did..." I grin. I can see my mother now, at least I think it's my mother. She had blonde hair and green eyes. I remember her wearing tops from the 70s and boot cut jeans, even in the summer. She always had her hair tied up in a ponytail.

"I'm sure she was wonderful," Iris grins at me and I smile back at her. My mother was wonderful.

"And we lived next door to this perfect, sky-blue house," I whisper, "My mother was friends with the single mom who lived next door, probably because she envied the woman's house color. She'd bring her daughter to

the park to play with my kid brother and me.”

“How much younger was she?”

“I think five years,” I can’t remember her, at least I think I can’t. I shut my eyes trying to picture her.

The little girl clings to my legs. She’s five, I’m ten. I hate her. She should just play with my brother, he’s closer to her age. “Get off of me, Abigail.”

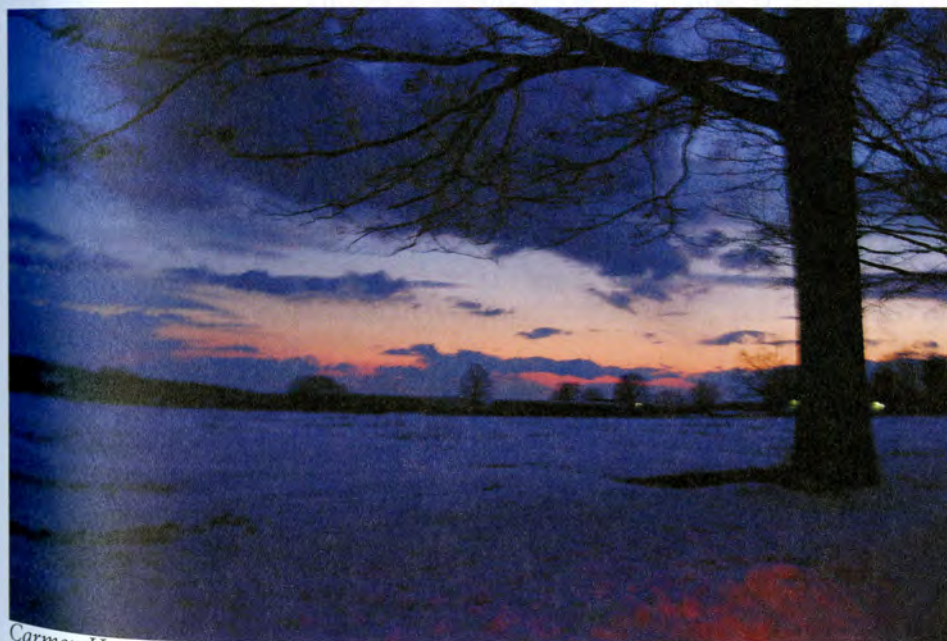
“Her name was Abigail,” I open my eyes and see Iris’ face much closer to mine. I want to pull back but she still has her hand tangled in my hair,

“Why are you so close to me?”

“I feel like I’m a part of you,” Iris looks away from me and I see a blush rise to her cheeks, “I understand you.”

She’s not shy anymore and her lips find mine. Her lips taste like summer, like honeysuckle and raspberries. I want more of her, all of her.

To read the rest of the story please visit: www.margaretbruetsch.wordpress.com/



Carmen Henriquez

History in the Making! !

Addison Donati

I tried. Truly, this morning I tried to stop. Just the thought alone made me uncontrollably shake from a freezing sense that was not present in the middle of August. The sweating was logical, but I wasn't hot, not warm even. I was numbingly frigid and drenched in my own perspiration. So I tried, but today just didn't seem like the right day. ! ! The three folded notes in my pocket all read the same thing: "Milk, cereal, bread, pay, leave." The multiple reminders guided me through my worst nightmare of weekly food shopping. It wasn't so much the shopping, no I actually enjoyed that part; It was the people, it was the goddamn people and their stupid, beady eyes. I'm picking up a gallon of milk, you want a friggen picture, dude? I know I'm not some beauty to look at, and I never understood milk to be all that interesting, so what the hell they are always staring at, I'll never know. Fuck it. ! ! "\$8.76 is your total." Handing over that money seriously sucks. Anything, it could be used for anything else. I mean, clothes, shoes, syringes, honestly anything else. Food's a necessity, I get it, but seriously \$8.76, anything else. ! ! In the car, my lungs kicked in; Outdoors, not so much. Oxygen sort of works opposite for me. Out in open air, I suffocate in the presence of others. Alone in my car, in my house, I swear it's the epitome of clean breathing. I'm honestly never alone, though. My arm, my veins, my bloodstream, they seriously never shut the fuck up. They complain like a nagging mother-in-law

and beg like a persistent toddler. Trust me, I give them a beating when they deserve, punishment doesn't affect them really. I thought about parenting classes, but I figured if I came in with just my arm and no child, not many people would get it. If you do get what I'm saying, I'm sorry that it's too late. If you don't get what I'm saying, don't ever go looking to find out, you lucky sonofabitch. !!

I used rope for a while because I found out my skin gets irritated from rubber. My homemade tourniquet started leaving a bruised rim around my forearm that sort of looked like a faded tattoo. I found it slightly sexy, and then found it disturbing that I found it slightly sexy. Today, I used the rubber tie again, even with its skin burns and sharp pinching, in a few seconds it never really matters anyways. Tie, flick, find, poke, inject, release. Rather easy, honestly. Much easier than food shopping. !!

89 Bulwick Road. My mother's first home, the address on my birthday invitations, my highschool graduation party venue, please join us here for the after funeral recession, the only thing my mother had to leave me in her will. I owned my own home, can you believe it? And my mother only had to die for me to have it. The thought of a will pissed me off, and someone reading it outloud to me put me over the edge. So sorry about the death of your loved one, but hey, listen to all this shit you're gunna get, what a deal! If you expected me to willingly live in this house without being high out of my mind, you're heartless. I wish she died of some horrifying drug

Liminal Spaces

Katherine Louie

I

You and I, we sit here with our fractured identities, on your painted front porch. I know it's wrong, but sometimes I avoid your eyes, because I know that if I look at them too long I will get lost and not be able to find my way out. I'm just stalling the inevitable.

The October air electrifies me. There are red lights flanking the bridge in the distance. They shimmer against the black sky and remind me of the lights that line airport runways. I am positively transfixed. "Escape" isn't the right word, but it's the first word that comes to mind. You offer me your cigarette, and I offer you my heart in return. I guess we're just killing time.

II

Tell me I'm beautiful, tell me I'm unlike any other girl you've slept with, tell me anything. Tell me something to fill this space between us, to consecrate this moment and memorialize it. Tell me something that I can write down to prove that we were more than bandages covering raw wounds. To somehow prove our humanity a million years later when researchers are ravaging the barren landscape for clues about how we lived. Our existence reduced to laminated photographs and bones and books. Until that moment comes, I will try not to count the minutes.

III

I once read that sex was sad because "it's as close as you can get to someone, but it's also a limit, it's something that you can't go beyond." It's the pinnacle of the relationship. It's an emotional climax, in the most literal and figurative sense. I understand this now, because I always want to give you more, but I don't know if I can. I think about that a lot. I think about it when we're in the shower and my hands wrap around your waist and I bury my face in your back. I feel safe and secure and everything feels right. I block out the world, and the space of your shower shrinks to just you and me. I want to stay here, maybe not forever, but for a very long time.

Jigsaw Success

Amanda Marlowe

He teaches me in ways unspoken
He touches me in ways unseen

Sweet dandelions tickle my skin
Tulips blush my mind

Green vines halt any movement

While mint sprouts
Soil creaks underneath

Flaming yellow slowly flashes colors
to warm and please

Deep purple creeps upon us

Amber sighs
Stinging cool air

Two canyons meet
for jigsaw success



Sara Kiter

Wait Up

Nick Chhoeun

What I have now is a year and a half
A twin bed two months away from a fresh taste
Another rug absorbing Tuesday's spills
On Wednesday's cleaner gym shoes
The walls don't want another black tack
If I slam the door, they will shut up

Only a year and a half
I'm still here eating a syllabus
When I should crave a Degas painting
Instead of the colored "nonsense" on my skin
Maybe for dessert 80 words will get me a B
But permanently it'll be another choice of small talk

Waters, Hall, and Hoppus warmed me before
Another brick on the wall or ask
What do I desire?
What's my age again?
To do what I love or do what makes me survive?
With a year and a half is it too late?

For now, home is a birthday candle
With a small window
In the middle of the four
Before the wax taints the vanilla
I'll have to blow with one permanent breath
Or hold it in and risk it on a bubble

I'll hold my breath like I used to
When we drove past a graveyard
Their stones all a billboard of simple sweetness
Hoping that a year and a half from now
I'll see a Random Access of Memories
With that Green Gentlemen running far

Iris

Emma Tice

To be women,
Portals between the spirit world
And the physical
Coexisting with the dominance
Of manhood.
Mult-colored eye candy
For lenses and screens.
Whose beauty can sell water to a whale.

In your room. The pink and teal void.
We plan our fun.
Forming flirtationships with
Fellow tourists on road trips.
Bonding and braiding
Our mermaid hair.

The sisterhood of blue irises.
On top of the world,
We look down on our hometown.
Pure visionaries;
Our hallucinations seem and will become real.

To be inseparable.
You have access to every inch
Of my brain.
The most intense platonic love.
We rearrange lyrics to reflect our lives.
Blow-dry the tears on my cheeks
And drive me home.

My Soul

Kevin Hudson

Standing perched like a scarecrow in front of the Hudson River
The riverbed rippling, a uniform rock forever unmoved,
Watches as a log, once lodged into the bed,
Is lost to the will of the water
Submerging, surfacing, struggling.

Along the river, a stance must be taken, and it begins the journey.
To the golden peaks, where the light and I gaze from afar,
Knowing where the end lies, but the fragile log, setting out on its path alone,
Fights its way to the river's eclipse, ignorant as to what lies beyond.
I open my mouth to speak, but my voice cannot reach it anymore.

As the it plunges into the depths, broken, scattered, fragmented debris
Guide the traveler, as they too have embarked on the quest
Clinging to the river's surface, the log stops, longing to remain in control of
The uncontrollable current.
Stilted I witness the log pulled up
From the debris, chunks of ice, leaves golden from a season far past.
The log remains afloat for a time with their help, but soon plunges

The sun has stopped warming my back
I can no longer reach it, such a task has long since made impossible.
It has reached the peak, where the river ends.
I watch with the rocks in bitterness, a howling wind courses through the air,
It is gone, yet I am still here.



Carmen Henriquez

The Black Dog

Logan Forsyth

The Black Dog, that's how I once heard it described.

I can imagine it following you as we walked with our hands intertwined.

I can imagine it sitting at your feet as we watched movies.

I can imagine it whimpering at the door to your room as we lay inside.

I can imagine it everywhere, but I cannot know it.

I can imagine you facing it.

I can imagine you insisting that you face it alone.

I can imagine these things, and more.

I only wish you could imagine that you don't have to face it alone, or at least
that you could face it with me.

The Black Dog, that's how I once heard it described.

“Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm”

-Winston Churchill

Three Poems About What Actually Goes On In a Fishery

(Family Owned Restaurant Which Specializes in Fish)

Bernadette Hogan

Don't be ridiculous.

I don't cook like you do.

Pencil drawn on eyebrows knit back and forth like jaws chewing.

I was just in Florida.

Were you?

Work some,

Golf some,

Travel to upstate New York.

Sounds nice.

His younger son looks just like you.

Lives on Fire Island.

Irish?

No. Jewish.

Oh. Oh...

Sometimes the two get confused.

It's off season. He's very sweet. Adopted two sons.

I remember that. They got married young.

Oh yes.

Another coffee?

Regular please.

You know, we'd better drop our voices.

Why?

I have a funny feeling she's recording us.

Oh. She totally is.

~~~~~

Two weeks given, minus the amount of time you spent sleeping equalizes less than one week to myself.

Myself.

Your planning gets in the way of your doing--

Head on collision.

What's your reaction time?

I forget.

Clock seconds shaved so close your already scabbied knees are bruised.

Evening undresses beneath the windowsill

Pooling across black and white tile,

Mercury milk and mellow, as the folky soprano jams out of my Spotify.

~~~~~

I can stand here and speculate,

One knee half cocked, resting inward

like the carriage horses do on the streets of New York City

Misleading one and all,

feigning exhaust.

The blackened tiles rub arm in arm,

assigned seating like a kindergarten class.

My left hand spoons a plumb coffee cup,

one degree above lukewarm but

inflaming the fingers stringing up to my palm

Just enough to sham sweaty nervousness.

The other collapses on a pen, cold.

Kind of like when you held my hand

--something I've never liked--too constrictive

one hand too warm and the former is left out.

It all comes down to how I feel when you read me riddles on popsicle sticks

and order whole grain bread instead of a roll

drifting into a melodious odium only oblivious humility produces.

A Toss for Love

By Charlie Grippaldi

You don't need someone else
To make you happy
Is what they tell me
As if I didn't already know.

Trust me, I know.
That's not the point.
I want someone else
To make me happy.

I had someone else,
But that expired.
So now I throw my heart
To anyone who will catch it.

But here I am.
I'm at that point
Where it hits the floor
Every damn time.

Some people come along;
They see it lying on the floor.
Some look, some touch,
But they don't take it.

Now here I am.
I'm at that point
Where I don't even
Go and pick it up anymore.



Bernadette Hogan

Based off of Komunyakaa's "Addendum"

Emma Tice

I'm a soloist,
I'm the frontman,
Born 5 years in advance
And a chronic control freak
blazing a delicate trail.

I'm a sovereign
From a fictional constellation
From the Valley of Glitter and Grunge
From your local playground
Reading a memoir on the swings
And crippling my ear drums.

I'm a twenty-story building.
I'm a hundred-page book.
I'm a run-and-jump into a pool.
I'm your secret admirer.
I'm ripped tights under your little black dress.
I'm a silk rose, frozen in time.
I'm the high definition face
In a faded dream.

Portrait of His Hands from a Distance

Sarah Kiter

Boy he's got the neatest hands the
neatest hands, the neatest
hands, now I've come home with
this paint on my shoe—

these teeth in jaw
these fists of fingers.
I wonder if he still thinks
I'm coooool, though

I chew my fingernails
to keep them clean
(so when we first met my
teeth were showing).

And every day that fantasy:

The cleanest knuckles in
all of Poughkeepsie,
pawing me without
grin or grimace.

When we meet he spends
eight months practicing my
name with only his
thick lips and tongue

When we meet I refuse to smile.

Boy he's got the neatest hands he
holds me to my promises;
I've got dirt. And mud.
And blood between my molars.

I dream I hand him a bag of
porcelain supernumeraries,
saying, here, now,
floss me clean yourself

Chewing my fingernails,
still showing my teeth.
and every day.
That fantasy.



Bernadette Hogan

The Heart's Graveyard Shift

Janelle Solviletti

Between loves,
the devil trolls along the ledge
of my black lit room as the hum of my heart is dispersed,
on a windy day sweet invasion of Irish spring lingers
while the outline of my coffee stained shirt is traced.

Red lipstick stains still moments
and the blare of music stings my passive ears,
between loves,
words pasted onto my wrist erase in the rain
unable to wait for spineless creatures and unstable minds.

Tick tock tick tock on its last round it won't escape me,
I crave puffs of ill concoctions clouding his freckles.
A silver chain sits in my sun lit bedroom until dawn
between loves,
Summer burns my cheeks
the kind that keeps me up all night
but his body is a pale corpse cold, numb, free.

Toxins run down my chest invasive like
the scrutiny of a man that my heavy eyelids drift toward
between loves,
years of blue plaid shirts that I can't have back haunt me
past the pummel of high heels and eyes that won't stay
I decay with the night.

Dear Deadbeat, Make It Right

Darriel McBride

Dear Deadbeat,

Here I am, re-writing you this letter.

The one my hand was once forced to bare at the age of 13.

The one where I was forced to say I wish you were dead.

I was kid, yet I was a tool for revenge.

A weapon my mother could use against you.

A means for her to express her anger towards you

For falling in love, with not us, but it. Your heroin stick.

The needle in between your sheets.

The substance that makes your heart beat.

But now I'm 20 and I've developed my own voice.

Brave enough to say that I'm hurt

Because you made the deliberate choice, to never get to know me.

And I only knew of you.

My mother used to call you dopey.

She said you'd never amount to shit. Because you were in and out of jail
since I was two.

But once I got older, you came around and gave me something to do. I'd
travel with you to work, watch you sell clothes out of a duffle bag on the
corner of 149th Street. You were always a good entrepreneur. But I could
never tell if you were sober. You always walked with a limp, eyes low, and
when you spoke your expression got colder.

You never knew me.

You walked out of my life before you ever had the chance to.

And they say the Black man has no place being a father. Because to him,
the responsibility of a child is more like a death sentence or a life of captiv-
ity. So it baffles me, how I'm supposed to be your Daughter, yet I am the

the naps in your hair.

Am I wrong? Am I not the seed you carelessly dropped into the soil?

I watched and observed. I listened and I heard.

You had other things on your mind, while your vision was blurred.
Then you left without a trace. Now all I've got to remember is the image of
your blurred brown face. The way you'd lifelessly slouch over the edge of
the bed and stare aimlessly at the TV.

How I'd try talking to you, but you could never hear me. Your bald head,
missing front teeth, and red zombie eyes.

If I painted you a pretty picture, it'd be an abundance of lies.

Cause I know you'll always be Mr. H team. Not a father, just another
dope fiend. Without it, you don't know how to act. It's a shame that you're
hooked on a drug that'll never love you back.

Now I just pity you because you never knew me,
But I bet you wished you did.

I bet you wish, you could have contributed.

I bet you wish, you could be a part of my life.

Well dear deadbeat, here is your last chance, to finally make it right.



Christina Coulter

A Bowl

Daniel McFadden

A bowl
Made of two hands.

Hands I have not been able to hold, because
They are busy digging up tapioca roots
In the Congo.

They are the hands that made our world,
Mending the bridges from concept to climax.

Soft hands made coarse by so much salt
And time.

They are the hands of the brave, the bronze,
And the broken.

Hands caressing the ascending bannisters of age
And prestige,
While quietly feeling in the dark for some religion.
Hands burned by the very fires they rose from.

They are our hands.
Yours and mine.
His and hers.

Look: The bowl of your hands.
What do you find?
A beggar? A giver?

Hands finding respite
When they are placed
One in the other;

In the bowl of two hands
That made our world.



Bernadette Hogan



Carmen Henriquez

Archetype

Jammy Thompson

His existence reflects the infliction he brings upon others

He is a monster, he is a savage

He is the enemy that imposes a threat to society

Who he is, is decided for him by those whom incarcerate his speech,
suppresses his dreams, strips him from his dignity, ignores his tears, dis-
misses his adversities,

neglects him for his appearance, exploits his differences, kills his inno-
cence,

fuels his actions and triggers his anger

His image has always been skewed and distorted, shaped and constricted

Recreated and reinforced by the projections of a monopolized market

He is whipped and beaten by misrepresentations of his
character which has impact the public's perception

A betrayal of civilization, a representative of the wilderness is what he is

His beauty resides within the repulsive crimes he is capable of committing

Building destruction and restoring havoc

How can one become immune to such representations?

How can one stay sane in a world that revolts against their appearance?

How can one live when the world only allows them to exist as mere noth-
ings?

He is not immune, cannot stay sane, and cannot live so

He is subject to being consumed by these projections

His pants is draped below his waist constraint tightly between his hips and
thighs

A soiled white t-shirt grips his chest and is drowned by a colorless over-
sized hooded jacket that has deep mouths that buries his hands and a hood
that hauls over his head shielding his eyes

What he wears is coded as warnings for people to seek safety

What he wears legitimizes the violence taken against him

What he wears legitimizes the violence taken against him
The pigment of his skin consumes his individuality,
his personality and it is enough to crown him as a criminal
A criminal he is foremost not because he has committed anything lawfully
wrong
but because he exists

Unable to willingly enjoy life without pondering about
Scarring ones present, piercing one's future
Random searches by those dressed in brutal blue
Firing bullets triggered by reckless mounts of abuse
he, seized with terror as they surveillance his every move

The system
that is supposed to be relied on would rather marginalize him
Hunt him rather than to defend him
Scorn him rather than to respect him
Shared humanity will never exist when supremacy exists
When a divide is formed between the

Overwhelming pattern of racial bias from enforcers
An overwhelming pattern of citizens who resist and persist to fight back

Blessed with a curse that causes his body to repel against the blows
Each blow reflecting the ignorance of a world that cannot accept the deep
reverence of accomplishments for colored people
A world that prefers to defer dreams
A world that revives, the pain and the lost and the animosity and the alien-
ation

The past has penetrated through emancipation documents,
court cases and lingers in the air being spread by cultivated conspiracies of
justice

What is justice?

An overdose of lies and excuses and inequalities?

Savoring memories of legal segregation and chains of oppression?

Is it the pool of vital fluids that stains the streets of Sanford Complexes

Is it 50 unknown bullets that puncture the life of a husband to be?

Is it 5 teenagers manipulated into confessing a crime?

Is it a 14 year old robbed of his innocence because his whistle released fumes of vulgarity?

Is it Diallo's black wallet that posed as a threat?

It is the lungs of a man grasping for air?

"I can't breathe, I can't breathe"

All I can do is suffocate

under the wrath of a legal system tainted not only by individual bias but also by the social conditioning of black men

Jails cannot fix broken people

who have already been broken down by this system

they only cause their life to become harder

shattered pieces of shards left on the ground.



Cento

(After Claudia Rankine)

Cristina Lupo

You – overcome in the moonlight
alone – too tired – nestled in the
past stacked among your pillows
the night's yawn absorbs you.

You – looking – the low, gray ceiling
your memory, your feelings
like thunder they drown you in sound.

You see your hand extending as a
falling wave, suddenly exposed to the wind.

The rain this morning
parts your lids – you –
disturbed – to stand, to interact as
friends – the stranger to the people
around you, gathering energy to stand among them
has become its own task.

You want it to stop –
to be seen – as usual you
drive straight through the
moment – alien to this place –
a life without a turn off.

You pull yourself to standing –
the start of you each day –
your existence detectable
only as sky.

No memory should live
in these memories.

As light as the rain seems,
it still rains down on you.

Man, Have Mercy

Sara Kiter

Later, we hold each other
with a gentleness that would break open
ripe fruit Later / still much later,
he leaves a seductive merlot bruise
on the wingtip of my shoulder and I
find myself mouthing the word synecdoche
into the ether

—

Before, before / half-naked on the
living-room floor; I find him worshipping
my puckered skin while I stare into
obtrusive slats of moonlight through
window blinds

I wonder, if stars could spy on
prostrate lovers, if they would guess—

I kiss each of his fingertips
one by one by one by letting my
tongue and teeth graze the
salty ridged edges

—

(Later) he inquires if flesh so close to
bone will bruise and I say we will just
see so he sucks until he tastes iron
and finally pulls away and

so I'm thinking God, Sweet Mercy, I'd
let you bruise me anywhere

and that blackberry mark in the shape of his
perfect pink mouth
(raised from the skin like some
crazy scar) is a trophy I have won

—
you and I on dust laden floors,
part to a whole.



Bernadette Hogan

Flintlock

Antonio DelVecchio

My first high school girlfriend, a red headed girl I met in the warmer months of my sophomore year, had a beautiful house on Flintlock Road. Pretty Romantically, it was there in her kitchen that I was threatened with a gun for the first and last time. "My dad has a shotgun out back in the shed," she said. "He wanted me to tell you." I thanked her for telling me, and I wished her father a happy birthday as I shut the front door behind me. I was wearing a party hat. He was wearing a scowl, and she was wearing my sweatshirt. I left without the hat.

I always liked that house, with the pine trees that had branches like tire spokes that made them so easy to climb, and the wide front porch with white rocking chairs in front of green shutters, and her second story window that I would watch cars out of as they flashed by on the dark street. I don't have many fond memories of the girl, especially toward the colder months, but sometimes I still think about that place.

We used to climb the pine trees at night and sit up there until it got too cold, or until the crickets got so loud we couldn't hear each other talk. The trees were sticky with sap and smelled like Christmas on summer nights, but we weren't climbing much by the end of the summer. That was years ago, so whatever pain I felt back then has blown pretty far away. But whenever I get a whiff of pine, it takes me right back. My memories of her are passive and indirect like that.

The only time I think about her is when something like a smell or song jumps my memory. I don't have any particular feelings for the girl anymore; we're both such different people after so long that I might've known her from a book rather than life. But I like to imagine the house is still the same. I haven't seen it since I pulled out of her driveway for the last time on the last night of summer, but in my head it's still exactly the same.

Houses are easy to remember because they're consistent. Houses hold memories like scrapbooks hold pressed leaves. They stay untouched when you look back on them. I can still see every branch in the old pine

trees, can smell their sap when I think hard enough. I can see the photographs on the wall of relatives I knew I'd never meet, pictures I'd look at instead of her. People, like falling autumn leaves, float and drift away. But houses can't leave. Houses can't change. Houses can't let you down.

White pillars, oriental carpets, and a kitchen with marble counters complimented a girl who was just as pretty. But the house felt empty when we were together. Sometimes you can just feel it. You can feel the silence between songs you didn't agree on underneath the artificial lights that are just a little too bright. But these backdrops are what solidify memories in your head. I'll always remember falling out of love to *The Sound of Silence* in a house with pillars on the inside. How goofy is that? But it's that sort of thing that sticks with you.

You can't anticipate an emptiness when you meet somebody for the first time. You catch a flash of red hair and green eyes and it fills you with hope. But it's not their fault. You're the only person that can fill yourself with hope. But this girl, man, she'd have you fooled on that. One look at her and – well – maybe she just made me feel an emptiness I hadn't noticed. She threatened to fill a hole I didn't know had opened, but there's a whole different kind of wound that opens up when you find out slowly and all at once that you've been lonely in anticipated company.

Then again, there's a very real kind of hole that nobody can fill if there's already a bullet in it. So I shut the door behind me, walking past a couple of rocking chairs and across a dark, pine-sweet lawn, and took a quick look back at the green shutters. The blinds were closed, but I knew what it looked like inside. I would always know now.

I'm happy that her old man threatened me. I wanted to get some story, some anything out of the place, out of this girl, before we finally drifted apart. I wanted this First Girlfriend to mean more than watching *The Graduate* and not getting invited to an old Italian's birthday party, but I hadn't anticipated anything so Romantic as a gun getting waved in my face, sort of. In the end, I guess I did. I got a story. But even that feels empty. I pulled out of her driveway and drove away toward anywhere else, putting her house behind me. I don't think I wondered if I had disappointed her too.

I am Primrose Lane (Inspired by “I Am New York City” by Jayne Cortez)
Nick Chhoeun

I am Primrose Lane
inside the river bending
on a drought of running little shoes
covered in strawberry chalk
a battle of cement saddles
my red stamped elbows

I am Primrose Lane
of mac and cheese road lines
street lights spitting a false eclipse
throw me a crow underneath my
carpet of grubs
my neck rusting in cornflake weeds

I am Primrose Lane outside of Condom Island
two moons wore a poison ivy raincoat
opening onto cheap beer
my innocence pleads JuicyJuice
in my locked beads of sweat
my fishbone hair

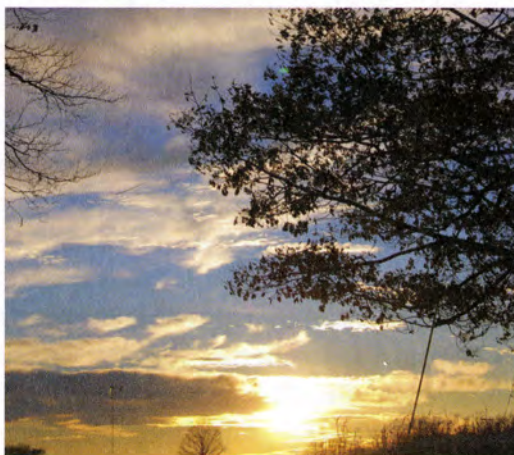
I am Primrose Lane
Thirty bucks away from tan lines
Grizzly Hill rained Grey Goose
gather gangs together of Gambino
my childish art paints crayon shutters
caress me on a sloppy piggyback ride

Leave the garden snake as a hockey puck
Leave the impossible year
Once was see you later, second a car horn
woo wee and waa bipolar tears
my weed whacker eats dog shit
my laughter an idiot to crowds

I am Primrose Lane
my cul-de-sac wishbone
my popcorn of sarcasm
stone giants now braille landmarks
Pilot me back to silver and black



Sara Kiter



Carmen Henriquez

The Secret Keeper (excerpt)

Marisa Maccaro

“Can I tell you a secret?”

If there existed a sweeter, more sacred expression, Rozalia did not know it. To her, these words were gifted with a syntax like the anticipation of the first kiss, with semantics evocative of entering the confessional, with a taste reminiscent of summer wine on la terrazza, transubstantiated into the blood of divinity by the carefulest touch of the lips. Spoken in a whisper sheltered behind the cup of a hand curved around a mouth pressed against the shell of an ear forming the passage a message containing crucial information that can prove most treacherous in the wrong hands travels—a secret risks abandoning the safety of its fortress only by the promise of being locked more securely within another.

Rozalia was made of secrets— they spawned her, sustained her, gave her strength. They ran through her veins and beat within her heart. Were she to prick her finger, they would bleed from it. Were her heart to break, she'd have to build them a new home. Secrets filled her lungs— she exhaled cautiously.

Her father was an artist. He restored the frescoes of the most renowned churches in Florence to their former grandeur so that he wouldn't starve. But secretly, his true passion was painting. One day while he was working in the Santa Croce, a beautiful young woman wandered into the oppressively empty church, meandering through the pews, making her way towards him. She asked him if he was the priest.

“Yes,” he told her.

She bowed her head piously before reciting the imploration: “Bless me Father, for I have sinned.”

Rozalia's father listened to this stranger's confession and absolved her of her sins. They left the church together that afternoon, and light with forgiveness, Rozalia's mother took the imposter by the hand and led him through the cobblestone streets. They walked along the Arno in the direction of the Ponte Vecchio and “By the time we reached the bridge, I had

fallen in love" is how Rozalia's mother always told the story.

"I loved her before she finished her confession," her father always swore.

"But I told you so many of my sins!" her mother would respond incredulously.

"They didn't sound like sins coming from you. You were so perfect, even your sins were blessings."

Rozalia loved to listen to this story, for she had believed from a young age in the magic of love. Growing up, whenever her mother would get angry with her father for dripping paint all over the house, Rozalia would say "Tell me the story of how you fell in love". Whenever her father would get annoyed with the sound of her mother humming while she cooked dinner, Rozalia would say "Tell me the story of how you fell in love". Whenever the two of them sat at the kitchen table to discuss the money that there never seemed to be enough of, Rozalia would say "Tell me the story of how you fell in love," and by the time they finished telling the story, everything would be okay again.

Her parents' love story taught Rozalia how important secrets are and how dangerous it can be to keep them, for her father did not tell her mother he was a painter for a long long time.

"Too long," he says, hanging his head in the universal gesture signifying the perpetual mourning of regret. "But only a priest can communicate with the divine."

Yet his humility was for naught and his love quite a bit more requited than he had thought. Rozalia's mother, mortified to have a crush on a priest but unable to ignore her persistent desire, visited the church nearly every day after their initial meeting under the guise of a penitent.

"My soul had never been so clean!" she jokes.

Every day she would arrive at the church with various immoral behaviors in which she had engaged within the past twenty-four hours at hand. They started out small. They started out true. But as the days turned into weeks and the weeks passed into months, Rozalia's mother began to run out of vices and keeping up her ruse required increasing amounts of creativity

and daring.

"Tell me your sins," Rozalia's father would say. And with a deep breath—
IskippedchurchlastSundayIdidntputanythinginthepoorboxthisweekIfor-
gottosaymygoodnightprayersIstolealemonfromthemarketIlostmytemper-
withastreetvendorandpunchedhiminthefaceIcalledmysisteraknowitallslu-
tIdrankawholebottleofwinepukedontheDuomothentpushedoveramoter-
cyclejusttoseeifthewholelineofmotercycleswouldfalllikedominosIdidn't-
wearunderwearyesterdayonpurposeIsnuckintotheGalleriaAccademiawith-
outpayingandtouchedtheDavidItoldGodtogofuckhimselfjusttogethisatten-
tionIvestoppedsayingmygoodnightprayersI—

The sins poured from her like sand to the bottom of an hourglass until one day the last grain fell and "liedtoapriest" fell from her lips in the torrent of petty immoralities inundating the confessional.

"What was that last one?" Rozalia's father asked.

"I stole a lemon from the market?"

"No, after that."

"I didn't wear any underwear yesterday?"

"Interesting, but no. After that."

"I, uh, lied to a priest?" And she admitted that she'd been making up sins to confess just so she could see him.

Rozalia's father shook his head, smiling hugely. "You may have lied, but not to a priest."

At last overcome by his clandestine desire, he revealed to her his paint brush, no longer afraid of rejection or heartbreak or any of the nonsense that stops us from loving. He ceased painting only when the walls were dripping with the masterpiece acclaiming the sinless girl he'd fallen in love with and neither of them kept a secret from the other ever again.

When Rozalia was born, her father held her in his arms while her mother placed a beautiful gold locket around her neck and whispered the words, "Love is always stronger than fear." Thus, Rozalia entered the world knowing the secret of which too many leave the world ignorant.



Christina Coulter



Christina Coulter



Sara Kiter

Drew

Chris Largent

I met Drew on the bus to school the first day of Kindergarten. I remember telling him about a strange dream that I'd had the night before. It was about an adventure in which I had to save my mother from some monster. Looking back, it was fitting that this was the subject of my dream and the start of our friendship.

When we were young we used to love to explore and go on adventures. Our expeditions were made possible by a massive national park known as Wampatuck that just happened to be right behind Drew's house. We would get lost for hours but somehow always manage to find our way back home in time for dinner. By the time of our graduation from elementary school, we knew this forest like no one ever would. But just as we became masters of the woods our friendship began to falter.

Maybe it was because Drew never really grew up. He was always at the forefront of fads when we were young, Yu-Gi-Oh cards, Pokémon, Bey-blades, but as we entered middle school, I started caring about things like making new friends and perfecting my schoolwork. Drew picked up card tricks and pranks.

But he was always a talented musician, skilled at the saxophone and then, later, the guitar. For a while, when I picked up the bass, our friendship was revived by our love of music. We would jam for hours, playing Sum 41 and Green Day in the new garage that his parents had added on to increase the value of their house. Eventually, though, I lost interest, and we slowly drifted apart again with the shift from middle school to high school.

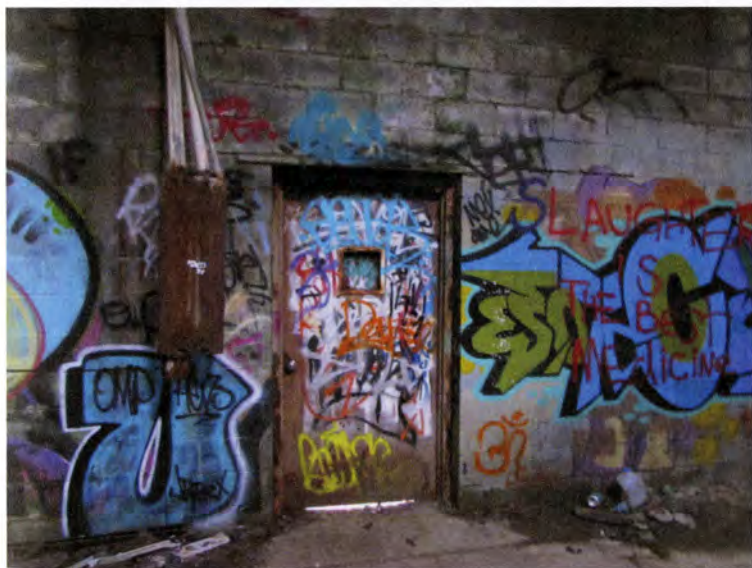
The day Drew left town, he came up to me in the hall to let me know. Our goodbye was not glamorous. It was not sentimental, as one might expect with two kids who had known each other their whole lives. In fact, it was short, rushed and awkward. I had heard from my mom that he was leaving but was too wrapped up in my own high school drama to really care. At that point, it was the first time we had talked in a year.

A few years later, I learned the real reason why he had packed up and left.

Drew had always had serious family problems but by some work of magic by my mother or simply because I was too young, I was mostly ignorant of them. One day, while working at a deli in the center of town, I had a conversation with an older woman who claimed to be Drew's mother's friend. She explained that Drew had been kidnapped by his father and held at gunpoint while he threatened his mother and sister. The police got involved and thankfully no one was harmed. In an attempt to escape this monster of a man, Drew's mother had moved with him and his sister all the way down the east coast to Jacksonville, Florida.

Half a decade after Drew's departure, during Christmas break, I was sitting at home planning what to do with my friends for my birthday and the ball drop. I had told them to come over so we could finalize everything in person. I heard a knock on the door and got up to open it. When it swung wide, standing in front of me was a tall, lanky version of my childhood friend. In his hand, Drew had a handle of Jack Daniels. He held it out.

"Happy birthday, bro."



Hand in Unlovable Hand

Marisa Maccaro

That love is inextricably coupled with death...the way his fingers would wrap around my throat when we'd fuck are an anguished reminder of that tragedy.

The first time I saw him two years earlier, he walked, nay— sauntered into my first philosophy class, leather jacket flung carelessly over his shoulder, those funeral-solemn eyes concealed behind prescription glasses tinted by the fading afternoon sunlight. As I looked up, the notebook I'd been anxiously scribbling in slipped from my hand, knocking the coffee cup on my desk onto my lap. But I did not notice that. I didn't notice the upperclassmen mocking my clumsiness. I didn't notice the teacher starting the lesson. And I didn't notice the clouds rolling in outside the window. He was an oncoming freight train and suddenly, I was teetering on the edge of the platform braced to be blown backward. Consumed, I was, by his presence; captivated by every movement; enthralled by his empty gaze. I could have sworn in that moment I saw the universe compress itself into his eyes, and then he raised them to mine— for an infinite second— and it exploded. Hot coffee spilled all over me, yet I made no move to clean it up. I just sat there and let myself enjoy the burn. An hour later I left class, my heart panting in iambic pentameter: I want I want I want I want I want. That day I remember anxiously waiting for the teacher to call on him so that I could hear his hallowed name. And then, his voice. My god, his voice! "Like Jesus fucking Jimi Hendrix with his own bass guitar" I would later tell him between long languorous kisses beneath his Starry Night sheets. Still, I do not remember what he said. I almost never did. I was always too infatuated with the act of his speaking to pay attention to what he was saying, and I know that this is somehow wrong. But I am content to imagine what I missed.

"Aristotle criticized Plato's theory of forms as empty words and poetic metaphors. He did not believe that visible reality emanates from an ideal

world, but only in a visible reality. So what does this mean for the existence of the soul?" The professor paused and looked around. Only one person had his hand raised.

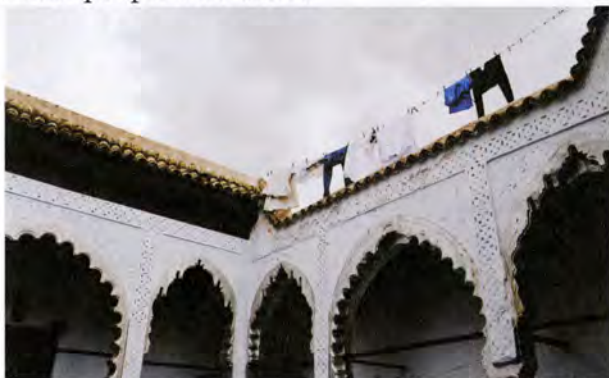
"The soul must be physical then. And therefore...mortal? But how does that account for innate knowledge?"

"Like what?"

"Like..."

Like Love. Like Beauty. Like Truth. Plato characterized love as "divine madness" that can allow us to transcend human existence and live in eternity with the gods. You see, the soul is like a chariot with two horses and a charioteer. However, if the soul were to grow wings it could fly to heaven on its own. Try as it might to control the horses, the soul of man has always had a bad horse that tries to drag the soul back down to earth, but not before it catches sight of the truth. Then, when a person falls in love with someone on earth, the soul is reminded of the perfection it once glimpsed and yearns to be with that special person. The soul that can deny the body the pleasure of consummating its desire will be granted the ultimate reward of returning to heaven...

But the truth is he never raises his hand unless he really thinks that what he has to say is important; and because he is constantly looking up at the sky he is constantly reminded that it isn't. He is a student of the uncaring cosmos. So instead, he holds his silence and tries his hardest to be good to make up for all the people who aren't.



Bernadette Hogan

Memories of a man from Corona

Carmen Henriquez

His lips the flesh of a plum,
hair springy black broccoli.
Not a teacher, not my lover, a sort of friend.
In his 30s and I only sixteen.
His eyes look at me hungry and wanting.

He calls me his, Spanish Nightingale, and I call him
by his name. My name swooshes in his mouth
as if tasting sweet wine.

He is enamored with my poetry but teaches me
little about the art of writing.
He teaches me other things instead-
How to eat Manhattan clam chowder at
the underground Oyster Bar in Grand Central and
how to get to 125th Street in Harlem alone, without being afraid.

He teaches me how to stay rooted in my roots while learning about his.
How to listen for the music the L makes as it passes my open windows,
to search for stars in an onyx city sky in August,
and to love the smell of books, especially old ones.

More: The taste of a grown man's lips. How to listen to
Billie Holiday and jazz with my eyes closed, how to tell which is
my heart beat as I am pressed against him; how to find my way home
from his house and back again.

He tells me that when I grow up, we'll have an office with
matching desks where we'll write, drink wine
and make love (He says he is going to divorce his wife for me).
Dreams of running his fingers through my long, thick, curly hair,
but I am afraid his fingers will tangle and I'd have to take him home.

I learn how a man could love a woman's poetry
although he can't have her-maybe.

I can only teach him how to roll a Spanish R.



Sara Kiter



Sara Kiter

The First Supper

Dakota Swanson

The walls were larger, the space more open, the people more numerous, still that oppressive air lingered. Its touch a remnant from the days that had passed and yet still clung to my shoulders, like the backpack flung haphazardly over my back. It was within that tormenting air that they had found me, two girls asking if anyone was sitting in the seats of my booth.

“No,” I mumbled out, my lips stumbled over my tongue as a smile struggled to kindle. Within that dimming cafeteria, where freshmen herded around the grill, pasta, and sushi lines, these two girls had slid into the seats beside me. Till this point college had seemed no different from high school, where the world around teemed with life while I survived in the outskirts. Not a soul willing to venture into my domain. One of the girls was silent, her eyes entranced by her igniting phone just like most of Marist seemed to be. The other, a fashion major, asked me all about life before Marist.

The Fashion major was

greeted to a brick wall of misery as my lips censored the words I had wished to use for high-school. Could they feel the hatred emanating from me as I flung aside their questions about the past? I had no desire to relive those years, let alone speak of them. High school was the worst thing in the world, and nobody could convince me otherwise. A place where they walked passed me in the halls, their fingers lining their wrists as they taught me “The proper way to cut”. A joke they would say, same as when they ripped chairs from underneath me, or punched me in my manhood that they claimed I lacked. All just a joke I couldn’t understand. But as I sat across from these two lovely girls, I wished, pleaded with my brain to shut up and move to something happier.

It was all so familiar, and yet so different. High-school’s grip resting over my shoulder as I looked at these two women. High-school me would have ran from the torment, waiting for the lunch monitors to disappear from the makeshift

cafeteria so he could flee to the safety of the hallway. But there was no hallways anymore, nor were their people worth fleeing from. All there was were two lovely girls and a boy drowning in his own insecurities.

I craved for human interaction, and yet as these girls tried to break down my walls, I simply ran. We met three more times through the drudgery of academic life before she had forgotten the sullen boy from the cafeteria. She would have forgotten me eventually, high-school taught me that much, I just quickened the pace.

Such a small school, and yet the administration ran it with a tight fist. Everyone was forced along to their views of heaven and hell, and of matrimony. A hug was worth a suspension, a kiss probably expulsion. They talked about building leaders of the world, but taught us not to think or breathe unless it was according to the word of god. Their god, not ours. Still, I escaped their rule by remaining forgotten, but is being forgotten preferable to being oppressed when even the teachers forgot you on the bus ride home in another state.

Despite what seemed inevitable, it

is that first meeting in the cafeteria that I would rewrite if I could.

“Is anyone sitting here?”

“Nah” I would say, smiling.

They would slide into the booth, and immediately I’d ask them how their semester was going. At that moment I would shake off the weight of high school along with the laptop resting against my back. I would look at them and not at my food as I cut past the awkward clouds that hovered around me in every conversation. I would talk and I would listen. Healing takes time, and in that moment I



Sara Kiter

was ready for nothing more than a passing ear. But if I could change it, I would be stronger than my pain. Conversations would flow from my lips as easily as they would enter my ears. I would have made friends. I would have been stronger. I was not.

Still it seems as if I am not strong enough. Words frozen on my tongue as fire blazed around me. People I know talk to others I know, but as I watch them the past curdles around me. The long tape of past mistakes and insecurities collected since youth binding my rigid body. Even if I try to speak what would be the point when the tape of my life is so easily forgotten, so easily fractured. Once more, I escape from the crowd, I do not need to wait for the lunch monitors to disappear for the walls are aimless, the space infinite, the people uncountable, and still that oppressive air lingers. The real story is not about two girls met in a cafeteria, but of a boy afraid of being forgotten.





Bernadette Hogan



Don't

Bryanna Adams

I don't like to feel hopeful. It makes me vulnerable. Open. I'm the tell-all who tells all the absolute bare minimum. I don't like exposure and yet,

here I am.

I lead myself on; this imagination -- this mind takes trips that you were never invited to... I've created a scenario where me and you... we work out.

I've got hand outs of the logistics -- if you measure personality traits and timing we should be just fine, but I don't know when the ampersand came between us two... You make me hopeful and open... and I hate to admit when I'm afraid.

But I am.

This is my natural stance.

Arms folded over my chest, legs always in gear to drive. To run. For you it's different. My foot is on the break so I can talk to you... so I can try to talk to you... so I can think about trying to talk to you...

I don't.

Because I think about thinking about trying to talk to you and I can't. I walk away. Because

I'm...afraid.

People ask why I walk so quickly.

They assume that it's because of the city in my footstep. It's that fast pace movement, maneuvering around skyscrapers that I'm so used to. Nostalgia in my toes when I'm on dirt roads and green pastures. It was never the answer.

Just avoiding conversation and eye glances from people who will later reject me.

Irrational fears.

I'm really scared of bare rooms that are all white -- they remind me of the one before you. The boy before you. A 20 year old minor.

There was one time I didn't walk fast enough and I caught his eye, my arms unfolded. There was this one time when I was open and should have been closed off... There was this one time I was really...really...hopeful.

He watched the sunrise in my eyelids... He. Knew about these trips my mind would take... He. Knew and asked to come with me. He. Knew all of the right things to say. My. Feet were on the ground and I could have just walked away.

So, when you touch me like my first name is 'Right,' and my last name is 'Now,' hinting at potential potentials. Because your hands around my waist feel like strong maybes but I think this is only a temporary condition, remembering "When I said it, I meant it." Just listen. I become addicted to the way you actually see me and the way you spoke in future tense. You look almost like security. You may be what safe havens look like...or maybe a false promise. Fingers intertwined with my sweaty, stu-stu-stuttering palms.

Don't hold me like that.

Don't look at me that way.

Don't touch me!

Just don't make me see hope in you! ...there's no hope... in you.

This. I'm comfortable like this.

Like this.

It's easier to be alone.

Home: The Trillionth Possibility

Julia Franco

There are an infinite amount of parallel universes, and within those infinite universes there are an infinite amount of parallel timelines that splinter off. Each decision someone makes splits the timeline into two, or three, or however many choices there are. And usually, everything goes perfectly and this remains but a theory that the world can neither prove or disprove. However, I am an exception. Through an accident I don't care to repeat, I was ripped from my native reality, 182AB7.4K. And I have to get back. Because, due to this mistake, the whole of reality is beginning to collide.

The universe is actually quite fragile, as I have learned. One person, me, out of time and space, threatens the whole of reality. Poor planning, actually. I can't be the first person to fall across universes. God, if the world ended every time someone fell across realities, the universe would have exploded before it even started. Oh well. That's reality for you.

So I'm trapped in an alternate timeline in an alternate universe, not too unlike my own. 78F9H.X8 ∞ isn't a bad place. They've got some cute shops and decent food but it's just a play town. Literally. It's a splinter reality of the larger 78F9H.X8. When I landed here, it launched the segment into a time bubble, the Bubble of the Infinite Reality.

Bubbles of Infinite Realities suck energy from the main reality to sustain the bubble until the main reality is out of energy, in which case it turns to the other timelines of that reality. There's a version out there where none of this ever happened.

Now, you say, there's infinite timelines inside these infinite realities. Yes, that's true. But the Bubble of Infinite Reality consumes time lines faster than they can be created, therefore causing the destruction of the whole reality.

78F is in trouble. I must pop the infinity bubble. Once I do, the reality, though damaged, will recover and timelines will split off and create other alternate realities as they should. Life in a Bubble of Infinite Reality is very simple. The same events repeat themselves over and over infinitely. Nothing ever changes. Bubbles of Infinite Realities do not split off into other timelines. What is done in a Bubble of Infinite Reality is set. Change contributes to the total chaos of the universe, and to contain the chaos requires extraordinary amounts of energy. That's why there's so many alternate realities and timelines within them. It took too much energy for the universe to contain the scale of reality to one timeline in one universe, hence the infinite realities.

But to contain a Bubble of Infinite Reality takes enormous amounts of energy, since the universe must suppress the chaos it wants to create. Bubbles of Infinite Reality usually form on their own when two timelines of different realities collide. But then they pass through each other so the Bubble only lasts a few seconds. But in this case, it's different.

The way to pop the Bubble of Infinite Reality is for me to get out of it and back to 182ABq7.4K where I belong. Except I can't do that. The technology that landed me here won't be invented here for hundreds of years. And in hundreds of years, this Bubble of Infinite Reality will have consumed every reality and every time line and the whole of existence will be this tiny pocket of a splinter reality. A pretty dismal fate for all of reality.

It had started like any normal day for me. Armies from the West were coming for me and my dimensional gateway. It wasn't fully operational yet but the army didn't care. They wanted it to seize it and take over every reality that exists. Of course, theoretically, that doesn't work because for every reality that they would invade, there'd be another splinter reality of what happens when they're unsuccessful. That's the problem with the universe, it accounts for every possible outcome. It's good because no one can take over the whole of reality. It's bad because reality is collapsing.

The army knocked down my door and was going to take me. In another timeline they do. I back into the gateway that was on because it was under testing. I fall though and here I am. In another reality the gateway is off. In a third the Army followed me through and dragged me back. In a fourth, rockets from another planet blow up my house with all of us inside. That's the joy of infinite realities, anything that can and can't happen does.

So now I'm here. To the people of this town, I came in a blaze of fire. They speak the same language but they do not understand me. For every universe where the human invented fire, there is another one where they did not. For every atom bomb, there is another one that was never dropped. Unfortunately, this one is still on the basic electricity and war phase of their evolution. They'll never understand. They don't understand that they're in a Bubble of Infinite Reality with their lives repeating the same few hours over and over. They never will.

The problem is that if I make it back to 182ABa7.4K, the army will still be there. If I end up anywhere else, even 182ABa7.4L, or godforbid 182ABa7.4K 1, it'll just create another splinter reality and that really does me no good at all. Interreality gateways don't exist naturally. Mine is the work of generations of scientists. I don't have a way of recreating it here.

I stare up at the night sky and look up at the stars. They have stars here. They're beautiful. I wish 182ABa7.4K had stars. We used to, back when it was just 182ABa7, thousands of years ago. But then there were the Star Wars where huge empires harnessed the power of stars as massive weapons. In the .4 series of realities, all stars were wiped out for millions of light years, with the exception of the sun. (In 182ABa7.4, the sun was wiped out and that universe exists in complete blackness. It's a dead reality as all life is dead until the end of time. But say something weird happens and life returns, then it splits off again like nothing ever happened. There's likely a reality where that happened.)

I've read the old stories, that's how I even know what they are. I've never seen them in my own life time. I wanted to travel the worlds, to explore the wonders that exist in the rest of the multiverse. But I didn't know my presence would create a Bubble of Infinite Reality until it was too late. I can't stay here. I must get back to my reality.

Do I want to go back? No. Do I have a way back? No. Do I have to go back? Unless I want to be responsible for the destruction of every other reality, yes. This is a pile of crap. And in 23.54 seconds, the timeloop inside this bubble resets and anything I've seen, done, or heard today is erased. But don't worry. It'll happen the same way over and over and over again unless I find a way to break out. And I don't know if I will break out.

This is a universe of infinite probability and infinite realities. Something is set in stone for all of time, but it really actually isn't. It's just in one trillion outcomes, all except one come out the same. And when you see that nine hundred and ninety-nine billion, nine hundred and ninety-nine million, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine times something comes out the same, you don't think that the last one will come out any different, because how could it? That's what I'm

Looking for. That blip that's the trillionth time when everything changes.

I don't know how many times I've repeated life in this Bubble of Infinite Reality. You can't keep track. You try to make a tally or a diary or something but when the reality resets, it is all erased. I look up at the stars again. I know their names and it is as if they have always been there.

The town in this Bubble of Infinite Reality is, on a technical universal scale, called 78F9HΦ. X8∞/∞. Before splintering into the Bubble, it was 78F9HΦ. X8/123, U8, the 123, U8 being its coordinates as part of its larger reality. The ∞ are really just filler coordinates as nothing really exists outside of this town. There's no context for this bubble of reality. However, the people call it something else. They don't understand the universal scale so they call it Home.

Home is small. It has some buildings and a farm or two, a church, a store, school, houses. It's got a population of 300 people. There's a mayor, a preacher, some farmers, kids, a teacher or two. There's some house pets. It's cute, but unimpressive. Especially when you're from the outskirts of a bustling metropolitan city with actual technology that doesn't live in the Dark Ages.

I've never met the people of that town of Home. I don't care to. They wouldn't understand who I am or what happened to their world. And of course they would ask and I'd have to answer the questions I don't want to answer. That's why I avoid them.

Days are short here, a fraction of my own. Most of the time it is dark. So I spend a lot of time staring at the stars searching for answers, for a way back to 182A-Ba7.40K. I have no way of knowing how much time I have, or if there is even time. I cannot die here. It is the fact that I am out of time and place that is destroying the fabric of reality and death would not change that. I must have been here for years. I can remember fragments of my thoughts from everyday. They must be the only thing that differs. I don't know how I can have different thoughts every day. Maybe I don't, and I'm blissfully unaware of the fact that the Bubble of Infinite Reality affects me too. Either that or I'm some kind of self aware god. I'm ok with that.



Christina Coulter

Tonight is different. Something feels different. In the air, in the sky. A shimmering. The Bubble of Infinite Reality is breaking down. It is the trillionth outcome. I don't know how or why or what happened externally. No one can find a Bubble of Infinite Reality. Until now, evidently. I don't know why it wouldn't be obvious to see the massive collapse of alternate realities and timelines, but then again. no one crosses realities.

It shimmers and shimmers, rippling all colors and lights and patterns. I see the lights on in Home. The people know something is different. The Bubble has to pop. It cannot reset itself. There is too much chaos released. Too much has changed. A shockwave runs through $78F9H\Phi$. $X8\infty$. A star goes bright in the sky. A supernova. The energy disruption overloads the Bubble's energy.

There is still no way back for me, but the reality is saved.

No, there is still something wrong. All of the stars are going out. Something is not right. The Bubble is popping, but what is beyond?

The last star goes out in the sky, due to the north. All is dark. I feel it in my heart.

Reality is destroyed. The Bubble popped because it ran out of fuel. There are no other universes or timelines for it to consume and so it turned to the stars. My native reality is destroyed. 78F9HΦ.
X8∞ is all there is.

Out of a trillion possibilities, this was the one that could not come true. This is the one that had to come true. Out of a trillion possibilities, this is the only one that could transpire. It was in front of me the whole time. I was born to destroy reality. I was trapped in the Bubble of Infinite Reality eons ago as part of the universal plan. In all of the infinite realities, this was the one that had to happen. This is the superior reality and Home will reign supreme for all of time in the single reality that I will rebuild with my own bare hands.

I hope you enjoy my terrible and cruel reality.



Michalyn Curran

