

# Insanity's Horse

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**Insanity's Horse**

Drew University's Art and Literature Magazine

circa 1985

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# 1

## Unprimed

*After Unprimed Canvas 1944-N No. 2 by Clyfford Still*

They used to sketch on cave walls,  
bump of rock forming the hump  
of a buffalo's back. Slapping  
bloody handprints onto the stone  
to celebrate a successful hunt.

Centuries later, on church ceilings,  
so eager to create they'd paint  
over what was already there.  
The rust-colored stain of hundreds  
of winters worth of water damage  
became an angel's crown. A clot  
of paint in a corner became a spire on heaven's castle.

Now, people gravitate  
towards only the primed canvasses,  
gliding past the rooms of shell mosaics  
arranged on driftwood, not even glancing  
at the shovel suspended from the ceiling.

But in one corner of the room  
hangs an unprimed canvas. Deep, splotchy green  
it challenges, *who declared our surface  
must be smooth even as our souls are cracked?*  
People stand and stare at the sterile and bright  
seascape next to it as all the while it dares you to look,  
whispering, *who says  
we cannot love  
what is raw?*

*Lisa Apple*



**Untitled**

*Courtney Rumbough*

wire, nylon, acrylic, oak branch

### Lightning Bugs

Lightning bugs rise  
from twilight grass  
like little fireworks.

There's a reason  
for their light—  
the rhythms

attract mates  
the way we too  
send out subtle  
signals of love.

How often  
we flutter through  
the cool night  
only to be trapped  
in the glass grasp  
of a twelve year-  
old's imagination.

We pace the clear walls  
saying to ourselves  
we must go      we must go

we must go.

*David Crews*

### While Cooking Teriyaki Sauce

Before the alcohol had boiled away,  
I'd tasted you.

You'd burned my tongue: it was  
punishment for my wanting to taste you  
before you were ready.  
In that burn, you'd told me  
to be patient, to be slow.  
You will let me taste you  
when you are ready—  
I must learn to wait.

Are you ready yet?

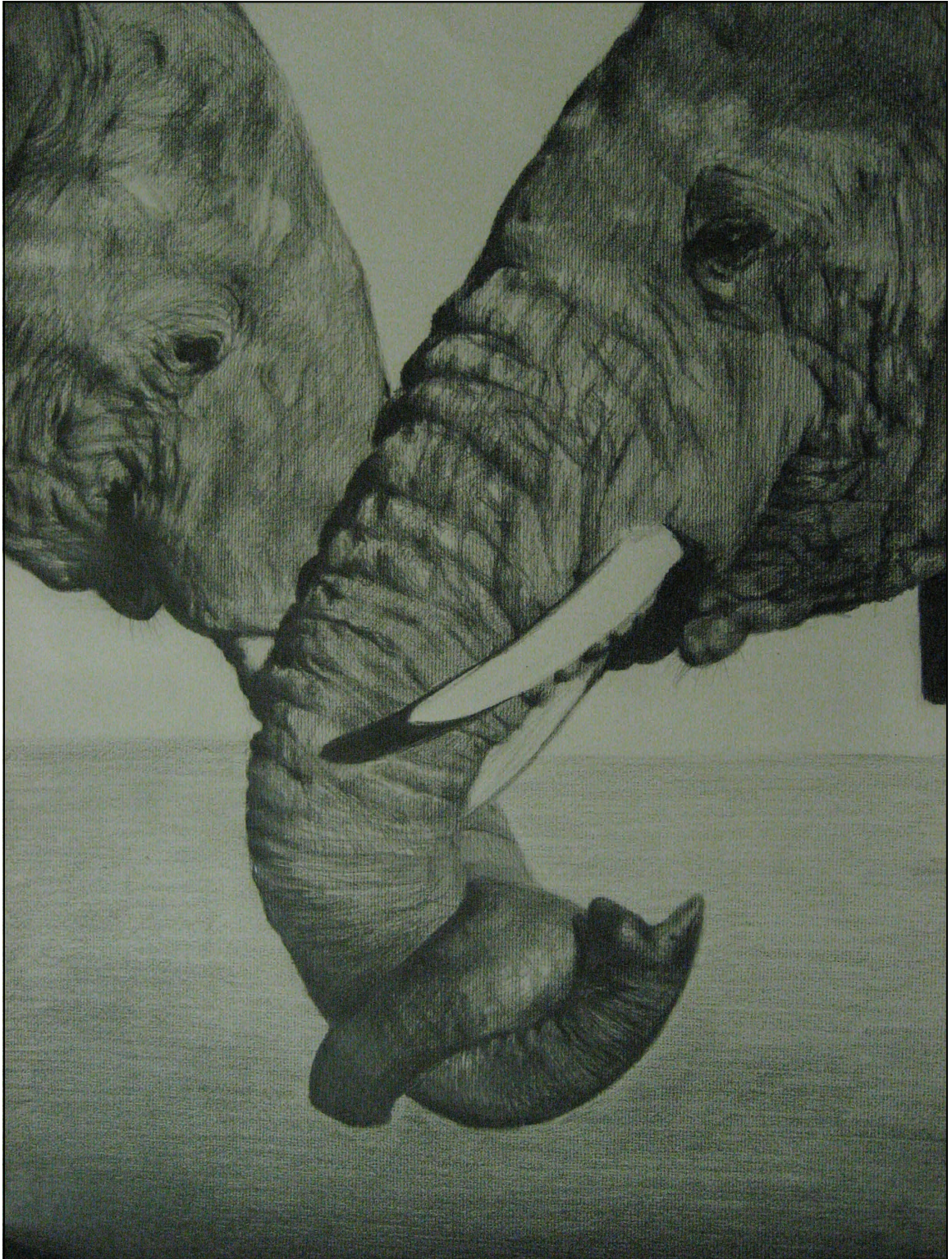
*H. Sudol*

### cursive

*a style of printed letter*

leeches out of the increasing  
creases of your blue thumbs,  
rubbing together to paint another  
van gogh to room in wiry neurons  
cluttering that blonde head.  
i can almost decipher your  
penmanship drawn from spider elbows  
and skinned knees. they weave around  
the maroon comforter, rocketing to the  
street sounds escaping the skyscrapers'  
steel tongues. green light dashes  
your tired pupils, then kissing  
the cursive of your chest, dotting  
the i's as it turns red. i latch  
myself to the inky corner of the sunken  
mattress, as you snore dreams,  
*resembling handwriting.*

*John Dabrowski*



**One**

*Kristin Germinario*

pencil

Janine stood in front of the Campbell's soup display, her bony arms bent and hands gripped to the waist of her frail frame. Her eyes swept over each disheveled row of soup cans as quickly as the beep of her bar code scanner. Janine drew a short sigh. The task before her was nothing monumental, but it wouldn't be as simple as restocking the peppermint Altoids by the front register nor as pleasant as displaying Sunday's flowers. But it had to be done. The sparse display case mocked her, its red-white consistency now checkered with the black gaps of sold-out soup varieties. This would not stand.

Janine sat on the mustard-colored tiles of her dull linoleum floor. She scooped forward and straddled her legs around the cardboard box of new Campbell's cans. Because she had misplaced her X-Acto knife, Janine would have to pry open the box with brute force. It was unfortunate—though not surprising—that Jorge, a passive aggressive alcoholic and her only employee, had called in sick this Saturday morning. At least his oafish arms could have opened this silly box.

Janine wrestled with the tape. She blurted a soft giggle at the thought of a customer discovering this compromising image of her valiant struggle. But it was barely 10 a.m., and Janine knew that no one shopped Janine's Convenience Emporium before noon. She couldn't figure out why—perhaps because the afternoon was a more convenient time for her customers to shop for dry goods, canned food products and cleaning supplies. Or perhaps "emporium" was an ornate description for her hole-in-the-wall convenience store. Maybe her customers didn't know what "emporium" meant.

Tucking a strand of her charcoal hair behind her thick-framed glasses, Janine closed her eyes and, exerting her final quantum of energy, ripped the box open with a satisfying snap. Janine let out a triumphant sigh, and examined her spoils of victory. Shit, she thought. What should've been a variety of Campbell's condensed soup was instead dozens of cans of Campbell's Disney Princess Cool Shaped Pasta in Chicken Broth. Janine held up a can. Three WASP-y looking Disney damsels-in-distress stared back at her. These were carefully marketed cartoon interlopers defaming the Campbell's iconography. Janine shuddered. She stood and began beautifying the display case, first by reaching into the dark, dusty back of the shelf to extract forgotten green pea, chicken noodle and consommé Campbell's, and then restocking the shelves with Disney Princess pasta makeover cans.

When the cardboard box was finally empty, Janine scratched under her bandana and stepped back to admire her craftsmanship. Harmony had returned: Before her stood a wall of perfectly positioned, impeccably placed, and chromatically synchronized soup cans. The Snow Whites and Ariels gazed ahead lifelessly. Janine cradled a back-shelf can of cream of mushroom soup; how she loved cream of mushroom soup. So simple, yet so sweet, thick, and perfect. Janine envisioned herself hours from now, locking up shop and hurrying through the barren nightscape toward her decaying apartment. Her travels would lead her past the usual sights and sounds—the pretty faces talking about nothing outside the Axiom night club, the pulsating techno rhythm shaking the asphalt by Charlie T's Gentleman's Lounge. Passing by people living wildly but without passion, Janine would walk with the determination of a drill sergeant.

It would be only Janine treading the sidewalk. Only Janine would unfasten the rusty deadbolt of her apartment's door, and only she would sit by the glow of the microwave as a bowl of Campbell's soup bubbled and warmed. And after eating quietly and politely, Janine would curl into her battered futon and wait for sleep to take her away.

Ding-Ding. The call of the front door bell called Janine back to the present. She looked past the meticulously stocked shelves to see Jerry, the neighborhood deviant and her most frequent customer, stumble into the store. Janine raced to the front register to protect its contents and surrounding impulse items like a lioness to her young.

"Hey, hey, my little darling Tinkerbelle," Jerry slurred as he looked over Janine. His eyes



were bloodshot, and his doughy face unshaven. He placed himself in front of the counter, and started fingering the display of candies and gum. His sweat-stained shirt barely covered his potbelly. That Janine's heartbeat quickened upon seeing a line of hair circling Jerry's exposed belly button made her excited and ashamed.

"Hello, Jerry," she sighed. "What are you looking for this morning?"

Jerry snorted and shook his head, his eyes looking at nothing and everything below Janine's neckline. "Same shit I look for everyday," he murmured. He looked up and smiled a yellowed grin: "Some six packs and potato chips." His breath smelt like beer and armpit. With a smack of the counter and a guffaw, Jerry lurched down aisle two.

Janine concentrated on picking a speck of gunk off the counter. She was reluctant to see if Jerry was disfiguring the straight rows of food goods she had spent all morning perfecting. The front door bell rang again, and a blur of two adolescent boys chasing one another raced past Janine. She stood dumbfounded. Why was her emporium so busy so early in the morning?

Jerry came bounding toward Janine with his hairy arms around a medley of beer cases, potato chips and cheese dip. He unloaded his bounty onto the counter. Behind Jerry, Janine could see the two boys darting and weaving between her aisles. Their screams ricocheted off the coffee cans and cereal boxes. This could prove disastrous very quickly.

"Hey, later on, I'll be watching the game at my apartment with some guys, you know?" Jerry said. He slid a wrinkled twenty dollar bill across the counter. Janine ignored him, because her eyes were locked on the noisy chaos in the back of the store. She automatically began to scan his items without saying a word.

"Hey, hey," Jerry said. "I was thinking that a nice lady such as yourself could come and party with me—us."

Janine looked past Jerry and raised her hand. "Hey, guys?" she said, raising her voice. "You, you might knock something over. Could you please settle down?"

Nobody heard her. One boy leapt onto the other, and both fell onto the dull linoleum floor. Jerry grunted, and leaned over the counter, his flap of belly fat resting by the YMCA coin jar and Chapstick box. "Listen, Janice, I think you are really something," he breathed. "I may have seen too many days, too many nights, but, you know...you should come to my apartment. We'd have a good time."

His words fell on deaf ears. To her horror, Janine watched as one boy jumped up off the floor and swiped a can of Campbell's soup from her display. Without hesitation, the boy threw it at his companion. The shot missed, but the target darted forward and launched his body weight into the other boy. The two ferocious creatures flew back into the Campbell's display, and it all came down in a waterfall of tin.

Janine's toil and meticulous attention rolled about in scattered ruin. What was a wall of comforting conformity had crumbled into disarray. The minutes spent placing and twisting the cans to display the hideous yet perfect Disney women were wasted by an instant of indiscretion. And it was all caused by two Tanzanian devil-children. Two boys. It's always boys.

Janine all but leapt over the counter and raced to the scene, gently side-stepping runaway cans as she approached the perpetrators. Behind her was the snarling and dry laughter of Jerry, who took the situation for high brow comedy. Janine ignored him. She approached one boy who was rolling in pain. She reached down to touch him—she didn't know why—and he leapt to his feet like a frightened animal. For an instant, his blood-stained eyes, wet with tears, made contact with Janine's. But in a flash the boy had darted around Janine, past Jerry and through the exit. Janine felt robbed, her dignity dashed, but she turned her attention to the other boy, who was tenderly holding his leg.

Every article of clothing on the boy was too big for his body. His shaggy jeans engulfed his shoes, his baggy t-shirt swallowed his scrawny frame, and his black New York Yankees baseball cap, worn backwards, must've been stolen from the drawer of an older brother. As the boy writhed in pain, his wallet chain crackled on the dull linoleum floor.

Janine stood over the boy, and couldn't decide to scold or help him. "Hey," she said, but the word stuck in her throat. "Hey," she said louder. "Are you alright?"

A protracted wheeze escaped the boy's throat. "Fuck no!" He yelled. "I just crashed into that thing of cans!"

Janine was slapped by the ferocity of his words. Jerry, making the scene into a spectator sport, had open his recently purchased bag of chips and munched happily. Bits of chip fell to the floor as he laughed at the unexpected expletive. Janine shot her attention toward Jerry, who had no business in this affair. Jerry wasn't quick on the uptake, but he could read the eyes of a scorned woman. He gathered his things, nodded once, and lurched into the morning sunlight.

The boy stood up. He gingerly walked past Janine, kicking soup cans that lay in his way. She stood flabbergasted, as if all her joints were marred with molasses. As the boy drew nearer and nearer to the door, and the permanence of this gross injustice loomed larger and larger, Janine finally mustered the strength to raise her voice.

"Hey, stop!" The boy turned. "You, you can't just leave," she said, her bony arms raised. "Please help me clean this up, young man."

The boy smirked and rolled his eyes. "Why should I clean your shit up?"

Janine cocked her head at the question. It was as if she clawed and scratched for every word. "You...you...can't just go, not after what you did...this is my store, this is *my* store, and you...no...you just can't. Help me clean this up."

"Fuck off, lady," the boy snorted. He turned. He started to walk. Snap. Something snapped. The speed with which Janine raced through aisle two caught the boy off guard. Janine pushed off the boy's shoulder, and placed herself between him and the exit. By doing so, she triggered the motion sensor of the automated door. It swung wide open, and behind Janine was a disorderly world of cars driven by faceless drivers, pedestrians walking and thinking only about themselves, and boys masquerading as men.

"What—get the hell out of my way! Let me out there!" the boy said, pointing toward his freedom. The morning sunlight illuminated Janine's silhouette, and she stood confidently, her hands gripped firmly to the waist of her frail frame.

"No. You are not leaving my store until you clean up the goddamn Campbell's soup," Janine said. Nothing could break her fiery stare. The boy looked left, right, started to speak, caught himself, looked to the ground, looked to the ceiling, and then picked his cell phone out of his pocket.

"I'm calling my mom," he said. Beep beep beep. Janine crossed her arms.

"Hey, ma?" the boy said into his black cell phone. "Ma, listen, there's this crazy bitch who's keeping me in her store. Yeah, it's like she kidnapped me! I didn't do shit! I don't know what to do."

The boy glanced up at Janine, and she gazed down on him. She didn't notice him terminate the call with the press of his thumb.

"No ma, I'll tell you what I'll do." He said into the phone as he looked Janine in the eye. "I'm gonna tell this lonely, pathetic piece of crap to move the hell out of my way, cause I heard about this broad from Johnny. I heard she creeps around this store late at night, all alone, cause she's got nothing in her life. So she stays inside, and plays with her soup cans. This place is a garbage dump, just like this broad I'm staring at right now."

Janine didn't blink. She didn't breathe. The boy's raw hatred stung her like the sharp pierce of a subzero chill—a sensation all too familiar. It was the same cold that enveloped Janine in her father's house while growing up, and it was the same frigidity that awaited her return to her grimy and lonely apartment. The difference was that the boy now said what all the other men must've thought.

A warm tear trickled down her soft cheek. And then another. Janine gripped the greasy handicap rail to her left, and the tears formed irregular dots around her, darker than the black

tarp where she now sat. And then her head buckled, and the sobs came. She cried not just for herself, but for him, and for him, and now for this boy.

His gait relaxed, and his lip began to quiver. The boy now saw the outside world unguarded, but he remained. Looking upward at the boy from the floor, Janine thought he seemed taller than his 12-years could endow. His shadowy frame, battered in the light streaming through the dirtied window, was like a prophetic glimpse of the body he'd grow into. With a small step forward, the figure lowered his face to Janine's. Now she saw him with greater clarity. His cheeks were rosy red, and pimply too. He was still just a boy. He gently touched Janine's shoulder with his sweaty palms and almost started to brush back her hair.

"I'm sorry," he whispered. And with that, he ran outside. The automatic door waited a moment, and then shut out the manic world. Janine rubbed her wet eyes and peeked at the mess of soup cans. Perhaps, on her own, it wouldn't take as long to clean up as she had thought.

*Seth Gorenstein*



**Reflections in the Forest  
(oil on campus)**

*Russell Kirby*

Digital Photography

## Galveston Bay

The anticipation of a crashing wave  
 —the unstoppable force,  
 brings a certain sense of tension  
 for a day at the beach.  
 The excitement hasn't been here  
 for a while now, and I wonder;  
*Where are the people?*

A grey blanket of cloud  
 covers the sky. I turn around  
 to see my grandmother  
 is much further away than I thought.  
 If it wasn't for her magnificent flowered shirt,  
 and the stars of jewelry on her fingers, ears,  
 and neck  
 I would not have seen her, and felt alone.

She is in her chair on the beach,  
 and water is rolling against my hips.  
 She said something to me  
 —*something* I heard before  
 about fishing or that she loved  
 my hair, and I smiled and waved  
 as a grandson would do.  
*Aren't you proud of me?*

A wave rose, swallowing a school of fish.  
 I saw them gliding within the warm salted swell.  
 It gave me hope, and for the first time  
 that morning, a smile stretched across my face.

Like small rainbows they fluttered  
 creating a dancing light on the surface  
 above them. The whites of their bellies  
 —buttery and speckled with black dots  
 made my eyes hungry, and I wanted one  
 for my own.

I reached back to cast out my line,  
 but my arm was cast out instead.  
 It traveled up past the rings of the rod  
 unraveling and rising, reaching far  
 over the curling wave and diving  
 into the warm ocean water just behind it.

I grabbed one, pulled it out,  
 and brought it in close my chest.  
 It squirmed and wiggled  
 as I had expected, but felt rather hard  
 and smooth, like a polished stone—  
 shining with a brilliance *even greater* than  
 before.

I would have held that fish—my gem,  
 for the rest of my life,  
 if my grandmother hadn't taken it  
 and put it in her plastic bag.  
 Its gills stuck to the white,  
 like a Band-Aid and it suffocated.  
*What are you doing?*

The hardened grey fish came out—  
 cramped and wide-eyed. I knew  
 it was dead, but only because I had  
 seen death once before—motionless.  
 She said something I heard.  
*"Watch me"*

And with the heal of her hand  
 she drove a knife deep into the anus  
 of the fish, until she hit its spine.  
 Dragging the knife upwards, she split  
 the belly open, grinding against the vertebrae,  
 leaving the insides unsalvageable. She opened  
 the fish  
 like the un-crusting of an eye lid and scooped  
 the creamy black insides out with her index,  
 and rejected them into the garbage.  
*"Dinner"* she said.

*Steve Carnes*



**Collage,** Yu-Hsuan Chen, photoshop

### **The Nature of Peace**

I know but will not tell you,  
 where my mother's bones lie.  
 I listen for the sound of beauty,  
 escaping the path taken by my youth.  
 I find solitude in a tree,  
 where caterpillars tickle my skin.  
 Free from society's trials I find where wisdom is whispered through wise winds.  
 Branches bend and kiss my bones years after her death  
 becoming the earth that was stripped from my ancestors.  
 I form into a sapling.  
 We find clarity through the stories told by our loved ones,  
 sleeping below the roots.

*Arvolyn Hill*

**When it's cold outside**

I think of you—when it's cold outside  
and time has frozen-shut the eyes  
of my house with sheets of ice

The crystals, which have formed  
Are perfect, remaining still  
outside the windows where I cannot see

I am to live without eyelids inside  
barely within reach of the warmth  
from the fire, which heats my house in winter

Why can't I go outside?  
but silence, never responds  
with answers, that please my heart

I wish—I left with you  
that night when it was cold  
and you walked to the university

Did the wind sting your cheeks?  
I bet it hurt to smile—and move  
your frozen fingers through the cold

Tell me all about the night, for I wish  
to pretend I was there—smoking cigarettes  
and drinking your bold brown liquors

But here I sit silenced  
by the crackling warmth from the fire  
where I no longer wish to be

And hear the cold winds  
Whip—through the frozen trees  
when I think of you

And the morning after  
when they woke—and found you  
cold.

*Steve Carnes*

**operation**

I felt the mentholated air rush crisp against my tonsils  
 and took in fake inhalations  
 until I was dragged into a sleep that mimicked sleep

Inanimate, I waded through hospital rooms  
 bleeding through cotton sheet after cotton sheet  
 and then blood hit the plastic cover

The tiny hands that lived inside mine  
 were stolen while we still were connected  
 I woke up to a wake I never thought I'd attend

I have no more heart to hearts  
 because I thought losing would be easy  
 but instead I got lost in my loss

For weeks, I carried

death  
 it's pieces collected at the drain of my shower

*Sheryl McCabe*

**Craving Better**

Sitting on the edge of his seat  
 He pulls the lever incessantly  
 Waiting for the golden stream  
 Of victory, but there is nothing  
 But the cocktail waitress  
 Asking: "Another scotch?"

The pulling of the lever paces  
 Heaving breaths, constantly  
 Recycling anticipation  
 With disappointment.

He pulls the lever again  
 And again at the end of the night  
 His wallet is empty.

*Christina Andreola*

**Apartment No. 5**

When I die it will be on Paris Street,  
Across from the bodega near 72nd.  
The heat will echo through my skin,  
Luring people to the blazing pavement.  
Near the park where children scream,  
And men play craps outside the liquor store.  
Where Hispanic music is blasted from boom boxes on windowsills.  
By the old Baptist church where,  
you can always hear the whispers of a hymn.  
As old women sit on porches forcing kinky hair into three braids.  
Two blocks down from where ten year olds,  
Choose between blue or red.  
Outside the house Uncle Jim sits on the steps,  
Waiting for his dream deferred.  
Upstairs from the ninety-year-old women counting rosary beads.  
In the room next to the kitchen the women in the red dress plays Al green,  
Bringing the smell of collard greens,  
Under the door into my room.  
It will linger there like a first kiss.  
I will die lying there listening to the sounds of my mother's song.  
Here in my native.

*Arvolyn Hill*



**Bethlehem Prayer** *Nicole Champagne*

Photograph taken in Church of Nativity in the West Bank of Israel



Mr. Peterson liked the way the world streamed before his eyes when he rode in the car. He liked when his wife drove and he could place his left hand on her thigh and sing "Oh darling, oh darling" in unison with the oldies radio station, giving the flesh of her leg a firm squeeze to help him keep the beat when the singer on the radio paused for the musical interlude to pass between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> verses. So it was in that way that he and his wife drove three hours across Pennsylvania and pulled into the long, winding driveway of Mr. and Mrs. Peterson's oldest daughter's home in Chadds Ford.

"Lots of leaves," Mr. Peterson said, opening his door and stepping into fall.

"Pardon?" Mrs. Peterson's hearing, even at its best, never was what his had been.

"Lots of leaves, Meryl," Mr. Peterson repeated. They were scattered on the lawn, woven together in a quilt of color. Tod, Kathy's husband, never did make time to rake them so on Thanksgiving it was always Mr. Peterson who would pull down a rake from its hook in the garage and form piles in the front yard. Sometimes the younger grandchildren would fling themselves into his piles or beg to be the ones to get lifted into the large brown bags the leaves got placed in and help stamp them down.

"What? What did you say?"

Mr. Peterson reached behind his wife's ear like a magician about to produce a coin. He turned up the dial of her hearing aid. "I said I love you."

"Oh good." Mrs. Peterson looked up at Mr. Peterson and there was no part of her face that didn't believe he'd meant what he said. "Let's go inside."

"Was the drive here okay?" Without waiting for an answer Kathy, Mr. Peterson's oldest daughter, was pulling off his coat, slipping the limp jacket onto a hanger. "Tod could have picked you up. He wouldn't have minded."

"Your mother likes to drive." Mr. Peterson watched through slats in the blinds as Tod walked Mrs. Peterson up the driveway, one hand on her back, guiding her closer to the door as her walker stuttered over the chunks of gravel on the driveway.

"I know she does, but—"

Tod opened the door and the foot of Mrs. Peterson's walker passed the threshold. She banged straight into a chair, like she hadn't even noticed it was sitting against the wall, and Kathy gave Mr. Peterson a look which he hated. That "you-know-I'm-right-and-you'll-do-what-I-tell-you" look and he knew she was right but didn't want to do what she said. Though maybe he would be the one to drive home, Mr. Peterson considered, as Mrs. Peterson knocked over the plastic plant next to the arm of the deep brown loveseat she sank into. A small patch of lighter brown was still visible on the back of the couch, the effect of stain remover being poured onto the spot where Kathy and Tod's son Andrew had decided to finger paint one weekend three years ago.

"Go kiss your mother hello," Mr. Peterson said.

"I will, Dad."

"And after dinner I'll rake your leaves."

Mr. Peterson watched Kathy look towards Tod, who was straightening the picture frames on the table next to the couch. "You don't have to do that."

"I rake your leaves every year."

"You're our guest, is all I'm saying. You don't have to do that."

"I'm your father, not a guest."

"I know, Dad."

"I like to rake leaves."

Kathy looked at Tod again, when she answered. "We'll worry about it after dinner. Marge just called and said she and Bethany would be a little late, but Laura and the kids will be here soon."

**15** Mr. Peterson took a seat beside Mrs. Peterson on the couch. He picked up the picture frame from the end-table. It held three photographs, the largest of which was of Kathy and Tod's entire wedding party. Everyone wore matching colors. The bridesmaids were dressed in purple with white flowers in their hair to match Kathy's ivory dress. The groomsmen wore white suits with purple boutonnieres. Mr. Peterson stood behind Kathy in that picture, his hands resting on her shoulders. His eyes moved between their faces, watching their identical smiles, the twin dimples pressed into each of their left cheeks. And it wasn't just he and Kathy who looked so obviously connected in that photograph. The whole extended family looked united, dressed in those matching colors, all there to celebrate Tod joining their family. Below that photograph were two small portraits of Kathy and Tod's sons, Thomas and Andrew, both dressed in colorful sweaters sitting tall in front of plain blue backdrops. Those photographs were clearly several years old. Andrew was still wearing glasses in his, now he only wore the contact lenses he'd gotten two years ago, and Thomas was missing far too few baby teeth in his picture, now it seemed like every time he spoke to Kathy on the phone she told him Thomas had received yet another visit from the tooth fairy.

Mr. Peterson placed the frame back on the table, straightening it once more so it faced forward before he reached for his wife's hand. She had fallen asleep already, the long drive having worn her out. Mr. Peterson felt his own head falling forward until his chin touched his chest. Sleep started to clear the pictures behind his eyelids, and the words "oh darling, oh darling" whistled through his head as he squeezed her hand.

Mrs. Peterson's hand was no longer pressed against his when Mr. Peterson jolted awake from his nap and it made the transition from sleep to wakefulness even harsher. When he was young, before he had children, Mr. Peterson remembered waking up from afternoon naps as slow ascents from sunken mattresses back into the world of hard edges. He'd become aware of the metronome of his breathing, open his eyes to check if the world was still there, and realize he was awake. But while raising three kids, he'd rarely had the luxury of a nap. There was always some small crisis to avert or sibling conflict to settle. If he did somehow fall asleep on what he thought would be a calm Sunday afternoon, he'd gotten too used to waking to the shouts of "it's not fair, I'm telling Dad" and "Dad, come downstairs and play now, you promised" to let his body fully relax into sleep. Now, waking up from naps was like slamming on the brakes and only narrowly avoiding a car accident, motion jolting to a stop only when he opened his eyes and realized he was just where he'd left himself.

It wasn't yet dinner-time yet but Mr. Peterson could smell the creamy gravy and sweet yams mixed with orange marmalade from where he sat. More relatives had arrived while he was sleeping, pulling the chairs that used to be in a small circle away from the couch on which he slept so they could chat.

"We didn't want to wake you," Jeremy, Mr. Peterson's oldest grandson said by way of explanation. "Aunt Kathy said you'd had a tough-drive."

Mr. Peterson looked to the empty couch-cushion to his right.

"Mom's in the kitchen. She woke up a few minutes before you did," Laura, his youngest daughter, told him. She got out of her seat and came over to give him a kiss on the cheek. "Let me help you up so you can go sit with Mom."

Mr. Peterson shook his head and waited until Laura stepped back from the couch before attempting to get up. He made a heaving sound he hated as he lifted his body off the couch. He couldn't quite make it upright and two tries later Laura and Jeremy were by his side, each taking one elbow and lifting him until he was standing tall.

"Dinner smells delicious. Do you know what time it's going to be ready, Kath?" Mr. Peterson asked, smoothing the wool of his sweater to bide his time until he felt steady enough to walk towards the kitchen.

"I'm Laura, Dad. Kathy's in the kitchen."

Mr. Peterson looked at her. Of course it was Laura. He'd been thinking it was Laura just a minute ago when she'd kissed him hello. He'd just made a mistake. People mixed up their children's names all the time. Meryl used to tell him, always laughing, about how growing up her parents often called her their dog's name. They did it so often it became a joke and the birthday cards they sent her, when they were still alive, were almost always addressed to Peach, the family's old golden-retriever. But Laura wasn't looking at him like he'd made a funny mistake. She wasn't looking at him at all. She was looking at her husband who still sat in the circle of chairs, eyes a little watery that way children's eyes sometimes got when you told them no and they'd desperately wanted to hear a yes. They looked at you like you'd broken their heart a little when all you'd done was speak.

"I meant to say Laura. Still waking up, I guess." The words sounded far more like an excuse than Mr. Peterson had meant them to, and it didn't seem fair to him that the truth should sound so weak. It had just been a slip. He was confused because he'd just woken up. He'd meant to say Laura.

Meryl was sitting at the kitchen table while Laura's twin daughters were chattering to her about the duet they would be singing for the high school's winter talent show. Two pots were on the stove, containing the gravy and yams Mr. Peterson had smelled from the couch, and the shut doors of the oven couldn't contain the smells of turkey and garlic. The counter was scattered with boxes of Domino sugar, two large red bowls with wooden spoons sticking out of them, and bags packed with miniature spice containers. Kathy looked unhappy, back bent over a cookbook. But then, didn't all women look unhappy at Thanksgiving?

"Do you need me to help with something?" Mr. Peterson asked?

"Almost done," Kathy assured him. "We'll eat in about half an hour."

Mr. Peterson nodded. "I thought I might take a look at those leaves in your yard, now. You shouldn't let them sit on the ground too long and the township probably only takes a couple of bags each week."

"I know how to rake leaves, Dad."

"You'll want to get them up before the snow starts to fall or you won't like what you see when spring comes."

"I just said I know how to rake leaves."

"You never used to like to, though. And it looks like Tod doesn't have time for them. I remember when you were ten and I made you start helping around the house but all you wanted to do was play in the leaf-piles. As soon as I finished raking a pile, you were jumping into it. I had set you up with this little baby-rake. I was ready to turn you into a regular yard-worker but you wouldn't have any of it. You just wanted to play." The story was funny to Mr. Peterson, now, though it hadn't been when it happened. He'd been so angry, Kathy launching her body into the mattress of leaves, scampering off with a laugh as soon as he called out to her that she needed to help re-rake the pile. But years had softened the anger and he liked how that had become a happy memory for him, how he could file it away with stories of the other household-chores gone awry. Alongside the story where Laura and Marge hammered the ceiling fan's blades *into* the ceiling so they wouldn't spin, and the story of Meryl clogging up the new garbage disposal the afternoon he installed it when she dropped four spoons and a fork into it.

"We've just been busy. Tod will rake them after Thanksgiving."

"I have time, now. I'll rake until dinner."

Kathy raised her voice, the first time he could remember her doing that in years, maybe since when she was a teenager. "You can't rake the leaves, Dad."

Meryl and the grandkids looked up from their conversation. The wrinkles between Meryl's eyebrows bunched and Mr. Peterson hated seeing that look on her face. He wanted her

**17** only to look at him like she had earlier, when their car had pulled up the driveway and he'd said "I love you" and she looked at him like she'd never heard something sweeter.

"We'll talk about this some-time when your mother isn't around," he said.

Kathy lowered her voice, Mr. Peterson could barely hear it over the simmering of the pots. "You can't rake leaves, Dad. You have to take it easy on yourself. You can barely stand-up."

If Mr. Peterson could be sure that his children wouldn't be talking about him as soon as he and Meryl left to drive back home, he would have protested "I can stand up just fine." But he knew Laura would tell on him to Kathy and then he'd hear about it from both of them for weeks. If Marge, Mr. Peterson's youngest daughter, was here maybe she would have defended him, but she had yet to arrive so instead he said, "I'll sit down with your mother."

"Kids giving you a hard time?" She asked softly as he sat down. The twins had moved into the next room in search of someone else they could practice their duet for.

Mr. Peterson nodded. Said with a smile, "I guess it's our fault, we raised them, right?" He laughed.

"A long time ago," Meryl said and she moved her left knee slightly so it pressed lightly against his leg. "They're giving me a hard time, too. Kathy has all these questions about dialysis and what does Doctor Fermer say about this and what does he say about that."

Mr. Peterson felt like, at that moment more than in a while, he and Meryl were co-conspirators and he thought about saying something like, "let's make a break for it." But he wasn't really sure where he would have wanted to go except to some other point in time, some family gathering when it had been everyone driving to he and Meryl's house, taking directions from them as to how to best stay out of the way so she could finish the meal and he could complete last minute household chores.

It was when Mr. Peterson first got married that he'd begun to associate seasons with house-work. And while he knew household chores had less to do with getting married than they did with the fact that he and Meryl had moved into a house only three months after they married—the first house either of them, life-time apartment dwellers until that point, had ever lived in—he'd always associated their wedding with the housework.

But really he didn't know if it was right to call it work if the chores were things he loved that much. There was comfort in the twist of his wrist as he unscrewed storm windows and replaced them with screens each spring, and he loved the vibrations the hammer's pound left ringing in his hand when it was a fence around the yard that he was building—something Meryl had always wanted. She had this picture in her mind of a perfect home with a back-porch and a fence and a dog digging holes beside the tall oak trees. Mr. Peterson was allergic to dogs so there would be none in their house, but he could give her everything else. So he built a fence and bought deck-furniture for the back-porch, and in the fall when the tall oak trees dropped their leaves he raked them into piles.

He remembered the first year they were married he'd looked up from the leaves he was raking and seen Meryl's face in the window, hair tucked beneath a red handkerchief, washing dishes in the kitchen sink, and he'd thought "that's my wife," and he'd known he could do this forever—rake leaves and build fences, change light bulbs and replace screens in the windows. This was what he could offer her.

The doorbell rang and it was Marge arriving at the house with her daughter Bethany. That, at least, made Mr. Peterson feel like he had another ally present. It was the second year Marge had come without her husband, the first year since they were officially divorced. Supporting Marge as she went through the divorce had brought them closer. She was the only one of his children who, like he and Mrs. Peterson, had endured being the topic of everyone's conversation without ever really being talked to. She'd had to listen while everyone else in the family spoke

about the decisions they thought she should make, how sad her situation was, what would be best for Bethany. They discussed what should be done to fix her problems and, if Marge didn't follow their advice, seemed so offended, like she had strayed from an agreed-to plan. When she had been married, sometimes family gatherings had been held at her house. Not anymore. Now Tod and Kathy and Laura and her husband rotated hosting dinners and reunions, something they did because they thought it made life easier on Marge. But Mr. Peterson knew differently. He understood what it felt like to have that responsibility taken away. For a long time he had been the patriarch of the family until family dinners had been moved to Tod and Kathy's because everyone thought it was too much work for he and Meryl. And along with taking over host responsibilities Tod had taken over the seat at the head of the table—a fact which Marge brought up when Kathy called the family to the table and Tod pulled out the chair to sit down.

"Kathy," she said, within Mr. Peterson's earshot though he wasn't sure whether that was intentional or not. "Don't you think maybe Dad should sit at the head of the table?"

Kathy brushed aside that concern, reasoning, "that chair doesn't have armrests. We're going to put him at that chair in the middle of the table, so he can push against the armrests when he needs to get up."

And, a few seconds later, Jeremy went into the kitchen to walk with Mr. Peterson to the dining room and helped him into the chair in the middle of the table. Mr. Peterson didn't hear whether or not Marge protested any more on his behalf.

Scolding again—hadn't that always been his job? Further down the table he could hear Marge scolding Bethany.

"Why didn't you take any cauliflower?"

"I hate cauliflower, Mom," Bethany answered.

"No you don't," Marge was insisting. "It's your favorite."

"*Broccoli's* my favorite."

"Well, you need some more vegetables on your plate."

And at his end of the table it was Kathy doing the scolding.

"Dad, you know you're not supposed to eat that. You're watching your cholesterol."

Mr. Peterson wished Kathy would just come out and say what she really wanted to say. She should tell him he's old and he can't do what he likes anymore and he has to listen to her now because she knows best. And he should say he'll do what he likes and she would understand that if she understood that there was more to life than preserving your body, never going too far or too fast so you never stumbled, never fell and broke a hip, stayed in good health while bits of the life you loved dropped away. But all he said was "pass the potatoes" and she did.

"Grandpa didn't say please," One of the grandkids Andrew, no, Thomas, protested.

If Mr. Peterson wanted potatoes, he'd damn well get them no matter how he asked. He'd eat what he liked. Mr. Peterson took a slopping forkful of potatoes that filled his mouth with garlic. Kathy had used his mother's recipe. He knew that mix of flavors, he remembered the bright orange bowl his mother had molded herself at a pottery class and placed those potatoes in each Thanksgiving. But Kathy made the recipe even better than his mother had. He didn't tell her that, but he did turn to her and say, after he swallowed, "thank you."

Everyone, or at least it felt like everyone, had urged Mr. Peterson and his wife to stay, but he could see the look in Meryl's eyes when Kathy offered them the guest bedroom. She wanted to be home. An apartment, now, not the house they'd always lived in, but it had the afghan Meryl had crocheted over twenty years ago lying across the same creaking bed in which they'd always slept and so it was home. And they couldn't stay even if they'd wanted to. Mr. Peterson had promised an elderly neighbor whose husband had died earlier that year that he'd change the light bulb in her kitchen. She wasn't steady enough on her feet to do it herself and had confided this

**19** problem first to Meryl who'd passed it on to Mr. Peterson. Their neighbor needed his help so he had to return home.

Kathy took his coat out of the closet and helped him into it, the empty arm holes livening as he slipped his limbs into them. Mr. Peterson helped Meryl into her coat, letting her lean on him when she had to take her hands off the walker. They walked down the driveway towards the car and Mr. Peterson opened the passenger door while Meryl got in.

"I'll drive on the way home, so you can nap," he explained.

"I like to drive."

Mr. Peterson sighed. "I know, but you can't do all the things you used to, Meryl."

She nodded, which surprised Mr. Peterson. He'd expected more of a fight out of her.

"Lots of leaves," Meryl commented as Mr. Peterson turned the key in the ignition.

"What did you say?" The noise of the engine had rumbled over her words. Mr. Peterson watched Kathy, Laura, and Marge who were all looking out at he and Meryl from behind the glass of the front-door. Laura waved and Kathy and Marge blew kisses as he backed out of the driveway.

"I said lots of leaves. Don't you usually rake them?"

"Not this year."

"Oh." Meryl said, understanding, he thought, though he couldn't be sure, that he no longer raked leaves the same as she no longer drove the car home.

Mr. Peterson turned on the radio, started to whistle to a song he recognized but whose name he couldn't think of. He put his right hand on Meryl's thigh, merging onto the highway with only one hand on the wheel. He'd warned his children about driving like this, one handed in fall when wet leaves which could so easily send car tires spinning were stuck to the ground. But his children were not here, now, to witness his disobedience.

*Lisa Apple*

### **Snowfall**

The winter sand, which forms a sheet,  
is firm beneath my slippered feet.  
The guiding star is clear and bright;  
the snow falls first in dawn's soft light.

The winter waves crash on the shore.  
I wait for you, as e'er before.  
For your return, I pray tonight;  
the snow falls first in dawn's soft light.

The gulf between us starts to shrink,  
and now I spy a light, I think.  
Your ship glides towards me through the night;  
the snow falls first in dawn's soft light.

Lord, have mercy on this maid -  
bring home he for whom I've prayed  
amidst the snowflakes' swirling white.  
The snow falls first in dawn's soft light.

*Kirstin Bethavas*



**Supercollider I &II**, *Kristen Hugg*, acrylic

## Epitaph

We were the brilliant golden girl which lined our father's doublet,  
 The gilt thread through his stockings  
 His is the burden on our brow, the orb in our right hand  
 We were a good Venetian glass pearl which adorned his slippers,  
 A penny seed pearl on his breeches.  
 His is the scepter on which we drape our divinity.  
 We were a golden link in his carcanet,  
 An emerald on his cloak, a sapphire on his sash.  
 His is the weight of rolling heads that rest in our arms.  
 We were the fine China silk peeking through his slashes.  
 His is the heavy brass key to the realm on our person.  
 We were his choker of blood-red rubies he gave our mother  
 On the 19<sup>th</sup> of May in the year of our lord 1536.  
 It came with a French sword, at his bequest.  
 When she never rose from her stage, they say rabbits ran  
 Through London lanes,  
 And the grass bled  
 And the people were safe again.  
 His is the ocean of tears I'll never cry for her,  
 Hers is the grave mistake I'll never make.

*Stacie MacLaughlin*

## The Sphinx

One myth was all allotted. Egypt graces your sands and bows at your stationary paws, but Greece presented you with bloodied pleasure. At each town your mark was left; scores of red marked the ignorant.

Until he, doomed since birth, stopped your flight. With your own answer on his lips, you tumbled from the skies and sunk into the earth, Grecian earth, but your name never touched upon their lips. But with hands wielding tools touched upon your form in stone.

Now, the edges of your wings are slightly weathered and the same weather has stolen your color. We cannot hear the riddles you spin like spider's silk; those are caught by the glass surrounding your figure. Humans hover over your head and use cameras to forever capture your friendly visage. Most know your riddle and recite it from memory. And we wonder if you remember the answer, if you whisper it incessantly, but no one stops long enough to listen.

*Jordan Stamper*



When you crawl in bed at night  
I wonder if you think about  
The smell of her shampoo—  
Like I do.

Sometimes I wonder if we both  
Use the same brand  
What her hair looks like  
Fanned out over the pillow.

If you lean in close  
Next to her neck  
To say good night  
And almost call her  
By my name.

I'd like to know  
If the expression on your face  
Is like the one that I remember  
When you stare  
Into her eyes  
If you are thinking  
She's just like me.

If she believes you  
When you whisper baby  
And kiss her forehead  
Moving slowly  
Down her cheek.

Sometimes I want to know  
What it feels like  
To be loved by you  
In a body that is not mine.

*Jessica Brown*



**Self Portrait**, *Cara Swan*, pinhole camera

## My Homies North

There's an actor named Chris Noth  
 who used to play in this show I watched  
 and I wonder if it ever bothered him,  
 how close to North he was, but he was missing  
 the neighbor of Q and S.  
 Which could stand for Quarrel and Search,  
 ways I find my way North.  
 I wonder if outer space has a North.  
 If Heaven has a North.  
 If it does, I hope I can still wonder and wander—  
 I don't know if I'll get to Heaven  
 but searching through these quarrels and quandaries  
 is the closest on this Earth that I've ever come,  
 and I like to have at least one familiar home token  
 when I travel. I wonder what home Heaven is,  
 I wonder if North *has* a home or *is* a home, if I'm  
 meeting you there or if you'll catch up with me  
 on the way. I just don't want to stop climbing.

I have a friend from the Bible Belt  
 who loves God the way they teach you  
 to down there, and she, my friend from down South  
     (not a Hell metaphor, thank you)  
 told me once that the way to find a man is to  
 RUN AFTER GOD AS FAST AND AS HARD AS YOU CAN,  
 and if *he* is *the he*, then he'll be running  
 right beside you: and he's your yoke.

Hey he, I'm going North.  
 Maybe God is North, or maybe happiness,  
 or maybe just a story I've got a jonesing  
 for. You can come if you want, if it suits  
 your fancy (you can even come in a fancy suit),  
 but I'm going either way, and I gotta rucksack  
 fulla biscuits and trinkets and tinkles of poems  
 I wanna write one day (maybe on my way North),  
 and of course, I've got my home token.  
 My first instinct was to pack a crucifix, or rosary,  
 as my home token, but what's lighting the way  
 is more like the pair of His sandals that He lent  
 me that I got on my feet, that fit me like a  
 love, but that I'm not fit to wear.  
 Oh yeah, *the he*, whatever the hell you mean,  
 The Real He, the One and Only J.C. is walking  
 with us—me?— too, I don't care if you mind but I  
 really hope you don't.  
 I think you two'd get along.  
 I'll introduce you, if you haven't met.

He's just after smores and a lovely story, too,  
 like me and you (maybe a salvation or two).  
 If you want to come, I just ask that you don't  
 mind that I talk to Him more, ask His advice  
 more, and think He's cuter.  
 I ask that you don't carry a bad-smelling home token  
 or mind my Third Party (that Party of Three being the  
 Ultimate Two He's and a She or so).

*Kathleen Cole Burke*

### **Mourning Tide**

The waves have reached such heights tonight.  
 Where in the day they merely fluttered, gentle as moth wings  
 They come down now in frenzied blows,  
 A droning gray-blue tumult.  
 I can hear your voice in each resonant crash  
 And remember the day  
 Your ashes turned to salt.  
 Now you are the Ocean.  
 I envision you, something mythical  
 Ascending from a silent underworld  
 To grab my waist and guide me back  
 If I were to slip from these sea drenched rocks.  
 I imagine you, gritty, midnight air  
 Leaving my skin raw in your fleeting embrace.  
 I wonder if in death you can still  
 Feel the dim glow of dawn  
 As it bleeds through the sky  
 And warms my pulsing chest or  
 Hear the dry hymn of shoreline  
 Tree leaves stirring in the wind.  
 I wonder if you still know my  
 Heavy, searching eyes.  
 The sun rays hit the water and you  
 Are made of Light.

*Jaya Misra*

**Confession in Decker Hall Room 216A**

he turned pink  
then morphed to a gummy plum tone  
mangled choking sounds emerged  
followed by a barely audible  
I'm in love with you followed  
by a line from *Insomnia*

silence gives way to  
shame riddled confusion  
who the fuck has the courage to say that  
contemplating my next move  
eyes now more alert,  
teeth clenched as a tongue fights to penetrate

barbarism over takes civility  
I spew fag, queer, and other taught hate  
shatter visions  
his overt masculinity, beautiful jump shot,  
and sixteen pairs of Nike Air Jordans dissolve

he attempts to speak last words  
his hands are a tremor  
barely able to clutch a raggedy copy of *A Cold Spring*  
I exit

*Victor Alcindor*



**Untitled (figure)**, Katharine Overgaard, oil on canvas

## The King and I

He's a father and a god and a black leather lullaby I've known since I laid  
in pink and white.

He's proof that I was loved tenderly  
enough for the women in my family to tender our introduction  
and make it stick to my ribcage  
like the comforting tick  
of every beat of my heart since.

He's a father and a god and a black leather Romeo at the balcony of everything I wish  
I was brave enough to be.

He's been around a while but he sweats  
like it's his first last time and it's not.  
He holds his mic like a paintbrush and he sweeps  
it back and forth across my body and he has no intention  
of ever stopping.

He's a father and a god and a black leather Charon on my river Styx  
whose black hair burns blue under the eyes of a billion  
beehived females throwing themselves at his word  
and his dripping sensual truth from colored silken cloths  
purchased for only one purpose.

He's a father and a god and a black leather Lucifer but he's still so goddamned  
beautiful that people see him in everything  
but themselves.

He's undeniable and repulsive as he loses control  
over his contractually bound legs which are not actually made of gold  
like they need you to think.

He's a father and a god and a black leather Southern-bred bouncing bonny  
firstborn of a marriage between black and white music whose country  
blood only fed the revolution of conventions  
that were no longer convenient.

He's a father and a god and a black leather Orion  
who protects the night sky and my insatiable lust  
to understand a man caught between heaven and earth  
a mortal deity alone at his own rock altar  
who lit his shadows on fire  
and was no match for his flames.

He's a father and a god and a black leather Casanova I'll never get to meet  
because his exit from this world  
came nine years too early for me.  
I could not walk the day I found out  
this pretty young man with soul  
in his eyes  
and a big fuck you to the establishment  
in his hips  
was the antecedent of a bloated blue blob of a man  
who could not hold sacred his liquor,  
his loves  
or his life



**Mystery of the Mind**  
*Joanna Ginder*  
Digital Art



**La Strega**, *Deborah Nuber*, paper collage

## L'AOÛT

B273: French V.

We're ten students seated in a moon's sliver —  
 half a cupcake dotted with sprinkles.  
 At the edge of our territory,  
 dusty textbooks string the metal shelves  
 whose surfaces are scratched with age  
 and its intelligence.

Yellow markers roll off the concrete desks and  
 onto the tiled floor  
 caked with mud, remnants of gym class.  
 Laminated posters plastered around the room,  
 enclosing us inside

*la salle de classe.*

Manila folders stuffed with packets,  
 still warm from the heat of the copy machine.  
 The smell of melted Nutella creeps  
 through the crevices of the locked cabinets,  
 tempting us with the scent of summer.

It is Madame who holds the key.

The hush of her marker against the smooth white board  
 conjugates *devenir*, "to become."

*"Répétez après moi!"*

The words glide upon on our slippery tongues like  
 butter in a frying pan.

*Je devrai*

*Tu devras*

*Elle devra*

*Nous devrons*

*Vous devrez*

*Elles devront*

The words become our air as we breathe the syllables of *chaque mot*.

Inhale. Exhale.

*Je commence à vivre par le français.*

Through the windows the swoosh of passing cars and  
 the clash of the American flag loosing its battle against the gusty wind.  
 Through the door, the rise and fall of rumbling voices fuse with  
 the grumbles of the radiator.

"Man, where ya goin?"

"Boys? Do you have a pass?"

"Due, you're cutting English? Sweet."

*"Faites attention aux verbes!"*

The bell sounds.

Clare Mullaney



I saw feathers lying splayed on the sidewalk, tanned by dust. Then a weakened talon poking out from a thin covering of leaves and at the other end, a twisted neck. An eye stared upward.

"Dead birds can't see," I whispered. "Dead birds can't see. Dead birds can't see."

The hawk had been there for some time. Its once proud chest was flattened, the meat gone soft from highway air and clouds of flies. I stepped over it, my sole not grazing even the edge of a leaf that covered it. But she didn't follow me. She knelt down by the bird, printing dirt on her designer jeans. Her plastic shopping bag rustling as she put it down on the concrete, the handles still wrapped around her hand.

"It needs a proper burial," she said.

"What?" I asked. I couldn't hear her over the staccato honks of a car horn and a boy's rude whistle.

"It needs a proper burial," she repeated.

Her eyes were lowered to hazel slits as she brushed the leaves off the body. Once she stared at me with those hazel slits, her fingers trailing the rim of a chipped coffee cup at a cheap diner. It was contemplation and the result of it was, "I don't understand you." I didn't understand then either and had lowered my eyes in shame.

Now, standing on the side of the highway, I didn't understand her.

She lifted the soda and potato chips out of her plastic bag. I would carry those for her. She slid her fingers underneath the decomposing body, and held it carefully in one hand. Both wings hung limply. The eye was stared up at her. She went to put it inside the plastic bag, but the humid breeze pushed the sides of the bag in. I had to get close to the bird by kneeling down and holding the bag open with a hand on each side. She slipped the body in carefully and took the handles up in one hand, the handles twisted around the knuckles.

"Aren't you worried about West Nile? Or any of those diseases?" I asked as she stood up.

She didn't answer, but walked past me. It was a dumb question. I knew she wasn't.

We walked down the highway, close to one another. The bag bounced off my bare calf and made it itch. Her left pinky kept brushing my right. During those fall and winter months, her left pinky would brush my right and somehow all the other fingers would become entwined and our palms would meet. But on this summer day, I switched my bag from my left hand to my right hand and took a step to the side, away from her. I couldn't hold her hand.

"Are we really going to bury that bird?" I asked.

I wished she would dump it into a garbage bin on the side of the road.

"Yes," she said. "We're going to bury it in my backyard."

Her mother's car wasn't in the driveway. She had a key though, on a chain around her neck since she lost anything that wasn't attached to her. Textbooks, homework assignments, rings, my t-shirts I had left in her room by accident had all been lost by her.

She unlocked the front door and we stepped into the tiled foyer. Air-conditioning cooled my over-heated skin and I could feel the sweat becoming a thin film on my skin. She led me through the foyer without taking off her shoes. We walked through the living room with an ice-blue carpet where our shoes left small brown spots. The door to the backyard was there. She unlocked it and I followed her back into the heat.

We found a place where the grass didn't grow thick, but patchy, underneath the pine tree. Damp earth bridged each patch. I could still smell the rain storm from the morning in the dirt-- a warm, humid smell. She broke the soil with her fingers first. Each handful crumbled into smaller bits and she piled them beside her. She left grooves like dry river beds. I put my fingers into the grooves she left behind. I wanted to see if they fit. They did. I loosened two handfuls. The soil piled beneath my palm and filled the gaps between my fingers, small stones getting caught

between my skin and nails. I threw them on to her pile.

"How many feet do birds need?" she asked.

"I don't know."

After an hour of digging, we wore mud gloves that stretched up to our elbows and our clothes streaked with brown and green. Her white shirt clung to her back so I could see skin pale from winter and a small brown mark on her left shoulder. Hair had fallen from my pony tail and I used my upper arm to throw it back behind my ear. The hole was wide and curved like a cereal bowl, not a rectangle that went down into the dark.

She wrapped the bird tighter in the plastic and tied the handles around its body. It was placed in carefully; the backs of her hands touched the bottom before she let it slip from her fingers. She picked up a clod of dirt and tried crumbling it into fine grains, but penny-size pieces plopped to the bottom, making the plastic hiss. Then we began throwing earth back into the hole. She smoothed out layers with her palms and I tried using a stick. We had never been there.

She took the stick I was using and wrote Hawk in slanted letters.

"Spell it backwards," I said. "Kwah sounds more like a real name."

But she shook her head; her short brunette tendrils stayed still with hardened gel.

We sat with our backs to peeling bark. Pine needles fell on our heads.

"What were you saying earlier?" she asked.

"When?" I said.

"Earlier. On the highway."

I put both hands down on the cool ground on either side of me. I looked up and a pine needle skimmed my temple.

"I don't remember."

One of her hands covered mine. They fit in the valleys of my knuckles and her black fingernails matched mine. Her fingers curled under so the tips touched my palm.

"Dead birds can't see," she said. "Dead birds can't see. Dead birds can't see." But I wasn't convinced.

*Jordan Stamper*



**Boston**, *Cara Swan*, film & photoshop

## Exiled Guard

A dank church basement holds makeshift hoops  
 one stands at a warped 9 feet 8 inches  
 the other is duct-taped poorly at 10 feet 2 inches.  
 The 11-foot ceiling is an open sore of  
 asbestos caked piping.  
 A thin layer of soot and grease from an exposed boiler  
 coats the remnants of a parquet floor.

Nine self-proclaimed Haitians and me – the one  
 actually born in a hungry hospital in Port-au-Prince.

They speak Creole assuming that my 13 years here has  
 eaten away my dialect.

Haitian # 2 says oh that's *blanc* – I've heard this same  
 reference from my own mother.

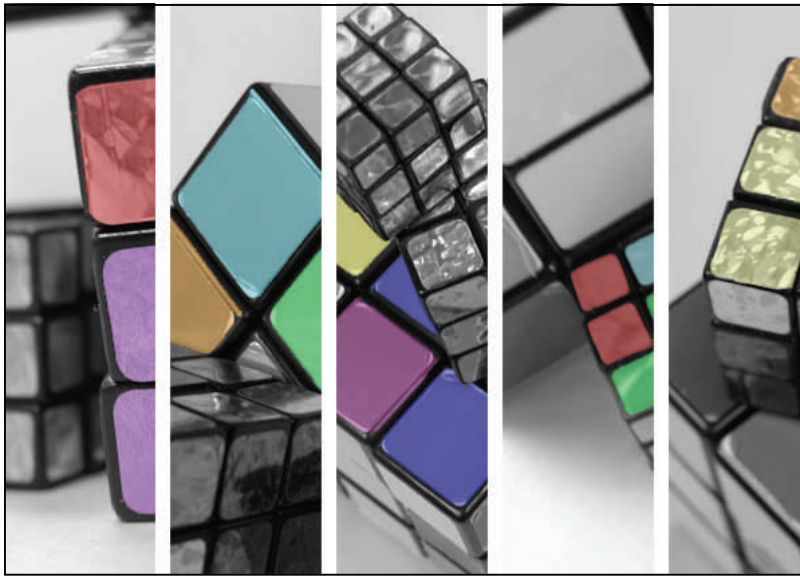
So we start, stifling space, boxed in,  
 and going no where fast.

I am picked last, I play hard,  
 set a pick, pick and roll, bounce pass,  
 go to zone defense, I play harder, not part of the play,  
 no chance to get in the zone.

I mouth to Haitian #5, the kid I came with...I'm done.  
 Making my way through soot, sweat,  
 grease, and grief - I emerge from corroded and crusted  
 storm cellar doors.

I exit, invite the air in, and  
 exhale in front of a marquee that reads  
 "Courage is like love; it must have hope for nourishment."

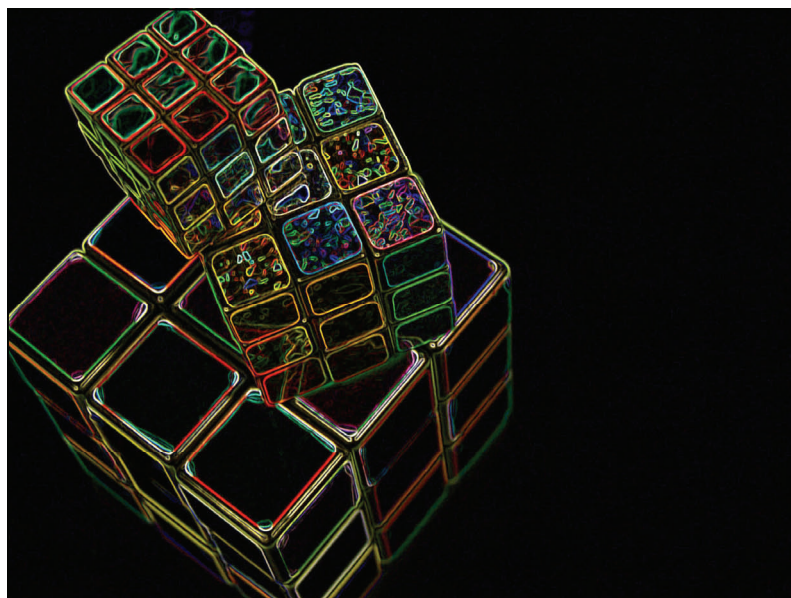
*Victor Alcindor*



### Integrate

Together, we are the slope of a  
vertical line:  
to you, we are undefined.  
You have not yet learned  
to turn your head  
pi over two radians,  
to differentiate or  
to antidifferentiate  
as I have.  
We are not the sum of our  
parts.  
To integrate us,  
you must learn  
a new math.

*H. Sudol*



**Rubix<sup>5</sup>**  
&  
**Inside-Out**

*Kristen Hugg*

Digital  
photography &  
photoshop

## Sunbathing in the Plaza San Martín

Sunbathing in the Plaza San Martín  
on a pink woolen blanket  
in the 104 degree summer sun,  
we looked more like foreigners  
than we thought we would.

Inside the circle of sun created by the  
gomero trees we laid out in our  
bathing suits, listening to our  
iPods and trying to catch a tan before  
returning to the cold, New Jersey winter.

But rather than other sunbathers, we were  
surrounded by couples hooking up  
in the grass behind us,  
on top of each other, intertwined  
unaware or unconcerned.

And there were business men on siesta,  
sprawled out on their jackets,  
taking bites of their empanada lunches.

While we stared at them, we didn't notice  
how it was us who looked foolish  
until a group of them pretended to pose  
in front of the statue of San Martín  
for a picture that we soon after realized  
was of foreigners in bathing suits  
on a woolen blanket in the summer.

*Samantha Pritchard*



**Festival**

*Kristen Hugg*

Digital photography & photoshop

## TO MY FIRST LOVE, BETH, IN SECOND GRADE

We watched you begging and pleading  
every morning clinging to the edge of the door,  
your pink fingernails dragging;  
your warm curly hair fell in your face  
and covered your bloodshot eyes.

We watched you being dragged.  
As your frustrated mother and the teacher we feared  
ripped you into the classroom  
your shrieking bounced through the halls  
making our lockers tremble.

We watched them force you into a desk,  
saw your slender body collapse  
like a rag doll with too little stuffing,  
your legs shivering with each weeping sob,  
your olive eyes drenching the floor.

We watched. And when you turned to me  
with your blushing round face  
and searched my black eyes like a scripture,  
your blazing mind seeking an ally  
in the war you'd been waging for weeks—I looked away.

Sometimes still, in the moments before sleep,  
I can feel your deep green-eyed pleading.  
In your jeans or plaid dress, with your ponytail,  
you were the only child to resist her—  
that witch-faced teacher who singled me out

as an example of an overweight child.  
She stood me up front and pinched at my fat with  
a thumb and a bony forefinger, *the perfect example  
of poor eating*. But I have waited until now to speak this.  
My passionate angel warrior, forgive me for taking so long.

*Charles Bivona*

## EDITORS' NOTES

According to Anais Nin, "We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospect." Poetry, prose, painting, and photography are all ways that we capture passed moments and allow ourselves a moment of reflection on how these events have added to our lives. The works collected in this magazine speak of the authors' and artists' unique perspectives on what life contains and the often times jarring experiences that cause us to turn to our creativity as a method of understanding. Each story, poem, or painting holds a piece of the person who created it, a piece which he or she willingly shares with an audience. The individual works come together to tell a larger story of the people in our Drew community. Whether the works are fictional or based in fact, each contributes to a greater sense of who we are and what we represent.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the making of this magazine for allowing us to be a part of the moments closest to you and for sharing yourselves on the page in whatever medium you have chosen. Your bravery and talent never cease to amaze me.

— *Samantha Pritchard*



We are not just a collection of writers and artists in the pursuit of appealing to your taste in art and writing; instead, we are here to capture the very essence of a culture undefined in history. At Drew University, we come from all over the world and have united as a community with a taste in art and writing that transcends the ordinary. Our work is an extension of our lives. We only hope you will immerse yourself in our stories for just one minute of your time to see life through a different lens. A life told in between the lines and imagined with the strokes of a brush in a painting or the jagged edge of a pencil in a sketch. Every piece written was crafted with diligence in hope to paint for you an imagination distant from what any piece of art can convey. Yet, as the words escape us, we resort to our visions in art to capture what words can't define.

It was an honor to have worked with a dedicated staff and the Drew community to create this year's edition.

— *Alshaimaa Salem*



