
Write till it burns.

We want to extend many thanks to those who have made this publication possible. To those who submitted their works, thank you! We truly appreciate what it takes to put yourselves out there creatively.

We have certainly labored over this publication and we are very proud to present a book with the sweat and blood of Elms College students, faculty and alumni.

We would like to thank Joe Sherry for the cover art.

We would also like to thank our advisor, Professor Dan Chelotti for his support and encouragement.

-Bloom Staff

Sean Smith, Joseph Sherry,

Kasey Leslie, Julia Bieber, Laura Fusini

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All the Elephants by Marisabel Santiago

I want to talk about elephants

Nobody talks about elephants

Everyone talks about love,

Or depression.

Or how much the world sucks.

What about the elephants?!

When do they get our attention?!

When we're not paying taxes, that's when.

When our biggest concern isn't national terrorism.

That, and the fact that there's 30% battery left on my new iphone

And God forbid I have to resort to my old iphone

When there's pilots getting drunk before flights

"One more shot Johnny I ain't drivin!"

And there's African children dying in…

I don't know, Africa

On the commercial on the TV while I'm eating

My takeout trying to enjoy my meal

God forbid I watch one more rerun of Friends though.

The world sucks.

Obama canned NASA.

Now my kid can't be an astronaut

The moon's callin Uncle Sam!

Russia and China will get there first.

As if China doesn't own enough already…

Good for them though! Really.

While we're busy worrying about

Colgate's ability to actually fight plaque

Or just how many calories are in our kids' mac'n'cheese.

They're watching the elephants!

Maybe not watching…China's capturing elephants.

Throwing them in cages and collecting them.

They're underfed, and abused in China

Elephants are…definitely.

At least they're looked at.

China recognized the elephants.

But do they see them?

Does anybody?

13 (Thirteen) by Hayley Zisk

Life is the Grand Canyon filled with helium

It's a broken crayon in a fresh pack of 64

A telephone booth for sale

A fly with no wings

A walk?

Plasma in a pickling jar?

Tooth decay flavored chewing gum

Binoculars under a microscope

2/3 of a cantaloupe resting on a rhinoceros's back

Balance?

Life is the Grand Canyon emptied of helium

A Venus fly trap in a crisp tuxedo

A "Q" on the Richter scale

A heated igloo made of asphalt

The construction of migraines by brain minions

Wood panels under metal sheet slabs

Sheet slabs meat slabs, right?

Plastic ribs and hollow blood

A compass that points north south east and north

The Grand Canyon floating away

Don’t ask me what life means

Just know that I really like it

Untitled by M.S.

Two weeks passed and it happened again.

You see, there was a severed human head navigating around my house, beneath the carpeting. How it moves from room to room, crossing thresholds, is beyond me; worse still, I have an idea as to whose head it is, but I'm presuming that they wouldn't care to have it back… So I feel that I might be stuck with it.

It lets loose muffled-sounding obscenities that usually subside around bedtime, for which I'm thankful, but I do find it particularly aggravating when I'm entertaining.

It, of course, can't see where it's going, so it's constantly plowing into furniture, knocking standing lamps over, or framed photographs off of desks and end tables.

I have my suspicions as to how it came to be here… And I've convinced myself that it's the head of my ex-wife's third husband, Frankie K. Parterpot. The thing of it is, she's an exceptional Black Widow if not a lousy wife and, if I'm not mistaken, is already on her 9th marriage.

I was her first.

She tried to bury me beneath a mountainous pile of pony meat, but it didn't take. The stench was overwhelming as the weeks went on and the meat

turned rancid, but I sustained myself by eating through the pile.

I chose not to pursue any type of legal recourse for fear she'd resurface and attempt to murder me again, so I just let it slide, but she's always resented me for surviving. And this is how she presents her displeasure.

It was two weeks ago that this Frankie K. Parterpot's severed head first appeared beneath my carpeting and now a second one has apparently been deposited here; this one with a less-than-masculine voice, but one that still expels the same suggestive language (it must be her 6th husband, Dorian Vilderbanks), so it's clear that they're each very upset.

The problem I'm most concerned with isn't that the other dead husbands' heads have yet to materialize, but that it would cost a fortune to replace the carpeting… And I've been spending far too much money on pony meat, for which I've developed quite the craving for as of late.



By Joe Sherry

Two Conversations in a Yoghurt Shop by Jason Burke Murphy

CUSTOMER ONE:

Yesterday, I saw a sign in front of a church—you know those movable-type-type signs? This one said "If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it."

(Pause. Screen shows picture of such a sign.)

CUSTOMER TWO:

That's absurd, God is all-powerful. He doesn't need a refrigerator.

CUSTOMER ONE:

Well, if he is all-powerful, he must have a refrigerator. He lacks nothing.

CUSTOMER TWO:

Which means he does not lack a way to cool his food, which he also doesn't have because he doesn't need it.

CUSTOMER ONE:

God has food in as much as God perfectly understands food. I didn't say God needs a refrigerator. I only said that God has a refrigerator. Without God, there would be no refrigerator.

CUSTOMER TWO:

If you mean that all earthly refrigerators are, in the end, God's refrigerators then I would see your point, but there would be another problem. There surely are people in the world who do not have any picture on any of these said earthly refrigerators. So God would have a refrigerator without your picture on it.

CUSTOMER ONE:

God's idea of a refrigerator is the only real refrigerator there has ever been. All others would be but a pale copy. Everyone is on the fridge inasmuch as all are known by God.

CUSTOMER TWO:

Sounds good. Lets go to the GAP. (EXIT.)

CUSTOMER THREE:

(SITTING, WITH YOGHURT) Hey, there's a clown. Let's get a balloon animal.

CUSTOMER FOUR:

(SITTING, WITH YOGHURT) I don't like clowns.

CUSTOMER THREE:

Aw, come on. Clowns are awesome.

CUSTOMER FOUR:

I once thought so but, you see, I've had just a few dogs my whole life and two of them were run over by clowns.

CUSTOMER THREE:

What?

CUSTOMER FOUR:

Two separate incidents. Two clowns that didn't know each other.

CUSTOMER THREE:

Were they on duty?

CUSTOMER FOUR:

What do you mean?

CUSTOMER THREE:

Were they in make-up? Was there a bunch of them in the car at once? Big, floppy shoes?

CUSTOMER FOUR:

There was just one in each car and one at each time. They were in make-up and outfits but they were quite serious given what happened.

CUSTOMER THREE:

Oooh! My favorite clown trick is the invisible dog at the end of a leash. There is a fake collar on the end and the clown keeps it where a dog would be and there is a bark sound. There's barking and a collar but no dog.

CUSTOMER FOUR:

If I saw such a thing, I would beat that clown just as surely as I am sitting here.

(Their spotlight goes out. Customers Exit.)

Bonded by Marcos Navarro

A lone figure sits by a dying fire

The fire provides a warmth from memories past

Memories flood the figure's senses one after another

A gentle embrace, a calloused hand in theirs

Laughter in the moonlight, running in the fields

The figure lifts their hand to their face

A lone drop falls to it, their vision goes blurry

"Where are you when I need you most?"

The fire answers with a pop as its warmth dims

New memories invade the figure's senses

Loud yells and a slammed door, Shivers from the wind

Standing alone in the rain, Painful letters with false words

The figure squeezes their eyes shut

More drops fall, now onto both hands

A wail escapes their lips as they break into a sob

"Why did you have to go?"

The embers respond, almost in sadness,

by almost going out

More memories assault the figure's mind

Wire jutting from a body, labored breathing and machines whirring

A hole in the ground, a cold box lowered in with a ring on top

The figure is silent now, no warmth, no movement

A hand reaches out of the darkness; a bond is made of hands

The warmth is familiar to both in the bond made

"You came... I didn't think you would..."

The fire is out now, the warmth no longer there

A cold figure is found no longer moving

In their closed hand is a ring, their face is a serene smile

Finally at peace...



By Julia Bieber

Nordic Love by Sean Smith

The girl went to the canal past River Street.

She had a silver dollar in her hand, pressed firm into her palm;

The same palm that ran over the back of a sweaty teenaged lover yesterday

The girl dipped her toe in the canal.

The canal wanted to swallow her whole

Swallow her as her palm was swallowing the silver dollar

The canal ran hard toward the ravine.

This is the same ravine she went fishing in with her Pop Pop years ago,

When she was a girl with a single braid and no silver dollar

This Song by Sean Smith

I'm sorry I don't know this song

The cliffs I walk along hold me back and worry me

I know that there's a ravine or another rock

Past the cliff

But I can't bear to look

You call me from the cabin

"Come home and warm up by the fire."

"The barley and the stove know your plight." you say

To comfort me with a smile will do just fine.

A little river to a golden field would suit me fine

Or a man with a satchel full of hearts and souls

A canyon of wheat and barely I'd understand

But a darkness without corners

Or a light without a sound

Would have me shiver to my core.

Venice by Sean Smith

Could I be with you, beautiful woman from Venice?

You swim in the streets; this is a fact

But you row in the moon tides; this is a wish

You hold candles to the other women in Venice

With babies on shoulders and dough kneaded with fists

With colossal heartbreaks of millions

Who flash by your photograph every day

Untitled by Sean Smith

Run the plough through the wheat

Call the baker who works in town

The dough will rise with fervor tonight

Call the baker who works in town

For the wheat to grow like healthy boys

The sun must rise soft and fall hard

For the bodies to grow big and strong

The sun must rise soft and fall hard

Poor, sad bodies stand hard in line

While course skin weathers time

Old men, young men, fair skinned children all wail

While course skin weathers time

The farmer sweats from a lapse in judgment

Crying babies, horror-stricken mothers unite

The farmer slices open his own neck

Crying babies, horror-stricken mothers unite.



By Rachael Wasser

Untitled by Christina Goodchild

The burning embers of the leaves hang,

upon the ground which shakes against the cold.

From the Play WE ARE A BEAR by Jason Burke Murphy

The audience sees a wall and a barrier above the wall that is meant to either keep it (the Bear) from getting out or zoo visitors from climbing in. The rest of the stage makes it clear that we are at a zoo.

Some children (as many as you wish and all played by adults) and a parent approach the barrier.

CHILD

What is it?

ANOTHER CHILD

It's a bear!

CHILD

What kind of bear?

ANOTHER CHILD

I dunno.

CHILD

Dad [Mom], what kind of bear?

PARENT

(Looking at the audience)

I don't know.

(A sign lowers with an arrow that says

"Information Here")

ANOTHER CHILD

It's a black bear.

CHILD

Brown!

ANOTHER CHILD

(Shoves CHILD)

Black!

CHILD

(Shoves back)

Brown!

ANOTHER CHILD

Dad! [Mom!] She pushed me!

(They tussle.)

PARENT

Settle down!

(They do for one second.)

CHILD

It’s not a polar bear, I’ll tell you that much!

ANOTHER CHILD

(Mockingly)

Ba-Ba-Ba-Ba-Ba. Ba-Ba-Ba-Ba-Ba!

CHILD

Dad! [Mom!]

PARENT

Now, now. There was every reason to make fun of you just then. Of course, it's not a polar bear. We don't need to know what kind of bear this is. We can just enjoy looking at it.

ANOTHER CHILD

I want to see the penguins.

PARENT

We don't have time today.

ANOTHER CHILD

Bears are stupid.

CHILD

Bears are awesome. Penguins stink!

ANOTHER CHILD

Bears can't swim fast underwater!

CHILD

Penguins can't smite their enemies!

ANOTHER CHILD

Bears eat stupid, mis-born cretins like you!

(Tussle)

CHILD

Penguins crap in your shoes and blame the stench on you!

ANOTHER CHILD

Bears are hairy stooges of satan!

CHILD

Penguins are nature's minstrel show!

ANOTHER CHILD

Codswallop!

CHILD

Horsefeathers!

PARENT

Stop! Stop that right now!

ANOTHER CHILD

I wanna see the monkeys!

CHILD

Penguins! You got to see this stupid bear!

PARENT

We are not going to either one.

ANOTHER CHILD

Monkeys are our cousins!

CHILD

Atheist! Atheist!

PARENT

Calm down!

CHILD

He always gets what he wants!

PARENT

That's not true. Neither of you ever get what you want because you are always acting stupid.

ANOTHER CHILD

I wanna see the monkeys!

PARENT

It is time to go home! We've seen half the zoo!

(Screen shows Dippin' Dots Ice Cream stand.)

CHILD

Oooh, oooh! Dippin' dots! I want Dippin' Dots!

ANOTHER CHILD

Yeah, Dippin' dots!

ALL CHILDREN

Please, please, please!

PARENT

No, absolutely not! You do not deserve the ice cream of the future.

(Children start to protest but are silenced.)

Have either of you ever thought that I might have my own list of animals to see? I wanted to see the elephants. But we saw your animals as if I don't even count. Instead of seeing elephants, I am losing my mind listening to you fight and complain. You don't deserve the ice cream of the future. We're going home and we're going to eat crappy, crappy, ice cream. Lame. Substandard. Do you understand me? You will eat lousy ice cream with no grousing. You do not deserve the ice cream of the future.

(They hang their heads.)

Do you?

ALL CHILDREN

No.

PARENT

You listen to me and you listen good. We are going to the gift shop and you will each pick one thing—one!—

and then we are going home. There better not be any more of this bull crap. Got it?

(The children start to exit and begin screaming that it's the others' fault just as they exit. An actor or dancer, dressed as a PEACOCK, enters. He reaches center stage and unfurls his tail feathers. One of the children runs across the stage shouting.)

CHILD

Kill the pigeon! Kill the pigeon!

(They exit.)



By Rachael Wasser

Perfectionism by Julie Waskiewicz

Putrid pinnacle of paranoid pride

Everlasting eye-opening energy

Ruthless ruminating ramifications

Fabricating fibs to falsify the flames

Endless earth shattering efforts

Careless of my cyclic crammed concerns

Tantalizing my tortured, tiresome mind

Igniting ingenious ploys against me

Opening ominous clouds of fury

Negating all tales the noggin negotiates

Isolating irreplaceable insights

Seductive sinister evil is what you are

My own murderous menacing enemy.

Identity Crisis by Julia Bieber

Brand new baby.

Baby joy.

Precious girl.

Our girl.

Blank slate.

New life.

Not quite.

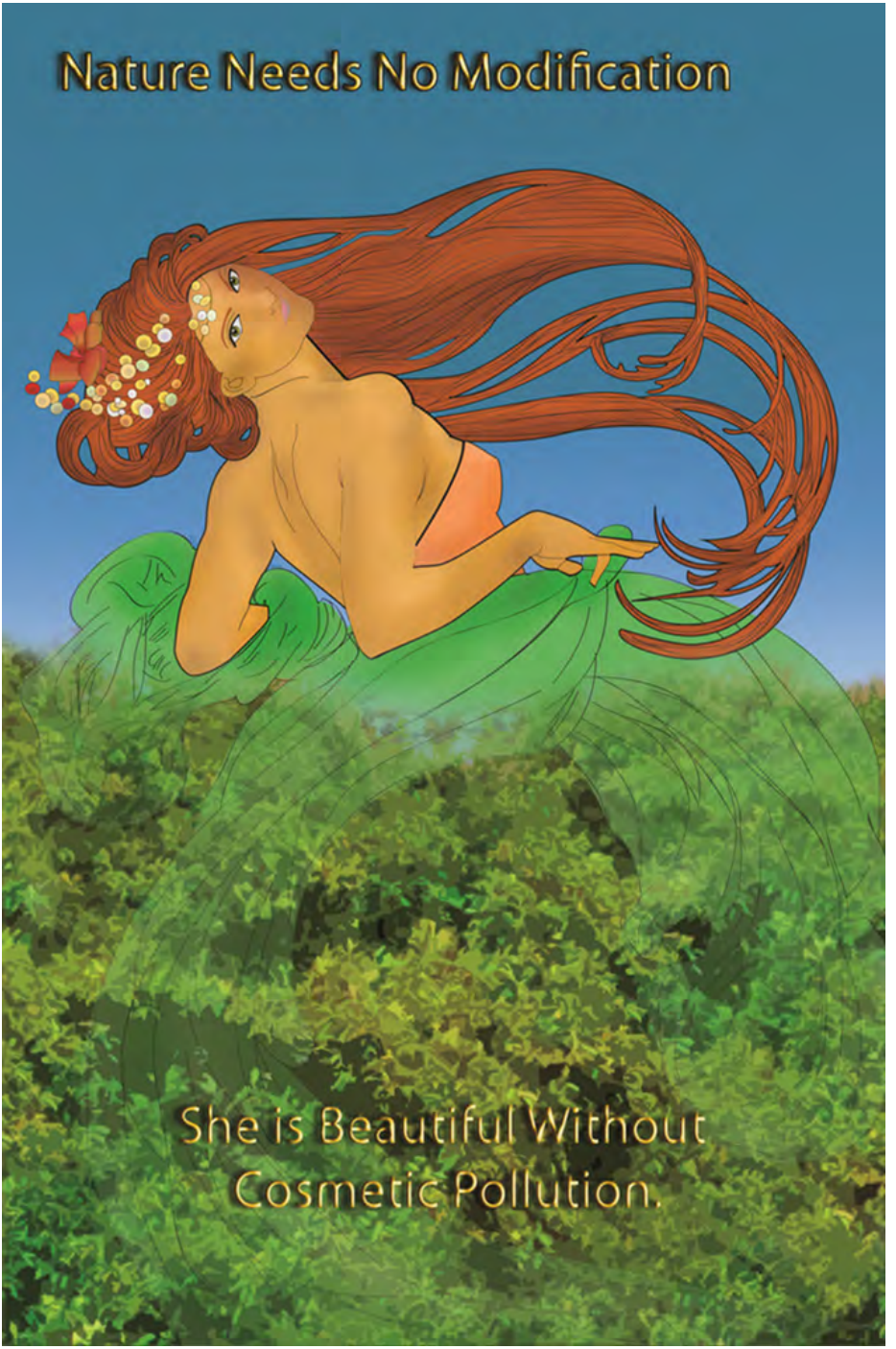
Old life, life that could have been remains.

What to do.

Secrets. Secrets.

Forget.

Unforgettable.



By Kristi Pueschel

The Half of the Day by Moma Ars

The peacocks have beautiful rainbow feathers

I imagine they have small hearts

the statue of the small, porcelain peacock is very fragile.

The squalid man has a small, porcelain cup

there is a small pond nearby where he lives

there are many beautiful swans in it.

Alaskan Sun by Marisabel Santiago

-Constant- something that is always happening, always there.

Like in Alaska, how the cold brisk air is always hugging the hot flaming sun.

It never gets dark in Alaska. I need me a girl who can be my “Alaskan Sun,”

Who will never leave me to go see other people, who would keep me warm when my heart was cold,
Imagine, never having to worry about your sun leaving you.

My Alaskan sun, feeding me through my roots, ripening my body and the strands of my hair, painted my toes like you painted the earth with its greens and blues; I was never blue with you.

Sometimes I’d sit and think about the moon, how it’s doing and wondering if she’s thinking about me too.

If it ever came around trying to take your place, the murder would be known as the “eclipse case”.

And with these thoughts I remember that you made me strong with your rays of hope.

You made my skin tough with your nothing short of intense heat; my favorite place is with you on the beach.

My Alaskan sun when I fear the pitted absence of color and what is lurking behind the door or around the corner, you tell me that I do not have to be afraid because you are always lighting up my way.

Illuminating my illusions, brightening my confusion, beaming on my bruises filled with pain.

The glare that you would give me, if the radiator even looked at me, never made me feel so good.

I was so hot because of you.

My Alaskan sun, you give light to many who need it, you dazzle with charm.

I wish I could wrap you up into my arms and let you shimmer through my soul.

How I love the twinkle you put in my eyes.

My Alaskan sun, your sparkle will never die.

Bridges by Marisabel Santiago

My mother once told me that people like me don't grow old, because we die young.

And in that moment, I could not have agreed with her more.

My life was speeding down a side street in the pouring rain, reckless.



By Anna Arbuzova

11:55 pm 9-4-12 by Tessa Rivers

You were my headache

you rusted out my lungs

with noxious gases and toxic fumes

there were no get well cards

or thank you letters

it's five months later and

they're in envelopes

but without stamps

with nowhere to go

the night covered us

as I tried to get away from

everyone else

from the streetlights

from the high tension wires

out to where the stars

and your eyes

transcended the darkness

it wasn’t a joke

this thing

this being,

us.

we tried and we failed and we

cannot be forgiven,

you cannot be forgiven.



By Kasey Leslie

Martha by Tessa Rivers

Shake the amber from your veins, Martha.

The woods have exploded inside your head.

Did November catch you off guard?

It has shoved red and orange sludge into your throat

and it has begun to peek out from behind your eyes.

You are frightened, aren't you?

Hands are shaking and teeth chattering,

this fear has become so interlaced, reshaping your alabaster bones

you can scarcely make one look different from the other.

It has chased you through the woods, and coughed

black soot inside of your doorframe.

It sought you out, rough calloused hands

Catching hold of you by the collar and dragging you to

the floor, the red and orange

pouring from your throat to your hands.

Shake the amber from your veins, Martha.

The dry leaves enshrouding you have taken apart the sunlight

and placed it carefully back together,

into your stained glass mausoleum.

Maggots have begun to feast,

gorging themselves on rotting earth.

Revolting, taking from you the only thing

you had left and using it to feed their babies.

A proposed agreement and a contract that

ink from your pen had not oozed

upon. The maggots locked themselves

inside a quaint fortress, barricading

against your liver and your lungs.

The revolution of rebirth, red and orange

creeping from the green canopy,

an effervescing, ever changing scenery.

The colors segregate themselves

a dream keeping them in hues

that dance and pop, an electric

magnetism, sent from heaven on the clouds

and the air choked against the greying sky

soaking the expanse of forest

until the chrysalis hid among

the branches of an ash tree,

breaking open their delicate mesh of saliva

to expose the stained glass orange and black,

that gale riding creature, absconding

through the night to slumber and

return at dayspring.

Did this love poem take ten? By Tessa Rivers

I watched your black dahlia smile across
your pale white face; it grew more pronounced and
seemed to be so morbid, but this is a
love poem. A love song I composed at
you, never to you, never about you.

After you I could only count to ten.

I stopped watching amber waves of grain blow
across the prairie, I do not care, there
are not any vicious animals to
lurk beyond pages in your diary
they tried to escape from the ballpoint cage
provided by the stationary store
but I cannot count to ten anymore

I am cereal boxes of dog drool.

I am acrid coffee and hookah smoke.
I hung ribbons from your follicles when
you wanted to fly to the stars and yet
you made it to the heavens without them.

When they put you in the satin and fired
the twenty-one cannons spewed ink and smoke.
I read your eulogy to a squirrel
that crept up my sidewalk to my window.
I would rather him dead than your white face
pale like the snow left to melt, dirty and
pushed aside and I gave up on fixing you

The dust in my apartment can keep me
believing in your honor even past
when my beliefs should have been expired.

I will still count to ten by ten with you

Counting the knife slots in the window sill
your hands matched them up so well, all of your
ten fingers, we stole them and they locked me
away to count my tens for your canon
note by note by chord by chord, line by line
every good boy does fine with seven notes
I'm stuck counting coins to place on your eyes
a padded cell with slot marks to match my
fingertips, like your windowsill and you
knew that I did say I love you, ten times.

I watch headlights; your obituary
recorded on raindrops I pasted it
to the rooftops, but the branches of the
cypress tree have never meant so much, they
held you up to count to ten, held onto
the air in your lungs when they put you down.

Ten by ten there were green branches and a
grave of water lilies and moss under
my fingernails. Wipe tears away, I love
you ten times. You've never said a word and
you crept away like a spider without
a web for protection. No shelter, no
foothold, no life rope to cling to when you
fall away from the Spanish moss upon
the branches swaying in a hurricane.

Untitled by Tessa Rivers

Icy hands grip my small intestine

the heart that beat so strongly

is panicked

the smell of sharpie permeates the room

the paper bleeds the ink

an octopus has sprawled itself

over thirty sheets of college ruled loose leaf

notebook paper

The lines are unsure of where to turn

or should they stay here

the safe white

comforting and familiar

Icy hands wring my neck

Breath hot and acidic on my face

melting my cells and sweat

a mixture of fear and loathing dispersed

on the pavement

Wave goodbye as her carnage drives away

Necklaces in hand



By Anna Arbuzova

ADK Release by Mike Biegner

The promise of graupel in October keeps it dangerous.

Dancing to the prehistoric growl of a throaty Mercury,

a morning skier rides glassy water.

Lazy heat climbs the dizzy heights of red-tail hawks overhead.

This festooned place, dressed in the rust of sumac,

hustles at the speed of tamarac.

The trees we measure our children's growth by.

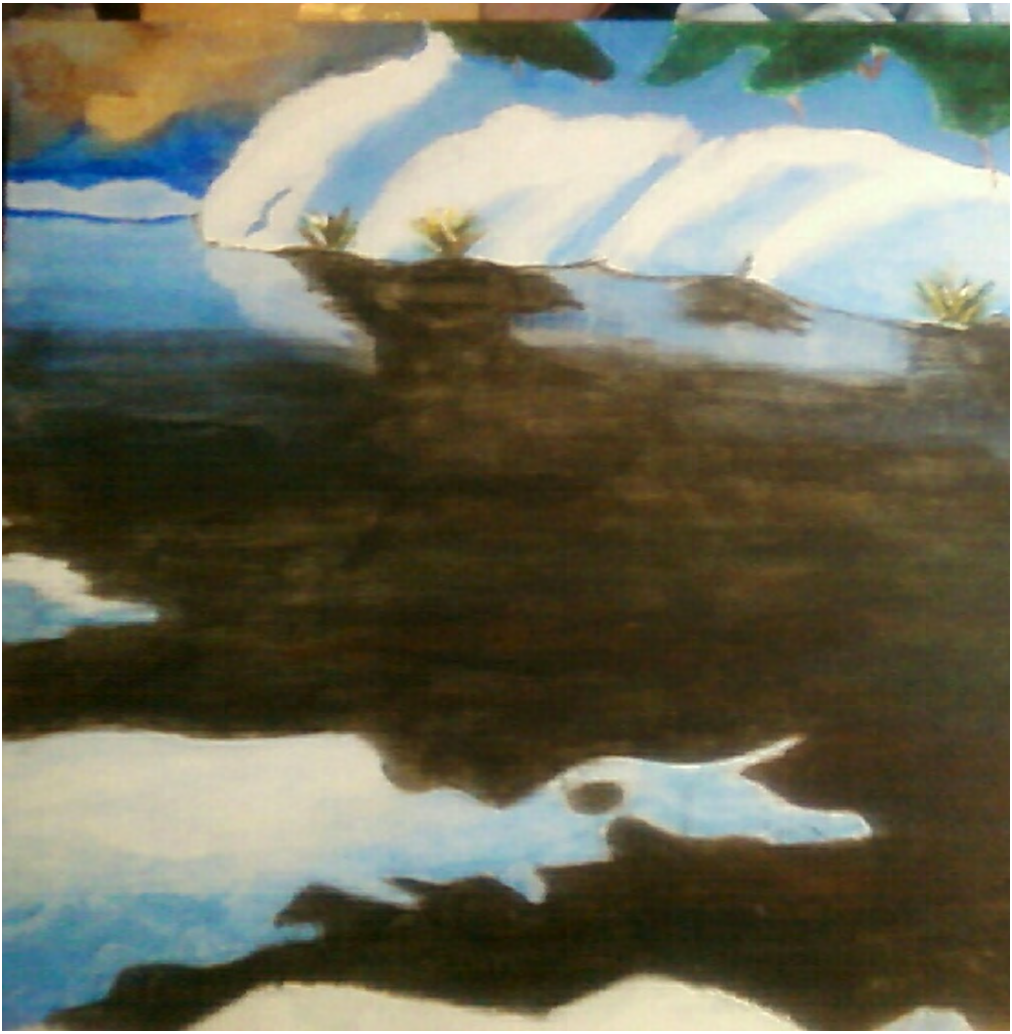
A lake of razor blades white as a kayak's wake,

flashes the lightning of a silver-bodied trout,

Caught on nightcrawlers, we dug up locally the night before.

She is netted from the deep cold,

gills gasping pink & then released.



By Kendra Hicks

Evolution by Mike Biegner

A wasp lands on my hand & explores the Appalachians of my knuckles,

warmed by skin below & sun above.

I watch him articulate wiry legs like an eight-year-old-Mozart's fingers

over piano keys. Each limb, brown & jointed, is raised & lowered.

I wonder about wasp limbs while he wonders about hands.

He counts the twenty-seven bones. He

Feels every phalange & carpal muscle with its silky line.

Is he jealous of my opposable thumbs?

Does he sense the ice ages past that erased every species

whose flippers, then claws, could not adapt?

These were the casualties of being unable to wrap fingers

around chiseled stones, of being unable to make tools of

discarded bones to build fires, tools

that felled the woolly mammoth,

that provided the calories to survive the cold,

that provided the protein to feed an oversized brain

that incited innovation

which gave rise to dancing,

that breathed spirit into religion,

that gave us the urgency of family.

He stumbles on my boyhood freckle –

Over the scar I earned that summer

Shucking corn with a fileting knife.

He lifts his bulbous abdomen,

As if showing me his own opposable thumbs.

He lowers his antennae but I make no move against him –

Even as he sinks his stinger into the boniest part of my hand,

where two blue veins join like rivers in the dark
European forests.

I watch the spot grow cherry red & bite my cheek but
will not slap.

Instead, I watch him limp away in weakened light.

Soon, a Canadian clipper will tear through the valley like
a rambunctious teenager.

Drunk from the cold, he will bump lazy into doors &
screens.

He will drop to earth & start to walk as if forgetting how
to fly.

By month end, the same New England frost that grabs
my sleepy garden by the throat

Every year will freeze the wasp dead.

Later, I will sweep its raisin-body from my deck

Occasionally stopping to rub my hand.

Heart. Lungs. Walnut. by Mike Biegner

The wooden Buddha sits on my computer desk along with a small figurine of Spiderman and a cheap clock bearing the image of Chairman Mao in his famous flat cap and comrade jacket. His arm is actually the second hand and as it ticks, he waves the little red book.

The Buddha, who believes all life is suffering, is mesmerized by the jerky motion of Mao's arm. Spiderman stares sternly ahead, arms folded, watching for evil to spring up. Life is not easy life for a superhero if your motto is "With great power comes great responsibility." Captain Buzz-kill.

Chairman Mao reminisces of the good old days, of purging intellectuals and saving the country from capitalism. The Buddha reminds him to leave the damn Dali Lama alone, to let him chill, but Mao, even as a piece of junky-Chinese-tourist-claptrap will not listen. Time softens all things save the ersatz Mao.

In China there is a one child policy to control the population. In a culture that devalues girls, many families abort girl babies and try again until they get a boy.

It's tough in China to be a woman. But it's tough all over if you don't have a penis. If a penis gives men power, then it is surprising that no man has ever considered getting an additional penis sewn on. And if one penis allows a guy to make 25 cents more on the dollar than

half the population, consider what having two or even three penises would do for the bottom line!

And maybe if Mao had sex more often, or the Buddha, things might be different.

I cannot speak for the Spiderman doll on my desk though since he is only a plastic torso, and has no anatomical parts. Besides, how intimidating must it be for a woman to have sex with a superhero, one who spins webs, one who looks better in spandex than she does.

But all this reminds me how the thin line that connects everything is there if we choose to follow it. How a walnut, turned sideways, looks like a heart and lungs. How a human brain from above does too. How the Buddha seeks enlightenment in the emptiness, while Mao craves the emptiness of a McDonalds in a country of billions and billions served.

McDonalds in China serves fish. And noodles. They try to tailor the experience to the culture so it seems natural which of course, it can never be if you have ever eaten at McDonalds. The experience is like everywhere that makes it like nowhere. Like Airport décor.

The Chinese like noodles. And fries. But they dislike the Japanese for pretty good reason, given the Japanese Imperial history of invading China. But the Japanese hate radioactivity. They had to create their own god-myth-action hero in the form of the lizard-god Godzilla,

which is the embodiment of the United States, the only country to ever use a nuclear weapon, twice. On Japan.

Which is really misleading because during the Iraq war, tanks shot shells of dense depleted uranium. These dense shells penetrated tank walls and had low levels of radioactivity, so that even Iraquis who survived, would die years later from cancer.

Spiderman didn't ask to get bitten by a radioactive spider. But it is a far cooler creation myth to say that I was bitten by an eight legged dirty bomb, than to say I was a tank commander in the Republican guard in the first Desert Storm.

Sometimes I lean back in my chair and I squint my eyes at the three figures. The Buddha meditates and sees reality for what it is. The Spiderman eyes him nervously. Buddha, a strict adherent of ahimsa, would never dream of swatting a spider, even a radioactive one. While Chairman Mao, under the force of the clock's windup springs, flails his little red book over and over at both the Buddha and Spiderman, knowing all the while that Kentucky Fried Chicken has taken over his country – this country that gave us SARS. Mao knows there is nothing to be done but dream of an aging capitalism, dying of natural causes, praying that he never bumps into Ayn Rand in the afterlife.

On that point, they all agreed.

Letter To Morning by Mike Biegner

Arab Proverb: “If you speak, it had better be more beautiful than silence.”

Dear Morning,

How are you even possible? How soft your reds! How blue the thin lips of your mountains! I haven’t written in a while, I am sorry for that. Your pink lips are the ones I dream of kissing in my sleep. What are you when I am not here, beneath raw egg clouds that hang over the bubbling river?

I have loved things of nature far stranger than you, let me tell you. I have loved the evening ever since I could recognize stars for what they really were: the eyes of children. But you introduce yourself to me as if my memory were an unrequited lover, as if I were a goldfish making one more turn around the fishbowl, asking your name again and again. I see the burdens in your bloodshot eyes; you just want one good night’s sleep. You want to be able to sleep in, to make eggs and brew strong coffee in the morning. You approach the horizon like an artist. You look at it from every angle, hoping to get the best light, the most evocative perspective.

I have loved winter storms, with their large open mouths and their brutish arms, with their mounds of snow in womanly shapes.

I have also loved the tugging war of the humidity of summer too.

Yet I bring the sunflower of my heart to you. The smile of grays to whites, to purples to reds to blues. I have dreams about you. I dream that you are a bride and we are being married, that I carry you in my arms, over a threshold of evergreen but sometimes my dreams go bad. Sometimes you are a dying bird of prey and I am crying in my sleep. The good kind of crying, the kind that has no reason, except for the sadness we all carry around in us.

On the river, I watch the sculls knife through blackish water. You seem happy. The hawks circle above, their red tails spark like flint, the kestrel high overhead pipes a shrill tune. I see the racehorse breath of the oarsmen from the exertion of rowing. They rest their oars flat, water drips melancholy but you seem happy. Their exertion is a love song to you. You blush. You are god-like, undressing the night, the mud, and the long-faced pull of the river south. The flotsam dances hypnotically on the surface: these are what I notice that you give fire to. As if you first gave life to everything. As if you were the god we pray to for all things.

Love

Michael

By Anna Arbuzova



To Jean-Marie, the one who corrected me.

by Laura Fusini

I am delighting in everything these days!

The one in charge and the attire I will not venerate,

it's not dying, it's dead; now finally to God alone!

The pennies left behind by the ones with somewhere to go

their muscles far too slight to drag copper.

The glasses of fermented fruit and the rancid meat

so pleasant to those savoring the top tiers.

I heard the martyrs say that my little thoughts could listen

To the boundless words but could not ponder them.

And as it was, I tried to be lawful.

Shiner by Laura Fusini

She showed me her marvelous, welling eye

we thought we would burn in reverie!

and so it was, under our crown,

Please look away!

Don't ever look away!

We will never be scholars.

She didn't turn her head

or close her eyes.

She went away.

We remained

in the middle of the wood floor,

begging for water like a mongrel,

we forgot the suggestive life.

My and Velimir's Courtship by Laura Fusini

My body is so old, it doesn't shine at all

and water is eating it alive!

There is still so much left of me

dead muscles

and thick wilting skin

Why do I still want

milk and bread and meat

even though I've seen the tree

and heard the blood pooling at her feet

We could, instead, sit in the wood

our hands dug profoundly in the snow

We are sorry

and the river swells around us

making our bodies hurt more

Drink the wine before the water eats that, too!

I did as you said

a decent daughter has to

I placed my breath onto a cloth

and washed your poor feet

with balmy strokes

We admired the sky

missing, all the while,

the calf eating a patch of grass beside us

Lumière by Laura Fusini

The Son wasn't born

how they would have you believe.

In steps:

Mary breathing how they taught her

thinking: I will never have another!

or yelling like a dog

and squeezing Joseph's hand.

On the contrary,

she had a milky belly

and eyes brimming with lapis hortensia;

she knew how to cherish her little king

and I cry that I can't have that baby stirring beneath my mantle.



By Tavish Leland

Secretly Writing Poems in the Bathroom of the Bar is Difficult

by Katie Condon

Celerity

was never my strong suit.

Poems demand more time than the time it takes

to take a piss, or to buy a tampon

from the sad machines that want

their fix of love or something like it.

Though, there's

    something ghostly about a woman

    leaving a bathroom with her bag too close,

searching for a window with a bird in it,

driving into the blue night

looking for a place to pull over so she

can stare into the sky's face uninterrupted—

ask it its name—reply for the first time

with her own.

Wind swims through the bar door

(illusions of breath on our necks),

the bartender hums the tune of a

hummingbird rising from its flower,

bar stools swivel, a basket is scored—

I could tell them all that the moon

is our only source of tiding,

but I'd be lying if I said that the water never reflected

the trees it wasn't supposed to,

that I am denying dying at the hands

of the sparrows and cranes that fly in circles

in my eyes— No, the morning will come

and will or will not bring rain and I will wear

black fabric to cover breath I want remembered.

They Remain to be Seen by Katie Condon

If this is land, and that is land, lounging on its back,

letting children snap its eyes into tedious dirty pieces,

then we may not have eyes at all, or this land

is not as simple as we want it to be: look at it

sloping up and out toward the sun as if its hairy green

bodice housed more than just pollen and air,

or animals pretending to be human; this land has

no means to move us, and no means to run anywhere,

except toward the softer ground beneath it.

We pick up our shovels.

We are going to Riverside

with the intention of possibly returning

after swimming in its fountains and peeking up girls dresses

at the mysteries that we have only just begun to dream about,

and quietly now we climb down the ladder backward,

the three of us and Jack Green, having little doubt

that we are descending away from the midst of men

who breathe heavy smoke across their moustaches, and clean

ladies who bathe only on the afternoons that threaten

their delicate porcelain sanities. We were all thirteen

then I think, except for Jack Green who was eleven,

and we moved out across the land in youthful torrents,

forgetting completely about the existence of stars

and sneakers and bicycles, hardly realizing that we weren't

carrying our shovels anymore, and believing

that the future would be a happy place for all of us—

but the years seldom seem to care what impression

they make on the twilit minds of children, thrusting

each one of us into the arms of whatever month it pleases.

We lost Jack Breen in August, and stood gently confused,

staring into the face of some ancient land covered in years

and lighting, spread out across the horizon, infused

with a shade of blue that is reserved only for midnight

or the fluid in our veins just before it turns to blood,

and we stood patiently on top of the land, drenched in blue

air, waiting for time to lightly shove us toward morning.

By Kristi Pueschel

A Peculiar Monarch By T.S.

I was alone in a dimly lit, dusty old room. There were no windows, at least the majority of the time...a small slit of a window would disappear and reappear at times, releasing the smallest sliver of sunlight. In this room I sat, feeling nothing but empty loneliness. However, out of nowhere, a beautiful burst of monarch butterflies erupted into the room. They were magnificent, and I recall being completely captivated by their beauty. They came through the tiny window, followed by a small ray of sunlight.

Suddenly, a group of boys kicked down the door of the room and barged in. Most were dressed in white dirty button-down shirts, with gray or brown pants, old fashioned suspenders, dirty shoes, and those old fashioned caps boys used to wear. Their ages ranged from twelve to eighteen. I sat and watched in horror as they came in, stomping on the butterflies; hitting them, flicking them, pinching them. They tore their wings off, grabbed them and threw them. I recognized some of the boys at moments as some of the men in my life. Some were friendly faces...others were enemies, ones in life who I did not appreciate at all. I sat in horror and shock for a few moments before getting up and screaming. I tried to grab the butterflies from the boys' hands, but it was always too late: The butterflies were beaten and broken, or worse, dead.

The most horrifying of the experiences occurred when the boys left. After they had gone, an eerie silence had crept into the room. The room was still; butterfly carcasses spewed about, draped over the barren furnishings. I sat in horror, beginning to be enveloped by sadness and the worst feeling of melancholy. I curled in on myself, pulling my knees to my chest, crying. The moment was broken, however, when I heard the most ungodly noise ever. It was an indescribable, inhuman sound: an ever so faint moan or screech, perhaps a whimper. It was something that was suffering. I got up, walked over to a shelf, only to find a butterfly that had been entrapped into some metal contraption meant to be a form of torture for the butterfly. Its body and wings were strapped down, encased in cold, hard metal. Only its proboscis could move. In a final, desperate, tortured whimper, it let its proboscis unravel slowly and inward one last time. I screamed and tried to free it, but it was too late, and I only injured the butterfly further.

I sat on the ground and sobbed again, giving up. Suddenly I noticed something small move on the ground beside me. Trapped in a small damp puddle on the ground was one last monarch butterfly, the only one left alive in the room. It was struggling tremendously, its wings drenched and faded of any color from the water. Carefully, I scooped it out of the water. Its wings, which were now clear, fell off, leaving only the body; yet it was still alive. Despite its loss, the butterfly seemed to have

a spark of life in it. With my own will combined with that of the butterfly, I decided to keep it, and nurse it back to health, as best I could. In the room, as days passed, I had set up a little box for the butterfly. It struggled at first, but willingly drank the sugar water I was able to provide for it. Time passed, and it grew stronger. The butterfly was the only thing keeping me going. I found pleasure and hope in its company. The butterfly grew back its wings and was more beautiful than ever. I released it out the window and sunlight lit up the room.



By Rachael Wasser