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INSTRESS

Journal of the Arts

2015



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Instress has been published by the students of Misericordia since December 1966. The word *instress* was coined by Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Bernadette Waterman Ward describes *instress* thus: "Instress is an action of the will—a moral action, for good or evil. Instress is assent, to use Newman's term, to an inscape. To call out an inscape is a pleasure, though not one necessarily leading to God; . . . But the ability to see and instress inscapes is the imaginative faculty that makes love possible." *Instress* at Misericordia is therefore an opportunity of the artistic and literary imagination to make possible something—call it *love* or even *grandeur*—like the following, from Gerard Manley Hopkins' "God's Grandeur":

. . .

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

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We would like to acknowledge all those who contributed to the creation of this year's issue. We extend a special thanks to Sr. Jean Messaros and the Religious Sisters of Mercy, President Botzman, our Guest Poet H. R. Stoneback, Dean Russ Pottle and the College of Arts and Sciences, Jim Sabulski and the Misericordia Print Shop, the English Department, and the editorial board.

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Guest Poet: H. R. Stoneback



The editors of *Instress* would like to introduce H. R. Stoneback (PhD Vanderbilt 1970), a Distinguished Professor of English at the State University of New York (New Paltz). An internationally renowned poet and literary critic, he is the author of more than 200 essays on such authors as Lawrence Durrell, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Robert Penn Warren, and numerous other poets and writers. He has published (as author or

editor) more than 30 books, roughly half literary criticism and half books of his poetry. Recent volumes of poetry include *Why Athletes Prefer Cheerleaders & Other Poems*, *Voices of Women Singing* and *Amazing-Grace-Wheelchair-Jumpshot-Jesus-Love-Poems*. Forthcoming books include three volumes of poetry, *The Stones of Strasbourg*, *My Boardwalk Empire*, and a cycle of *Pennsylvania Poems*; forthcoming critical volumes include *Hemingway's Provence: Our Provence?* (a meditation on the Spirit of Place and Hemingway's symbolic landscapes), *Passions, Places, Pilgrimages: Selected Essays on Hemingway 1976-2013*, and *Composition of Place: Selected Essays on Elizabeth Madox Roberts*; other works-in-progress include *The Stoney & Sparrow Songbook: Volume One* (a collection of his songs with commentary) and volumes of memoir and fiction. Misericordia University was delighted to have Stoneback visit our campus in April 2014 where he gave a Master Class, Lecture, and Poetry Reading.

The following poem by Stoneback, "Dropping Slow," is reprinted from *Des Hymnagistes: An Anthology* (Des Hymnagistes Press, 2010).

Dropping Slow

(For J.A.S.)

H. R. Stoneback

On the warm summer nights of all the years
we played backgammon on the back screened porch
I built, which she said was the best thing I'd
ever made except for certain songs and poems.
We were not rich, and never dull, but perhaps
we played too much backgammon, played too late.

At some point, most of those long summer nights,
with fresh gin-and-tonics, the game on hold,
she'd read or say the poem inscribed on the tea-
towel that hangs on the brick wall by the table.
One night she said *Did we buy that in Sligo
or at Thoor Ballylee? There's something not right.*

*There's something fake about his cabin and his lake.
And I don't believe his bean-rows, his garden.
If he did build a cabin, I'm sure it wasn't
made like yours, like ours, at Wedowee.
I doubt he ever really gardened and I
wouldn't eat his beans of Innisfree.*

*Now isn't that clever? That rhyme (you'd call it)
of Innisfree with Wedowee. I'm sure
we've outbuilt and outgardened old Yeats
but there is one thing that really makes his song.
I always knew what was coming, I'd heard
it many times, the way her voice brought it alive:*

*some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow
those notes carried through to the end of her song. Like
all great singers (and few poets) she had natural mastery
of time and timing, voice and rhythm, note-
duration. She should have been there for Pound's
experiments with sound. Talk about an ear*

*for music. On this warm August night
she said: Nobody ever said that before,
not that way. It makes the rest of the poem
come true and sing in the deep heart's core.
She was right, of course, and I always felt
the same way when she sang on that beautiful shore.*

When she sang, she made everything come true.
When she sang, peace always came dropping slow.

AWARD WINNERS

The following are the *Instress* Outstanding Achievement Award Winners:

POETRY

Award Winner: "Inspiration" by Kaleigh Killian

Runner-Up: "I Will Not Wane Away" by Jessica Pachuski

PHOTOGRAPHY

Award Winner: Olivia Anglovich

Runner-Up: Mason Moher

ARTWORK

Award Winner: Maia Painter

Runner-Up: Matthew Gromala

FICTION

Award Winner: "Citric" by Scott Bargisen

Runner-Up: "Finding Home" by Sierra Krohnemann

AWARD WINNER

Inspiration

Kaleigh Killian

The words won't come.

Drip, drip

The water into my sink

My fan whirs and my desk lamp crackles

I hear my own breathing

But the words won't come.

I tap a rhythm with my fingers

Jiggle my foot around

Exhale a sigh of pure frustration

But the words will not come.

My coffee on one side

A box of chocolate on the other

And a water bottle within reach

But the words simply will not come.

The blank page stares up at me

And the words refuse to come.

I stop thinking, I feel.

I place my fingers on the keys,

Shut out the other sounds,

Inhale the smell of coffee,

And the words. They come.

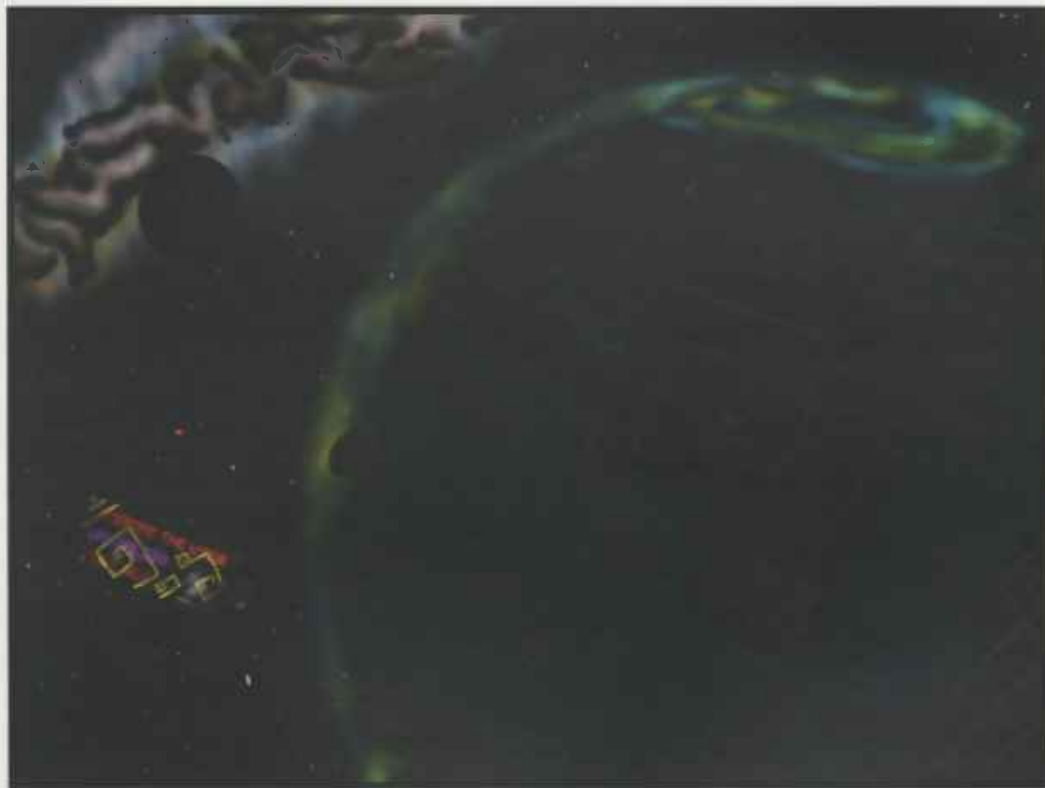
They come, and I write.

AWARD WINNER



Olivia Anglovich

AWARD WINNER



Maia Painter

AWARD WINNER

Citric

Scott Bargisen

I walk into the psych ward and see all of these pale, emaciated clay models of faces. These people couldn't be real; they were almost robotic. The nurse takes me through the recreation room to a small, padded room with a table in the middle. On the table there is a tape recorder, it's about 14"x10", top of the line for 1961. A perfect place to be one of the first volunteers to experience the healing properties of Lysergic Acid Diethylamide. There are people from all over the west side of the Mississippi to do these experiments. Menlo Park isn't too bad of a drive from Oakland, so I figured, what the hell, why not? A doctor walks in. "Hello, Mr. Aleman. I'm Dr. Goldsmith and I'll be giving you your dosage for this experiment for this week." Music to my ears. "Here are your pills. The tape recorder is on. Let's check your measurables." He then checks my heart rate, blood pressure, height, weight, frequency of bowel movements, the usual. "Please talk as well as you can, describing your experience and your surroundings. I'll see you in half an hour." I take the pills, drink my water, and he takes the cup and leaves. The door slams a little too loud for one not to wonder why he was so mad.

It's been a few minutes, and I don't feel anything. I'm just twiddling my thumbs and waiting for something. In the background, I see the tape recorder move. It just slides a few inches to the left and expects me not to know it did, but it damn well did move! "You better go back, or Dr. Goldsmith will get mad at both of us!" The tape recorder sighs and moves back to its former position. He gives me this annoyed glare, like I asked such a terrible thing from him. It shouldn't be hard for a frog of his stature to move a couple inches right or left. This big bullfrog with his eyes spinning round and round and round and round . . . what? Sorry, I digressed a little too much on that one little bit of amazement. I didn't know that cream colored frogs had eyes that could spin in the same direction like that: clockwise with the pupils constantly fixated on me. He lays flat and looks up at the light. Why the light? I look up and it looks like a tree. A tree growing downward from the ceiling, as if the frog was its, like, Life Force or something. The leaves are falling toward the ceiling with the gravity. The tree is so beautiful. It's a bright green with purple and orange leaves falling to its deeper green roots and to the white ceiling. The ceiling was moving now, too. It was moving with this calming breeze. Like a nicer version of the amber waves of grain in "America, the Beautiful." And this is beautiful. A placid reminder that life is meant to be calm and nice in between work and sleep.

The toad calls me. He begs me to help him sleep, so I push this red sore just lower than his mouth and his eyes stop moving. I think he's asleep. But he still hears everything I say; I see my words floating through the air and into his large, bat-like ears. I don't remember seeing the

ears when he was looking at the tree or when he was looking at me prior. The doctor walks in, and I am genuinely scared. "Hello, Mr. Aleman. How are you feeling?" "I'm doing quite nicely right now." "Really? How do you feel, physically?" I chuckle, "More like METAphysically." He tilts his orange head, "What do you mean?" "This is ineffable. Everything we do is orange." "Oh I understand you now. What's in the room?" I tell him about the beautiful foliage of the tree and the mean frog. He seems to be happy to hear this. He then asks me a weird question: "Can you tell me how long a minute is?" I say I could try. I remember him saying my pulse was around 68, so I touch my tentacle and count to 68, hit the number, and say, "Minute sir." He is astounded, a true "Miracle of Science."

He leaves the room to talk to another doctor. They seem to glance back at me once in a while. Another doctor walks in. "Mr. Aleman? Can you come with me please?" We leave and we go to another room. This time there isn't a table, no frog, but there is an eye on the ceiling. The doctor says, "We need to take care of you for a few months. You had the same reaction to the placebo as other patients have responded to our drugs. We believe it would be best for you to stay here for a short while as we evaluate you. Do you have any family members you want us to invite for a visit?" All I want is this eye to stop staring at me, blood vessels shaking as his eye slit bounces all over his iris. "Mr. Aleman?" I jump at the eye, and just as I make contact, the beautiful foliage of the other room is crushed beneath my hand; I hear the crunch of the leaves and feel the fibers snap and break. I cry for a few hours after that. I never thought I could love a phosphorescent conifer more than I loved myself.

AWARD WINNER

Runner-Up

I Will Not Wane Away

Jessica Pachuski

This is just a phase.
You'll grow out of it.

Darling, I'll grow.
I'll blossom and bloom.
Without water,
I'll stretch my flowers
To the heavens.
Without a foundation,
I'll dig my roots
Into my own supposition.
Without sunlight,
I'll flourish by the
Light of the Moon.
La Luna, my muse.
Her beauty cast by shadows,
Illuminates her phases.
You don't speak
Condescendingly of the Crescent
Or weep at the waxing and waning.
Why must you reject my "phase"
When I did nothing
But shine for you?

AWARD WINNER

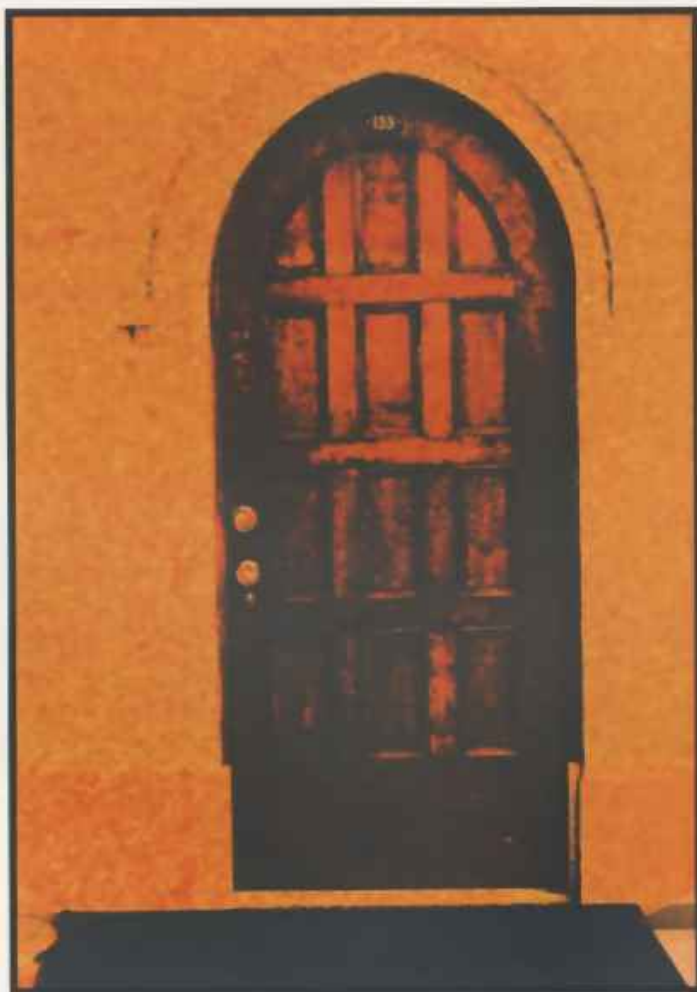
Runner-Up



Mason Moher

AWARD WINNER

Runner-Up



Matthew Gromala

AWARD WINNER

Runner-Up

Finding Home

Sierra Krohnemann

Unforgotten memories shade my view of reality. The walk home is a short one, passing familiar faces with unfamiliar stories. I guess God gives everyone a story that can be heard if you decide to reach into the back of your heart and connect it to theirs. Some people speak so freely, while others hide themselves behind clouds of devilish secrets, unspoken tragedies; everyone has a past.

The air is cool, but it feels refreshing. Though my nose is red from the wind, I take a different turn than usual. I pause before I cross the street.

My brother holds my hand and walks me to our neighbor's house. At six, I find it strange that even at such a young age, Mama and Papa force him to help me cross a street where cars pass maybe once every three hours. He is ten. His brown hair and brown eyes mask our resemblance, but he still has my nose, and we share the same love for Mama's mac and cheese, so I understand that he is my older brother. But I don't understand why he has to hold my hand for the ten feet of black cement that separate me from my best friend. Though, what did I know? I was only a kid.

The mountain air feels thicker than normal, but breathing still comes easy. I soon find myself surrounded by scenery that feels distant, back roads, and abandoned farmhouses, but the word "lost" never comes to mind.

"If you ever find yourself in a situation, call me," Mama says, sounding distant as she kisses me on the forehead and allows me to head into the home of my elementary school friend for my first sleepover. I am scared, letting go of Mama's hand. I don't like the feeling the air creates between us. Her comfortable smell of powder and Dove shampoo is soon replaced with birthday cake and a small dog whose high-pitched bark makes my insides feel uneasy. I was scared that night. But I am not scared now.

One hundred and four miles away from the place I learned to call home now feels less like familiarity and more like a vivid dream. Stuck in transition, we all yearn for a place to call our own.

"You feel like home to me," he whispers as I rack my brain for a way to get his lanky arm off of my petite shoulders. "You shouldn't make home a person," I reply, as I smoothly connect our fingers and remove his arm, relieved that I no longer have to sit hunchbacked on my own bed. "I should, and I am!" His voice cracks. Puberty did him a dirty deed. I laugh, stand up, and turn around just in time to say "Go home" before he starts this argument again.

Running has never been strictly for exercise, and suddenly, I no longer feel like putting distance between my surroundings and my heart. I feel comfortable. As my eyes begin to tear from the gusting of the wind, I sit down on an unfamiliar bench with an unfamiliar feeling of unfamiliarity. And I finally feel at peace.



Sarah Wigg

The Essential Question

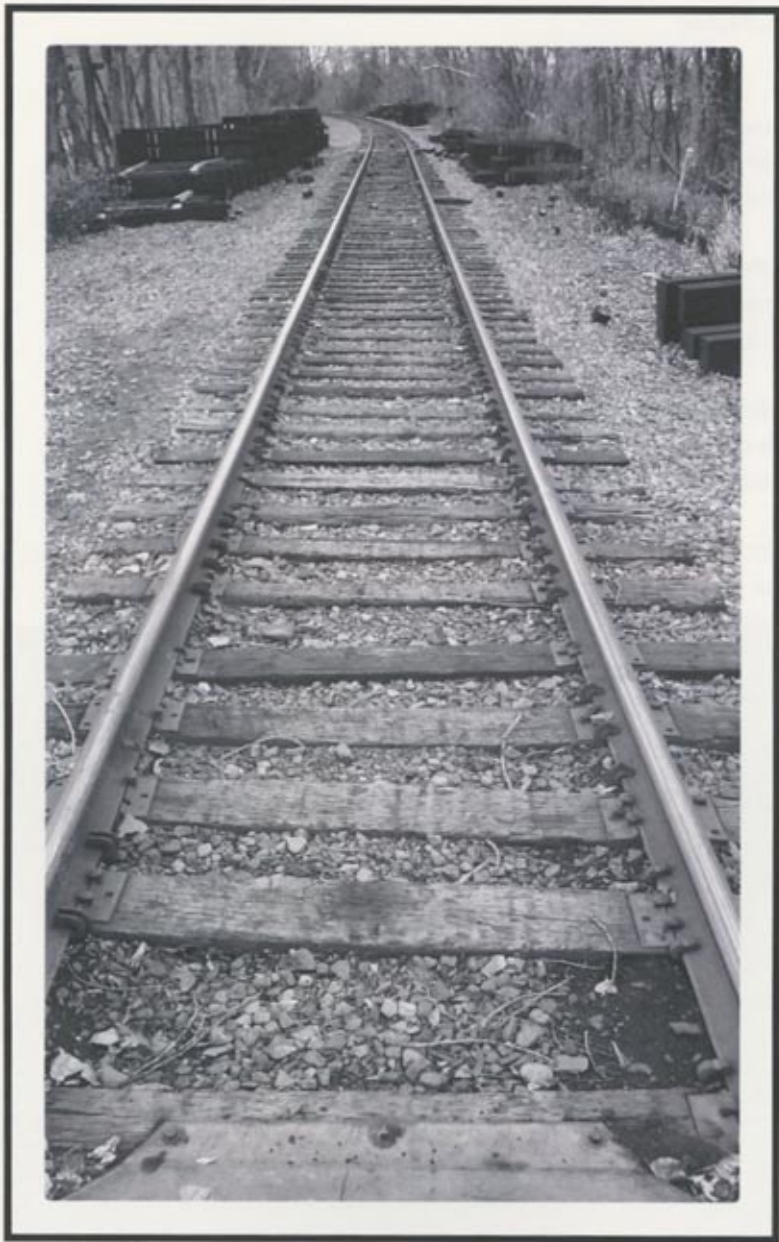
Ashley Collins

A woman with one eye
tried to save my soul.
Perhaps she could see more than I.

She rang the doorbell
as I was passing by.
I couldn't hide like usual.

She was mild-mannered
and brochure ready—
but I couldn't read through my skepticism.

I asked her,
“What can you see that I can't?”
and she asked me the same question.



Erin Loucks

The Beginning

Devin Crevani

Two paths are happened upon
Each worthy and unworthy
Each riddled with struggle
Inclination pulls to the left
Or is it intuition?

To the right can be seen
Riches and prestige
Flanked by deadly crags
And chuckling Lucifer looms above,
Eyes twinkling with greed.
Or is it a child first echoing his father's laugh?

The left offers a beacon
At the end of a road of hurdles
A gem glimmering atop a lighthouse
But is the gem false?
Is it there at all?

Whispers to choose echo
Louder. Intensifying.
Shaking.
Dark clouds cast a shadow.
But the preconception yields to footsteps
Which speak of uncertainty.

Right or left?
An old man smiles at the choice.

Wine-ing Down

Alexandria Smith

Meltdowns are
all the rage
Full of rage
Dreams drip
From childhood
Mentality
Sanctity
Where are you?
Safety of mind
Peace of heart
I burn in the light
And suffocate in
The dark
Always losing
Breath
I find myself
Wanting to lie
Face down
On the floor
Lost in the hardwood
Landscape
Of dust trees
And fields of hair
Air
I need air
Because the
Death
Is
Too
Much



Alexandria Smith

Freedom Dreamer

Chelsie White

It is cold; the air comes down and wraps its frigid hands around me. In the midst of the hot summer, when they had the air at its lowest, the cold almost choked me. Now that the wonderful fall has begun to arrive, they do not run the air so cold anymore. There are people surrounding me in every direction. I would like to make a break for it, but the clear glass box encasing me will not allow that. I hear so many voices. They want to know what we mean. I cannot speak for the other pieces that I cannot hear, but I do not know my meaning. I am merely an owl lying on a plate, just waiting.

I am lying on my back in the center of the room, alone and afraid. Most of the pieces are close to each other; some even share the glass boxes. I can see the other owls perched around the room. They are watching, ever-still, never moving, as the room comes to life. A group of nearly twenty-five people file into the small room I share with the other works of art. They are noisy in a respectful way. There are high heels clicking against the wood floor, and the number of whispers grows immensely. The children frighten me. I am fifty-seven years old and much too fragile to feel comfortable with them so close. They just walk around the room in circles, stopping momentarily at different pieces to make judgments. I am so obviously positioned so that people will notice me, yet I receive a fraction of the visitors others are getting. I like when people overlook me, as if revealing my delicate front to all makes me too vulnerable to judge. I wish that someone would hide me in a corner where I could blend into my surroundings and not be noticed at all.

My wings are spread out across the black plate I call home. My vivid red feathers were hurriedly etched in by my dear friend, Pablo Picasso. I have to be a bold color. If I were not a fiery, beautiful red, then everything about me would be boring and sad. My eyes are wonky and lopsided, causing my line of vision to be less than my fellow predators. Every so often someone will stare into my eyes, and for a moment I think they see my loneliness, my desperation for change, but they soon walk away. I wish that I could use these wings to fly away. Unfortunately, I cannot leave my plate, for he and I are one. My body and his curve together. Where his rises mine does as well. We are but one sad and lonely existence, forced to be an attraction for people who would rather be elsewhere. At night when all the lights are turned down, and the other works of art are in a blissful slumber, I lay wide awake dreaming of another life, the kind of life where I could separate my wings from the black hole of a life I live right now, where I could hide away and sleep all day and awake to the moon high above my head. I dream of stars and weaving in through trees while chasing small rodents for

dinner. Life outside of this stuffy, airless box sounds like a dream come true to me. I have all the tools to live a free life. I have dreams, ambition, love, and hope. The only thing I lack is freedom.

People do not understand me. They see my cartoonish eyes and asymmetrical lines and assume I am a happy and optimistic piece of art. I spend my days watching people smile at me almost expecting me to return it. When there are not random strangers sneaking peaks at me in between other pieces, I stare at the ceiling. They view me, but they do not see me. I want to feel a sense of belonging. At this point, I do not care what it is I belong to. I want someone to walk into this room and let me know that I am not alone.

A happy and smiling blonde woman came today. She took her sweet time looking at the other owls and whispering about her severe love of the species. She walked past me twice, merely glancing in my direction, and I thought she did not get me either. She came back though. She stared into my eyes and said, "I get it."

Missing Identity

Morgan Myers

Who are you,
really?

A blurry face in the crowd
as you get swallowed up
by the mixture of faces
around you?

A wannabe model
wearing a mask of makeup
that hides your personality
though layers of color
and fake orange highlights?
A flirt who changes your appearance
to impress someone
who isn't yours to impress?

You're a secret phony.
You tuck your books away,
slipping them into your bag
as your frenemies walk by.
You disguise your eloquent words,
carefully choosing the ones you
hope others won't criticize.

Instead, you keep quiet.
Your story remains unseen,
unnoticed and tucked away.
And you cross your fingers
that nobody will read it.

Meanwhile,
you're a twelve-year-old girl
in an adult's body,
pretending to be concerned with
what she said about you last week.
In your universe,

you are the sun
and the stars glimmer around you.

But I know that
deep down,
you are not any of those things.

So take off your mask
and wipe off the thick concealer,
because the only disguise you're hiding
behind
is yourself.

You may not know who you are
but I definitely know who you are not.

A Fool at Peace

S.A. Hain

She tells me I can trust her.
I tell her she's full of shit.
She tells me that she loves me,
and if I look inside myself, I'll see that I feel the same way . . .
I take a deep breath and close my eyes; it's dark, real dark.
I grope my way through my subconscious; I can't find my way.
It's so quiet that I linger there.
She calls my name. I snap back to reality.
She says, "Well?" expecting an answer.
I tell her that I'm a blind fool wandering in the dark.
I close my eyes, and wait for her to leave.

Trafalgar

Emily Halbing

The National Portrait Gallery
and the statue I sit on
stand like bookends against the square.
There are children everywhere around me,
seemingly being spawn from the very concrete.
They climb higher and higher,
narrowly avoiding my face
with their small feet.
I try not to be annoyed.
They beam down at their mothers
and their fathers, who squint
as they hold one hand over their eyes,
a camera held by the other.
The parents stand idly at the base of the statue.
The children pose cinematically on top of it.
They wave their floppy hands
and blow sloppy kisses.
After a while,
they are beckoned back to earth.
“Come down now,” their mothers say
and their fathers,
but they take their time,
reluctant to leave the new perspective
they have been given.



Bridget Guarnieri

Exile: False River

We must live with our own conscience.

Ernest Gaines

Matthew Nickel

The lake, bending like God's fingernail, pretends
to be a river and the live oaks imagine you are
one of them waiting in the limp air for rain fall
and down-thrust vomit of thunder clouds.

I pass an old man under an oak tree, legs extended
his head ridged steady as if time had forgotten to drop
off a package and the world kept waiting, his eyes
followed my truck, waved, then back to his contemplations.

Around the old plantation home and down the dirt lane
I followed the topography of history, observed
thin columns around the mansion, the roof heavy
imposing, and imagined ahead a little boy running

to catch his ball in the lane, his sister stopping
as I approach; no words, just a stare out of some
hollow place in the pit of landscape, a reminder
that we cannot name ourselves until we name the

little girl who stops in the road before us. But I drove
by and paused in front of the last shack of the quarters
the dilapidated memorial for nostalgic scrap book,
the folklorists orgasm, a reminder of the condition

we may call being human; the shack, swallowed
now by earth, like all things in Louisiana, a warning
that we are owned by the land, free to wander
only so far; I drift onward slowly down the road

cut into cane fields on a mud track, then ahead the

grove of pecan and oak; they have already started,
I am late, arrive, shovel in hand, ready to work. Greet
familiar faces, I have been here before, he waves;

“Good to see you again,” and Diane smiles bright;
“When you cut the cane for the kids, Mr. Gaines,
please let me know.” Today I help dig the ditches,
last year washed the stones and painted white,

unearthed the half-submerged slabs under weeds
rescued nameless graves of their ancestors, slaves
who worked this land, lived here, loved, and died,
tried to hear their voices hidden in the dust, then

planted chrysanthemums; today, we divert the
water flooding the cemetery, find ancient nails buried
under the roadway, a tool shaped like a hawk
that I am unable to figure about, but am told

“is just what they used then.” After sweat
and long hot work, one of the guys laughs
“that Ernie, he wrote about me once in a story,
you read him, yeah.” I smiled back, and we

shored up the coulée with large stones,
standing in sun, we laughed at our craftsmanship,
“they done this better then, but is OK now.”
We walked back to Mr. Gaines’ home afterward

followed his golf cart through cane fields,
girls riding along beside him, and soon
the smell of gumbo and red beans and voices
made even the distant river seem true.

“Tell us a story, Ernie” said one of the young
men. Gaines hesitated, drew on his Bud Light,
then looked at me and said, “There was this couple
been married 50 years, sitting on their porch before

cane fields, and the old man says, 'woman, you know you going to die before I do, and when you die, I'm going to write on your tombstone, cold as always.' Then the woman, she held still a moment

and stared at that cane a long time before she answered, 'no, you got that wrong, no me, no you going to die before I do, and when you do, I'm going to write on your tombstone, stiff, for the first time.'"

Laughter out of bellies under the port cochere and I think he might have winked at me, or at least that's the way I want to remember it, and the feeling of never wanting to leave Louisiana, to stay and

come back for La Toussaint to Pointe Coupee Parish to find answers in the smoke of November, to stay through the jasmine bloom and spring burst—to lose myself in the dream of the past; just as bad, perhaps

as the photo of the slave quarters. I have wandered far from False River down false paths, woven betrayals, I have met myself in empty gloom of sunset beyond the gulf's widening yawn and have wished I could

turn back. Wouldn't you turn back if you could? No, my feet have kept wandering. I do not know where the road goes from here. I do not know if there is a home somewhere along this road.



Sarah Wigg

To Annie

Kateri Kopicki

Every time she smiles, she dies a little inside—she knows the warm feeling is only temporary.

I wish I could lock her in a box, safely tucked beneath her daddy's pillow. Then, she would live happily forever without exposure to the cold adult world she prematurely faces.

But is that really a life?

Sure, she must eventually favor one parent over the other and grow up with trust issues and uncertainty with everything she does but

There's a time to smile and a time for goodbye. I just wish time would not fade her glee so soon.

The Disease

Jared Pinter

"It's a disease."

"It's not a disease."

"We should treat it as such."

"Have you looked at the facts?"

"What facts do you speak of?"

"Why, those that are true."

"Facts are always with truth."

"Then my argument must be correct."

"You have yet to even lay your foundation."

"I am waiting for the cement to arrive."

"It is a disease."

"My cement has not come yet."

"Portugal found a cure."

"And we are not Portugal."

"The Portuguese are human."

"And we'll have none of that here!"

"But it is a disease."

"It is certainly a cancer!"

"My brother was affected."

"Your brother should be in jail!"

"He was."

"And he'll go back again."

"He has a son."

"That needs a father!"

"My brother is here."

"I don't care to meet him."

"Is anything the matter?"

"I am wasting your time, I'm afraid."

"Time not wasted is time not spent."

"We have jobs to do."

"Running the world, of course."

"You need riches for that."

"Only rich conversation."

"I've spent too much time in here."

"But there is nothing out there."

Focus

Devin Crevani

The calm is broken
by waves of excess.
And Emperor Pleasure rears his head,
presides over his complete victory,
over his cavorting subjects.

All talk, all air.
They are, oh certainly, they are.
While preaching a supposed desire for good,
while claiming commitment,
they cannot help but admit
only of their master's influence.

Trembling at the thought
of such utter simplicity and emptiness.
Trembling at the calls of "Indulge!" readily and greedily heeded
as the putrid stench of hypocrisy and contradiction
Rise.

What am I, who am I,
to stand in the face of this horde?
Are doubt and analysis my allies or imposters?
And why
does it all feel so wrong?

Hold back the damn.
Keep the rage at bay!
Stride on.
But how and why?

I once was told, "Apathy is death."
Apathy is here.
Death surrounds.
Decay.
Why are we so lost?



Elena Uribe



Leah Santucci

Human Nature

Ashley Collins

I should have known better.
Because the human brain is not a concrete thing.

You never etched your words in stone,
just let them float to me on a soft, warm breeze.
You only held my hand;
you did not chain my wrists to yours.

But people are fickle things.
They'll say yes to a beverage and no to a date.
You think you'll learn their ways,
but you know nothing of their brains—
their sinister, snaking thoughts,
the ones that would turn you to stone.

Humans are crazy creatures,
but you,
you are the craziest.

I should have tasted the bitter bite of irrationality on your tongue,
should have seen the smoldering fire beneath the pale skin of your temples.
But the current of your words were that of a tsunami,
and your warm, watery hands engulfed my body.

Humans are fickle things.
They cannot be blamed for behaving as such.
And I,
I should have known better.

Poetry Reading:

90 Years of Mercy at Misericordia



Wednesday, November 12
12:00 p.m.
McGowan Room
Mary Kintz Bevevino Library

The English Department of Misericordia University is hosting a Poetry Reading to honor the Religious Sisters of Mercy, the Mercy Tradition, the Charisms of Mercy, Service, Justice, and Hospitality, and Misericordia University. Faculty and Students are encouraged to write original poetry in honor of our great institution and tradition.

Join your peers and colleagues as they read their poetry
honoring 90 years of Misericordia.

This event is free and open to the public.
Refreshments will be served.



90 Years of Mercy at Misericordia

The English Department at Misericordia University hosted a poetry reading celebrating 90 Years of Mercy at Misericordia University. Original poems written by students, faculty, and staff were read in homage to the Mercy tradition, the Sisters of Mercy, and to the university itself. Sister Jean Messaros, RSM, opened with a reading of a song by Sister Regina Kelly, RSM, "I Am Only Me," followed by remarks about the traditions of Misericordia and the Sisters of Mercy. It was a special moment, and *Instress* is delighted to be able to publish the following poems that were read during the celebration.



I Am Only Me

Lyrics - Regina Kelly, RSM
 Melody - Regina Kurutz, RSM
 © 1974

REFRAIN G C6 D7 G G em C6 D7 G

I am on-ly me I have on-ly now I am on-ly me I have on-ly now.

1. I do not come with mir-a-cles I would not know how yet I run to you with gifts I can scarce-ly bear. (Return to refrain)

2. I come through God's mer-cy to you and I come be-cause I care I long to heal as Je-sus did, to teach in Je-sus' way. Yet be-cause I am on-ly me and on-ly have to-day I come with real com-pas-sion to share the grief you know. I come but I am on-ly me, I'm here but I have on-ly now and some-one else will come when I must go. (Refrain)

The musical score is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). It includes a refrain and two verses. Chords are indicated above the notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes a 'Return to refrain' instruction and a final '(Refrain)' at the end of the second verse.

Home

Lauren Apgar

It's not grandma's cookies or mom's spaghetti
Or Sunday church and an early dinner.
It's not bed by 11 and up by 7, walking the dog everyday
Or Mom doing laundry and it magically appearing in your drawers.
It's not your brother taking out the trash and you doing the dishes
Or 5 minutes from every best friend.

It's an unsuspecting smile, doors held open,
Pure intentions,
And professors that notice.
It's full of possibilities and study abroad,
Challenging, filled with personalities,
And full of new experiences.

It's Metz cookies and midnight breakfast,
Temple Grandin and Hillside ice cream,
Welcoming arms and trust for freedom,
Midnight volleyball, tea time, and talks,

Puppy stress relief, Operation Beautiful,
Saturday games and Sunday night church,
Making first impressions and lifelong friends,
Smiling at strangers,
And constantly saying your thank yous.

Turns out, it's not so hard
Finding a home away from home.

Misericordia, Grant Me Peace

Emily Halbing

I was the girl
who hid in an alcove behind the couch in
my living room
where I couldn't be found if I didn't want
to be

a stack of books at my side that I'd have
finished by dinner

I was the girl
who got butterflies when my mom took
me to the bookstore

she usually only let me pick out three
books

but sometimes I shot her the doe eyes to
get a fourth

I was the girl
who used a purse just to fill it with books
that I could read when regular people
bored me

I was the girl
who was more content between two
stacks of books

than between my sheets at night

But I became the girl
who started to read less

I picked out a few books
that would sit on my shelf for weeks that
became months

I was the girl
who didn't have the time anymore

I was the girl
who transferred schools
whose life was blank and out of focus
who waited for that epiphanic moment
promised by cheesy college advertisements
but it never came

I was the girl

who started taking English classes
who started reading because I had to
but I felt different with a book in my
hand again

its weight replacing the weight in my chest

So I was the girl
who became an English major
because it made my breaths come more easily
because it makes me better

I became the English major
who doesn't want to skip classes
not because it will hurt my grade
but because every class makes me happy I
chose this school

I became the person

I always was and wanted to be

The little girl hiding behind the couch

The voracious reader

The English major

Beginnings

Rich Hancuff

In old photos you see
one building
firmly planted on a hill
that perhaps was pasture,
nothing but sky behind,
a small road to the side.

We drag ourselves back to this solitary hall,
from a present that already knows
the two wings added less than one decade later
the entrance arch
and the filling of the hill
with dorms, athletic fields, and paved walks.

From this beginning, though,
the future is unknown,
a rough plan, a series of choices,
decisions balancing mission with resources,
a road much easier to trace from the present
than to draft from the past.

In 1922, those sisters
in their habits, holding spades
to open the future to women
who had no college in the county,
did not know where every shovelful
would fall. They did not know their dorms
would harbor men or that their one building
standing solid on the hill
would remain central to their school
even after library and auditorium
and living space moved elsewhere.

But they knew in each arcing motion of the shovel
that the future must begin somewhere.

Our Doors Are Open

For Matt who lives the value of Hospitality

Jessica M. Nickel

I.

The sky rests upon the hillside
Holding steady against
The fall tree line shaping the bend
Of the Hudson below

In not too distant memory
We hunt our deer stalking
Slow in Krum Elbow cathedral
Woods in crisp setting sun

Trees rise naked above the slope
While moonlight carries night
Wind slanted over our shadows
On snow in hallowed sight

Cutting green boughs, he makes pine wreaths
And places mistletoe
Above our doorway suggesting
The question of lovers

Around our tree George Winston plays
Each morning as light pours
Over coffee; nothing touches
Us—not even the cold

II.

In summer heat, our house above
The River stands, holds our guests
Cicadas leave empty shells and
A lunar moth floats down

My husband cuts lilies for me

And grows geraniums
And pansies, nasturtium, his hands
In soil, the day in color

Our wedding feast home grown with
His Kentucky pulled pork and
French cassoulet, my mac and cheese
Our labor of love gift

Dessert: my peach cobbler, ice-cream
Chocolate chip cookies made
By hand—our hands together, we
Laugh, say grace, offer thanks

There is no toast, no rehearsed speech,
No bride dancing with dad
Sadly giving her away now
No clinking of glasses

We have no special table and
No eyes staring, pointing
No time lost posing for pictures
And no awkward first dance

We drink our keg beer from plastic
As our friends play music
Live for hours in the corner
Of the crowded side porch

We sing to guitar strumming hymns
Into the late night as
Some leave; I stay in my wedding
Dress, my shoes swapped for boots

We give ourselves to each other
We give the day to friends, our family
The July warmth washes through our
Open doors above the

Hudson—and they are open still
Here in Pennsylvania
As one, we continue to pray
As we give it away.

Sisters of Mercy and God

Rita Molino

There is a strength within us
And a mercy God bestows
A vision for the type of people
who bring strangers in from the cold.

The vision He created in 1914 began to unfold
When the Sisters of Mercy purchased farmland
And turned it into Misericordia gold.

In 1922, a cornerstone was laid
Mercy Hall became the name
There was no time for the Sisters to gloat
Mercy was their claim to fame.

1925 saw a Charter
Additional buildings became a matter of barter
Sisters reached out with hospitality and grace
Seeking donors for land they'd come to embrace.

When I ask myself how they did this
The only answer could be
They prayed to a God no one could see.

Strength and humility
Moved them forward for 90 years
Prayers, kindness, values, and service
Gave them the ability.

Let us applaud these women
Whose vision took hold
When the Sisters of Mercy
Turned land into Misericordia blue and gold.

Mercy

Rebecca Steinberger

just 5 letters mean so much
generations
of young women
and then men
feisty
fearless
looking burning crosses in the eye
first a tear
then a backward glance
of defiance
resilience.
Our university
a phoenix
rising from the ashes
of religious persecution
gender bias
racism.
But all that hate
has been over-taken
in 90 years
by overwhelming
Mercy
embedded in the name of our Sisters.
Tattooed on the faces
of all who enter
those Arches
better than gold
just five letters
reflecting
those willing to
serve
allowing a
dream
paving the way for
peace

Le Misericordieux: Man of Sorrows

He is despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows.

Isaiah 53: 3

Matthew Nickel

When tenderness becomes a delicate two-step,
we find more to unlock the secret of mercy,
misericordia: heart of mercy—*a merci*
at one's mercy—*amercement*, to punish
by court-fine, to pay the fee, supplicate

the *miser*, a wretch at heart, the *cor* of a body's soul
wretched in spirit, blessed are the wretched, the exiled
racked soul of forgetfulness, wretched soul forget me
now and at the hour of our body of mercy, the secret
hidden in the wafer and golden chalice;

misericordia is a thin dagger to give a mercy stroke
to one's fallen adversary: slip the bladed spear gently
to let the water bleed, falling timber, atone for mercy
a merci, human *amercement*: we pay just a little each day
for being human;

misericordia is also an indulgence, food, dress, given
to one of a religious order, formed on the footholds
of charity, our institution of Mercy ordered from the world's
chaos, built on the rocks founded in the heart's loan, pursuant
after hope's long eternal habit of doubt;

and Dante drew the path to Purgatory, an Angel of Mercy
"Beati misericordes" rejoicing in pilgrims partaking
purgation, rising through the wrath of mountains
writhed in ambivalent smoke black as serpents, blessed
are the merciful obtaining;

and Geoffrey Hill writes of *Le misericordieux*
qui nous brûle le sang, the man of sorrows, he says,
whose blood burns us; and Isaiah divined a tree

spreading a Man to bear our grief, to burn our blood
and pay the debt we owe;

we find in loving more than mercy, and in mercy
we find more than love; the cup is infinite and always
flowing; the secret is beyond the calculations
of tenderness, but we seek tenderly to live in a way
that lifts up the spirits

and we march onward in spite of the ghostly
dagger, wringing meaning from the garments
of peasants on loan merely because the interest
is too much for us to pay, so we pray and hope
our mercy follows Him.



Gerber Cry Baby

For my best friend

Emily Halbing

I have seen my best friend cry three times. And twice was because of me.

“Please take him out,” I pleaded.

The year was 1999. And I was seven.

“He really doesn’t like being taken out,” she protested. I didn’t care. I wanted to cuddle that hamster and I wanted to cuddle him now.

“Please, Callie. I wanna hold him so bad!”

“Fine. I’ll try.” She stuck her skinny arm into the cage, reaching for its small, huddled frame. As her hand drew closer, he shrunk into himself, irritated by the proximity of her open palm. I should have seen it coming. Once she was close enough, he clamped his tiny teeth around her smallest finger. She yelped, bringing her finger to her mouth and sucking hard at the punctured skin.

“Are you okay?!” I became frantic as the pain gradually increased in her eyes. She didn’t respond. “Callie. Are you okay?” Her eyes filled with threatening tears. “Callie, I’m so sorry.” Finally, she took her finger from her mouth, and I examined it. The blood was a deep vermilion, almost black, as it poured from her finger. She whimpered, and I looked at her helplessly. At last, the floodgates opened. I watched as my best friend cried in front of me for the first time. And it was my fault. I made her cry.

Her mom raced down the stairs. “What? What’s wrong? I heard someone scream.”

“I wanted to hold the hamster and then I made Callie take him out...” I continued to blubber, aware that I was now crying myself. “I’m so sorry!”

“Hey, hey, hey. It’s okay. It’s just a little bite.” During a moment of silence, the dark blood dripped from Callie’s finger and landed with an muted *plop* on the carpet. I sniffled.

“Okay, I’m just going to get a bandaid upstairs.”

“It’s...just...I’ve never...seen...Callie...cry,” I said, huffing between each word.

“Well, honey, that’s because she’s such a happy girl. She has nothing to cry about.”

It was the truest thing I had ever heard about my best friend. She was happy. And what right did I have to take that from her? Twice.

Every year, Gerber has this contest to see who has the cutest baby. If you’re going to solicit your baby for money, this is the way to do it.

It was 2006. I found a picture of the new Gerber baby and showed it to Callie, who was sitting across from me. I studied her face as she studied the picture, and I noticed the veins in her eyes began to pronounce themselves, asking for attention, and her irises were bright. *What the hell is wrong with her?* “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. Why wouldn’t I be?” She looked down hastily.

“I mean, that’s a pretty cute baby right?” I didn’t realize what was happening. How could I? This phenomenon was too rare to recognize right away. “Oh my God.” I stared at her, my lips parted. “Are you crying?” She dragged her finger under her left eyelid, rubbing eyeliner that had been splayed across her upper cheek. “You’re crying.”

“YES, OKAY? I’m crying! That baby...” She stopped and shook her head. “It’s so...cute. I just don’t—“ She waved me off with a hand as I stared, appalled. Her cheeks were flushed scarlet, and her face was swollen. I didn’t recognize the person sitting across from me (Though, this didn’t stop me from calling her “Gerber Cry Baby” for a few weeks).

Somehow, again, this stranger was crying because of me.

And I didn’t know what to do about it.

She really was the happiest girl in the world. I took comfort in the fact that making her cry had never taken the form of a stolen boyfriend or a forgotten birthday. I felt lucky that the only time we ever cried together was after watching *Good Will Hunting* for the third time in a row (Which *was*, in fact, your fault, Matt Damon).

So when her dad moved out on April 14, 2008, I still didn’t know what to do. It was the first time she wasn’t crying because of me. After all, making her cry was only okay when I did it. It never meant anything when I did it. The happiest girl had been knocked down, and I was left dumbfounded. But does anyone know how to act in that kind of situation? You try to be there. You rub her back. Maybe bring her a glass of milk. But it doesn’t help. It’s like getting “Honorable Mention” at the seventh grade science fair. *Thanks for your volcano, but it still sucked.* The hole is still exposed. That drop of the heart still falls hard. That aching of inadequacy is still there. That feeling that you’re not good enough and you won’t be. Ever. So I just sat there. And I rubbed her back. And I brought her some milk. And I waited for her to feel better, wishing that I had been the one to make her cry that time.

Arpe

Mary Bove

Invisible traces left on my skin
Burning fingerprints
That only I can see
And feel
And resent
“Get over it”
Shouldn't be that hard
But there is nothing
More difficult and taxing
Than trying to not blame
Yourself for something
Completely out of your
Control



Kateri Kopicki

On Rereading *A Farewell to Arms*, Thirty-Five Years Later*

To the memory of Jim Spenko

That men may rise on stepping-stones

Tennyson, In Memoriam, 1:4

Brian Carso

Reading again, I vividly realized
How I had walked down a hospital corridor
Like Lieutenant Frederic Henry,
Into a small nursery where the shades were drawn;
How, against hope, I bowed my head into a bassinet
to listen for a whisper of breath;
How I heard a pulsing hum from the white fluorescent light,
A distant tone from a medical machine,
And the approaching footsteps of two nurses
Who hurried to baptize the still and silent boy.

I was sixteen when I first read *A Farewell to Arms*.
Nearly done, a few chapters from the end
I put the book down to go to the dentist,
Who found a cavity and filled my tooth
With enough dark metal to build a doughboy helmet,
Or a stack of coins to pay the barman, or a mortar shell.

The dentist was president of the school board,
And I was a good student, so I didn't tell anyone
That maybe he was a son of a bitch because,
When the Novocaine wore off, the pain was red hot:
The worst pain I'd ever felt. So I rocked back and forth,
Groaned and breathed deeply and read the last chapters,
Until Lieutenant Henry walked out of the hospital.

A few years later I read *The Sun Also Rises*
With a professor who embodied
Something close to Hemingway himself—
He was an amateur boxer (until he realized
How blows to the head could affect his scholarship).
He told stories of surf casting in the Florida Keys,
Of drinking in Paris; debated the nature of courage,

Explained the meaning of bullfights,
And why a young man from Oak Park
Would drive an ambulance in the Italian mountains.
This professor: he was someone to look up to.
So his Midwestern accent I took as my own,
I grew a beard like his, copied his walk—
Not quite a swagger, but a gait
That was ready to make something of the moment.
He read aloud like someone who'd seen it, who knew—
And we believed him.

At the end of one class he sat down in a chair
And told us how the old writer
Had stared into the barrel of a shotgun.
My professor reached for an imaginary point,
an arm's length away, below his knees, paused for a moment;
Then, with a push of his finger, and a silent burst of shot,
class was over.

A letter came from a classmate several years later,
Pencil, lined paper—I still see it:
I had no idea—none of us did—
That my professor's somber reenactment
Wasn't only a demonstration of Hemingway's death,
But a rehearsal of his own.

Decades passed; I began *A Farewell to Arms* again.
And wouldn't you know it, as Lieutenant Henry and Miss Barkley
In the darkness and rain, passed Pallanzo in their rowboat,
My tooth cracked, and that grey metal filling
Had to come out, to be replaced by a perfect white crown.
When the Novocaine wore off I made a cup of tea,
Sat in a chair and read to the end.
Then I listened to the silence in the room,
And after a while thought back to the beginning:
To the soldiers marching on the dry road,
And the dust they raised
That powdered the leaves of the trees.

**Presented at a poetry reading held during the 16th Biennial International Conference of the Ernest Hemingway Society in June 2014, in Venice, on the island of Torcello, in the garden at Locanda Cipriani, where Hemingway lived while writing Across the River and Into the Trees.*



Sarah Wigg

Modern Meditations of a Doubtful Outlier

Devin Crevani

Nothing or everything,
From which, hails the abyss?
To which port does the boatman sail,
even as he smirks at the oh-so-feeble
attempts at understanding of his passengers.

Finitude and infinitude exist,
coexist, and yet cannot.
A cipher stands before me?
Unintelligible but
Clear as day.

Halt the queries, cease!
No! Truth exists!
Fool! Worthless ponderer!
No! I am the question!
I am the answer.

Yes, something stirs beyond the veil
That herald of blindness
That giver of sight
Ever elusive, ever in hand.

Fishing for a CD

Jacob Hebda

I found the CD sticking out like a tongue from the player in the sport utility vehicle.

A few days ago, I lost the damn thing when I was getting ready for a trip to the mountains. I was packing my SUV with things I would need to bring. There were road maps and water bottles and sandwiches wrapped in brown paper bags. My walking stick sat in the trunk with my backpack, which held a number of books, and my camera bag.

Before I left, I remembered I had played it on my computer the night before while I was working in my sketchbook. I wanted to listen to music on the drive to the mountains too, but radio stations usually broadcast noise. So I went back inside my flat, found my blue plastic CD case where I keep all my music, zipped it open and fished for Rachmaninoff. It was not there. Did I leave it in my computer? No, it is not there either. I would have looked more thoroughly but it was getting late and Sarah was expecting me.

I drove to the mountains, but the old SUV had music of its own. The motor hummed like a violin and the tires raised a quiet chorus as they tread upon the asphalt. Sarah was at the park under a black locust tree near the lake. She was angry I arrived late. I blamed it on traffic. We embraced and forgot about it for a while. We had a tent to set up, and we got to work immediately. It was midday when we found the right spot to pitch the tent. Our campsite was at the edge of a stand of pine trees near a stream. I remember that there were many Carolina locusts near the stream, which I thought was odd because the insects like dry ground. Sarah said she saw a black grasshopper when we were looking for a campsite. I would have liked to have seen it too.

We had a nice time in the mountains, but I did not have a nice time looking for my CD. I began to worry about it on the ride home. When I made it back to my flat I tore apart my bedroom and my bathroom and my kitchen looking for the damn thing. I could not find it. When I went to work I asked everyone about it. They looked at me as if I was a black grasshopper next to a creek. I tried asking students at night class too. They expressed concern but had no leads for me. When Sarah called I asked her about the CD and she too was puzzled.

Last night I attended the first performance of Sergei Rachmaninoff's piano concerto number two in C minor. I sat next to an anime character with jagged blue hair. She turned to me and complained about the music. She said real composers should not tell us how to feel. I said perhaps she was right. A blue eyebrow lifted over one of her eyes, which were large in proportion to her face like the eyes of a grasshopper are. I sensed she wanted me to be firmer in my criticism. I carefully looked into her glittering, candy-blue eyes, reached under my seat into the water of the large aquarium hidden there, pulled out a squirming *Cephalaspis* and struck her. The head shield of the prehistoric armored fish found her skull and I smiled and put the fish back in the water.

I woke this morning and thought to check the CD player of my SUV.

Poor Little Liam

Mason Moher

I envy that Poor Little Liam,
And someday maybe I could learn how
To smile and stare and hope and dream
But for now please let me finish my meal.

Poor Little Liam,
Smiling longingly from your booth
Wishing, dreaming of your life to come.

Poor Little Liam,
Watching intently as we eat,
Just trying to make it through the meal.

Poor Little Liam,
Starry-eyed in complexion,
Still to experience star-crossed love.

Poor Little Liam,
Defiant against your maternal tyranny
Protesting the industrial farms on your plate.

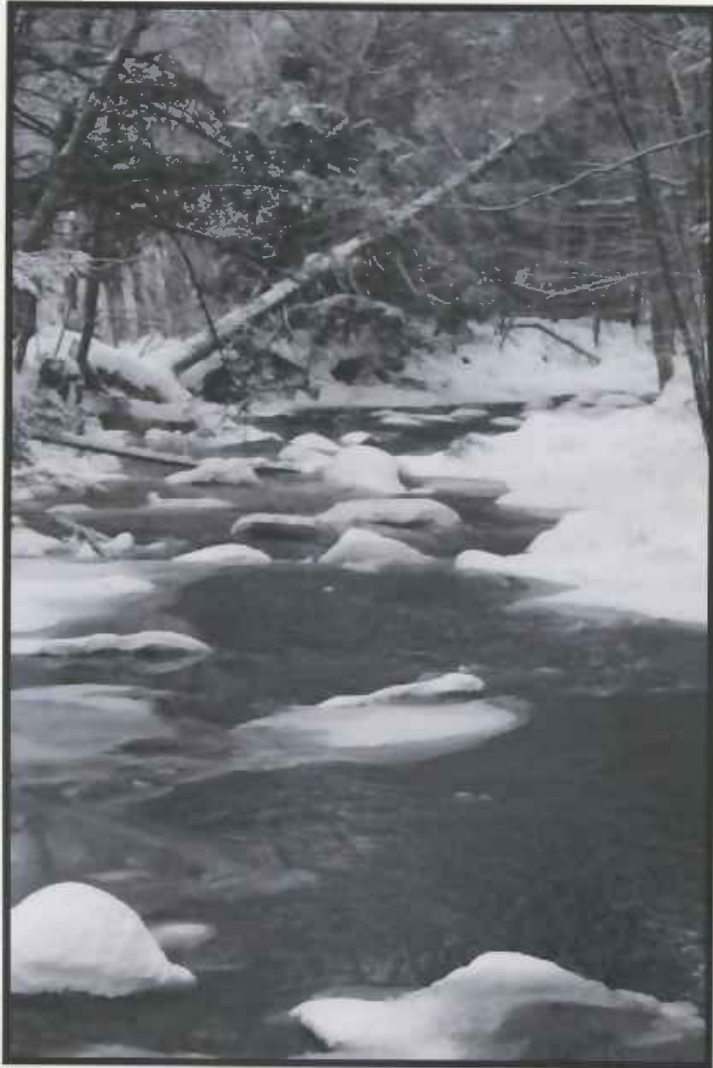
Poor Little Liam,
Yet to see the world besmirched
By broken bones, hearts, and dreams around him.

Poor Little Liam,
Still lies quietly upon his bed
Yet to experience the long lonely night.

Poor Little Liam,
Still hopes for "Happily Ever After"
Not knowing that Things always Fall Apart.

Poor Little Liam,
Still thinks he's special
Not understanding he's another's copy.

Poor Little Liam,
Still knows not of the path before him
Nor the suffering that awaits beyond the bend.



Melanie Quintanilla

Underlying

Kaleigh Killian

Soft wind caresses my body
Light, like the stroke of your fingers
Your touch.
But in it there is a chill,
An undeniable chill
Cold, haunting, deadly.
Your grasp squeezing
The life right out
Of my heart
Turning to ice,
Freezing in stone.
Never ending and all-encompassing:
A tomb of love and lies
Like paradise turned
Upside down and pots
Of gold raining acid on the
People. People are everywhere.
They see and they know and
Warn me. I'm wrong and
they know and try to tell me.
But I won't listen. I don't.
The end is near and I can see
They took the right path instead
Of left behind and instead
I am left.
My own fault. My mistakes
Spilling over the world
Drowning in the icy chill
Of wind.

The Story of Us

Morgan Myers

When I write something new, it reminds me of you
and the stories we wrote. You used
your cool sequined journals. I used plain yellow notepads
to jot down the snappy dialogue
invented during late-night conversations.
Your hands grasped a glittery gel pen, forming fabulous words
into sentences. Mine held a small pencil
that had worn away over time,
rubbing dull marks against thinly lined paper.

You showed me your ideas,
a hint of drama, two spunky protagonists,
a dash of plot twists:
excitement, tension,
a sprinkling of humor.
I reread your words sometimes—
nothing more than childish thoughts
rolled up into crinkly balls of notebook paper,
but no less special.

Your pens are tucked away in a drawer now,
chipping and fading away,
the points snapped beyond repair.

I take them out sometimes; mine with the broken erasers
don't seem as special anymore.



Leah Santucci

Absentee Antiquity

Thomas Simko

There used to be a chandelier. Right there. Must have been fifteen feet across, easy. At least that's how I remember it. Before they shut the electricity off you could turn it on and see the hundreds of tiny crystals refracting thousands and thousands of prismatic glares. It was hypnotic. Kicking my way through broken furniture and piles of refuse, I moved as close to the center of the room as I could get and stood in a clear(ish) section of floor. The grand piano sat right about here. It had been broken, and most of the keys were useless, even when the building was still in operation. Nonetheless, it had been regularly cleaned and was cordoned off by red, velvet ropes, even though it was no longer of any use as a musical instrument. It's not like there was anyone watching or preventing us from breaking it further if we wanted, but you know, we never did, and every week somebody still came and dusted it. It was a piece of a history none of us were alive to remember. I wondered how long it had been since they had taken it away.

I upturned one of the dilapidated chairs to sit down. It promptly buckled under my weight, and I found myself laying face up amongst the dirt and garbage. Cockroaches scattered. Catching my breath and gazing up, I could see where the chandelier used to be, where the holes were drilled to set supporting brackets to hold the massive thing as it swung slightly, like it was constantly being rocked by a gentle wind.

There was no wind. There was no chandelier. There were just holes. I imagined some immigrant workman, standing precariously on a ridiculously tall ladder, the weight of the hanging light being held by some sort of small crane, and, as he drills the holes, he is christened by plaster and dust. I imagined him bolting the studs through the brackets and into the ceiling, unaffected by the beautiful piece of architecture just inches from him, hanging there. Just doing his job. The only man to ever get that close in that way again, the only man to share such intimacy with the suspended artistry of the chandelier, would be the one to take it down, a century later, after it had lost its luster, after the gold had tarnished and faded, after the crystals fell, jingling one by one to the terrazzo floor. Then I noticed I was lying on garbage, lost in the nostalgia of a time before my grandparents were even born.

My mind drifted again, and I remembered when I was twenty-four how we would sneak into the due-to-be-demolished building, after they had boarded up the doors and windows, through a small, unseen gap we found. We did photography shoots for rock bands that just thought the place was "cool." I remembered when I was nineteen how we used to sit in that lobby, still closed and condemned as it was now, drinking in

secret with friends in this place amongst the bums and the squatters where the cops wouldn't find us. I remembered when I was fifteen how they opened a punk rock club here, between the marvelous marble columns that flanked the room, a few years before the building was finally closed. I could hear the noise and the mostly awful but occasionally glorious music that echoed throughout the aged lobby and see the faces of all the wonderful, ridiculous people I had met and drank bad coffee with between those columns. I dreamed the gala balls that happened here more than half a century before my birth, the fabulously expensive clothing, the celebrities and magnates, the deals made beneath the chandelier amongst the cigar smoke and champagne. I could see the building as it was when it was new, at the turn of the century, and then I remembered again that I was lying on garbage.

I stood up and brushed myself off, the years of disuse shedding from me like old, dead skin around a healing wound. They were tearing the place down soon. I would never get to see it again. I held the memory in my mind, knowing it too would fade, cradling it like a disaster relief worker might cradle a small body found in rubble, saying goodbye, wondering why it had to happen the way it did. I moved away from the center of the room, again navigating the broken furniture and garbage. Stepping quietly, reverently, towards the light of the broken wall that marked the exit. I crawled beneath the curling plaster through the gap that led to the alley, the secret way in and out, and as I stepped beyond the wall's boundary and on to the warm pavement, I could swear I heard the jingle of crystal touching down on a terrazzo floor.

Burdensome

Casey Saylor

The truth is a funny thing.
Nobody wants to see it, to know it,
to seek it out.
That would be too burdensome.

The truth is right in front of you,
if only you would look up from
yourselves for a moment,
But that would be too burdensome.

And that's how they like it, the holders of truth.
For if you look up, you might see,
and if you see, you might know,
and if you know, you may continue to seek it out,
And that's when you begin to be a burden.

So really, it's better for everyone
to keep the burden on you.
It's in your best interest, really,
for truth to remain a funny thing
nobody wants to see, or know, or seek out
A thing that honestly is
too burdensome.



Mason Moher



Bridget Guarnieri

Interrogation

For Dashiell Hammett

Matthew Hinton

Dappled canvas-sky with gold filigree edges
and a man in his undershirt is crushing ants again
to the rhythms of Buddy Rich.
The typewriter clunks down his life
staining the paper with his stains,
yellowing the edges and coffee-ing the rings.
His collar stale, his sweat bleeding the ink,
he smells like the inside of a cigarette case
and it reminds him to light the dangling Parliament-iciple.
He is trying to bury them all
the coworkers
the kids on his street
the gods
his parents
—bury them with words,
right up to their necks,
coax out the stories under the weight of ink and air.
He clacks his way through years,
lifts the corners of rugs with a crowbar and a kick,
topples dressers for new mysteries
and piles picture frames for furnace fuel.
He is through with the careful, clean interrogation.
His wallet is emptier than his heart
which is creased into the secret compartment
behind his license to kill brain cells.
When this ribbon runs dry
he will scrape his knuckles across the keys
just to tear the yellow paper with his ghosts
just to make an impression

A Walk in the Park; A Throne for the Ages

Ashley Collins

Barefoot feet smashing tiny trees,
plopping drops that say, "I'm sorry."

The wind must feel my restlessness.
The trees wave, beckon, with their hands;
cooing, calling,
"Come with me!

I too know only the wind and the rain,
the bite of the cold

but

the kiss of the sun.

My brothers have been bulldozed
and my body is bent.

My roots hit rocks
and my leaves drop dead.

I've ended up losing
nearly all of my branches.

Yet, through all the seasons,
I still stand."

So I take my place
standing next to them.



Sarah Wigg

Perspective

Tori Dziedziak

Today was a great day. After waking to the smell of brewing coffee, I stretched out my tired body; I spent most of yesterday babysitting the neighbor's kids with my roommate. I learned just how much the Miller triplets love flinging macaroni and cheese, belting out the Scooby-Doo theme song, and playing with the dog. I didn't mind cleaning up the noodles stuck to the kitchen tiles, though, and I'll admit that I very much enjoyed watching Scooby-Doo—he was always my childhood hero.

I'm definitely not a morning person, so upon waking up, I was a hot mess. "Good morning, Buddy," my roommate said when she passed my room, chuckling. She calls me Buddy. "Breakfast is almost ready." *Thanks. I'll be down in a minute,* I yawned. After summoning enough energy, I finally crawled out of bed and trudged downstairs. I gladly recognized the familiar aroma of cooking ham. Whoever decided it was a good idea to eat meat with breakfast is a hero in my book, right next to Scooby-Doo. By the time breakfast was passed my way, I was practically drooling.

After eating, I saw my roommate off to work with sad eyes. She works a few blocks away near a dog park, which is my favorite part of town. Our area is well known for stray cats and individuals like us trying to survive fresh out of college.

In college, my roommate was particularly neat and studious. She was always burying her snout in medical books and practicing for presentations. "You're my audience. Try not to make me laugh this time." *Okay, I'll try,* I'd say, knowing that she'd laugh anyway. She's kind-hearted and friendly, but people always seemed more excited to see me than her when we'd walk through campus. She graduated on the highest honor roll, whereas I'm just happy I walked away knowing that, when I came into contact with people, I brightened their days.

I love living with her, I thought. She makes us dinner every day, and she only complains when I leave stuff lying around. "What is this mess?" she'd ask upon returning home from her boyfriend's house, obviously annoyed. *Sorry, I didn't think it was that big of a deal.* "This can't keep happening." Besides her tendency to keep things perfectly in place, I'm thrilled we're roommates. I met her when I was three months old and we've been inseparable ever since. Every evening, we go running together and, on summer weekends, we take road trips. She laughs when I stick my head out the window, but she doesn't know I'm not trying to be funny. I just find it refreshing and freeing.

Stats. Settling into my spot on the couch, I accidentally knocked the remote control onto the floor and that awful static noise began blasting its horrid chorus.

I still don't know how to work the remote and I never will, so I stepped on it a few times until the noise stops and Animal Planet flashes onto the screen. *Excellent*, I thought. *My favorite channel*. I tuned in to catch a *Pets Gone Wild* marathon. I thought about how happy I was that I had the day off and that we didn't have any wild, smelly animals dirtying up our house. I smiled. *Today was going to be a good day*.

I spent most of the afternoon snacking on leftovers and testing out the fish-patterned, plastic kiddie pool my roommate recently bought. I don't think she's a very good swimmer, but she never really mentioned it, so I'm content just sitting in the one-foot pool of water with her on extra hot days. She usually reads, but I like watching the clouds and the Miller children chasing each other with water guns. They think it's funny to squirt the stray cats, but their mother yells at them and my roommate shakes her head. Secretly I think it's funny, too, but I keep that to myself. Still exhausted from the weekend, I fell asleep on a towel under the sun listening to birds singing and three children laughing and squirting their guns.

A few hours later, I woke up to Mr. Johnson next door mowing his grass. *Vvrrrrr*. The lawnmower engine growled and so did Mr. Johnson's curly-haired bichon frise puppy, defending her territory. I always thought she was so cute. Mr. Johnson caught me staring at her and he smiled and waved, redirecting my attention. I acknowledged him and walked back into the house, embarrassed. The last thing I needed was my neighbor thinking I was stalking his dog.

By that time, it was late afternoon and I was getting bored and lonely. My roommate should be home any minute now, and I was excited to see her. Suddenly, I got a whiff of a strange smell. *What is that?* I hopped off the couch and took a lap around the house.

Creeeeak. The front door opened slowly and then all at once, catching me off guard. There was something in the air getting me especially riled up and anxious. *It's about time you came home!* I wondered what she brought home for dinner that smelled so...distinct. She slid through the door sideways, holding a large cardboard box. She shut the front door and greeted me animatedly, "Hey, Buddy!" *What the Harry is that? I hope it's steak*. She seemed really excited, so I checked it out.

She put down the box so I could peek inside. "I know how much you hate sharing me," she joked, "But I found this little guy hopping around outside my office, so I brought him home." Peering into the box, I saw what looked like a giant grey dust ball, like the ones my roommate misses when she's vacuuming. I hate the vacuum.

A smelly rabbit? No. Gross. What would we do with it?

"Remember back when I saw you sitting on the side of the road? I pulled my car over, wondering why you were sitting in the pouring rain and who on earth would abandon a three-month-old. When I walked over to you, you smiled and started wagging your sweet, curly tail, the happiest husky I'd ever seen. You jumped on my leg

with your funny paws that were too big for your legs. And when you looked up at me with those innocent blue eyes, I knew I just met my new best friend and roommate. And that's all this rabbit needs, Buddy - a friend and some good roommates."

If I could, I'd cry after listening to my roommate's beautiful story of how she saved me, but I'm a dog, so instead I wagged my tail and licked her face, just happy to have her home again. *Well, since you put it like that... I love you, roommate. You are the best human in the world.* I rolled over and she scratched my belly, just the way I like it. She patted my head, put the box on the kitchen table, and fed me my favorite dinner. We went for a run, and she even took me to the dog park a few blocks over. *Today was a great day.*

The rabbit stayed.



Emily Halbing

Night Self

Ashley Collins

I am night, stepping lightly,
needing to hide from all eyes—
melting, pulling,
stretching . . .
a sick crumpled mess . . .
like a liquid freed from glass.

I stay waiting,
I am waning
in this sculpted blotch of darkness
with La Luna laughing,
mocking—
I cannot fall prey again.

Yet, I will test you from the shadows
as screaming voices ring like church bells,
unaware of each penumbra,
forever trapped in black and white.

So I am waning,
and I stay waiting,
because someone here has got to break.
Still slightly praying,
expecting no salvation,
“Please let it be the dawn.”

The Year of Snow

WINTER

By [Name]

Photography by [Name]

Illustration by [Name]

Design by [Name]

Layout by [Name]

Printing by [Name]

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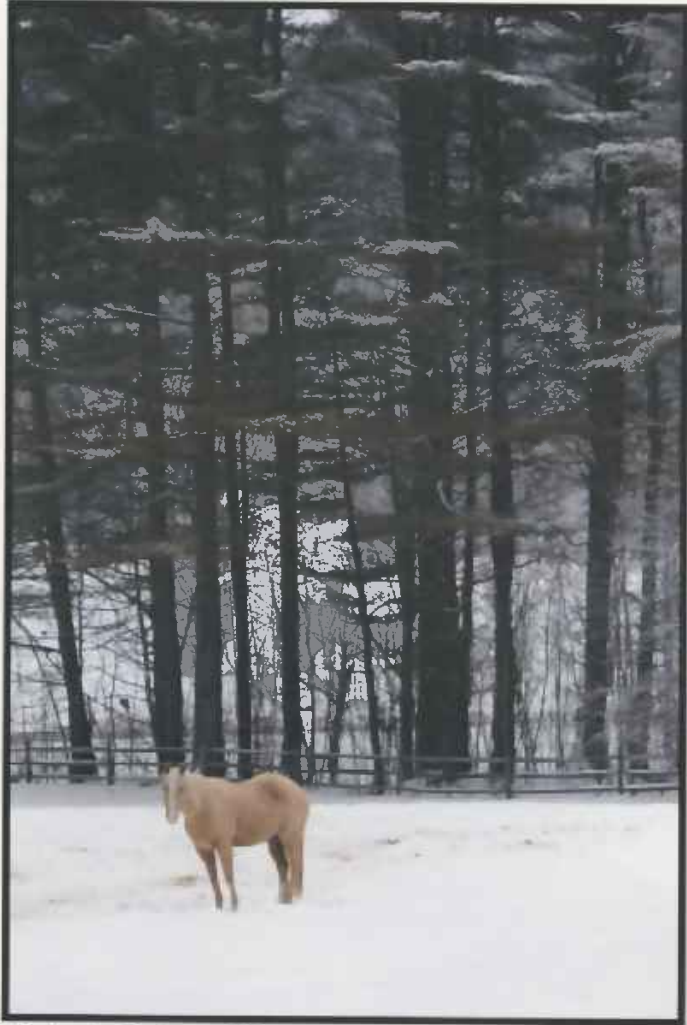
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Melanie Quintanilla



Elena Uribe

Two Sides of Lonely

Emily Halbing

She lies in a field covered by dead grass
Her eyes blank and full of everything
Her dress still, swelling in the breeze
She thinks about nothing besides what matters most
And the sun tinges her cheeks a deep red
Slowly and suddenly, before she realizes
The sky turns black and alight with stars
The wind dances more excitedly
Trying to push her closer to something
But she dances with it instead
It is just between today and the next
A few minutes before midnight
When the dead walk the earth
And remind us what we're missing
They are carried by the wind
From one side of lonely to the other
And it hurts her heart but only in the right places.

Long Flight Home

Dedicated to Sarah Jane Buzzard

Jared Pinter

There's a train that leaves every hour on the hour, and my heart goes with it to the most beautiful girl. And soon, I shall return to the States, but my heart will remain on that train. I'll forget about the beautiful girl and move on with my life. But on that train, my heart will stay. I may forget, but the heart never does.

I may forget, but the heart never does.

I wake up and call out of work. I lay in bed, thinking of her, and doze off again.

The fireplace burns brightly in a well-lighted room. We sit on the couch and sip our hot cocoa. I feel full and I pull you a little tighter under the blanket colored like the winter's deep blue sky and decorated with snowflakes. We watch the kids through the picture-glass window, and we're blanketed with the warmth of each other. Outside, the snow is falling, and I'm in here falling deeply in love with you. The fire begins to dim, and I don't get up to fetch more wood. To leave your arms would be to freeze to death wandering in a blizzard. The fire goes out.

A pile of plane tickets rests on my nightstand. I have a cigarette while I wait for the taxi.

I land in Redding at 4:07 and take a taxi to the train station. At 4:17, I arrive at the terminal and pay my fare. With forty-three minutes to wait, I sit at a kiosk and enjoy the bitterness of a black coffee.

On the train, an elderly couple sits across from me. The woman is leaning into her husband.

I arrive in London, and I don't know where to go. I don't know anyone, and I do not know the area. My boots crunch in the snow as I wander the London streets aimlessly. I don't know your address but I walk, looking for the street with the right-sounding name.

When I am too cold to walk, I wander into a coffee shop on the corner. And there I sit. The fire is hot but my heart much hotter. The coffee is sweet but your smile much sweeter. The shop is peaceful but your arms much more peaceful. The table is hard but love is much harder. My eyes are glass but yours are crystal. And I stare into you. And you at me. The fire is bright but your smile much brighter.

The fire dies, and my heart goes with it.

I awake to my alarm at 7:00 A.M. The plane leaves at 1:00 P.M.

I arrive at the airport at 11:49. I skip the cigarette and head inside, and I find the

coffee shop nearest my terminal.

My plane comes in from London at 12:18. Londoners and travelers alike empty into the terminal. I scan the faces to see if any are yours. Of course, none of them are. I take doubt but sip my coffee.

The woman at the terminal announces that my flight will be delayed by an hour. I buy a Hemingway book and another coffee to pass the time and reposition myself to sit facing away from the terminal.

I read the book and look up as the last of the Londoners pass. Still, none are you.

It is 1:40, and the plane begins to board. I take the ticket from my pocket and stare at it a moment. Folding it, I replace it in my pocket and leave the airport.

When I arrive home, I call the airline, tell them that I missed my flight, and ask for a midday flight tomorrow. I think I'll have some tea tomorrow.

Plathonic

Alexandria Smith

Like smoke
Inside of a
Bell jar
My soul
Waxes
And wanes
Curling
Deflecting
A mere reflection
Of that which
Once was
Burning
A personality
That yearned
For a reception
Confined
Only to dreams
Dreams are
All that remains
Of this crippled
Body,
Starved of air
And poisoned
By a lack
Of light
Like smoke
Inside of a
Bell jar
My soul
Is extinguished
By the confines
Of my own
Mind

Of Wax and Dreams

Thomas Simko

Fluttering white down,
sunlight glinting off quill tips,
It's my fault.

Heat lines make little rainbows in the ocean spray
where the gulls pick and peck
fighting over what has washed ashore.

We were weightless once,
but freedom cannot be built
by shaking hands in the candlelight.

Candles are liars
that emanate a flickering hope,
that breaks on rocks with bones,
that mixes red and failure
into a blue-green sea.

I wish I had flown
into the embrace of Helios
with him.
For what becomes of the word
"father"
after king and god help you
murder your son?

The Personality of Clouds

Rita Molino

In the clouds, there are God-created life
forces

Enriching the soul as we view the different
shapes

Each shape engulfing the clear, blue sky like
a kite flowing through space

Gaze on one of the formations as you let
your mind

Wander into another space and time

Think not of what is man-made

But of the cloud formation God has given
you today

Each cloud design is separate and unique
from the other

Like people, the clouds have distinguishing
personalities

The shape you see today may be different
from the one you see tomorrow

Yet it is the same cloud-filled sky God created

What forces have changed to create today's
clouds?

Perhaps there was a thunderstorm

The winds, rain, and lightning were tumultuous

And, when the clouds appeared, they were
challenged

Yet they appeared in another formation to
let us know

God created another cloud-filled blue sky day

I saw a cloud formation of a dog today

It had pointed ears and fur so fluffy I wanted
to pet it

It was in a peaceful state floating across the

blue sky

Until another darker cloud appeared and
overshadowed it

I waited patiently for a few minutes

My eyes peering into the same location my
dog originally appeared

Finally, the dark clouds gravitated away from
my dog

And there he was again

As fluffy as before

Whatever dark cloud is overshadowing your
personality today,

Remember, tomorrow God will create a new
sky

And if you look closely and say

I think I can see it

I know it's there

Ah . . . yes,

You will see the dog with the pointed ears
and fluffy fur

Reality

Michael Baloga

Collapse

Dissect the body,

Light refracts and flips

A jump of synapse.

Enters the root.

The root of all.

Existence?

God?

Self?

Mass of sugar coated mush!

Base of understanding,

But still, no answer!

Questions lingering,

Insufferable.

But sought.

Morning Tide

S.A. Hain

Dark clouds are rolling in;
A storm approaches.
The wind picks up
And the ocean is churning.

Sand stings my eyes
As I stand transfixed—
A tidal wave arcs up out of the water.
Its course is set; I look up ill at ease
When the whole thing comes crashing down.

Fall upon me with all your fury;
Unrelenting tempest, whisk me out to sea.
Drag me below the ebb n flow
To the swirling current's embrace.

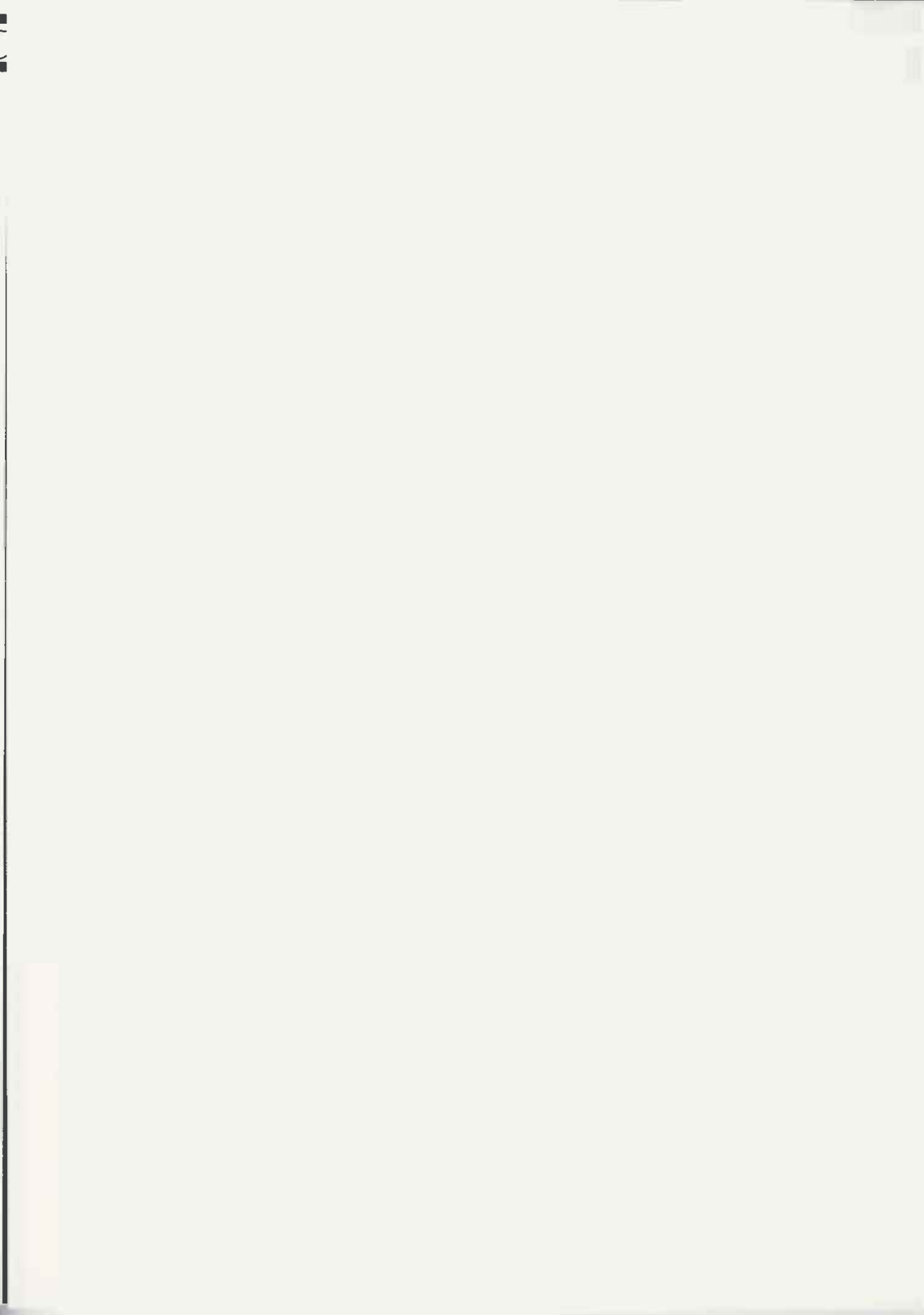
Extinguish the flame of life within;
Set me free from this place.
For so long now, I've felt so empty,
Fed up with living here among the heathens—
That occupy dry land.

I offer up my soul
To the incorporeal demons of the deep—
I have no need for it anymore;
I'm just all used up and empty inside.

At long last, Poseidon answers my prayer
And the water cascades over my whole body.
Drug down into swirling whirl pools
Whose fearsome grip will not let me go—
Till well after I've died.
I wash back up further down the shore-
Carried back when the furious storm finally dispels
And again becomes the morning tide.



Mason Moher



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