

the MEADOW
2006



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TRUCKEE MEADOWS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Reno, Nevada

M06

THE MEADOW is the annual literary arts journal of Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nevada. It is published every spring. Students interested in literary arts, graphic design and the arts are encouraged to participate on the Editorial Board. Visit www.tmcc.edu/meadow for information and submission guidelines. Look for notices around campus, or in *The Echo* student newspaper, or contact the Editor-in-Chief at meadow@tmcc.edu or through the English Department at (775) 673-7092. The course ENG 299 Literary Journal gives students the chance to earn college credit for their work on THE MEADOW Editorial Board.

We accept **Submissions** of poetry, short stories, essays, creative nonfiction, screenplay and novel excerpts, interviews, one-act plays, artwork and photography. Our aim is to publish original, significant pieces. We encourage students and beginning writers to publish alongside experienced writers and artists. Contributor work and contest winners are chosen by a vote of the editorial staff through a blind submission process.

Submit **Literary Pieces** via email attachment in MS Word (.doc) or .rtf format to meadow@tmcc.edu. We prefer email submissions. Typed manuscripts must be accompanied by a .doc or .rtf file on disk (address below). Submit no more than five pieces of original work. Include a cover page with name, address, phone number, email address, the titles of all works submitted and a short author's biography (35 words). Do not include your name on the works themselves. Send copies, not originals. We prefer prose pieces to run 3000 words or fewer. For prose pieces, include a word count.

We prefer submissions of **Artwork and Photography** as email attachments in .jpg or .tif format to meadow@tmcc.edu. Include title, description of media, contact information and a short biography (35 words) in the body of your email. If you choose to submit a hard copy of artwork, include a CD or disk containing a 300 dpi scan of the work. We discourage the submission of original art. Submit no more than five pieces. The artist is responsible for verifying receipt of the work and for providing means to return the work. Attach a card to the back of the piece with artist's name, address, phone number and email address. Include a title for your work(s) and a description of the media used. Submissions must include instructions for returning the work to the owner. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope or mailer, or claim pieces from the editorial office in the last two weeks of the spring semester.

See our web site at www.tmcc.edu/meadow for information on our annual **Cover Design** and **Literary and Art Contests**. TMCC students are eligible for prizes.

At this time, THE MEADOW is not interested in acquiring rights to contributors' works. All rights revert to the author or artist upon publication.

Our address THE MEADOW Truckee Meadows Community College English Department: VSTA B300 7000 Dandini Blvd. Reno, Nevada 89512.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE MEADOW 2006 coalesced around the loose theme of "The Journey." Janner Redera, the winner of our annual cover design contest, captures a dream-like aspect of this theme with his exceptional image. Before we encounter the actual beach of our physical journey, no doubt the mind's eye has already colored our mental experience with precognitive notions and imagined dreamscapes. The work in this year's journal comes at life's metaphorical journey from all angles—young, adult and wise. Life's premiere irony might be that when we finally know what to do we no longer have the strength to do it. These pages contain the efforts of artists young and old who are struggling to say and to do the wise thing. If at the end of life's journey we are left with nothing but a raw sense of wisdom and a feeling of kindness toward the rest of the stragglers who are seeking their journey's end, then we can celebrate a successful journey. Right now, I just want to celebrate a successful literary journal.

Given the quality of THE MEADOW 2006, deciding student prize winners wasn't easy. Through a blind submission and voting process, the editorial board decided to award the following TMCC students first-place prizes:

Art/Photography "Lost Times #2" by Shu Nomura

Fiction "Lisa" by Dillon Dunlop

Nonfiction "Watching Men" by Rebecca Eckland

Poetry "Dear Charles Fort" by Jessica Ellis

Cover Art Janner Redera

The Associated Students of Truckee Meadows Community College (ASTM) sponsored first-place prizes this year. Only TMCC students enrolled during the 2005-06 academic year were eligible. We enjoyed a record number of submissions—which translated into the laudable content you hold in your hand. We look forward to increasing these numbers.

The "literary" year at TMCC has been extraordinary, as our special section, beginning on page 65, clearly demonstrates. Kudos to Ana Douglass, a Nevada Humanities board member, for conducting our interview with bestselling author Khaled Hosseini.

TMCC student Graphic Design Manager Eleanor Martin made this year's production go more smoothly than ever. Thank you, Ellie! Hugh Fraser of English, John Adlish of Arts and Humanities and TMCC President Dr. Philip Ringle offer continued support, making free-of-charge distribution—and increased circulation—possible. We also thank Terri White, Sondra Peel, Juanita Chrysanthou, Nolan Preece, Cal Anderson, Manuel Becerra and Noah Gallop, as well as the faculty and staff of English and Graphic Arts for encouraging students to produce and submit their best work.

Our contest winners and editorial board will be recognized at the Student Awards Ceremony on May 17, 7-9 p.m. in the V. James Eardley Student Services Center.

Brad Summerhill
Editor-in-Chief

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE TMCC LITERARY YEAR IN REVIEW

Khaled Hosseini (An Interview)	65
Wordsmith Paul Zarzyski, his poem “Pathetic Fallacy”	68
Writer and Artist Marilene Phipps, her poem “Chapel Space”	70

FICTION

Lisa	Dillon Dunlop	7
Fungus	Jenny Weisberg	23
Blood	Rebecca Ann Eckland	40
The Painting	Mollie Booth	78

NONFICTION

Facing Off the Demons, Standing Naked on the Page	Dawnne Ernette	27
Watching Men: Of Wordsworth and Washing Machines	Rebecca Ann Eckland	84

POETRY

I Know the Number	Dalia E. Gerdel	17
Étude	Jessica Ellis	18
Creation	Victoria Ceretto-Slotto	19
Quick Postcard from Animal Hell	Jeff Alessandrelli	20
Sally Ann	Tim Howland	21
Starry Night	Hayley Bault	22
An Evaluation of Insincerity	Michael Witkowski	31
New Snow	John Hayes	35
Sources	Samuel Wood	36
Remembering Elaine	John Hayes	37
Who Goes First? (Found Poem)	Tricia Martin	38
Monument of Blue	Dalia E. Gerdel	39
Dipsomaniac	Alexandra Charchalis	47
Note to a Dead Boy	Rebecca Anderson	71
Pulp Noir	Jessica Ellis	72
Suuuunnnnnn of haBEEETchaaaaa	Patricia Homeyer	74
At Home	Jeff Alessandrelli	75

Communication	Calina Defebaugh	77
Night out	Abigail Terrobias	91
Scar Tissue	Dalia E. Gerdel	92
collect call / cancelled trip	Alixandra J. Dewitt	93
Reality Check	Jane Logan	96
Pele's Bones	Calina Defebaugh	97
Dear Charles Fort	Jessica Ellis	99

ART

Untitled (Photo)	Justin D. Sullivan	49
Another Man's Treasure (Photo)	Nick Baker	50
Sky's Open (Photo)	Cary Crites	51
Untitled (Photo)	Donna Bradley	52
All About Eve (Illustration)	J. V. Tabbada	53
Re-Creation of the Self (Mixed Media)	Ernest Williamson III	54
Faith & Phases (Mixed Media)	Ernest Williamson III	55
Untitled (Photo)	Kathy Burks	56
Vegas Bouquet (Photo)	Linda Seibert	57
Binary (Mixed Media)	Eleanor Martin	58
Stray (Mixed Media)	Eleanor Martin	59
Man— Tiravenamalai (Photo)	Betty Victoria	60
Untitled (Photo)	Nick Higman	61
Lost Times #1 (Photo)	Shu Nomura	62
Lost Times #2 (Photo)	Shu Nomura	63
The Arch (Photo)	Dale Davis	64

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES 100

32ND ANNUAL STUDENT ART EXHIBITION, BEST OF SHOW	Beverly Colgan, "Pony #2" (Ceramics—Raku)	103
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LISA

The night I told Lisa Segheri I loved her and she didn't tell me back was the night I drank a lot of vodka and went on a rampage. That's what I would later call it, a rampage. I would tell all my friends about it. It would become the number one thing they knew me for, the night I went gambling and lost a lot of money and broke some windows and smashed a few video surveillance cameras on the roof of the mall. It was on the news, even. And years later still, my friends will bring it up when we are bored and drinking and there is nothing else to talk about. Remember your rampage? is what they say. Oh, yes, it was some rampage, is what I say. And, what happened again? they then say, and bring their eyebrows together, like they forgot. My rampage...I say and smile and remember Lisa Segheri before I remember the rampage. But I never tell them about Lisa Segheri. I never tell anyone about Lisa.

How Lisa and I met wasn't because I was special or brave or dangerous with girls in any way. I didn't walk up to her and say, hey girl, what's your name? Mine's David. I didn't ask if she wanted to hang out or go somewhere and maybe chat over coffee. No, we met because our last names: Segheri and Setcan. That, and we had chemistry lab together.

The first week of lab, the lab teacher paired everyone up based on their last names, and Lisa and I were assigned as lab partners. And after the second week of lab, on the way to the library to do research for the following week's lab on the difference between certain bacterial cell walls, Lisa told me she lived across the street from campus and hated the library and had fast Internet anyways, so why didn't we just work at her house? And maybe later we could have dinner. Whoa. Girls didn't just invite me to work at their house and maybe have dinner, so I said sure. I said, Okay.

Over the next couple weeks, there were lots of dinners, and I began keeping a diary. The entries I still have and sometimes read. The diary I keep underneath all my clothes, buried in the corner of my closet, shoved in a shoe box.

9/20—You've met your soul mate. Move forward with either reckless abandon or caution, it's up to you!

10/4—Need to tell her how you feel. Tell her, "I don't know if you're seeing anyone, but I need to tell you how I feel or else I'd regret it my entire life. I've never, nor will I ever, meet anyone like you. You are seriously more like me than anyone I've ever met. Doing the simplest things with you have been some of the best moments of my life. I am telling you from the bottom of my heart that I am so enthralled with you that I cannot, nor do I care to, think about other girls, because I know I'll never meet anyone in this lifetime that will make me as happy as you."

10/11—Had the best day with her yesterday. We laugh so easily that it is getting to be very dangerous. I really think there isn't another person out there for me. This is the one. I am terrified that she may not feel the same way, but when young people ask old people, "How do you know if it's the one?" and they respond with the mystical, "You just know," I now know what they mean. It's a feeling, simple as breathing, this knowledge: I'd be happier with her than anyone on earth.

A few nights later, October 14th—yes I remember the date! it's the date I told her I loved her!—I was reading from the lab book at her kitchen table when she placed a plate of broccoli and spaghetti in front of me.

"Is it hot in here?" she said.

I set the book to the side and wiped my forehead. "It's just I have a hyper metabolism," I said.

"I wish my metabolism was more hyper," she said and laughed. She walked to the fridge and opened it. "What are you drinking?"

"What are you drinking?"

"Gotta have wine with pasta." She moved to a cabinet to the right of the fridge and opened one of its doors. On her tiptoes she pulled out a wine bottle. Holding it in front of her, she rubbed one of its sides and said, "Do you like chardonnay?"

This was exciting. We had talked about drinking, had found out we both drank, but had never drank together.

"Kind of," I said. "But wine makes me donkey."

"Makes you a donkey?" she said.

"Makes me donkey," I said.

She laughed and opened the fridge.

"We also have bottles of Bud Light and Coors Light." Grabbing a bottle of both beers and holding up each the way dead fish is held for a photo, she said, "Coors Light? Or Bud Light?" and cocked her head to the side. Hair slid across one green eye, and I imagined her naked.

"Coors Light."

She threw the bottle at me. "Nice catch."

During dinner, I liked eating so much it was hard for me to do it slowly. After dinner, we were at the sink doing dishes. I was the dryer.

"This one's not clean," I said. "Don't send me dishes that aren't clean, yeah. I'm just the dryer."

"Oh, be quiet. It's fine."

"Fine?" I showed her a missed spaghetti stain on the white plate. "What do you call this?"

“God,” she said, rolling her eyes at me. She grabbed the plate and sank it in soapy sink water. Lifting the plate, she scrunched up her eyes and nose to examine it closely and said, “Okay, stupid baby, does the plate look okay now?”

I grabbed the plate and checked the front, then turned it over. “There’s a grease smear here,” I pointed.

Lisa grabbed the rag from my hand and began wiping the smear off.

And I grabbed the rag back and said, “Hey! This rag’s for drying. You can’t get the drying rag all dirty, ‘cause then it’s not a drying rag, it’s a cleaning rag.”

She kept washing and smiling.

And I placed my hand on her shoulder and said, “Lisa.”

Petting her shoulder as if it were fragile tissue paper, I said, “If you’re low on rags, I got lots. I can bring some over.”

She kept washing and smiling.

“I have so many,” I said and reached my hand up off her shoulder and placed it on her hair.

She looked down and frowned.

“We didn’t grow up with drying rags,” she said. “We didn’t have much rags at all. Only rags we had were engine rags.”

I slid my hand off her hair and let it fall limp by my leg.

“No.”

She nodded.

Looking at my feet and putting both hands into my old-jeans pockets, I said, “If it makes you feel better, on my twelfth birthday my mom asked to see if I was growing penis hair yet.”

“What?” Lisa said, scrunching her face up around her nose. “She wanted to see if you were?”

“Yeah,” I said. “She was going through nursing school, so she said her wanting to see was only a scientific matter.”

“A scientific matter?” Lisa said. “Your mom asked to see if you were growing penis hair when you turned twelve and said it was a scientific matter?”

“Uh-huh,” I said.

You could tell she didn’t believe me.

“What did you say?”

“I said, ‘Mom, it’s my penis,’ and I said, ‘Mom, it’s my land.’”

“You did not,” Lisa said.

“Yu-huh,” I said. “And I said, ‘Mom, it’s my birthday, and seeing my penis would be a present for you, and it’s not your birthday, Mom, it’s

my birthday.”

“You did not!” Lisa said and cupped a handful of sink water and splashed it on my chest.

Water seeped warm through my shirt. I could taste dish soap on my lips and feel some on my chin.

“I’m wet,” I said. “You got my favorite shirt wet.”

“Well,” Lisa said, pushing me back, “I don’t want to hear nasty-ass stories about your mom wanting to see your penis when you were a twelve-year-old child.”

“No,” I said. “You don’t understand,” I said. “She just thinks since I came out of her vagina she’s allowed to see how I’m progressing, is all.”

“Oh,” Lisa said, bobbing her head to both sides. “But besides that she’s a good mom?”

“She’s a regular mom,” I said. “She used to lift weights and stuff.”

“What in the hell does that have to do with anything?”

“You don’t understand,” I said. “It’s not like she’s a body builder or anything. She makes cakes,” I said. “She lotions her body.”

And Lisa said, “Oh my God,” and laughed and came forward and shook her head and said, “I love you,” and placed her head against my chest.

And up off her hair, through my nose, down along the back of my tongue, soaking into my throat and lungs, the sweet smell of her made my blood melt, the manic warmth creep across my skin. I could be like this around no one else. I loved her sick.

“How’s my shirt?” she said as I walked into her bedroom and sat on the king-sized bed, where she was folding laundry. She had given me a shirt of hers, so she could wash my wet shirt. My shirt was in the dryer. Her shirt was black and too tight on me. It said Bean Factory in white letters across the front.

“It’s pretty man-throb,” I said. I looked down to examine the shirt and began tracing the white letters with an index finger. Stopping the finger at a nipple and pushing down hard, I said, “This.”

Lisa closed her eyes and put a used sheet of fabric softener across her face.

“My favorite smell in the whole world,” she said, “is fabric softener,” and inhaled deeply.

Opening her eyes and offering the sheet to me, she said, “Smell.”

And I smelled and said, “Mmm.”

Tossing orange panties next to my thigh, she said, “When I was a kid, I used to save sheets of fabric softener and put them under my bed,

behind my dresser, in my closet, in my sock drawer—everywhere. Growing up,” she said, “me and my sister shared a room and my sister would find them and throw them away, but I’d always go get more. I’d even get them straight out of the box if there weren’t any used ones, you know, and my sister just hated that.

“But now,” swinging headfirst and dipping beneath the bed agile as a big lizard, and swinging back smiling with a fistful of fabric softener, she said, “look.”

She gave them to me and said, “Smell.”

And I smelled and said, “Angels.”

She said, “Come on!” and slid onto the floor and disappeared her head under the bed and said, “I want to show you something.”

I slid off the bed and lowered to my stomach. And underneath the bed, behind the hanging white comforter, what must have been thousands of fabric softener sheets were crammed together like feathers in a giant pillow, and she was digging into the middle, saying, “Come on!”

Saying, “It’s fun!”

When we were both underneath the bed completely, and all I could see was a muffled darkness beyond the sheets in my immediate vision, she said, “Doesn’t it feel like you’re in a cloud?” and squealed. “I love to come underneath here and just lay for hours listening to music or thinking. Sometimes I even sleep here.”

“I used to sleep in my closet,” I said. “Under all my clothes and stuff.”

Hugging armfuls of fabric softener to her chest and closing her eyes, she said, “When I don’t want to see my roommates, or they’re all going out and want me to come with them to some stupid club or something, I’ll just lay under here until they’re gone.”

Lifting her butt and back off the ground and packing fabric softener between herself and the carpet, she said, “One time, they even checked under the bed for me, and they still couldn’t find me.”

I imagined what it would be like having sex with Lisa underneath here, in the midst of all that fabric softener and trapped air. Our combined body heat would be remarkable and would have nowhere to go.

“How, how many sheets do you think are under here?” I said.

“I don’t know,” she said. “Hundreds, maybe thousands.”

“You know,” she said, “I’ve only brought one other person under here, and that was my sister. Except that wasn’t this bed, that was my bed where I grew up. And the bed where I grew up didn’t have nearly as much fabric softener as I have now.”

“So I’m the first one besides your sister?”

“Most people would think it’s weird,” she said, “but I knew you wouldn’t.”

She made a noise and said, “I’m going to turn on some music, kay? It’s cool just laying here listening to music. Watch. You can have such clear thoughts,” and she dug toward the room’s light and was gone.

The box spring whined a moment later.

“Sorry,” she yelled. “Am I squishing you?”

“No.” I moved toward the wall.

“I’m just looking through my CDs. Do you like Sarah McLachlan?”

“Not really.”

“Do you like Mariah Carey?”

“No.”

“How ‘bout TLC?”

“I only know their waterfall song,” I said.

“Okay, well, I’m going to play TLC, their waterfall CD,” she said. “It has some good songs. And they have some messages. The waterfall song’s about getting AIDS and dying.”

“Dang,” I said, trying not to laugh.

She slid across the bed, and I could feel her walk across the carpet to start the CD.

A moment later she crawled back under and sang, “Where’d you go, David Setcan? David Setcan,” she sang, “where’d you go?”

“Against the wall.”

“Why’d you go over there?”

“Because you feel all safe and balled up like a kitty.”

And maybe halfway to me, she said—“Oh! Should I get Mr. Kitty? He loves it under here!”

Mr. Kitty was a big Siamese cat that greeted you by showing his claws, and when he looked at you, one of his big blue eyes would vibrate. Mr. Kitty was old.

I told her to get him.

“Kay,” she said. “I’ll be right back. Right back,” she said.

While she was gone, just in case she decided to pull my pants down, I thought of her. I put a hand down the front of my boxers and was growing an erection in no time.

And burrowing back through a minute later, Lisa was saying, “He used to get nervous when I tried to bring him under here at first.” Digging below my feet, she said, “But after I lived here a while, I’d always find him hiding here. He’s always hiding here,” she said, “just like me,” and she laughed.

“Do you like this?” she asked.

“Me?”

“Duh.”

“It’s peaceful.”

“The music?”

“No, under here. The music’s okay, yeah.”

“Mr. Kitty’s coming to see you. You gotta help him. It’s hard for him to push through, and sometimes he just gives up and leaves.”

I reached down below my waist, until I felt something furry.

“I got him.”

I held him from under the front arms, and he tried to get away, so I scratched behind his ears and whispered nonsense to him:

“No, you have to like it, donkey. You have to like it.”

To Lisa I said, “I can’t believe he stays under here without, without panicking or anything.”

Lisa spooned behind Mr. Kitty and began petting him also. She moved a section of fabric softener separating her face from mine, and a small rope of light from the window above the bed spilled down the crack between the mattress and wall, illuminating the outline of her lips, the curve of her jaw, and I had the sudden impulse to kiss her.

“Last week,” I watched her lips say, “I brought my lantern under here—well, it’s not a lantern, it’s more like a lamp—and made a little clearing in the middle for Mr. Kitty and me.”

Pulling hair from her mouth and running the end of her tongue over her lips, she said, “I made tuna and crackers and I gave some tuna to Mr. Kitty. You love tuna, huh?” she asked Mr. Kitty, who was purring louder now and lying on his back between us, clawing at fabric softener.

I watched her fingers rub Mr. Kitty’s stomach and asked, “Am I really the only person besides your sister that you’ve brought under here?” I said, “You haven’t brought any other friends? None of your roommates?”

“You’re the first,” she said, moving sideways and looking right at me. “What do you think? I bring people under here all the time and tell them they’re the first ever so they feel special?”

“Yeah.”

“Shut up. No. Really,” she said. “You’re the first.”

I rubbed my nose and mouth against the top of Mr. Kitty’s head, which smelled like syrup, and imagined having pancakes with Lisa several years in the future, when we were married.

“You don’t think I’m weird for liking it under here so much?”

“No, I wish I had a little hole to hide in,” I said. “Well, I mean, I practically live in one, but I don’t have one to hide in.”

“I’m glad I have someone to show it to,” she said.

“I’m glad that someone’s me,” and blood swarmed to my face.

She scrunched up closer.

Her bare foot rubbed against mine.

And a spark went banging up my nerves, to my heart, and without planning it right, without even being able to see her reaction right, the look in her eyes, if she had stopped breathing, like I had, I was saying it:

“I’m in love with you, Lisa. I think I’m in love with you.”

I had said it—twice. I couldn’t believe I had said it even once.

And she didn’t say anything.

I panicked. I tried to remember what I had written in my diary. Tell her that! I should tell her that!

But I couldn’t remember a thing.

And now, for some reason, I couldn’t even see her face.

I said, “Lisa?” and couldn’t hear her breathing, and then the stupid, stupid waterfall song began.

And Lisa, after the intro, buried somewhere in the fabric softener in front of me, she finally said, “This is really weird.”

She said, “I’m sorry.”

“Can you please leave,” she said.

“I’m sorry,” she said.

After the rampage, after I had lost over \$400 playing blackjack and had broken the windows and smashed the video surveillance cameras on the roof of the mall, after all the adrenaline had worn off—but not the vodka—and I was sure the far-away sirens weren’t looking for me and wouldn’t find me, something happened that I never told my friends about. Something happened that I never told anyone about. I crawled from the bushes I was hiding under in someone’s front yard and walked the two plus miles to Lisa’s house. I looked in through her bedroom window, at the curve of her on the bed, and thought about sneaking in and staying under her bed for the night, in the fabric softener. I could be there when she woke, which was sometimes all I wanted. I thought about it and thought about it. And I thought about raping her. But I couldn’t do that. Or maybe I could. I didn’t know. I’d probably start crying or something stupid like that. But I could definitely probably find a way in pretty easy. I could hide in the fabric softener and crawl out and leave through the back slider down the hall from her room after she went to her 9 a.m. class—I had the urge to be there when she woke, to see her morning routine, to see if she stretched and went straight to the bathroom, or if she turned on music and went to the kitchen for breakfast first. I needed to know. Just thinking about it made my blood move.

I whispered, Lisa?

Lisa? I whispered, and slid the pad of my index finger in an arch across the window, which left a smear in the shape of a rainbow.

I whispered, It's me, it's David, and pushed my index finger against the center of my forehead.

From behind the mountains the sun was slowly turning the sky purple all around me, and I imagined how I looked pressed against a window, waving and talking to a sleeping person on a bed.

Oh, man, I said, and slid down the wall, to the ground, where I sat with my back against the house. You are all the way crazy, I said. You are all the way crazy and you are done, I said.

I know, I said and nodded. I know.

Scraping a handful of dirt off the ground, I placed it in my hair. Some sprinkled down my forehead and caught in my eyelashes like fairy dust, and I closed my eyes.

I began to cry.

A few minutes later the muted sound of a radio went off. I wiped my eyes. Standing, I peered through the bottom part of the window just in time to see Lisa slide out of bed and stumble out of her room. Then, to the right of her window, through the small bathroom window, a light came on. And then water began to run.

She was going to take a shower.

And here was my chance—for what, I didn't know. I was just moving along the wall, to the left, around the back corner of the house, to the back slider. My heart was in my ears and my blood was microwaved syrup as I pulled the handle.

It wasn't locked.

And I forgot to breathe as I slid through the opening and pulled the door back in place. A slow shiver ran along my skin; inside was cold as outside. Breathing in deep and holding my breath, I listened for any sound from her roommates, whose rooms were both in the front of the house, and I listened for sounds from the kitchen—anything. But there was nothing.

So I moved toward the hallway. A shaft of yellow light came from both sides of and underneath the bathroom door. And the smell of strawberry shampoo wafted by in a wave of wet heat that ran across my bare arm as I continued pass the bathroom door, to Lisa's room.

Her room was much darker than the hallway, and it smelled like her. My pulse quickened. I looked around for a moment, and then lowered to my stomach. Sliding underneath the bed, into the fabric softener, I waited.

Lisa came in maybe ten minutes later, and I had an erection. She turned the lights on, and fabric softener at the edges of the bed glowed a

dull yellow. I felt Lisa walk all the way across the room and stop.

A moment later music began. It was the stupid waterfall song. And it was loud. And I couldn't feel or hear where or even if Lisa was walking around anymore, so I moved toward the wall.

And while I was still digging, Lisa sat on the end of the bed for a moment, and then stood. Fabric softener began to move just enough to feel it against my heels. I stopped.

I froze.

This couldn't be happening. Was she coming under the bed? Why was she coming under the bed? I was going to get caught and I was going to prison, where I would be raped repeatedly by black throbbing penises, and that's exactly what I deserved. I resisted the urge to squirm from beneath the bed and just run out of there. Maybe she wouldn't see me. Maybe she'd be so scared she wouldn't even come out from under the bed, and I could just be gone. I could be out of there. But I couldn't move as she kept digging toward where I was. I felt sick. I didn't breathe. I hoped she wouldn't hear my pounding heart.

And then she stopped digging. There was a silence that seemed to last forever, and she began to cry. She cried quietly for a time, no sobs or wails or anything like that, and then just like that she was done. She breathed in deep and sighed one big heavy sigh and dug her way back out. She replaced the fabric softener that had come out with her.

She then stood and walked away, and I couldn't hear anything she was doing. I didn't even know if she was in the room anymore. The music was still on, and I had no idea what she had cried about, but hope burned hot as a caged flame inside my chest. It had to be about me. There was no way it could not be about me.

Dillon Dunlop

I KNOW THE NUMBER

They sent him away again.

In my mind,
it is a dry, hellish place where rain doesn't fall,
just bullets and bombs. He wakes every morning
in darkness, the sand having glued his eyelids together,
and turned his tongue sandpapery and foreign.

He won't tell me what he sees when his eyes finally open.
What he says when his tongue is moist and soft
is only this, "Don't ever go to War."
Don't ever ever ever go to War.
He believes it will kill my mind, if it doesn't
destroy my body first.

He never tells his mother his dangers,
his fears. I never tell my mother mine.

The news comes on, and I can only watch the weather report.
Because I hate the thought,
loathe the thought
that they'll turn him into a number.

Dalia E. Gerdel

ÉTUDE

I am afraid of my memories:
a wooden box of orchids on an antiquarian's desk:
beautiful, fragile impressions that wither in the air
whenever I open the lid—
fleeting portraits of skin that will not remain skin,
of the hand on my thigh that will not be there tomorrow,
of the borrowed coat, the poetry, the words I affix
to my present consciousness—
I touch these things carefully now, quietly,
because I cannot be sure that they are here with me,
because the mind I can deconstruct in hindsight is not my mind,
and yet I know that it must have been mine.
I hesitate because present things
exist only to me in this way, unique in the moments that birthed them,
and they brighten the bleakness of a northern sky.

Jessica Ellis

CREATION

Naked tree branches
Snag pendulous raindrops
That hang like old breasts.

I study the cosmos
Etched in a water-bud.
Scurrilous clouds frown at me.

Finches tiptoe,
Stretch out carmine-hooded bills.
Thirst destroys the Universe.

Victoria Ceretto-Slotto

QUICK POSTCARD FROM ANIMAL HELL

The flayed gazelles and thoroughbreds
were running blindfolded
into the hunters' firing squad bullets
while up above,
cowering,
the dirty swans,
pibbs,
and maybe even an old baldie
watched them,
transfixed,
dying over and over
and over again.

Off to the side,
the vulture on duty forgot to croak

He'd have it coming.

Jeff Alessandrelli

SALLY ANN

“Come and walk with me tonight,”
I say to Sally Ann.
“The moon is full and shining bright
Upon the cool sand.”

Your mother warned you not to wander
Past the edge of town;
But luckily she’s fast asleep
And never heard a sound.

Now we’re all alone, my dear
Walking hand in hand,
Basking in the moonlight
As I drag you through the sand.

Your cheeks aren’t rosy anymore
And you’ve gained a pound or two,
You were so afraid of death, my dear...
But look what it’s done for you.

We mustn’t stray about all night
They’ll all be coming soon,
The townsfolk with their torches bright
Led by the bitter moon.

So let’s be getting on, my dear
I’ve made the bed for two,
Dawn’s evil light’s just ‘round the bend...
And I’ve got plans for you.

Tim Howland

STARRY NIGHT

Depressed blues, manic yellows,
Blackness jets into the sky:
The colors melt as the painting flows.

Blackness jets into the sky:
Emotions make the feelings rush—
Stars laugh while the sky cries.

Emotions make the feelings rush—
The village bathes in the starry night,
As the world drips from Van Gogh's brush.

Hayley Bault

FUNGUS

What do you do when you finally go to the doctor for that tickle that has pestered your ears off and on for the past three years, and the doctor peeks in and his hand begins to tremble to the point that his ear tool rattles your head, and he steps back and gasps, “Mrs. Krumm! It is amazing, a miracle really, but you are harboring a fungus in your ear thought to be extinct a decade ago.” Then his eyes rivet on yours and he raises his tremulous voice. “Mrs. Krumm! Have you ever used the same Q-tip in both ears? Perhaps a fungal colony is multiplying in your other ear as well! May I check your left ear? Mrs. Krumm?” And he leers toward you with a mini-scalpel and eyes of a sex offender? Well, I personally would run out of the office to my car in the Staff Only zone and step on the gas all the way home. And after catching my breath, I’d run upstairs and tear apart the attic until I found my old Bosnell dissecting microscope from seventh grade biology 30 years ago. I’d get to know this sucker before surrendering it to medical science.

But what about the next morning when your recently Ph.D’d son tears into the driveway in his battered Corolla, with a look in his eye similar to the doctor’s, and runs into the house (letting the screen door slam like he did for the first 17 years of his life) yelling for you?

“Laundry piling up again?” I’d ask. “It’s been over a month since you’ve come to see me.”

If he simply cut to the point and said, “Mom, your ear has made statewide news! You’ve got to let me have a sample of the fungus. It will launch my career at BSU. It could mean early tenure!” I’d stomp over to the garden window and force my gaze onto the tattered lettuce leaves the slugs had worked over the night before—anything to avoid my son’s face. His earnest selfishness was cute when he was six, but now it made him resemble a deranged collie.

“Nobody’s been interested in my ears since 1957, when I got ‘em pierced and the jeweler couldn’t get his five bucks fast enough,” I’d say. “Now, nobody’s taking anything out of my ears till I say so, and that’s not till I have the first look-see myself!” But a nagging doubt would tug at my conscience. What did I know about scientific matters? How could I deny my son’s advancement of his career on account of my own stubbornness?

If he persisted, “Then can you at least answer a couple of questions regarding the fungus? Any idea how you contracted it? For instance, did you have intimate contact with hedgehogs when you were in your late teens? And its last appearance was in 1983. Have you washed your ears since 1983?” I’d immediately realize how I could deny the advancement of my own flesh and blood.

“I wash my ears every day for your information!” I’d holler. Then I’d face his

agitated snort. “You can take yourself and the rest of your imbecilic questions out of my house!”

That afternoon, I’d answer the phone only when I recognized my best friend Jean’s secret-code-ring she used so many years ago in high school. “Jean!” I’d cry. “Thank God it’s you.”

If she said, “Sally, I heard about your ear this morning on the nine o’clock news report. What gives?”

“I was going to call you earlier, Jean,” I’d say, “but I’ve been so flustered I couldn’t even dial the phone. If I’d known my road to fame was going to be paved by an ear fungus, I’d have lived with this itch to my grave.”

If she asked, “Well, what the hell is it? I’m picturing a clump of tiny mushrooms rooted in earwax,” I’d explain that, under magnification, it resembled a flake scraped from a hardened bath sponge.

“My scope’s not so powerful,” I’d say, “so I can’t get much more detailed than that.”

If she asked, “How did it invade your canals?” I’d cup my hand to my ear.

“My son insinuates that I got too friendly with a hedgehog in my past,” I’d answer. “Maybe Rick was a little bristly on his hindquarters, but he’s the only one that’s been in my bed since senior prom, and you know how long ago that was.”

If she laughed and said, “I’m coming over. I’ll swing by the library and pick up a few journals on the subject, and bring along a couple of those dusty encyclopedias I bought Doug 20 years ago,” I’d thank my lucky stars to have a friend like her.

What do you do when your driveway and front lawn are clogged with camera crews and curious onlookers, and what looks to be your skinny bug-eyed doctor, still in his lab coat, and they are all craning their necks, trying to catch a glimpse of your infamous ears when you peer through the screen door searching for Jean? I’d step out onto the porch with a tiny plate and a cotton swab and shout, “This Q-tip is soaked with rubbing alcohol. Move any closer and I’ll dip it in baking soda and rub it in my ear and it’s over!”

If, after the fake-out, everyone stepped back and allowed Jean—who’d just arrived with her son’s ancient canvas hockey bag bulging at the seams—to march up the sidewalk to the porch, I’d hold wide the screen door and usher her through with a bow. We’d clear off the kitchen table and set up our laboratory between a brewing pot of coffee and a carton of Sailems.

If Jean commanded, “Let’s get down to brass tacks,” then broke out her seventh-grade microscope (the deluxe model her father had insisted on),

the encyclopedias, two texts on fungus, and a laptop computer (checked out from the library), I'd stare gape-mouthed at her research savvy. If she searched the web, and in a matter of seconds pointed to an image of the fungus on the screen which, magnified 500 times resembled a monster the size of Texas, armored with scales and spikes and claws, my head would begin to buzz and tingle. A ball of concrete would drop into the pit of my stomach. "Jean," I'd say. "If that beast is transmittable you'd better get the hell out of here. I know we're old friends, but if something like that hunkered down in your middle-ear, I can honestly admit I wouldn't come within a ten mile radius of your head."

If she simply stated, "Yes you would," and nodded toward the window and added, "No one out there is running away and I won't be the first. Besides, I know how stubborn you are, you'd probably hole yourself up here till you started to rot," I'd sigh with relief and hand her an encyclopedia. Cracking it open and scanning the pages, she'd resemble a middle-aged Nancy Drew looking for clues. If she found the entry, stumbled over the Latin name, then recited, " 'A rare spongiform fungus carried by mites. Infecting certain Dutch populations of hedgehogs. Symptoms include itching, irritation, blocked ears, and milky discharge. Survives freezing or drying up to seven years,' " I'd sit hard on the wooden kitchen chair.

"I've got the itching and irritation," I'd admit. "Now I just have blockage and oozing to look forward to."

If Jean commented, "It's strange the fungus's human possibilities aren't mentioned," then, after a moment, excitement began to build behind her eyes and she exclaimed, "Maybe they're worried you'll start an epidemic! Maybe they'll have to put your head in a deep freeze for eight years," I'd warn her sharply that a little bedside manner wouldn't be lost on me. Even Nancy Drew had tact.

If my microscope gave me a headache after ten minutes, I'd offer Jean cigarettes and refills on coffee for support as she labored over hers. "This research is making me think about causes and effects," I'd comment, leaning back in my chair. "How did I contract a fungus from an animal that lives in Europe, when I've never traveled past the Corn Belt?"

If Jean was too absorbed at her post to even look up, I'd hazard a guess. "Maybe it jumped off the tulip bulbs I ordered from that nursery down on County Road Five. Or maybe it's lurking around the pharmacy. Dr. Schwartz is always bragging about his Scandinavian travels, and he has those wide suspicious ears..."

Then if Jean exclaimed, "Your doctor is a moron!" and pointed toward the slide under its tiny spotlight, and added, "There's no way this is the extinct fungus. Look at the flagella along the top side. Look at the thickness

of the cortex. Are you sure he wasn't after something else, like an excuse for a full-body physical?" my eyes would roll.

"Are you kidding?" I'd say. "Nobody reacts that way to an old bean pole like me. He was convinced he'd discovered something. I could tell by the tick in his cheek, the glint in his eye. Besides, why else would he be out there trampling over my flowers? He wants first cut at my ear, believe me."

But my inkling of relief would again turn to panic if Jean said, "Well, your ear is big news now. Even when they find out it's something else, you'll be lucky if you aren't avoided like the plague. Hedgehogs! Parents won't let their children trick-or-treat here this fall. Animal rights' activists will picket your lawn..."

"Okay!" I'd interrupt, "so, I'll board up the house and head south. Maybe I could afford a one-room shanty near the tracks in Alabama. Any better ideas?"

If Jean's eyes narrowed and her let's-get-even smile popped up, I'd know a plan was brewing between those round, perfectly healthy ears of hers.

What do you do for a friend who, after practicing the Latin name of your thought-to-be-extinct fungus until she no longer tripped over it, stepped out onto the porch and sold to the highest bidder a complete ear excavation of your right ear and rights to all ear wax for the next four years? And managed to garner 200K from a private research company (your doctor coming in a close second at 175K, and kicking the flowers in disgust)? I'd try like hell not to blow it all by laughing hysterically.

But then what if breaking news blared over the car stereo of an idling, red convertible, informing its audience that another specimen of the fungus had been discovered—in the ear of Barney Sax, the State Senator? What if two hundred sets of eyes turned toward you, and mouths dropped open in fascinated disgust? I'd blush deeply and swear I'd never put my head on the same pillow as that old fart.

But if voices commenced to shout, and hands shot up in another bidding frenzy, I'd decide to worry about my honor later. If the new highest bidder, the CEO of a famous drug company, signed the contract written in duplicate on the back of old grocery receipts (which months later—after the fungus was revealed to be a common infection masked by dermatitis—held up in court), I'd shrug my shoulders and shake his hand.

So, this is how Jean and I bagged six digits in one day. Jean plans to buy a computer and bid with uninterrupted auctioning on e-Bay until her half of the earnings runs out. As for me, I've never had more than sixty extra dollars to play around with, and I'm still adjusting to the sensation. And what do you do with so much money? That, my friend, you can leave up to me.

Jenny Weisberg

FACING OFF THE DEMONS, STANDING NAKED ON THE PAGE

Given an option, the essay I am writing here is not the one I would have chosen to write. My essay would have explored the writing process from a distant, analytical, invulnerable place. It would have suggested some general ideas regarding students' attitudes about writing, and those ideas would have been supported by a few cautiously crafted observations from my personal writing experiences. And those personal explorations would have been surface ones at best, because I do not feel at all compelled to put myself onto a piece of paper to be judged, or misunderstood, or even rejected. The essay I would choose to write; however, is not the essay that needs to be written. The essay I'm required to write here and now asks me to risk being discovered by my reader and, perhaps, by myself as well.

I haven't always considered writing to be dangerous; I actually used to think that writing was much easier and safer than speaking. When I speak, I sometimes have difficulty presenting the words I need on demand and, as I spew forth, I can't call the language back for a careful, deliberate editing. When I write, however, I have plenty of time to manipulate my thoughts, words, and even my voice; I can edit and revise—and revise and revise—until I achieve that careful, deliberately crafted written presentation. I've learned, though, that the only truly safe writing I've ever done was the writing done for myself, never to be shared, no response required.

I learned my first lesson about the possible negative results of textual exposure at a very young age, when I wrote and shared, my first full poem. I was an early and voracious reader who never had enough books to read, and I loved disappearing into books of stories and poetry, being able to see the images and actions presented and even becoming the characters in those places described on those pages. These writers drew pictures with words so vivid and physical that I wanted to express myself in the same way, and so I began to practice the imagery, rhythm, and rhyme of the poetry I loved.

I wrote that first piece of poetry when I was eight years old. It was all about a swan that I had seen on Lake Washington when I was there on a picnic with my family. I still remember the magical way that huge, white bird glided swiftly yet seemingly effortlessly across the mirrored surface of the lake. I worked hard on that poem, rewriting it until the rhythms, the rhymes, and the images presented exactly the picture I wished to present. I showed my four verses to my teacher, and she smiled and praised my work. I was very excited about my accomplishment and very, very proud.

I wanted to submit my poem to the publication *Highlights for Children* that my parents subscribed to for me and my sisters and brothers.

To submit my poem and have a chance for it to be published, I would have to ask one of my parents to sign a note stating that the poem was my own creation. I told my mother what I wanted to do and gave her my poem to read, but I desperately wanted much more than a simple letter of verification—I wanted her to like my poem as much as my teacher and I did. If she liked the poem that I had crafted and written down on paper in my own words, then that would mean that she liked me, too.

I held my breath as I waited for my mother to read my poem, but I didn't have to wait very long. She glanced at the paper I had given her, thrust it back at me, and folded her arms across her chest saying that she would not sign any note for something someone else had written. I wanted to protest and defend my work, but I could see by the tiny lines of disapproval forming around her pursed mouth that a fence had been erected between she and I, prohibiting any further discussion. I don't remember if I cried, but I do remember going to my room, quietly closing the door, tearing my poem into little, tiny pieces, and throwing it all away.

I could not stop reading and writing poetry, however. My favorite poet was Edgar Allen Poe, and I continued to create what evolved into reams of terrible, morose broken prose as I entered adolescence. I did not have to share any of my writings, and so this poetry became a safe place for me to explore and articulate feelings and ideas that I did not believe I could discuss with anyone. It was darkly negative and a perfect vehicle for all my private teen angst and I did not have to worry about recriminations or rejections.

After high school, the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko joined Poe and others, and I began a serious pursuit of the dream I once had of being published. I was growing and changing, and so my poetry evolved as well. I experimented with various styles, always drawing from a variety of experiences in commercial fishing, commercial driving, and flying to present the images, ideas, and feelings that I wanted my writings to convey. I loved writing this poetry, and most of my friends enjoyed reading what I wrote. By the time I married, I had quite a stack of poetry-in-progress that I hoped to polish into something worthy of publication.

I wanted to publish my poetry—I wanted to achieve that dream. I was a little worried, though, that my poetry was not good enough to publish and that, if submitted, it would come back to me with a note attached, saying “Dear contributor: Thank you for your submission, but it's clear that you have no talent. We only accept work from the very best poets and, frankly, we're not sure exactly what this is that you've sent us. Although we encourage you to continue writing (snicker), please do not bother us again.” It seemed only natural, then, to want share my poems with my husband.

I needed a little extra support, a little boost, a little more assurance that I wasn't being ridiculous and foolish. I needed one more important person in my life to help convince me that my poetry was good enough to risk acceptance along with the public exposure that might follow.

So I explained to my husband what I wanted to do, and I presented him with three of my best poems. I hoped that he would think they were good enough to submit, but mostly I just hoped he would like what I had written. Somewhere deep inside I was very afraid that if he didn't like my poetry, it would mean that he did not like this particular presentation of me. But my poetry was an integral expression of me, a rather raw one, and it did not seem likely that he would not embrace my writings in the same way that I believed he embraced me. I stood there, my hands gripping each other, waiting to hear his thoughts and response.

I did not have to wait long, for he glanced through those three pages, tossed them on the table, and put on his coat to leave. "It doesn't make sense—it doesn't even rhyme," he said as he walked out of the room. He simply walked out of the room that had suddenly become much too big, too empty, and too cold, and I have never written another poem.

I've reread what I've just written, and I wonder why I allowed two disinterested people to affect me as dramatically as they did. After all, my father would have signed a note supporting my swan poem without hesitation, and my friends who liked my poetry had known me much longer than my husband had. Still, for some reason I sought those two out and made their rejection more valuable than others' acceptance and support. I continue to carry both the mother and the husband experience plastered securely against the inside of my upper right arm where its subtle prickle reminds me to write cautiously.

I imagine my readers, too, some collectively shaking their heads at the foolishness of my fears. They would probably tell me to get over it, it happened a long time ago, and move on to something with more relevance to real life. But others would nod their heads in recognition that, yes, they had experienced varying levels of this same rejection because sometimes we put all of ourselves onto the page in trust that those we love and want will want and love us, too, no matter how we look in our skins. It is the heart and soul of us that gets slathered across the page. When that page gets wadded up and thrown away, it feels as though we have been wholly and carelessly discarded.

Although I do not write poetry anymore, I do embed poetic constructions in my college papers sometimes. I enjoy writing this way, but I'm very careful to hide specific elements of myself underneath and even outside of the academic presentation that I have been taught at the

community college and at UNR. When I returned to school at forty-two, I was very insecure. I was not only scared that I would fail but, even worse, I would embarrass myself with my poor speech and, probably, poor writing as well. However, even though I have had a few negative experiences since I've returned to school, none have had the impact of those two earlier dismissals. And writing for the academy has suited me well—I've successfully avoided standing naked on the page throughout most of my academic career.

This, for me, was a difficult essay to complete. I've worked hard for many years to make words and punctuation and sentence structure create the personality I want exposed on the page—as long as it isn't really me. Therefore, I certainly didn't want to look at painful elements of my writing history, much less share those events with anyone else. I've wanted to be safe—safe from judgment, safe from misunderstanding, and safe from dismissal. That, however, was not the essay that needed to be written; the essay that needed to be written is the one that discovers why I want safety in my written presentations, and I think that I understand why. I think, too, that sharing my reflections might help a reticent writer better understand his or her own demons, and might even help a writing instructor better understand a reticent writer.

Ultimately, writing this essay was about doing the job that had to be done and, after all, it's only a collection of words that will suffer subtle shifts in meaning at the mercy of each successive reader. Because of this, my attitude toward writing has changed a little over these past few years, and I find that I don't worry quite as much about judgment or being misunderstood as I did when I first returned to school, and certainly not as much as I did when I gave birth to my own writing demons. I do still worry, of course, but not to the point of paralysis. I can do the job. But I need to remember what I've learned—effective writing can never really be safer than speaking or anything else. And that's okay, I think, because of something a writer named Elbert Hubbard said, "To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, be nothing." I'll probably continue to speak and say something unpopular or even make a fool of myself sometimes, but people could eventually forget what I said. I do have the choice to hide outside of the language I use, and be assured that no one will have anything to say about my writing at all, or I can choose to write what needs to be written, standing naked on the page. Although people might have something to say about what I've written for a long time, and their words might not be exactly the ones I'd like to hear, my words might be exactly the ones that someone else needs to hear.

Dawnne Ernette

AN EVALUATION OF INSINCERITY

“Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,...
...Let us go and make our visit.”

—T.S. Eliot (from “The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock”)

I. *for Elusiveness*

Our legs interlace, arms wrap around bodies, lips press.

Moments before, those lips pulled smoke from cigarettes,
taken deeply into lungs, then expelled
the cool air turned to mist about the warm bodies and the yellow light
I murmured a hopeless attempt at advice.
She laughed—black curls trembled, eyes reflected artificial orange glows
clouded by gray ash; obscured by smoke,
that wound around the nighttime sky;
where stars weren’t observed, not in each other’s eyes,
they were covered, concealed in smoke,
that stung our noses, when taken in unintentionally.

It is unclear to me, if the love being made
should be reflected in the heart.
Or is it the French she’s moaning
that makes my digression so artful?
It certainly isn’t, as Prufrock suggests,
the subtle scent of skin, or perfume from a dress.

II. *for Jealousy*

Her fingers curl around a manuscript, folded pages;
the papers shuffle, scrape and rub together, stick to fingers;
her eyes, half concealed by reflections on glass, shift from left to right
captivated by something I’ve written—
I’m not sure why...

Her lips are dry, rougher than they might look,

they press together as her eyes sashay over paper...
I depart for a cigarette—she's fascinated by the smoke,
drifting impermanence, a limitless metaphor
seldom used to its full potential;
she thinks the scent has the lingering
quality of old books. I think it smells like moist leaves, cinnamon, and
grass afire,
but we agree that it doesn't last.

She's whispered something—was it about desire?

We talk of the king of kings, *Ozymandias*, and dread,
but Shelley has little to do with her and me.
We share seemingly endless talk of the craft: go on for hours,
hours that pass too quickly,
yet never acknowledge what, perhaps, should be said.

She hunches over, six years of division from me;
I think she might be beautiful, all the same,
her hair seems fixed to her face,
conceivably, it was the uncertainty
to push through the overly browned-golden frame,
when removed, reveals rounded cheeks, and a quivering smile.

Her attentive look is reminiscent of the girl reading *The Precious Book*,
indeed too forlorn to embody the persona—
the vulnerability of her last look.

III. *for Rationality*

Her eyes hide from mine, turning the blue,
to the gray of painted skin, while outside
the sun struggles to light the window, before it fades blue;
failing, she turns her head down, and to the right;
yellow hair turned orange by the fading light;
the perfect artist's angle, three quarters down, and to the right.

Does her knowledge of the arts influence this gesture?

I wonder...

I say something absurdly romantic, she laughs in the rapture,

I laugh; maybe I lied.

Her face remains turned, as her smile fades toward a frown, she leans toward me; lip still slightly curled—the *Venus of Urbino* couldn't have been more seductive setting a glass upon a table.

I prattle on, something else, I can't remember,

and she replies kindly; she almost tried:

"That isn't what I meant for you to say, at all."

I light a cigarette in the following silence,

she doesn't seem to mind that she becomes obscured.

And I think that my entire life has been covered by smoke.

IV. *for Amnesty*

It would have been a perfect moment;

candles flicker, expectedly—casting predictable patterns throughout the room,

while she turns on her side; I watch it reverently

the shadow settling and forming as my arm wraps around,

she's pulled closer—skin unmistakably, perfectly soft.

Predictably soft, I smell her, mixing with me;

the salt of sweat, stickiness of sex, half dried into skin,

the salt and stick of skin reminds me of the ocean

the whispering sound

of emptying streets, awake, not quite pushing into the room;

she arches her spine into my chest—knowing I feel the same beaded quality

to sheets that still smell new,

sheets that are, perhaps, slightly overused.

I depart for a cigarette, return, smelling of smoke,

and she complains the scent annoys her: it's an allergy.

While I inwardly protest that if the persistence of memory

can make even the roughest brute cough, certainly, I would choke.

V. *for Mediocrity*

The perfect comfort and serenity of these moments,

isn't it ironic that the clock now seems obscured

that I had shared with each of you, and you with me;
maybe it is better to have bitten off the matter;
with a smile—an unnatural frown,
alluded to something I never wanted to say,
“Goodbye, my dear, it’s been awfully fun,”
wrap a scarlet scarf, once or twice, around my head,
and close the door after
never making atonement
while thinking, “Well, wasn’t that fun...”

There will always be that instant,
when, for a moment, there is a hint of regret laid bare,
for never completing a moment, with precision;
the incredulity at failing to understand,
or was it indecision?
the reasons the heart beats along with the beating of shoes upon the
pavement
to a café, pub, or private room, reviewing the faces I had prepared,
the inadequacies of each to each
for the loves, one might meet.

I might admit, for no reason, I was scared.

Which begs the question, who next will I meet,
slipping quietly through the silent streets;
might it be as Prufrock suggests,
the scent of textured skin, or perfume from a dress?

And wonder, “Do I dare?”

Michael Witkowski

NEW SNOW

In early afternoon soft snow falls.
A sweep of virgin white swaddles
lawn and drive.
“Looks like six inches.”
“Yeah. Gonna shovel?” my girlfriend asks.
“Tomorrow,” I say.

About four a.m. I wake,
our room is light.
Three moonbeams bowl
on walls and soft pine floors.
I ease from beneath our quilt,
shadows dance
across the frozen sheen.

The house is cold—
heat will kick on at six.
I shiver,
ease back beneath our quilt—
she spoons into my chilly skin.

John Hayes

SOURCES

My Selectric typewriter
has more balls than
a brace of male poets:

"elegant" balls
for lyrical poems
"hairy" balls
for bodacious poems
"bull" balls
for poems that hang
on and on and on...

remembering, of course,
that every poet
has a private stock
of vintage-self
that others may not have
the palate to savor...

Samuel Wood

REMEMBERING ELAINE

I force my finger against a spinning blade
of my small apartment fan.
Rotation stops and I recall Elaine's obliging giggle.

Her folks had a large floor fan
I could stop that one too.
So could Elaine.
Frank tried to stop the fan once but lost an index finger.
Hot August evenings Frank, Elaine, and I
sat on her porch steps and waited for the ice cream wagon.

Elaine was wonderful. She'd laugh at almost anything.
One night I asked her, "Why did the fly land on the picnic table?"
"I don't know. Why did the fly land on the picnic table?"
"To smell his honey," I said.
Elaine laughed like she always did.

Frank liked to swat at mosquitoes and brag about his time at camp.
"These mosquitoes are nothing compared to the ones at Atlin Lake."
"Watch." I'd say. "You never saw one this big."
I'd let the mosquito on my forearm swell with blood.
Then smash the sucker.
Blood would smear on my arm.
"Yucky," Elaine would giggle. "You got mosquito blood on you."
"It's his blood," Frank said.
"Is not. It's the mosquito's now."

We argued about other things too
like which milk company was best
or if Tom Mix was a better actor than Hoot Gibson
but stopped when we heard the ice cream wagon.
I always got strawberry. Frank got chocolate.
Elaine was daring, something different every night.
Tin Roof, Rocky Ripple, Peach Delight, she even tried vanilla once.

I jerk my finger from the blade
Elaine's laughter mixes with the spin.

John Hayes

WHO GOES FIRST? (FOUND POEM)

The person who bought this game
Always goes first
(This is the least we can do
Now that we have his or her money.)
If the game's owner is not present,
Then the person who borrowed
This game goes first.
(At least he or she is resourceful.)

Tricia Martin

MONUMENT OF BLUE

“If you like stained glass,” the woman,
a family acquaintance, tells us when she
learns of our trip, “you should go to Sainte-Chapelle.”

My mother and I stand in the center of the police station,
using our limited knowledge of French to decipher
the price to get into the church. When we
enter, finding the first floor vacant of windows, we wonder
if it's the wrong place, until we discover the narrow stone steps
that lead upwards. My mother climbs first.
She reaches the top, gasps, turns to me, and smiles.

Every wall of the church is glass. From floor to ceiling,
a myriad of biblical figures surrounds us. For a moment,
I stay by the stairs, watching my mother as
she walks in the presence of these figures. Sunlight
streams through the glass, and her face transforms.
She becomes a kaleidoscope, every separate part of her
owned by a different color.

My mother and I must see colors differently.
Her favorite (called “cobalt”) is a
deep blue, rich in its rendering found
only in glass. When I try to pick it out,
I am deceived, mistaking that particular shade of blue
for some other entity. Only one of my offerings
sits on her altar, her monument of blue glass
arranged on white shelves.

I believe she meditates on it, searching for
the life essence within the color, trying to pluck out
the very thing that resonates with her soul. If she could
find it, perhaps that peace she receives from it would
stay, transforming her to perfect blue.

Dalia E. Gerdel

BLOOD

I open my eyes. Another day shines through my bedroom window. The potted plant stretches its leaves to take all the light and all the warmth, without leaving any for me. Which is fine for today. I sure as hell don't want to wake up, to walk outside and live as though nothing has happened. Because something has, *goddamnit*.

About a month ago, I let *him* inside my house. We'd seen each other for a while. He had smiling blue eyes and honest brown hair. A nice guy, as we say, the sort that offer flowers and chocolates, who show up wanting more of us without any logical answer to the question *why?* We waltzed on alcohol-soaked toes up the stairs to my bedroom with its black bedspread and white walls. He opened my legs there with careful hands, reassuring me with fragile caresses and phrases interspersed with the word "love" whispered as though it were merely a breath moving in and out of lungs, timeless. A kiss, a touch—and I trusted him. I offered him my hands, my face, my body, all white on the black cloth. In those moments, we had been creatures dancing together in the oldest sort of way. Afterwards, he slumped on my chest, in that place in between my breasts and tickled me with his breath coursing over my skin, still wet but covered in his saline liquid mixing with mine. I ran my hands through that honest head of hair and smiled as his eyelids fluttered asleep. Love? I was undulating towards yes.

But the man had seen too many movies. When I woke up, he was gone. He never called. That day, I 'd shrugged, watering my potted plant. I closed the door of my house on the way to work. *Nothing to worry about, nothing at all*, I told myself. There are more men—infininitely more men—and I have, stashed in my mirrored bathroom cabinet, a plastic circular container of pills. "He meant nothing to me," I said. *And I can forget him because the magic of medicine has erased him from my body.*

But that was four weeks ago, and in the grand scheme of our small human worlds, four weeks can be nearly a lifetime. I waited on Monday for *it* to start. To feel the cramping, bloating, the wetness between my legs. I wanted to take that five-minute break from the sales floor and tell my boss, "I need a break. I won't be long." And he would eye me, thinking he knew all my secrets and nod with a slight smile on his pudgy face, his whiskers intertwining in his cheek cracks. And the world would be right again. But Monday nothing happened.

Tuesday. Then Tuesday was the day. It would be a joke between my body and me. "Oh, haha—you sure had me fooled, waiting a day like that you *bastard*." And we would laugh and have a drink, all the while feeling that beautiful, beautiful blood drain between my legs, ruining yet another pair of white underwear. But Tuesday, nothing still. I took a test—it

said negative in a thin blue line. My voice shook when I told myself that it would be tomorrow—*definitely tomorrow*—because I wasn't sure it would be. Wednesday—nothing. Nothing. No *thing*. This absence lasted until Saturday, when I found myself sitting on a plastic chair in the break room, away from bosses and customers.

I wanted a sign to tell me what was happening. My body wasn't supposed to do this. No—it wasn't supposed to ignore the fact that I had taken all the pills. *Goddamn*—it was supposed to bleed with mourning that yet another chance had passed me by to do what women all over the world are supposed to do. But staring at the vending machine, another thought entered my mind.

My back stiffened as I thought of it. Was I shaking? *I can't be pregnant*. It's impossible. Well, not impossible per se, but I can't be pregnant, not with those glorious pills in my mirrored bathroom cabinet that I took each and every day at the same time, to the minute. Every day, the same minute. Well, except for that one day, when I woke up late and had to take it as I ran out of the door. Or the other—when I ... Jesus, I didn't take it until I got home. I'm flooded with examples of me not taking the pill and I suddenly can't distinguish reality from horror. It's all the same to me. *Fuck*, I whisper.

It makes sense, this new horrific future where I am pregnant and alone. It explains everything. Why I feel so vibrant and healthy and *thin* and attractive and why I still smell like a normal human being and why I haven't started to bleed. *Shit*.

I miss that smell. No, I ache for it. That blend of brackish blood and salt that seems to whisper a private, perfect secret, announcing to all the world that I am not pregnant, not at all. Why did I cover it up before with lotions and perfumes? I want to scream it to the world—I am not pregnant. I slouch in my chair.

But then panic rises in my stomach. It tingles and my mind teases me, asking *Is that what it feels like to have a baby in there?* I swallow. I stand. I pace. *This is not happening, it can't be. It isn't fair.* Are my breasts tender? Do I have to pee again? My words follow the rhythm of my steps. I can't have a baby now. Where would it go? There's no place in my little room for another person, the plant is already too much. I couldn't charge it rent. My job wouldn't stretch so far. And what do I know about children anyway? Who appointed this duty to me? Surely there are men who are more qualified, or who know more than I. Aren't there special ways of holding a baby? I have enough problems with roommates, and they feed themselves most of the time...

Feeding—the baby would feed on my body—*my body*. My breasts

that men have kissed and caressed, that have led me into bedrooms from bars would lose their power and become a symbol of something else altogether. I shiver as I think of something clinging to me there, not out of love, but out of necessity. *Take this thing out of my body, take it now* I scream silently, sitting in another chair, farther from the vending machines.

“Sandoza, your time’s up!” I hear my boss yell from the hall.

“Yeah, yeah—just a minute,” I say, keeping my voice flat while my insides are whipping around in circles.

“You wanna get paid, Sandoza?”

“I’m *coming*,” I say, though far from it. I’m tangled in knots. I take another breath and stand. I stride onto the sales floor and see a woman holding her toddler’s hand; her eyes rest on the various models of dishwashers. I watch as she tugs him along, toe-headed and wide eyed, as though he were some deadweight she couldn’t disentangle from her. The toddler looks around, his eyes wandering over the dishwashers, the lights on the ceiling and me as though we were one and the same.

The woman looks up at me with frustrated eyes and sees that I am wearing a nametag. “Can you tell me about this model?” she asks, tugging on her son’s arm. “Behave,” she whispers not to me, but to him, drawing his face close. “Let Mommy talk to the nice lady.”

The statistics and costs fall out of my mouth, but I want to ask her about her *model*. *Do they take much time? Can you train them to do useful things? This one doesn’t look so bad...* But then the toddler opens his mouth and a high pitch scream comes from his small body. I step back.

“I’m so sorry,” the woman says kneeling at the feet of her son. “Honey, honey you *promised* Mommy you wouldn’t scream.”

The child increases its volume.

She shakes her head and looks up at me with dark brown eyes, pushing her bangs back from her brow. “I’m going to take him to the car. Thank you for your time.” She pulls him between the rows of glistening white appliances, out the glass doors and to a place outside I can’t see. I look down at the concrete floor and begin to pace again, trying to look busy. My mind starts racing, my stomach knots again. *I can’t do this... I can’t have a baby. I just can’t. Why can’t I have any say in this?*

I stop and stare at the reflection of myself in the GE stainless steel double-door refrigerator—the one with the ice maker with the snazzy snap-on light. I don’t want a child. I never have. I don’t have the heart for it, I guess. I always thought I’d wanted cars and men, airplane rides to distant countries and fine, leather furniture—you know, the sort you can’t have with children. Or, expensive meals and bottles of \$50 wine followed by a small glass of Pastis which turns cloudy as I sit, staring at a raging fire,

thinking of nothing in particular. But children—who ever asked me what I wanted?

But this is my *duty*, isn't it? To have children? To make some man happy? It seems unfair somehow that this particular part of life has fallen to me, when I want nothing to do with it. I envy all these men, here. My eyes fall on my boss—his thick, round belly and hairy arms and bald head. He has a choice, a true choice. He can fuck some woman stupid, and yet, not have to worry about children. His body remains intact and all his own and never morphs into anything other than a sexual instrument, a *thing* women can, if they choose, always desire. Unlike mine. Men will go to work the next day and the next and the next and no one will ever know there is a child in their lives unless they choose to allude to it. They can drink and buy cars and find other women.... But my body marks changes day by day. Soon, it won't be my body anymore and people will stare at me, knowing all. They will *know* someone grows inside of me. Most will be offended because I'm not married. I'll have to get new clothes, and maybe a new job. I won't even have my god-given right to see my own feet. My stomach will grow and grow as though I never stop eating, though I'm dizzy with nausea in the mornings and right before bed... and everyone will see not only my choice written all over my body, but also the choice of a man, some random fucker who hasn't spoken to me in over a month. Well, *fuck him* I say. I don't have to go through this. No—I don't. I have a choice in the matter *goddammit*.

Choice. That's what Sartre said, we all had a choice. Did he mean for us women, too? Or did he leave that part out for Beauvoir to write about later? And what would such freedom mean? Could I drink, too, buy cars and fuck more men than I can keep track of? I'm answered by silence. *No*. Freedom doesn't mean that—it doesn't mean that at all.

I lean against the refrigerator and my mind stops. *But I can't, I can't...* not if I'm pregnant. Is there anything left for me? There's always that easy out, the escape, denying that anything had ever existed at all.

I step away from the refrigerator with its distorted image of me in the brushed silver front, and fall into the shadows of a badly-lit aisle. Dark patches cascade over my blue uniform as I move from vacuum cleaner bags to coffee filters. I'm careful to avoid the eyes of others who wander the store. Frank Sinatra plays faintly from the speakers mounted on the ceiling. *I couldn't do it, no I couldn't do it—that's asking too much for freedom...* I can't kill a little thing, not like that. I don't have it in me. I shake my head. I can't do it. I'd rather suffer. I'd rather die.

Die.

Jump off a cliff, run my car into a tree doing 90 plus, shoot myself

in the temple next to a mirror, letting the thick, red blood splatter all over the silver surface, flecked with gray portions of my brain... none of it sounds all that great, but I couldn't be pregnant if I was dead. There wouldn't be suffering on either end. It would be better that way. No child would have to face my sad face, wondering what might have been if they hadn't interrupted my life—and I wouldn't have to face a child with a forced smile and watch as their life turned to shit because I had nothing to offer them. Nothing but myself.

But maybe it wouldn't be so bad to have something in my life besides that plant by the window, besides those pills. Both leave me lonely. Maybe, just maybe this wouldn't be so bad to have a reason to stay home, away from the smoke, the bars, the random men. I put my hand on my face—I'm not even sure if I'm thinking straight.

"Helen," a voice says behind me. The voice is soft but masculine.

I turn and see *that man's* face behind me. His blue eyes still smile.

"Hey," I say softly, looking at my feet. *I was just thinking of death now.* I don't know what to say.

"You look good," he says.

I force a smile.

"We've got to talk," he says, shifting his weight over his feet.

"You haven't called."

"I was with my wife."

"Oh," I say, looking away from his face. This is news to me.

He shakes his head. "She's... pregnant. I had to stop seeing you. Hey, don't look so sad. It was just a fuck, right? I don't regret anything."

Silence.

"Yeah, anyhow... I'll call you if things change."

But they already have. "Don't bother," I say, adjusting my name badge. "I'm doing great. Really, really great."

He nods. "Right." And then turns to leave. I want to kick him. But then I want to wrap my arms around him, and ask him to stay, to listen, to pretend.

Wait, I want to call to him, wait! I'm pregnant, too. I need you to help me through this. I was thinking of death just now. But instead, I stand there and watch him, disappearing down another aisle filled with washing machines. I want to rage, tear my hair out, throw those shiny microwaves and listen to their broken parts crying as they shatter on the floor. It's all cold and empty inside. I'm starting to worry that something human about me is missing.

I approach the fat man—my boss. “I’m feeling sick.” I tell him.

“Let me guess, you wanna go home, Sandoza?”

“Yeah,” I say, meeting his eyes with a flat stare.

“You know, you keep taking and taking... you’re bleeding this place to death with all your sick days. What’s your excuse this time?”

I look at his fat face and those squinting eyes of his and lose my train of thought. I can’t tell the truth—but I’m not sure I want to lie. “Existential quandary.” I say, hoping he won’t understand.

“Ah, *female* problems. Fine, fine. It’s company policy to not *discriminate* against you.” He pauses. “But I’m onto your tricks, Sandoza. You’re sly, but not *that* sly.”

I shrug. “Whatever.”

“Be here, 6 a.m. tomorrow,” he calls after me.

I open the glass doors and walk outside.

It’s hot, really fucking hot—the pavement’s melting into the air in invisible flames that distort the smooth contours of the cars in the parking lot. I start sweating under the bright sun. I squint, trying to remember where I put the damn car. I’m looking around, back and forth, like a real idiot when my eye catches movement to my left as I cross the street.

I look—but it’s too late to move. A black Cadillac—you know, the long like-a-boat ones—is coming right towards me. The driver is wearing dark glasses, holding a cell phone up to her ear. She’s not driving fast—maybe 40 mph—but when you’re just standing there, it seems really fucking fast. “HEY!” I scream, but already my palms are on her hood, and I can feel the warmth of the engine rumbling beneath my body.

And then it gets blurry. I’m on the pavement. My head hurts. Everything hurts. “Ohmygod, are you OK?” Some disembodied high-pitched female voice asks.

The pavement is burning itself through my uniform. My legs feel twisted, broken, bruised. I open my eyes to see a painted woman standing over me, waving her palm back and forth over my face, her fiery red nails act like traffic flares, causing my eyes to blur even more. I blink.

“I’m so sorry. Are you OK? Ew...what should I do?”

I groan, rolling momentarily onto my side. But pain shoots into my back and it’s all I can do to roll myself back the way I was, and look at the pale blue sky. I debate what I should say. I want to scream *call fucking 9-11 you dumb bitch*, but at the same time I wonder if I lay here long enough, if I’ll die of exposure. Maybe I should just ask her to run me over, and end what she started. I’m sure I’m pretty broken up—like those microwaves.

The lady’s not listening to me. “I don’t have insurance for this kind of thing. And you’re going to sue, I just know you’re going to sue.” A man

approaches us. Apparently, he saw the whole thing happen.

“And you’re just going to let her lie there? Have you called 9-11? Jesus, have you done anything at all?”

Breathing’s become a conscious effort, and though I’m lying on the ground like a two-by-four, I’ve got a bad case of vertigo. The man bends down towards my face. I should tell him to slow down. He’s saying something, but I can’t hear him. Retired-something-or-other. He asks me about pain. I try to shake my head. I don’t know if I succeeded. I don’t feel pain. No physical pain. Maybe I should nod. I remember I’m pregnant. But all that seems distant now. Voices, do I hear more voices? I can’t get the man to tell me. Sirens. Or are those birds, some flock of mourning doves, come early?

And then, release fills me. I feel the blood. The sweet, beautiful blood, warm and gentle. It’s soaking into my underwear, into my pants, up my back and down my legs. “Blood?” I manage to say. The expression on the man’s face changes. I can’t tell where the blood’s coming from. I know I should be happy—life will be as it was before. But instead there are tears coming out of my eyes—out of my control, almost.

The blood doesn’t stop. It’s flowing hard, a river, it pools around me. I shift my eyes again to the pale sky, but find it difficult to see for all the salt cascading out of my eyes. Men rush around me, wearing uniforms, issuing commands to each other on crackling radios. Some are splattered in blood. *So much blood.* I turn my head to them and smile. They seem to look right through me.

My eyes dance around them for a moment, but then I look up to the sky again. I feel at peace there. And in an instant, I’m alive again, my spirit free of sounds. I cannot feel their rough hands as they lift what was once me onto a sheet of white. Doors slam and motors start—but I’m in a place beyond all touch, away from the blood which reflects the sky above me.

Rebecca Ann Eckland

DIPSOMANIAC

Babylonian tales of Gilgamesh
memorialized fallen gods
with fine wine grapes given to Mother

Finely divided diverse spirits collected long ago
return me to their medicine often
for it is a safe place
to reach

Absolute
Abdication
Altogether

Although the
aqua vitae guts
as does the Absence

Temptations become
Dangerous, for I am
in orbit with Draco

A thousand multiplicities
concoct in my brain
and leave me tongue-tied

Dipsomaniac, what I cannot speak
the body reveals
chemistry fermented

Begetting bacchanalian wonder of
lips
opening again, again, again
tasting fire, igniting fire

Body careering
Hair entangled
I ask for more, more, more

The flavor
resounds
in my

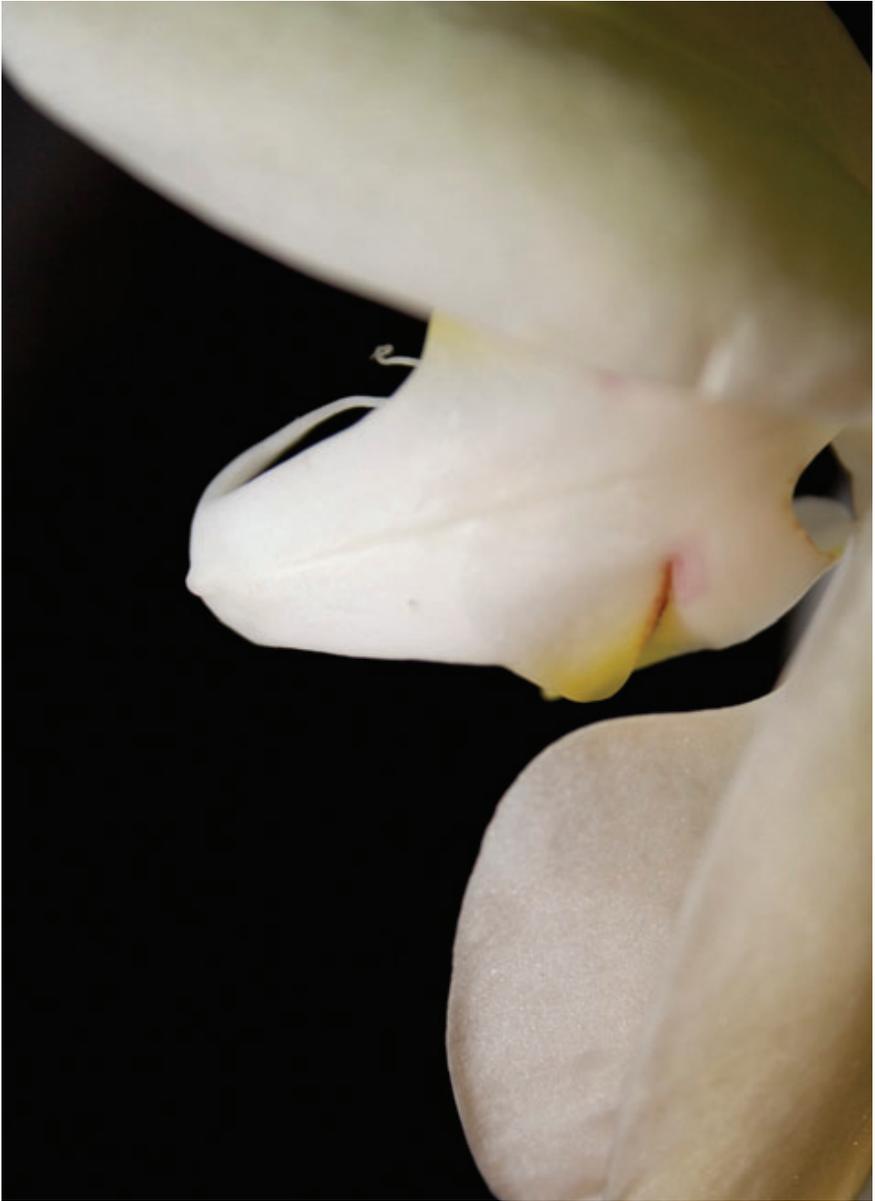
mouth

The scent
 resounds
in my
 lungs

So like a vibrant, fragrant flower
 if I were a hornet
I would never emerge from
 this potency

Alexandra Charchalis

UNTITLED



Justin D. Sullivan

ANOTHER MAN'S TREASURE



Nick Baker

SKY'S OPEN



Cary Crites

UNTITLED



Donna Bradley

ALL ABOUT EVE ("ANG LAHAT UKOL KAY EBA")



J.V. Tabbada

RE-CREATION OF THE SELF



Ernest Williamson III

FAITH & PHASES



Ernest Williamson III

UNTITLED



Kathy Burks

VEGAS BOUQUET



Linda Seibert

BINARY



Eleanor Martin

STRAY



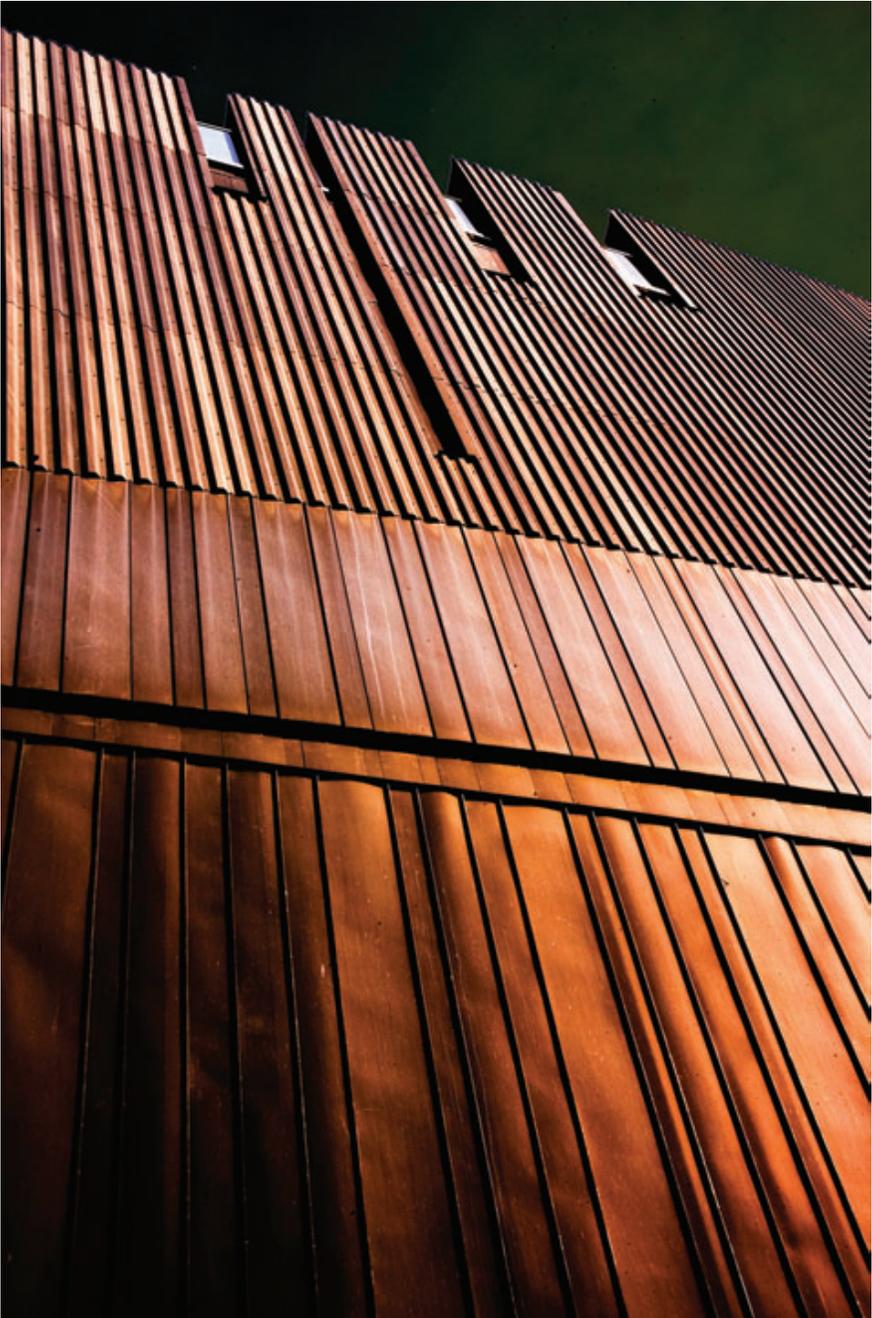
Eleanor Martin

MAN - TIRAVENAMALAI



Betty Victoria

UNTITLED



Nick Higman

M06

LOST TIMES #1



Shu Nomura

LOST TIMES #2



Shu Nomura

THE ARCH



Dale Davis

THE TMCC LITERARY YEAR IN REVIEW

KHALED HOSSEINI

An estimated one thousand people packed into the V. James Eardley Student Services Center on the evening of March 30, 2006 to listen to author Khaled Hosseini speak of his life and the events that led to his writing the bestselling novel *The Kite Runner*, a story of betrayal and redemption set in Afghanistan. Nevada Humanities brought Hosseini to Reno as part of its Books & Authors series, the nonprofit agency's first such partnership with the college. In the words of Nevada Humanities assistant director Steve Davis, "We have presented book related events for ten years and this was by far our most successful event."

Earlier in the day THE MEADOW 2006 got a chance to sit down with the first-time novelist, whose book has been on bestseller lists since 2003. Special thanks go out to Ana Douglass of the TMCC English department for conducting the interview. Douglass is also a board member of Nevada Humanities.

M06: What novels did you look to as models or inspiration as you developed the themes of your own first novel?

Hosseini: You know, it's hard to say. It's actually after the writing you realize that maybe you have, and I've not really been aware of it, or you notice similarities between your book and another book. For me, there was *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy in which there's two children who betray their lower-caste servant with very traumatic consequences for both parties. So in terms of the theme of betrayal and the guilt and the consequences of the things we do as children, and the difference and the difficulties between parent and child, it felt like there were a lot of similar themes. After my book was published somebody else came out and said, "Do you know that *Atonement* [by Ian McEwan] is kind of similar?" There is that wealthy child who betrays the son of the family gardener, and then [it] basically becomes a book about long-lasting guilt and so on. I don't think I consciously drew inspiration from any book.

M06: Would you comment on the symmetries that abound in your novel's structure? Were you aware of all of these symmetries?

Hosseini: Certainly during the first draft I didn't notice them and then [they]



The Kite Runner
Author Khaled Hosseini

became more clear to me in subsequent drafts. I probably wrote about four, maybe five drafts of this novel, and probably somewhere around the second or third draft, I began to see the symmetries and maybe there were too many. I mean, you always have second thoughts ... you always want to edit yourself. You know, it's basic in this process. And on some level I think the symmetries are interesting and certainly [what] I like about this book. On another level, maybe there's too many of these symmetries, I don't know; it's up to the reader. But I noticed them somewhere around the second or third draft, and then it became a matter of consciously highlighting them. For instance, it begins with a kite and ends with a kite, the harelip, all those things....

M06: At the novel's climax, the antagonist from Amir's youth reappears in contemporary Kabul. You associate this sadistic antagonist with Hitler. He is clearly not a devout Muslim. Why did you decide to associate your antagonist with Nazism?

Hosseini: Certainly there is a brand of Islam that the Taliban impose on the people that is very harsh, a very strict interpretation of Islamic law that they use to oppressive ends. I felt there were elements within that regime and some of the things that they did ... reminds me in some sense of the whole notion of cleansing and the getting rid of people on the basis of ethnicity reminiscent of a fascist kind of thinking. So, that was the reason why the Nazi allusions were there, and those I stand by. I stand by that. In terms of the coincidences, it's been one of the things people have criticized the book for, the number of coincidences, especially in the latter third of the novel. And to me, that's been one of the puzzling criticisms. A lot of criticism, I kind of see the point, sometimes I even agree. But with that one, you know, I feel like they tend to affect some people more than they certainly affect me. In Afghanistan, you meet some old man on the road who turns out to be a colleague of [your] mother's. In fact, in north Afghanistan that might have been a fairly ordinary thing. It is a very tightly knit community. There's a line in the book where you put two Afghans in a room and give them ten minutes and they will figure out how they're related. But, you know, it kind of [was that way]. That may strike one as a coincidence, but it didn't strike me as necessarily an egregious coincidence.

M06: Scenes of what one might term "hope" take place almost exclusively in America, while the country of Amir's youth appears hopelessly devastated. Do you see much hope for Afghanistan?

Hosseini: I do see hope for Afghanistan. It's very cautious optimism, but it would be very cynical to say there is no hope. That nothing good has happened. There is [a] school of thought that runs along [the] lines that it's basically an unmitigated disaster. I don't think that's the case. I also don't

think that it's quite as rosy as the leaders [of] Afghanistan who come here and talk lead you to believe. I think the truth is somewhere in the middle. Enough things have happened to give you reason to at least have hope. You cannot disregard elections, and maybe they were flawed and not perfect, but you cannot disregard [this] very important step. Or the writing of a constitution which at least on paper says that men and women have equal rights no matter your ethnicity. These are important steps. At least to me, they give me reason to think that there is hope to be happy in the future. So I do have hope for the future of Afghanistan. It's cautious and it depends on a lot of things—largely on how this country and European countries [support] Afghanistan. Because it certainly can't do it alone. Withdrawal of support would basically mean a return to chaos. That's almost a certainty. [With] talk of a supreme insurgency and [a Taliban resurgence] security [is] the big issue in Afghanistan, but that's only one of the issues. There's the narcotics trade, which has been a huge problem. There's corruption and ... the influence that the Islamics play on policymaking. They won quite a number of seats in Parliament. As a liberal Muslim, [these issues] give me reason for concern. (Laughter.)

M06: The novel features a sort of love triangle between two brothers who are competing for their father's affection. What is the role of the female in this novel?

Hosseini: Women in the novel may be physically absent, but I think certainly in the lives of the two boys, the loss of their mother casts a pretty large shadow on who they are and how they turn out. But this is, you know, about men, and in a country that's very patriarchal in nature. So I thought that mostly men would read this novel. It turned out to be quite the opposite. Ninety percent of the readership has been women. I was telling a story of these two boys and their father, so the women in this novel are more secondary.

M06: Is Afghanistan itself, in a sense, the absent mother in this novel?

Hosseini: Well, it's really funny because when very hard-core religious Muslims in Afghanistan speak ... of Afghanistan they speak of her as a mother. So, in some sense, it is, you know, their identity, the idea of it is as a woman.

WORDSMITH PAUL ZARZYSKI

Would it be an insult to cowboy poets the West over to say that Paul Zarzyski is more than just a “cowboy poet”? That’s how he was billed on the evening of November 16, 2005. He recited his work to an audience of several hundred in the V. James Eardley Student Services Center. Zarzyski received the 2005 Montana Governor’s Arts Award for Literature and came to TMCC as part of the college’s Distinguished Lecturer Series. Beyond the fact that he recited his work from memory instead of reading it from the page in a professorial monotone (and the fact that he had the audience in stitches at points), this “cowboy poet” wasn’t much different from any other poet we admire. Except for that big ole cowboy hat riding his ear tops. Zarzyski kindly agreed to let *THE MEADOW* reprint one of his works:

PATHETIC FALLACY

They have put to death the most elderly
male grizzly bear ever trapped
in Montana. After 28 seasons
rot his teeth, but not his will
to go on feeding, he ransacks cabins
on the Flathead—a homeless man
chancing upon paper bags
of what he hopes is food
or some other warmth abandoned
on the street.

Finders, keepers,

I say, in this helter-skelter West
where we feed, clothe, shelter, humor
the satanic predator—not worth naming—
decades after a slaughter
that nothing we should ever classify as *plant*,
animal or *rock*, let alone *human*,
should ever be capable of.

On our off-kilter scales
of unpoetic justice, we weigh
28 years of noble heartbeat
against 16 unoccupied cabins—innocent victims
minding their own business
beneath righteous skies?

The Great Oz

has spoken and goes on, as fraud, speaking

in the name of whatever agency rules
whatever fairytalish foofaraw is these days
licensing the executioner. It's every bit as easy
reducing paragons of wildness
to pariahs, as it is vilifying the poet
as anarchist or rogue.

After reading what seems
my own obituary in the Great Falls Tribune,
I dream the bear, not so *horribilis* at all
rattling the latch of my back door,
wakes me out of dreams too sweet,
cautions me to curb the sugar, to be careful
what I eat before bedtime.

I'm ready now.
I refuse to hibernate in silence.
Come and get me. Trailer to my portal
your foolish-looking culvert, your so-called *live
trap* no poet worth his clawed notebooks
could ever be duped by. The rhetoric you use
as bait stinks. I don't give a shit
about your scientific research
or reasoning. The mad poet waits
with pencils honed, erasers gnawed,
my stomach growling.

Paul Zarzyski

*From Wolf Tracks on the Welcome Mat (Oreanabooks)
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Visit paulzarzyski.com for further information.*

WRITER AND ARTIST MARILENE PHIPPS

Light snow fell across the TMCC hills on March 8, 2006 as artist-poet-short story writer Marilene Phipps shared her creations as a part of the college's Distinguished Lecturer Series. Phipps has received a Guggenheim fellowship and her work has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories 2001*. She won the 1999 *Crab Orchard Review Poetry Prize for Crossroads and Unholy Water* (Southern Illinois University Press). She delighted her audience with a slide show of colorful oil paintings: "At the Virgin's Shrine" depicts the Holy Mother in blue with worshippers below, arms outstretched, praying for relief. Images of mountain landscapes, graveyards, crosses and goats accompanied her soft, insistent voice as Phipps read her poetry, her Roman Catholic upbringing in Haiti evident in much of her work. Phipps graciously agreed to allow THE MEADOW to reprint one of her poems:

CHAPEL SPACE

In a space where beings are transparencies of color
or born out of a stone-chiseled struggle for form,
hard and pale and with better substance to endure through time,
then elevated to a pillared position that establishes a difference
between us below—uncomfortably sitting, recognizable through
an illusory temporary favor that reveals us
as wrapped, robed, stiffened, uncertain, shifting mounds
bound within thread-stitched layers of charismatic cloth—
in such a space, is there place for prayer that burns to rest
in a candid dance for the remembrance of those flimsy and slight
who carry in their changeable faces the body of my heart's life—
these memories woven through them, born out
of solitude and born out of bliss?

Marilene Phipps

From God, Love, and the Leap of Frogs
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NOTE TO A DEAD BOY

Dearest Jack,
I hid your pail
up the hill
near the well
in the moonlight.
I never gave
a second thought
to my actions
and to your whereabouts.
It never occurred to me
that fetching water
meant the loss
of something
innocent.

Love, Jill

Rebecca Anderson

PULP NOIR

I.

when I am the swallowtail
butterfly under the butcher's
parasol, with umbrella
bones for wings

when I've nested in rags
on the breath of the homeless

I will be what I have made myself
in the heart of your heart
with the time I have been granted:

*(I will swallow myself
and my wants for you.)*

I will take your small tragedies
and secret them under my skin.

II.

in winter, when my stomach turns
I will drag myself along the gutter
with a black eye the color of
coalbird wings and yellow laburnum,
to the nearest bar with a phonograph

circa 1909

(digging grandiose and
florid under
skin and under flesh,
these waxen voices
all suspended)

& I will drown my sorrows in
a garden of words over-tangled

(it's cold outside)

& all of these small fictions aren't
enough to chase away

the rain and the spit on the glass.

(I've rearranged you.)

I want to be the shadow of your hand,
the shadow of your Calliope.

III.

& in rotten spring,
under the butcher's parasol
under the shadow of your umbrella

when you become my Dorian

when I am surrounded by
the light of your light
and I am content
to follow you

when explanation is no longer
necessary or even required

(I will sleep.)

& I will be bright and hollow
in all things.

Jessica Ellis

SUUUUNNNNNN OF HABEETCHAAAAA

Broken English swearing
was my childhood alarm clock.
Every day at 5 a.m., year after year,
our Portuguese neighbor
loudly son of a bitch his cows into the barn.
After milking, he son of a bitch them out again.

Age ran him down.
Silent, idle,
he sat on a dilapidated chair
under cottonwood trees
and waited for the last tick.

Patricia Homeyer

AT HOME

We squirt lemon juice in the dog's eyes,
and tell him to die, quit.

Packrats, we throw nothing away, even
the crib from her stillbirth that one of us
spray painted, "Lexy is sexy" on.

No one runs anymore—
too much resin lingers in the air to inhale.

There was once a real estate agent
who called it drab and muckish (probably
thought she was British) and it didn't sell.
We didn't want it to sell.

Everyone is still here. No one's moved
away, is planning to move away or will move away.

Dirt everywhere instead of some
tidy shellac of grass.

Shell casings in the dirt.

Not believing in birds means
zip, zero, zilch coming around;
they have ceased to exist.

Every now and again an imperfect sun comes
from the southwest, glaring, for what seems like
days and we sit in the plastic chairs
and stare, each thinking his or her chickenhead
thoughts in his or her chickenhead ways.

Somehow,
it's always only
what seems like
and beautiful little else.

Here, it's nothing if not time's, our time's,
full measure
and then some.

Christmas soon,
again,
and no one's
hair's getting any longer.
Still teasing ourselves silly that it's the light in things
that makes them last.

Jeff Alessandrelli

COMMUNICATION

Long sweeps of her hands as
her words spring forward.
He's taken
entranced, his eyes follow
confused, his eyes dart.
And then she sits back and smiles
hands folded, words silent.
She looks at his mouth
willing it to sputter open,
but he instead nods, agreeing
and pulls her hand to rest on his leg.
He's satisfied this way;
she can't understand how.

Calina Defebaugh

THE PAINTING

The painting was a gift that I was given, as a child by the sea. My days then were spent playing on the beach by my parents' hotel, and people would pass me on their way down to the water. They would walk to the very end of the land and back away again as the sea rose and kissed their toes with cold and salty lips. The Ghost who created the painting was one of them.

I disliked the sea myself, for all the vast intrigues that it contained, and for that I stayed away. My horrid boy's imagination was far greater than my bravery at the time, and the krakens and leviathans below both pulled and repelled me with the motions of the tide. The sand was filled with far safer castles and tin soldiers, and all the shells were empty of weird creatures with vicious looking arms.

The sun was strong the day that the Ghost came down to the beach carrying his brushes and canvases. He wore a white shirt and slacks rolled to the knees, and his naked head shone in the bright light. An impish porter staggered after him dragging an easel and stool. The Ghost settled under one of the wide umbrellas that spanned the hotel beach, perching on the stool like a huge bird on a wire. He was tall and pallid, with a long nose and deep red eyes that flickered in the light. I had started to privately call him the Ghost when he had checked in at the start of the summer and I noticed how cadaverous he looked next to the other tanned beachgoers.

The canvases laid about him were all blank except the one that he set in the easel's frame. He faced away from me, and I moved closer so I could make out the subject of the painting. My mother's voice floated out of the courtyard.

"Don't wander, John."

And how far we all wander, in the end, from where we start.

It was the image of a young woman by the sea, standing with her bare white feet sunken into the wet sand. The woman's face was rawboned and sad as she looked out over the silver water. Her hair, bleached by the wind and salt no doubt, was frozen around her head like a halo of white cloud.

Without turning around, the Ghost spoke to me.

He said, "Do you like what you see here, boy?" His voice was deep and coarse and rigidly furrowed with the creases of a strange accent.

I looked over all the colors on the beach.

"Not really."

"Hah. And what don't you like?"

"She looks dead. The whole thing looks dead. There's no color."

"You are right."

This news coming from an adult emboldened me as much as shocked me. As I took a step closer, I asked, "I am?"

"Yes. I love to paint the life of things. I dreamt of this girl in the night."

"What is she doing?"

"She is dying."

"I still don't like it." I shivered in the hot sun.

"Here is what I will do. I will paint a portrait of life for you. Would you like that?"

"My parents wouldn't like it if they thought-"

"I will give it as a gift."

As the summer ended and the holiday travelers began to dwindle, the Ghost presented my parents with the enormous painting, claiming that I had inspired it. He winked at me as they exclaimed over its detail, and clapped me on the shoulder, saying, "And there is the life of a boy, eh?"

They thanked him graciously and had it hung in the ballroom, where I inspected it for the first time. I remember the first viewing of it the way anyone remembers something from childhood: half expectant for it to lapse into a dream or a fantasy that never took place. I have tried over the years to erase that haze, to somehow capture a rational image, but all I can do is assume that what I remember was real.

At first glance, it was a picture of a party in a ballroom that looked very much like the ballroom in the hotel. The floor was bright and polished, and the walls were warmed with candelabra to gold and red and white. Many men, perhaps more than fifty, stood about wearing black suits. About twelve wore suits of other colors, and some stood next to the ten or so women in the painting. A man in a green velvet smoking jacket sat in a chair at the head of all the goings-on like a king ruling a court, while a man dressed as a jester dealt cards at his feet. A young man with a crooked smile stood circled by four of the women who were all laughing. A man whose face was darkened with anger stood with arms folded across his suit, cutting a look at the woman next to him while a man in a dusty coat stood at the door holding a suitcase, looking rather awkward. A woman whose hair was the color of pale honey was being dipped by a thin man, neither face visible.

I noticed with shock a man in the far corner of the room, observing the action around him with a revolver in his hand and a smile on his face. There was a pale man with dark circles around his eyes standing next to the bar and holding an amber drink in his hand. A man in a bright blue suit was singing into a microphone, and a man sitting at a table with a group of children watched him. It was there, at the table, that I found myself. I

was sitting with other children, holding a smaller one on my lap, and I was watching a man who wore a sailor's hat and had a tattoo of a cross on his arm. In the very center of the painting was a man who stood looking out of the window at the sea. And on and on it went; with many people, leading many lives, all dancing and watching and living. I understood what the Ghost had meant, then, when he said that he painted life. The painting was so alive I felt like I could reach out and touch the people in it if I simply ran a hand over the surface; I would feel the velvet and silk of their clothes, hear the staccato racket that all their voices would make, and smell the cigar smoke and perfume.

The most curious part was the faces, however. If you took the time to study it, you would notice that although the women were different, all the men had the same face with the exact same features. Dark hair, dark eyes, and a rather long nose that resembled mine peeked out from the faces of all the men in the room. Although the age and the demeanor varied slightly, they were unmistakably the same man. One man, leading many lives.

I was fifteen when Ann came to the hotel and began to stay each summer. I loved her with the painful ferocity of youth. She was a fragile wisp of whitish skin and hair who seldom smiled or spoke. She had in her a frail sadness that only deepened as the years progressed, until she was a timid shadow of a person. Touching her was like touching the foam that was carried in by the waves, and she would shy away and vanish if handled without the lightest touch. I had to learn how to hold her just so, and speak so she wouldn't feel frightened. I ached to take care of her, and I believe to this day that I was the only one who knew how. She smiled more when she was with me.

Ann's return the following summer was punctuated with a torrid storm that pushed a tree into the ballroom, and it was closed for repair. Ann had not been inside yet because of her hatred for crowds, so one night we snuck into the ruins so she could see it. The painting still hung on the far wall, undamaged and watchful. I showed it to Ann and together we explored the faces.

"That's me, at the table. I'm looking at someone..."

"The singing fellow."

"Funny. I thought it was a sailor."

"Why would you be interested in a sailor? You can't stand the sea."

"I could stand it if you were with me."

"These are all you."

"What do you mean?"

“These all look like you, except a little older.”

“I think they look like my father.”

She paused and I was aware of the movement of her chest as she breathed. “This painting scares me.”

I took her hand in mine just as the moon came out from behind the clouds. I wanted to comfort her. We tangled ourselves together, and she latched onto me with little fingernails and a small wet mouth. When I undressed her, her naked skin looked translucent in the dim light. I was afraid that I was hurting her, there on the floor, and I tried to be as gentle as I could, but she whispered to me not to stop, and the sea roared in my ears and rushing blood filled my head until I could no longer hear her breathing. In the blue light, I could see her eyes shining with tears that I kissed as they fell down the side of her face and left my lips brackish and dry.

It wasn't until the next summer that she confided in me at all. We were walking along the beach, talking and looking for pieces of shell for her to make into a necklace. She had had to sneak away from her father who was engaged in some kind of courtyard party that my parents often held for the guests. We were far down the beach where the noise of the hotel had faded to the single sound of the waves. She bent down and picked up a large shell that was half buried in the sand and looked out over the bright water.

“My father doesn't like you.”

I was surprised.

“I haven't met him.”

“I know. He doesn't like you because he thinks that I do.”

I went over to her and brushed her unruly hair behind her ears.

“You do like me, don't you?”

“Of course.”

“What about your mother?”

“She died a long time ago.”

“I'm sorry. Do you miss her?”

She pushed the shell back into the sand with one finger and wiped the wet sand from her hands. Without looking at me, she nodded.

“Does he just not approve of me?”

“He doesn't approve of anyone except himself. And me.”

When we were eighteen she came for the last time. At the end of the summer I asked her if she would marry me. I didn't expect that she would say no. She wept as she said it.

“I just can't. I'm sorry.”

“What is it?”

“There isn’t anything left for you.”

I should have made her explain, but she had turned away and left me standing on the beach. I let her go. You could not force Ann to come back to you. The next morning, there was a crowd of people on the beach, clustered around a pale thing under a tarp. I found out that she had drowned herself in the night, walking into the dark sea. She washed up onto the shore when the tide came in, and a young couple had found her. Seconds, and she was gone.

I got drunk for the first time that night in the dark ballroom. I watched the painting suspiciously through the fog of alcohol. There was no sailor, and no dancing couple, and no man surrounded by laughing women. I remember thinking that I must have made them up as a child. And then I remembered what Ann had said about them all being me. Those versions of me had disappeared. In the fog that the gin caused, a pit opened under my stomach that held something cold and foreboding.

I never inspected the painting again, but I would glance at it from time to time, and it always looked a little more empty than I remembered.

I thought that if I left the hotel, I might escape the dark in me, so I eventually moved into the city and found work at the newspaper. I couldn’t stand the sound of the sea that swallowed Ann’s life with its giant throat. In time, I got married. Her name was Darcy. I found being with her as intolerable as the hotel, so I began traveling. I was gone for months at a time, and when I would come back to the city, I would not come home. Anywhere I went, I was plagued by the same feeling of unease that there was something that I had forgotten at the hotel; something that would wait for me until I remembered it.

My parents died in this time, my mother four years after my father. I closed the hotel, and it fell into disrepair as the years passed and I ignored it.

Darcy stood by me as long as she could, but eventually I came home to an empty house and she was gone. She told me in a neatly written letter that the house had always been empty.

I quit the newspaper and was hired at a hotel in the city where I became manager in time. In the bright lights and perky paint, I was able to ignore all the things that had become my past, and for a long while I was very nearly happy.

I was crossing the lobby one day when I saw the Ghost waiting in the lounge. I stopped cold and stared at him. The void in me began to slowly turn and roil, and something like fear or possibly hatred rose from it. He looked up from his paper almost immediately and smiled at me.

“Boy. You have grown, I see. How does your family?”

“They’re dead.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Thanks.”

“How many are left?”

“Excuse me?”

“In the painting.”

The fear clawed at the inside of my throat, while the hatred squeezed my heart. He answered before I could.

“You haven’t seen it for some time, I see.”

I shook my head. The owner was calling me from the front desk. I turned to answer, and when I turned back, the Ghost was gone from the lobby. I went home to my apartment under the excuse that I was ill and there I spent a great long while looking in the mirror.

Looking back at me was the face of every man in the painting. I could almost see them lined up in front of me like the first time that I had seen it, like when I studied it with Ann as a youth. I remembered her then, too, with a perfect clarity that made me put together for the first time something that I’m sure you have noticed. Ann’s hair, so blonde it was white, blowing around her ears in the wind.

Ann facing the sea.

None of the faces in the painting were any older than mine right then.

Somewhere near the sea, it’s waiting for me.

I am traveling to the hotel now, not knowing what I will find. Perhaps it is nothing but ruin now, but the painting is there. It will have survived as I have survived, perhaps a little worn, but intact. I know that when I look at it again, the others will have vanished. There will be no married man, and no Darcy. No children, no traveler. All that will be left is the man looking out at the sea.

“I could stand it if you were with me.”

Then, I will walk into the water and there will be no one at all.

Mollie Booth

WATCHING MEN: OF WORDSWORTH AND WASHING MACHINES

*The world is too much with us late and soon
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers....*

Amid the rows of other spectators, I am a watcher of men, clasping my free ticket in one hand and my five-dollar beer in the other. All people are watchers of men, though most men won't admit they like to watch themselves. And yet, our eyes are drawn to those powerful physiques that charge up and down the courts and fields of our world. They are our heroes, succeeding where we fail, offering a constant hope that they'll score yet another point, and that their glory will live on forever. White and red—sweat and blood—glisten under the steady lights of our gaze and to captivate us yet again while the women on the sideline smile, guiding our gaze courtside.

In fact, watching has, at times, made me wish that I was there, with them. That I was not an observer, but a man, too, capable of immortality.

Women don't play football, after all, and who watches the WNBA anyway, besides those crazy types who feel guilty about watching men all the time? True, there are sideline journalists and the short-skirted sideline-girls, but all pale in comparison to the men who play the game. For some reason, men are more interesting. Why else have they occupied the stage upon which our desires are played for so long? Consider for a moment: drama at one time was too the domain of men. It was only later someone had the brilliant idea of letting women on the stage. And, millions more have read and recognize the name of Charles Dickens than they know of Elizabeth Gaskell, though both wrote the same genre of novel in the same historical period. And ask people in the bleachers whom they prefer—Picasso or Georgia O'Keefe. They'll say she only painted vaginas and leave it at that. Apparently, it's not worth mentioning that Picasso only painted squares. Rigid angles versus flowing lines. Society knows its boundaries well when it comes to matters of men and women.

*Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away...*

Man and woman, we tangled ourselves up in his sheets. I was restless in a moment of sentimentality, selected parts of me covered only by a thin, flower-print fabric that was more for looks than warmth and a

necklace that he had given me only yesterday. The cold Tahoe air stung my skin while outside the single-paned window, snow rested on evergreen boughs and the shoreline beyond his deck. He opened his eyes—it was the perfect day for one last hike of this season.

He had all the appropriate gear, of course: neoprene, polypropylene and nylon. He was accustomed to mountaintops. I instead wore the flower-print underwear under my jeans, which was a mistake because both were, after an hour of hiking, soaked through from the moist snow. But, the original nature-freaks—William Wordsworth and the rest—must have experienced something similar when they ventured out into nature. The outdoor gear of the nineteenth century consisted of little else than cotton and wool garments, piled on like mountains over the same human skin we have today. I imagined myself as Wordsworth himself, trekking along some ridge only to lay in a field of daffodils later on in the day, to think about them dancing.

I smiled at him as we trudged on, my jeans squishing audibly at each step: I'd have rather gone without pants at all. But for those of us who have hiked to the pinnacle of Mt. Tallac know that, this too, would have been a bad idea. Hell, even Wordsworth in that cushy Lake District of the British Isles wore pants. It's a green expanse there—with rolling hills—quite the opposite of Mt Tallac, which is rock-covered like the moon, showing views of the entire Tahoe Basin on one side and Desolation Wilderness on the other. Anyway, the natural world—cushy or no—is no place for a pant-less lady.

He and I reached the top, and sank down on a nearly-flat rock. I caught my breath and for an instant, I thought it—the view, the mountain, the sky above—was Sublime. And then sentimentality squished against the rock again, reminding me I was cold and wet.

The Sublime—that sensation coined by nineteenth century intellectuals refers to that strange feeling I'd like to feel in nature, but not sure I ever do. How do you know if you're in that state which intellectual Edmund Burke had defined as “the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling?” If I didn't know any better, I'd say he was talking about an orgasm, not the feeling you get looking at trees. I glanced over my shoulder at him and asked if he thought the view was Sublime. He looked at me and said he'd seen it before. Impressive, yes. Sublime? Er... maybe, he said, opening another beer.

But men have known the Sublime, especially in regards to mountains. In fact, many men have named mountains after women, devoting some portion of the awe and terror they felt to that sentimental other-half that remained at home. Once, a French instructor in middle

school told me he had a foreign exchange student from France live with him—a young girl. As a souvenir to take home to Paris, he'd given her a t-shirt from the Grand Teton Range, with the letters "Grand Teton" in bold, block letters across the front. The girl had blushed at the gift and promptly stuffed it in the back of her suitcase. When he asked her why she never wore it, she replied that "teton" was the French word for breast. The instructor laughed at his story—but I thought he was the stupid one not remembering what the word meant. But when it's the name of a place, I guess meaning goes by the wayside. I'd never think to call a mountain "breast" but maybe it goes back to that orgasm thing—perhaps the Sublime isn't too far from sex. It's been said that men love their mountains—and it makes me wonder—why have I never looked for my beloved's face in the rock formations I sat my wet self down on? Is it because (as a woman) the Sublime is foreign to me and I am only well-versed in its other, distant half, the sentimental? Or is it due to something else?

He smiled at me again and reached out for my hand. "This place will always make me think of you," he said, confirming my thoughts. I perhaps, for him, it had been *Sublime* after all.

*This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune...*

According to one account I read a few days ago, in 1874 the modern washing machine was invented by a man who wanted to give his wife an impressive birthday present. I'm not so sure if that's entirely true, but it is interesting nonetheless. In the era of late Romanticism and early Victorian ideals, the world was cleaved in two: men were pushing themselves to greater extremes farther from home, moving west in the United States, in the search for mineral wealth. In Great Britain, the "great" colonizers moved deep into the heart of Africa and east to India and China to make their empire a place of constant sunshine. And yet, women were moving in the opposite direction. Given new technologies, like the washing machine, they were pushed inside the home to wash, mend and percolate with new machines that made their tasks easier and less time-consuming. As John Muir climbed his pine tree to watch a violent storm in the Sierra, Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy, washed clothes and drank coffee under the secure roof of her home, looking at the rain from behind window panes. Even women writers (generally speaking) stayed

away from that male concept of the Sublime and wrote instead about society, particularly, domestic society. Sublimity rested on mountain tops while domesticity waited in the towns below.

The dichotomy is apparent in any novel, especially those of the 18th and 19th centuries. Take, for instance, Daniel Defoe's work. While *Robinson Crusoe* navigates his little island in the sea alone, *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* both navigate the domestic world of London, battling society rather than survival. What woman has braved the wilds and lived to tell about it? The field of naturalist writing was dominated by men until the mid-twentieth century when egalitarian motives pushed women from the home into the workplace, and for some, into the great mountain ranges and low-lying deserts.

And yet, the Sublime has not yet been given over to women. Jack London didn't write about a woman's failure to build a fire (though the account would have been accurate, at least in my case)—no, the Sublime of nature was still the territory of men. Women, instead see nature in different terms. We see it as Georgia O'Keefe would have (or so goes the implication)—soft, rounded and full of gentle, polite color, a place upon which sentimentality can be painted. And yet, that rendering of the landscape is lacking—who doesn't want to experience that crafty Sublime—the clear distinctions that could make me a hero as so many men have been? Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Muir, London, and Abbey? I'd love to name a mountain, at least just once. Swelling Crest, Hairy Nipple? Maybe it would sound better in French. Alas, however, they have all been named, and it was men who experienced the Sublime, and wrote about it later. Not women.

I search my mind for their female equivalents but that list comes up empty. I could very well be mistaken—there may in fact be female poets and writers that my education didn't inform me of or that my tendency to forget has made the omission handy to this particular argument. But my point here is not that there were *not* women who wrote and experienced the Sublime, but rather, that the Sublime itself is *male*, that the drive to be at once in awe and in fear is something most women are not welcomed to do. It is not in our *natures*, as they say. Sometimes I feel as though fetters have been made for us in washing machines and our own insipid vanity, trying to become the graceful forms our literary past has cast us in, granting us access to sentimentality without Sublimity.

... I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn...

Sometimes I think there is no Sublime left for us—that our post-modern tendencies to deny the all-inclusive narratives of the past have also led us to deny the Great and the Terrible. Already, we hate Sentimentality and discard words, particularly poems, which read like stilted tracts of undeveloped love. It was sweet once, those “lingering moments” and “aching hearts” with “teary eyes” and “feelings washing over us like the sea,” but none of that is good enough. Has it been said too often, or do we simply not experience this emotion anymore? It could be that Sentimentality died along with God. And, perhaps the Sublime isn’t far behind—soon it will be out of fashion to be in awe and terror at the same time—though I’ll weep when the world is too grown up for “the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.” Isn’t it *human* to feel so?

Physically speaking, we’re already trying to get rid of it: those new, technical fabrics insulate our bodies and keep the elements out. Throw out the cotton garments with the little printed flowers on them—those don’t stand up to the elements. Or necklaces—they do nothing to keep the rain from splashing on your neck. Now, Gor-Tex, that’s what true naturalists wear. The sort he always wore, when he didn’t mind my company, before he told me “goodbye”.

Gor-tex is nice, I suppose, if you live alone on some mountaintop, but most of us, I think, do happen to live in cities—in society—where those sentimentalists reigned two hundred years ago. You can’t touch skin beneath a solid layer of waterproof seam-sealed and taped up synthetics. We may as well be wearing zip-lock bags, preserved and alone. You reach out to touch a tree, a rock, fingertips, only to find that it’s the fabric which does the touching, while you’re still within a boundary, safe from harm. Do we fear the pain that Truth can deliver? Sentimental words, skin against skin? I don’t need to name a mountain if only someone were capable of loving me in return.

I came to this basketball game alone, to watch those powerful men act out sublimity on the court. Seconds are counted on the scoreboard—victory is contained within the possibility of a three-point shot. The ball changes hands—and then—the crowd rises from its seat. He’s made it, victory is ours, *his*, really, the man we cheer for.

As the applause fills the stadium, I stand to leave, my neck without adornment. The players vanish into the shadows of the court turning into ordinary men I pass along the streets of the world, unremarkable next to me. The cheerleaders, too, exit the stage becoming

once again women, my peers, the half of us that struggle to be like men but not men, strong and independent, Gor-Tex wearing and yet, still loyal to cotton. Though not capable of scoring a final shot—we'd never have our names chanted by a stadium filled with complete strangers. And yet, all of us stream out into the cold night together, walking down paths all our own, lighted by street lamps and tonight, the moon.

*Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory;
Odours, when sweet violets sicken
Live within the sense they quicken.*

Rubicon Peak, covered in snow. That's where our destination rested that January morning. I attached the skins to my skis and began the ascent to the peak. It was harder than I'd imagined—and perhaps that's why magazines which tout "backcountry lore" rarely employ female writers. But there I was—once again throwing myself back into the world of mountains.

I struggled—breathing, stepping, slipping down the slope where even the skins on my skis couldn't quite grip to the ice, frozen in the shade of old-growth pines. Blue and white, with shades of black shade—like a deserted basketball court, the seats vacant and blue, filled with immense, empty echoes. He brought me here—would it have been more suiting if I'd arrived alone? How can I know the Sublime, if I'm always in the company of men? Either way, no one watches me, my triumphs or failures. Very few even care to know my name.

But perhaps that is the point—that Sublimity and Sentimentality are like those terrains I seek—distant from view, far from society's eye and trends. And yet—though there are no mountains I have named—I still don't even get to name a washing machine. Is there nothing left for us women today, nothing but following men, watching men, adoring what we cannot be?

But I guess that's the funny thing about these outdated human emotions—I cannot outgrow them. I have climbed mountains for a man's momentary affections, just as he has descended from his awe-inducing ascents to be with me. Or was it the other way around? Perhaps I was the one climbing mountains, and he, doing laundry. I can no longer remember. Was it Dorothy Wordsworth or Wordsworth himself who truly inspired the poetic lines we so revere today?

We aren't Romantics, anymore, however. Which is both good and bad: women are no longer condemned to the indoors, and yet—though we

can venture into nature, it is still not ours to claim our own. It's as though life and love—sentimentality and sublimity—exist side by side, but forever separate. Until that moment, however, when we decide this paradigm is outdated, not by its age, but rather by its denial of something essentially human about us all. I am grateful for the mountains I have climbed, and when I'm there, on some peak looking at the world around me, I can hardly care whether or not someone stares at me, or if, by some strange chance, I'd be asked to name the hill I'd just climbed. The experience is much more spiritual than that. It is better to have touched something *real*—some rock or tree or skin—than to have stayed forever apart, as only a watcher of men. And perhaps, for contemporary times, skin will have to become the next mountain we climb—sentimentality: the new terrain of the Sublime.

Rebecca Ann Eckland

NIGHT OUT

I'm swaying
Not sure if it's from
My feet
Unsurely planted
In these red stilettos
That have a tendency to
Make me wobble
Stumble
As I walk
Or if it's from this
Warm toxicity
This sensation
This state of inebriation
That seems to be growing
As I drink
My fifth martini

Abigail Terrobias

SCAR TISSUE

My brother, lying in the hospital bed
gauze covering the incision beneath his
collar bone is asked what hurts. He replies,
“What do you think?”

A small comet plucked from the heavens,
placed along the curve of the rib I might have
stolen from you. What was such a small cut is now a
brown mark that you never told me how you made.

Playing cards with Sky, I become worried when he
leans back, digging his fingers into the flesh of
his chest with a grimace. Through pain, he tells me
not to worry. “It’s just old scar tissue separating.”

Dalia E. Gerdel

COLLECT CALL / CANCELLED TRIP

it's ten after nine
and it may take me a minute
to go back
settle onto the concrete
and prepare to witness
the attack...

on a day
not unlike any other
the usual energy
of my city
was shut down
in an instant
the sky was filled with fire
the streets were choked with screams
and everywhere around me
paralyzed people were running
from their lives

i sat still
upon the sidewalk
concentrated
on the taste of the ash
in the air
i opened my mouth
and took a deep breath
so the cremated pieces
of the lost
could fill me
and show me their view

i'm distracted for a moment
when i notice scarlet
walk past me
struggling to interpret
the messages she's receiving
from a source she cannot see
through the blackened
canopy above us
swallowing everything whole
a sickening thud

refocuses my attention
and at first i think
it is only my own heart
sinking in my chest
until i catch sight
of the bodies
as they rain down
and slam against the earth
to rest lifeless at my feet

i suddenly wish
i were brave enough
to jump

the mourning
aftermath
the desperate searching
for missing loved ones
for answers
for a reason
to go on
makes me wish
i could have really been there
to take the place
of someone who wanted to live
as much as i want to die

instead i find myself
separated from my city
still grieving as much today
as i did when it happened
and it calls to me
louder and louder
while i bleed myself dry
in the struggle to return
and stand silent once more
beneath that Big Empty Sky
a vacancy that is matched
by the size of this void in my heart

as my absence echoes

across three thousand miles
from the only home i know
i truly feel the distance
my heart struggles
to find the beat
my voice shakes out
the words
but they fall through my hands
when a single tear escapes
sliding down my cheek
to freeze my eyes
and grasp their gaze
upon this crippled nation

i'm forced to watch
helpless
as they hurry out
one by one
to buy their american flags
tie them on
like blindfolds
and get in line beside the others

Alixandra J. Dewitt

REALITY CHECK

Braiding sadness
securely into place
with rainbows of ribbons
conjures up smiles
until
arthritic fingers struggle
and memory cannot remember
how to braid.

Jane Logan

PELE'S BONES

In August, when the humidity sweats strangely
through me
Larry and I make the climb up a
volcano
with the intention
of making land a home.

Here, on this borrowed land
Pele's purges have shifted further.
Actually, Pele lives deep
beneath and her island-roof shifts
away from her
north, as a string of pearls.

We catch up with Her.
She is silent, slowed to a still.
We pour gin from a plastic water bottle
into her collapsed artery,
a huge semi-tunnel made from what everything
here is made from, Her.

We walk over Her black bones.
Crunch, sometimes to powder,
but mostly they slide against themselves,
make nails on a chalkboard beneath
my soft vulnerable tennis shoes.
Slice up my ankles, ferocious minerals.

From this first impression
I feel I'm going to have to
try harder than superstitions of
booze
to get her approval.

I'm fighting with her to believe
this home can work,
that I can survive
in a world built on the stuff
of stiffened magma.

But as if to illustrate

that lusciousness can come
from the aged-old,
I see

from her decay
the greenest ferns, tenacious orchids, and the few
patient trees
emerge.

Calina DeFebaugh

DEAR CHARLES FORT

—*For D.*

When the words leave my cold white fingers,
tripping down pages, I want to believe, Mister Fort:
that that which is ugly is *only* incomplete.

(Is the severed hand really less of a hand, Sir, than the whole?
If the opus is unstructured, can the work befit a corpse?
If the Venus de Milo shelters Beauty in her armless shell,
does she embody just *one* ultimate exception?)

You know the girl upstairs in Heaven's cabaret
who worked such an unhealthy punishment on me:
she took my face out from the wardrobe
and put it over hers; my muse devoured me.
Now I'm blanker than a mannequin, than
Monday's typewriter with bared teeth.

With a smooth featureless face and eyes
like pearls, I'm making my way down to the sea,
to the ultimate *body* of water, to the *cadaver*.

Lately I've been feeling strung together
like a mannequin, built with wires around
a hollow core and covered in muslin.
Ugliness grows in lesions over faceless
creatures like me, Mister Fort: subtle gaps
flowering in the epidermis, cancerous, carnivorous.

(It takes a steady hand to suture the Ego with the context):
In my experience, the smallest truths have wept
under the scabs of every old fragility.

Jessica Ellis

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

JEFF ALESSANDRELLI graduated from the University of Nevada in 2005 with a degree in English Literature, and is currently applying to various graduate schools for Creative Writing.

REBECCA ANDERSON has been writing since 1988, and finds it to be a way to release and express views on women's issues, politics and more.

NICK BAKER is a contributor to THE MEADOW 2006.

HAYLEY BAULT has lived in Reno her entire life and is a sophomore in college. She has plans to transfer to Southern Oregon University, where she will study theater after completing her Associate of Arts degree at TMCC.

MOLLIE BOOTH is a 21-year-old student at TMCC. She has lived in Reno all her life, and while clever retorts and witty phrases are a specialty of hers, she can never think of anything to say in author biographies.

DONNA BRADLEY has "taken pictures" all her life. She has produced photography, as art, over the last seven years. She has a gallery show at TMCC's Meadowood Center through the end of April 2006.

KATHY BURKS, photographing for over twenty years, has recently made the transition to digital. Not only has the format she shoots in changed, but her photographic interests have also changed from landscape to more abstract subjects.

VICTORIA CERETTO-SLOTTO has published in THE MEADOW and *PetFolio*. She retired from nursing to pursue writing and has recently completed her first novel.

ALEXANDRA CHARCHALIS is an old crow, who likes shiny things.

CARY CRITES was born in Stockton, California. Consumed with taking photos since February 2005, he took up photography after his last disposable broke and the death of his grandfather awarded him a mediocre digital.

DALE DAVIS is a contributor to THE MEADOW 2006.

CALINA DEFEBAGH has been writing poetry since she attended Virginia City High School. She is currently studying creative writing.

ALIXANDRA J. DEWITT (Patricia Jones) has been writing ever since she can remember. She is currently a Theatre Major at TMCC, but plans on relocating to New York.

DILLON DUNLOP is a pre-nursing student at TMCC, but he writes in his spare time. Right now, he is focusing on short stories, because anything of novel length inevitably drives him crazy.

REBECCA ANN ECKLAND is a graduate of University of Nevada, where she studied English Literature. She also enjoys drawing, painting and telemarketing.

JESSICA ELLIS writes in pursuit of self-quietude (to eliminate the existential quandaries—or a least be at peace with them) and existent beauty in the time of the assassins.

DAWNNE ERNETTE is a poet (in her heart at least), a writer (she thinks perhaps in her dreams), and an instructor. She loves the written word in all its forms, and she loves life.

DALIA E. GERDEL is working towards her Arts transfer degree at TMCC. A lover of nature and stuffy libraries, she hopes to one day see her name amongst the greats and be a well-fed writer.

JOHN HAYES is a poet and actor. His last performance was as Al Lewis in *The Sunshine Boys*.

NICK HIGMAN is a contributor to THE MEADOW 2006.

PATRICA HOMEYER is a native Nevadan who enjoys writing free verse on a variety of subjects. She belongs to the Nevada Poetry Society in Reno, Nevada.

TIM HOWLAND has been writing poetry since he took Jim Roderick's "Writing Poetry" class (ENG 220) in the fall of 2005. He thanks Jim Roderick and Michael Witkow -ski for their guidance and encouragement.

JANE LOGAN is a retired nurse who returned to Nevada in 2003. She is the grandmother of four, including two who are currently attending Sparks schools. She is a volunteer for the Assistance League of Reno/Sparks and a member of the Nevada Poetry Society.

ELEANOR MARTIN is the Graphic Design Manager for THE MEADOW 2006. She says, "Dot rules!"

TRICIA MARTIN lives in Reno with her husband and two daughters, and is currently working towards a nursing degree.

SHU NOMURA is a civil engineering student at University of Nevada.

LINDA SEIBERT has enjoyed photography since her teens. Initially reluctant to leave the darkroom behind, she has only recently begun to discover the endless possibilities that digital photography offers.

JUSTIN D. SULLIVAN was born in Los Angeles, California in 1983. Following the Rodney King riots, his family moved to Nevada. He has been photographing locally and nationally for six years.

J.V. TABBADA came to the United States in 2003 and is currently the President of the Filipino Club (PUSO) at TMCC. For him, it is through art that we express our emotions and address certain issues. He dedicates his drawing in this issue to his family, especially to his mom, who was not present when he won the first-place award in THE MEADOW 2005.

ABIGAIL TERROBIAS is a native Renoite. In her spare time, she enjoys writing and good martinis.

BETTY VICTORIA is a contributor to THE MEADOW 2006.

JENNY WEISBERG studied geography in Wisconsin and Wyoming, and creative writing in Nevada. She lives with her family in Reno.

ERNEST WILLIAMSON III has published poetry and visual art in over 40 online and print journals. He holds a B.A. and an M.A. in English/Creative Writing from the University of Memphis. He is currently a doctoral student at Seton Hall University and a member of the International High IQ Society.

MICHAEL WITKOWSKI believes that in the act of writing, it is never possible to capture what was intended. Instead something else is created, something that is more than the original impetus, and this is superior. He finds the greatest joy in discovering what this expansion of the original idea will be.

SAMUEL WOOD was Serials Cataloger at the University of Nevada library for 30 years. He is comfortable writing in both forms and free verse and has published two books: *Cages and Other Places* and *Times and Places*.

32ND ANNUAL STUDENT ART EXHIBITION,
BEST OF SHOW



Photo by Neil Whitehurst

Beverly Colgan "PONY #2" (CERAMICS—RAKU)

M06