

ONION RIVER REVIEW

2015

river run by

Briana Brady

Sam Burns

Lily Gardner

Russell Hammond

Shawna Norton

Cory Warren

Editors' Note

The children were whirling past the door, throwing things high into the air. "Little demons!" she cried. "What have they got?" she asked Jacob. "Onions, I think," said Jacob. He looked at them without moving.

~ Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room*

And here we find ourselves, once again, throwing Onions into the air, not knowing where they will land, or who will be there to reprimand us as the little demons we all are. This year's *Onion River Review*, we hope, can fit snugly onto the shelf next to Onions of years past. Each year we are a little different, a little weirder, and that is all thanks to the wonderful people who submit as well as those who put so many hours into bringing you this book. We hope you feel the love in each and every page.

This year, we encountered a new wealth of sex jokes, produce poems, and more cat images than we believed imaginable (though regretfully, no Gorlocks). We've seen poems that are sexy in all of the right ways, we've been awed by mountains and creepy windows, we've been carried into the ocean in search of giant squids, and we've been conveyed to a hard wooden chair in Professor Delanty's Poetry class. We've loved, we've knife-fought, and we've lost, and well . . . you get the point.

But this year's Onion isn't simply about the Problem of Poetry, or adding spinach, or even about the Hip Shakes of the 15th Century. In the midst of the events we've seen in Ferguson and New York City, in seeing Saint Michael's College call for renewed attention to racial issues, we of the Onion want to take up this call too. Two of the pieces we wanted as a part of this book for more than just their good writing; we wanted them

for the message they carry. Being a small, private college right outside Burlington, Vermont, it can be very easy to be lulled into believing that everyone we see around campus, every stranger who opens the door for us, and even we ourselves, exist in a world that is not structured by racism, prejudice, and privilege. Although there are many kind people in Vermont, this region faces the same systemic prejudice that Ferguson does. The only difference is that it is easier to ignore because of this kindness. As the editors of the *Onion River Review*, we felt it necessary to remind both ourselves and the Saint Michael's community that being passive in the face of racism makes us complicit in all its outward manifestations.

As for how the *Onion* of 2015 got here, the process begins with (of course) all of the wonderful submissions. And these are handed over to our ever lovely and eccentric Core Editors. After losing so much brilliance to the tragedy that is graduation in 2014, Briana Brady was joined by Sam Burns, Lily Gardner, Russell Hammond, Shawna Norton, and Cory Warren. Then wanderlust stole Cory and Briana (Cory studying abroad in London; Briana taking on the cats of Morocco), and Russell, being so smart, was able to graduate early—leaving Shawna, Lily, and Sam (and her alter egos Randall and Hans) to go crazy in St. Ed's 334. Many Tootsie Pops were consumed. We're lucky we're still here today.

And of course, we wouldn't be anywhere without our wonderful auxiliary editors—Sean Levasseur, Cody Wasuta, Lexi Goyette, Agi Chretien, Jackie Matthews, Jaimee Deuel, Michael Bureau, Charlotte Ferdinand, Victoria Sullivan, Filip Deptula, Nate Gabel, Megan Durocher, Emma Gilfix, Jamison Major, Isabelle Carter, Joshua Kranz, Devin Wilder, and Daniel Kuhn. We love you. Thank you for spending so many hours in Saint Ed's and the Cashman Great Room, eating bagels and knife fighting with us. Without you, the *Onion* wouldn't be here.

And the *Onion* really wouldn't be here without Summer Drexel and George Goldsworthy of Printing Services; without them, we would still be lost and fumbling in Saint Ed's 334. Thank you to Jamiee Deuel for being our Excel Master, thank you to the Student Association and to the English Department for making this entire process possible, and of course, thank you to everyone who submits their work for their talent and bravery, as well as to everyone who takes the time to read the *Onion*.

Last, but most certainly not ever the least in anyone's book, the biggest thank you in all the world to Will Marquess, the heart and soul of the *Onion River Review*. Will, thank you for your wisdom and your nudging, for the Tootsie Pops and bagels, for your trust, and most importantly, your love. As you recited Theodore Roethke's "The Waking" at one of our Open Readings: "I learn by going where I have to go." Thank you for letting us learn, and letting us go.

And with that, we leave you. Keep writing, and more importantly, keep reading.

Until next year,

~ Shawna Norton, Sam Burns, Lily Gardner, Cory Warren, Briana Brady,
and Russell Hammond
Core Editors 2015

ONION RIVER REVIEW

2015

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You make us cry without hurting us.
I have praised everything that exists,
but to me, onion, you are
more beautiful than a bird
of dazzling feathers,
heavenly globe, platinum goblet,
unmoving dance
of the snowy anemone

and the fragrance of the earth lives
in your crystalline nature.

~ Pablo Neruda

Strawberry Heart

Megan Durocher



fine line pen, pastel, watercolor, Promarker, colored pencil

The Problem of Poetry

Ralph Culver

The problem of poetry is not going away, will not go away. Standing there in the steady rain, waiting, it would seem, for a bus, and then there it is, the bus, the 87 Ardmore as it happens, leaving a wake behind it in the seething black water massed at the curb. Slowing to a halt and the door smoothly opening, then closing with a hiss and a sigh, and the 87 pulling away to reveal the problem of poetry still standing there, drenched, smiling, perhaps a little too smugly, no gloves, no overcoat, no umbrella in sight.

Silent Conversation

Briana Brady

My father and I, we are masters
of comfortable silence.
We unsay what should be said,
let silence extend from our mouths
like a broken wave flooding the sand,
and feel the weight
of every particle of air
that carries our unsaid words.
He never asks.
I never tell.
Our stories hide
in the rhythm of our breathing
echoing loudly in the small cab
of his truck.

An Evening Serenade

Jaimee Deuel

I put my shoes on
(my dogs are barking;
another night, another fight.
Whining as the laces
get tightened and tugged
to the slurred,
jumbled harmonies
of sung praises
to all inebriated souls,
glory, glory,
halle-luuuuuuu-jah!
In Espagnol!
In Frances!
They've heard it before,
the song that ends with
the drunken sting of his hand,
after a choral proclamation
of lost keys and a bridge
of accusations and threats.)
and walk out the door.

Beach Bubble

Brian MacDonald



digital photograph

Up and Down

Briana Brady

“Sierra and Tara go up and down. Up and down. Up and down,” I sang, jumping on the floor and holding the chubby hands of a six year-old lost in giggles as she bounced up and down on a small trampoline in front of me. Her parents had bought the trampoline just for Sierra. They kept it in the refinished basement of their house so that at any moment she could tumble down stairs and bounce, her arms waving in the air and her tangled black hair flying up as her body sank down into the mesh. As soon as I finished the line, I started again, singing to a tune that sounded like some mangled version of “The Wheels on the Bus.” *“Sierra and Tara go up and down. Up and down. Up and down.”* Sierra looked at me with a grin like a stretched out bungee cord and released a sharp giggle as her feet hit the trampoline. She squeezed my hands and leaned forward, using me to push herself even higher into the air. She tried to sing along, but couldn’t quite manage the full line with all its difficult sounds, “Sierra. Tara. up ‘n down.” I couldn’t tell if she knew what she was saying, but I almost stopped jumping at her words—after two summers of babysitting, it was the first time she had ever said my name.

The first time I looked after Sierra the previous summer, her parents hadn’t told me. I worked behind the desk in the administrative building in the condo community where they spent their summers. They might have assumed that I had seen their family around enough to gather for myself what it was that made Sierra so different, why her movements reminded me of a much younger child in wonder with the world, why she so often jumped up and down, up and down. They might have thought that if they told me the specifics, I wouldn’t have been as willing to babysit, that I might have raised my rate. Whatever the case, they seriously overestimated my powers of deduction.

It was July when I first showed up to their house in my self-imposed uniform of an ancient t-shirt and jeans. When the door opened, I could see Sierra zooming around in the background, a blur of pink with a stream of nonsense words bursting forth from her mouth into the air. I walked into the front hallway. There's always something odd about stepping into a stranger's house. The air smells like people. The air smells like those people, completely unfamiliar to you. Previously surrounded by a cloud of your own scent, you enter into someone's home and it's their air that you're breathing, their world that whelms you. I stood there, quietly breathing in the scent of something I couldn't quite put my finger on as Alice gave me instructions about emergency information, where the snacks were, the fact that I should check if Sierra needed to use the bathroom every half hour or so, and that Aiden was not to spend the entire night plugged into the computer. Her movements were quick as she pointed around the room, and Mark kept making subtle hand motions towards the door. Their reservations were waiting. For a moment, Alice looked anxiously at Sierra, whom Mark had placed in a booster seat at the dining room table while she had been giving me instructions. To remove herself from the house, she first had to remove her thoughts from her daughter. It was like watching someone rip the label off of a salsa jar; it comes off easily until the very end, where the glue is, and then the task becomes impossible.

After they had given out hugs and kisses and torn themselves away from the house, Sierra's ten year old brother Aiden, renowned knower of facts and prolific player of Minecraft, sat down across from the seat I had taken at the table, folded his hands, and said as if it were the answer to a question on a game show, "Sierra's autistic."

"What?"

"She's autistic. That's why she doesn't talk and stuff and why she still wears diapers. You didn't ask. Can I use the computer?"

"No, your parents told me not to let you, why don't you hang out with us." I waved towards Sierra maneuvering her way out of the booster seat, grabbing a handful of goldfish from the pile in front of her as she

slid to the ground. The moment her feet were firmly planted, she started running for the basement stairs, shoving all of the goldfish and a large portion of her hand into her mouth as she went.

"Please? I promise I won't be on it that long. Pleeeease?"

"Fine, just come downstairs and play with us eventually," I said over my shoulder as I chased after the sound of Sierra's Minnie Mouse sneakers pounding down carpeted steps. Looking back, I glimpsed Aiden slipping a large pair of green headphones over his ears, and then I was sucked into the basement.

Two hours later, I was sitting behind Sierra in her large cardboard rocket ship quietly watching as she rocked and banged around. I occasionally counted down from ten and yelled "Blastoff!" in order to elicit a burst of laughter from the little girl in front of me. She seemed content, and I was just happy to be sitting. For the past 120 minutes I had been in a constant state of agitation hovering over her, convinced that if I left her for even a moment she'd end up with a missing limb or poisoned. And yet, no matter how vigilant I was, I wouldn't have noticed it except for the smell. But once I noticed it, the source of the odor wafting towards me was not to be ignored. I had forgotten Alice's suggestion that I plop Sierra down on the toilet every half hour, just in case. It had been more than a suggestion. I immediately scooped Sierra up from where she had been sitting in her small beach chair inside the ship and ran up the stairs with her thrown over my shoulder, the smell swirling about my head the entire way, engulfing me in a cloud of what I was sure was sulfuric acid. As soon as we hit the bathroom, I pulled her pants down and discovered just how much she must have needed to go. It was everywhere. It was my fault.

And then there was Sierra, staring up at the ceiling, her fingers in her mouth, humming a tune recognizable only to her.

Over that summer and the next I started making mental lists—"What Sierra Knows" and "What Sierra Doesn't Know." Sierra knew where the snacks were, she knew how to lead me there by the hand, point up at the cabinet and say "gol-fish peas." She knew how to sing "Twinkle

Twinkle Little Star” and the tune to “Frère Jacques.” She knew not to jump into the pool and that when I held her hand and spun her around three times it always ended with a “dip.” Sierra didn’t know my name or how to ask me for help. She didn’t know how to tell me she needed to use the bathroom or what was making her cry. She didn’t know how to read or that eggshells and crayons are not something that we chew on. It didn’t really matter how long the lists got, however, whatever she was thinking, whatever way she saw the world, was locked up inside her in such a way that I wasn’t sure if I could ever figure her out. Although I learned that she liked pizza but not cucumbers and what her face looked like when she had to go, she remained a mystery. A familiar mystery.

Everyone is staring. Sierra’s parents asked me to take her swimming today, but Sierra decided to run up onto the deck above the pool and sit directly between the snack bar and the tables full of older couples lounging beneath umbrellas and sipping on iced tea while they play games of mahjong and rummy. She’s running her hands over the texture of the wooden slats. She’s smiling, laughing in sharp bursts. I look at an elder gentleman and he motions to Sierra with his hands, his white eyebrows raised, asking the question: This child is making a scene, aren’t you going to do something about it? So I do. I sit down. I run my hands over the texture of the wooden slats. Sierra giggles.

Nillie
Jen Signet



oil on canvas
20 x 20"

A Touch of Cerulean

Rachel Jones



Rachel Jones

watercolor and gouache on paper
9 x 12"

For V.

Chris Wallis

Today,
I remarked
the Halloweenish
monotony
of my lunch,
and,
reminded of
that disapproving
twinkle
just above
your Miss Peacock
rims,
I added
some spinach.

Looking at Anthony Perkins¹ after the Premiere of Psycho (1960)

Cory Warren

“People never run away from anything.

You knew what would
happen and even so, you screamed
when we all were supposed
to and I did not look over to see your fist
bitten fright, though amidst the
collective cry and sigh, I heard you
only you, Norman, shout for mercy
from your own shadow. I imagined you,
not in that wig, but saw you strut over
to some producer in your little pink trunks
with martinis in hand, inviting him to listen
to something you needed to say—
you say, I have a secret.

The rain didn’t last long, did it?

That first gal, she was a barn
burner and she told me
in the plush front seat of my
Buick that if she was a man
she would be gay, just so she
would not have to deal with women.
I gulped and blushed and tried to laugh.
We did not make love, not even a kiss.
Of course, I flitted around my own
discomfort, invented new ways to
subdue and forget. No, instead we just
watched from the drive-in screen, and
I thought I saw you leant alax upon the
railway ahead, watching yourself on the dusky scrim.

It was summer, so all the windows were
rolled and high school boys, their skinny arms
scant and meager roiled around mindless girls’ necks,
threw their heads out agape to talk with their pals
while the shower steamed and they missed
the whole spectacle.

You know what I think?

Yes, you were watching, and so was I
but I listened to you.
I see you, and you’re
a big goof, though your
wife doesn’t know it and
around her you’re no
different from the nervy pervy
prisses she passes on the smog
struck streets of Hollywood, as she
struts by marquees and matinees with
your name up on the boards,
your name with the word—psycho.

*I think that we’re all in our private traps, clamped in them, and none of us can
ever get out.*

You aren’t married?² Oh,
not yet, though it is expected
so even now in 1960
you know you must and
will. For now, cavort in
your nightgowns and wigs,

¹ Anthony Perkins (1932-1992) played the role of sociopath Norman Bates
in the Hitchcock thriller, “Psycho.”

² Perkins married Berinthia “Berry” Berenson in 1973.

with your foreign dancers.
But get out of that motel—
you're wasting
your whimpers.

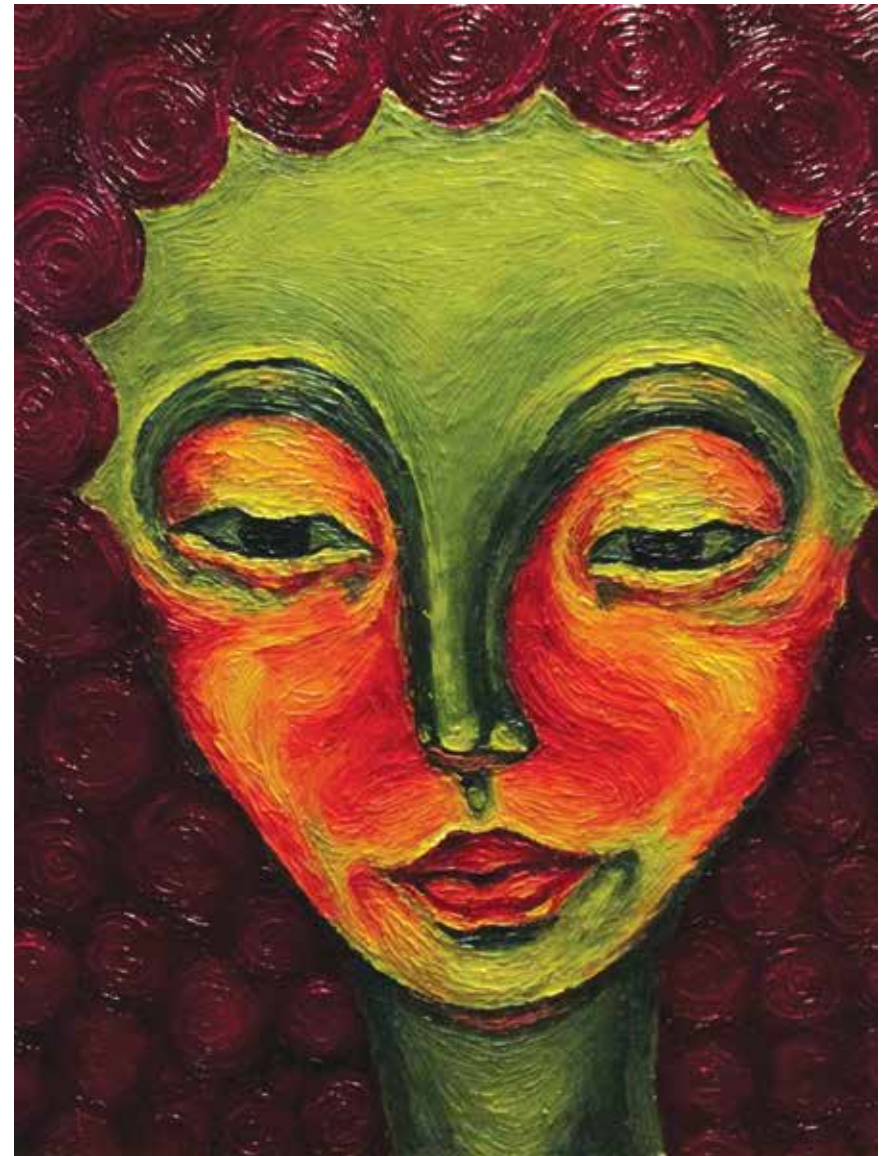
*We scratch and claw, but only at the air, only at each other, and for all of it, we
never budge an inch.*"³

You said that showers
of sparks exploded in
your head when you
thought of love and
women.⁴ You forget,
Tony, that the thrill
is in the drive—
the knife-fall, the spiraling
score, the quickening pools
of gore—
not the
thought, not
the scream.
You are not the thrill.
You are lost in the effect.

³ Quote from *Psycho*, uttered by Norman Bates moments before heroine
Marion Crane is slain.

⁴ Quote from an interview with Perkins in *People Magazine* (13 June 1983,
Vol. 19, No. 23).

Faraway Jen Signet



oil on canvas
16 x 20"

Insha'Allah¹

Jenelle Roberge

Forgive me father
for I have sinned,
seven days have passed
since I last cleaned the dishes.
Lipstick-stained glasses, silverware,
patterned plates, and mugs still smelling
of chai tea or hazelnut coffee
clutter the counter tops.
I find the chaos soothing,
like an art installation
intentionally exhibited
in my kitchen.
Yesterday, I readied soap
on a fresh sponge, put on
heinous yellow rubber gloves,
and started to scrub one of the mugs.
She came home and heard
me at the sink. I felt her arms wrap
my waist, her breath on my neck,
and from behind my tights
slowly slid down my thighs.
They landed on the hard
wood floor. I left the water flowing.
Bubbles built their own
magnificent citadel.

Pride of Japan

Stephanie Knoll



ink on paper
8.5 x 12"

¹ God willing.

He's Just Seventeen

Shelley Vermilya

He's seventeen, handsome, graceful and smart, plays mid right wing for a very good soccer club. His shoulders are broad, so is his smile, and he is getting taller. He is African-American and I am his white mother.

We live in Vermont, where hippies still thrive raising carrots and kids on small farms. This is a state with only 626,630 people, 95.2% of whom are white. There used to be more cows than people, but those days are gone—well, at least the cows are. Folks answering demographic surveys around here are predominantly well educated, and aren't partial to organized religion, though we have a lot of Buddhists practicing in these hills. Despite such mindfulness, I hear comments like, "There is no racism here." "Everyone knows everyone and everybody helps one another." The state motto is Freedom and Unity; kindness could rule if Vermont were a separate republic.

Even so, the Southern Poverty Law Center gives Vermont a grade of "F" for civil rights instruction in the public school.¹ It seems like teachers want to do the right thing and, along with most white people, they don't want to say the wrong thing about race (or class or LGBT or adoption or disabilities) so they just don't bring it up. Most white folks I know here don't see any evidence of racism unless someone points to specific incidents or talks through the issues, like Driving While Black or Shopping While Black. Even then, some of my white friends, and many of my students, get exasperated: "Racism is so old-school," I've been told. They don't want to believe that racism exists. This essay is for them, and for my kids.

None of the parents I know have had to teach their white kids the skills to be safe in stores, schools, highways, and neighborhoods, as I have. I thought about this as I read a piece by self-described upper middle class Attorney Lawrence Otis Graham in *The Washington Post*.² Graham and his family are African-American. He offered a list of nine rules he and his

wife have taught their children—among them, never leave a store without a receipt, keep your hands free and visible, and always be polite, even in the face of disrespect. Even with this careful preparation, Graham's fifteen-year-old son called home terrified, having been harassed by white men in a car, shouting the N-word as he walked on the sidewalk of his elite prep school.

African-American men and boys are incarcerated or killed by the weapons of racism in countless numbers. Most of us have learned about Emmett Till, brutally murdered for the possibility that he had whistled at a white woman in Money, Mississippi in 1955. His mother braved threats and opened his casket for the world to see what happened to her 14-year-old-son. Seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin, walking home with a fistful of Skittles in Sanford, Florida in 2012, is in our more recent memory. The summer of 2014 presented us with many more dead black young men and boys: in Ferguson, Missouri. Staten Island, New York. Los Angeles, California. Beavercreek, Ohio. and Victorville, California.³

I recently discovered the stories of two boys (they called them Negro then) shot after the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham. They are not remembered as are the four girls who died

¹ Teaching the Movement 2014: The State of Civil Rights Education in the United States. www.tolerance.org/TTM2014.

² www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/11/06.

³ Michael Brown of Ferguson, Missouri; Eric Garner of Staten Island, New York smothered in a chokehold; John Crawford of Beavercreek, Ohio shot in the chest in Walmart holding a .177 calibre BB rifle; Ezell Ford of Los Angeles, California shot in the back after an "investigative stop"; Dante Parker of Victorville, California Tased repeatedly and died in the hospital; Trayvon Martin of Sanford, Florida in February 2012; and, always, Emmett Till on August 26, 1955 in Money, Mississippi.

in the blast⁴ The New York Times, September 15, 1963 article describes the shooting of one of the boys, 13-year-old Virgil Wade: “The Jefferson County sheriff’s office said ‘there apparently was no reason at all’ for the killing, but indicated that it was related to the general racial disorders.”⁵ No apparent reason. General racial disorders. Our nation has a long history of bullets flying into innocent black youth. I knew this history, but it became mine when I became a mother.

I also have a daughter who is a year older than her brother. On my first trip to the grocery store in 1996 with my eensy weensy baby girl, a white employee collecting carts in the parking lot asked, “Is that a Negro?” I immediately responded, “Yes! And isn’t she beautiful?” Despite my initial (and intuitive) reaction, I have learned to be ever wary of the inexperience and obliviousness of other white people when it comes to my children. Sometimes I get a pleasant surprise. When my daughter was only a few months old, I steeled myself for a diatribe when a guy came over to my table at a diner. I confess, he fit the stereotype of “redneck” that I hadn’t yet overcome. The baby was too small to sit up on her own, so she was in my lap. He extended his finger for her to grab as he pulled his wallet out of his back pocket. He was smiling ear to ear as he proudly showed off a picture of his biracial granddaughter.

On another occasion, my son came home from kindergarten to report he’d been washing his hands after art with other classmates and one told him his hands were still dirty. My son responded, “Mine are clean but yours are covered with paint!” Another time, an elementary teacher was adamant that “black” was the proper term for her to use when teaching civil rights. My daughter was uncomfortable: “But I’m not

⁴ www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0915 (accessed 10.17.14) 14-year-old Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley and Carole Robertson and 11-year-old Denise McNair) were found beneath the rubble in a basement restroom. Ten-year-old Sarah Collins, who was with the other girls, lost her right eye, and more than 20 other people were injured in the blast.

⁵ www.history.com/topics/black-history/birmingham-church-bombing.

black, I’m brown,” she told me. I asked her what she’d prefer the teacher say. She thought for a moment and proudly said, “African-American.” When I talked to the teacher, I suggested she talk to the kids in the future to find out what they liked to be called. I have had a lot to learn about negotiating the world crisscrossing color lines.

A pivotal moment in my awareness occurred one luscious summer night at the beach. The kids were two and three. We were walking along the shoreline as sunset approached. It had been a lovely day, just the three of us, strolling around town, playing tag with the waves, tossing stones in the water or watching construction on the wharf. We could while many hours away in these pursuits. Our after-dinner stroll was the icing on the day. Big sister was leading little brother down the strand. As they wandered ahead, I followed along happy to be in the midst of their joy. The infant and toddler years were receding and I was thinking how big and independent they were becoming. A tall and very strikingly handsome African American man watched us approach. I waved and called, “Hello.” He boomed from his doorway, “Are they yours?” When I nodded he continued, “They’re cute now but what are you going to do when people cross the street when they are bigger?”

I had no words. Was this one of the what-right-do-you-have-as-a-white-woman-to-adopt-black-children challenges I had heard before, or simply a bold forewarning? There was no way to have a conversation; his was not an invitation, and the kids were already far ahead. That man’s question has not haunted me with doubts about whether I was right to adopt my children. Their birth-giver settled that for me when she decided their destination and made sure brother got to be with sister. No, his question has provoked all of my work as an educator, community member, and mother.

I don’t want women to fear, as Sandra Bullock’s character did in *Crash* (2004), the sight of my son on the sidewalk approaching her. I don’t want people to duck into a store when they see my kids coming. I’ve led “interrupting oppression” workshops and classes to guide people to understand the amazingly complex intersections of all prejudices and to appreciate and honor the variety of perspectives and ideas a diverse

group can inspire. The forewarning of the man on the beach, and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s plea to have our children recognized for their character rather than their color, are motivation to always be in conversation about understanding skin and gender and privilege and power. And fear.

The Color of Fear (1994), a documentary by Lee Mun Wah,⁶ features eight men talking about race in North America. They are African-American, Latino, Asian-American, and Caucasian. The clothing and eyewear is dated but the dialogue is still (sad to say) relevant. One of the men, African-American Victor Lewis, tries to find the words that will get white David Christensen to understand the depths of the differences between them. David only wants to see America as just, full of people with the kinds of positive experiences he's had. He resists believing that the lives of men of color have been traumatically different from his experience as a white man. My white students get very uncomfortable watching the scene where Victor declares that he is a black man, not white, as it seems to him white people want him to be. He says he cannot trust David until David is willing to really listen to the stories of the men of color in the room. After the film someone always says, "He is so angry!"

When I first saw the film, I saw anger too. But having lived the years since, learning to see the world through my children's eyes and paying attention to current events, I now say, "I see him as frustrated and extremely passionate. Wouldn't you get impatient and heated while trying to talk to someone who so resisted the truth of what you were saying, the truth of your lived experience?" I have learned that passion is often misinterpreted as anger. I have been thus misinterpreted, as I get riled trying to be understood. Every time I watch this film I also think of my son. Will he be misconstrued?

Just as that man leaning in the doorway on the beach knew he would, my son has grown beyond cute. Will people cross the street when they see him coming now that he is no longer a small child but a tall, graceful young man?

My son wanted airsoft guns when he was 13. I told him then of an 8-year-old I had read about who would not hand over his toy and was shot by police. My son immediately dismissed my concerns, "But Mom, I'm playing in the woods with my friends. And really, come on, we're in Vermont."

Is that enough of a safety net?

It's true; Vermont is not Ohio or Mississippi. *Men We Reaped* is Jesmyn Ward's 2013 memoir remembering five men in her family circle who died young. These African-American young men were whole, until they were thwarted by the economic and educational apartheid of their Mississippi. The young men she describes were hindered and emboldened by stereotypes of masculinity and African-American. Drugs, guns, despair or white men driving while drunk murdered them.

Guns and guys. Economics. Rural landscapes. There are differences and similarities between rural Mississippi and Vermont. Our winters are for sledding, skiing, reading by the woodstove. Folks in Mississippi rebuild after hurricanes and slog through heat no Vermonter could abide. If it reaches 98 degrees folks practically faint around here. Many Vermonters want to do right, be good, be green, be advocates for every cause. They take pride in the history of the stalwart New Englander. There are many markers of Civil War veterans in Vermont cemeteries. Vermont is the first state to approve of civil unions for same-sex couples. Vermonters want their guns for hunting. They tend to leave one another alone but help out in a pinch without being asked.

But perfect we are not. Vermont has a statewide problem of prescription drug and alcohol abuse among teenagers and an economy that prompts our young, educated population to go out of state to find good jobs. Vermont gets an "F" while Mississippi gets a "C" on the Teaching Tolerance report card. Drugs, guns, and economics are all factors confronting youth in Vermont and Mississippi.

I have faith that, with support, Vermont educators will rise to meet this challenge, teach beyond tolerance and tests, deepen understanding of stereotypes and prejudice. It is time to inspire students

⁶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nmhAJYxFT4.

to desire and create a society, a new civil social paradigm, which will address school shootings by white children with high-powered artillery and which does not accept the shooting of unarmed children, young adults, and citizens of color.

Vermonters are proud of the state's dedication to justice and hold kindness as a rule. I'm grateful for that. But if we are too attached to an image of being kind and progressive, we miss the real racism that occurs to those who are darker skinned. We miss opportunities to understand our privilege as white people to walk down the street and not have someone cross the street or call the police because we are here. We miss the fact that our white children are not being shot for holding toys, as seventeen more brown children have since I had that conversation with my son four years ago.⁷

We don't have to wait for this to change. History offers examples of non-violent activism that resulted in fast-moving changes. In the early days of AIDS activism we shouted, "SILENCE=DEATH." No media, government agency, or pharmaceutical company seemed to care that so many gay men were suddenly dying. Men and women organized to work with doctors, lawyers, medical researchers, poets, and playwrights so political activism started to bring change and hope to people who were HIV positive. The primarily privileged white, male, educated provocateurs of this movement were determined to get their demands met; they assumed they had the right to health care and attention. That civil rights movement was organized with unprecedented immediacy and voice. We need that kind of momentum to gain justice for black boys and men dying by excessive police force and incarceration.

As I write this, there's a huge crescent moon in the clear Vermont sky. That same moon shines over all of us. It shines in Ferguson, Missouri, still smoldering after the riots over the grand jury's decision in the case of Michael Brown's death by Officer Wilson. It glows over Cleveland, Ohio, where just last week twelve-year-old African-American

Tamir Rice died when white officers didn't distinguish his pellet gun from a real one at a playground. Why are lethal shots fired? Not one shot, but many?

Thousands of lives—my son's life—depend on our not being silent.

We have wonderful mentors and models for our crusade for justice—suffrage for women, civil rights for Native Americans and African-Americans, women, gays, lesbians, transgender, and disabled, peace movements and the AIDS movement. None of these efforts has led to permanent success, though. Constant vigilance is our responsibility.

At seventeen I was marching against the war in Vietnam. Now, I see that we were practicing hope. Hope for change, hope for humanity, hope for kindness. I adopted my African-American daughter because I wanted to walk into the future as the future would be—multicultural, full of difference. I adopted my son knowing I had to guide a boy to becoming a man. I became a mother in the anticipation of joy and hope in a bright future for my kids. I am an educator because I believe knowing history and social constructions provokes understanding, especially of people who are different from us somehow.

Every young person killed is a son or daughter.

Every shooter is too.

⁷ www.mydaytondailynews.com/data/news/17-shootings-that-involved-fake-guns/(accessed 10.17.14).

Wyoming Falls
Kyrstin Gee



black and white photograph

A Closer Look
Rachel Jones



watercolor on paper
11 x 14"

On the Ineluctable in Strand's *Collected Poems*

Ralph Culver

I paused on the lakeshore and looked out across the ice, ice as even and polished as a marble countertop as far as the breakwater. Long pennants of blowing snow lifted and sped over the gleaming surface. "Winter, bidding farewell," said the jogger passing at my back. From an errant sky tinged the color of moss, gulls convened now, landing in silence on the ice as a group, standing facing me as a group, as though each gull were about to unroll a yoga mat. But it's not Tuesday; it's Wednesday. The gulls wait. This would be the time to light a cigarette, I thought. If only I smoked. Instead, they have taken out their composition books. Clearing my throat, I begin.

The Cracks We Grow Through

Christian Schou

I'd like to stay tip**TOP**,
but I hear every **DRIP**drop
every scratch//scratch
every smick'-smack'
every splish\✓/splash
 it comes with a good<catch>
a woopty-woo,
a how-do-you-do?
"Well son, I drink the Sun,
now how 'bout
you?"

"Well Sir, as-you-prefer:
I'm a mut,mutt,mutter,
with a stut-strut-stutter,
but,
I'm *smoooooooooooooooooth*—like butter
so slug, drInk-and-drunk
I don't need the funk,
of this clit/clat/clutter
I don't need the Garden,
I've got the *gutter*."

First Day of Poetry Workshop

after Greg Delanty's Introduction

Filip Deptula

You told me that it is your addiction—
that you ingest it every morning
thickly spreading it over your morning biscuit,
adding it to your second cup of coffee,
with lunch and before dinner,
and sometimes after sex.

It's the kind of habit
that causes inflation of the brain—
that quickinstant dizziness—
leaving you light-headed
while you snort lines of it
amongst the ozone molecules of stratosphere.

It causes bears to scratch at hives.
It convinced the dodo bird it can fly.

It's the Italian mob, full of wise guys,
strapping on the cinderblocks to your feet,
and it's the ripple of the splash
as you drown in the Long Island Sound.

It's like shaking hands with God
or whatever clichéd epithets
the rest of the fizzle fried fanatics are calling it—
them picking and choosing whichever
culturalistic messiah to praise.
They store kilos of it
in great, dimly lit, dusty halls of Academia
and each day they strip, lash and crucify *It*,

melting the hard, dark, inky substance
and injecting it with queer significance.

But if I could make a suggestion:
if you want a life of glory, fame, women, vice, and money,
I'd stick with cocaine.

Pancakes

Mackenzie Faber



colored pencil on illustration board
11 x 14"

Home-Making

Amy Wilson

You stand up, I step back,
and we draw breath together—
see the wooden shelf where before
there was only smooth wall.
It is satisfying to see this shape we have built
in a worn old house, our own piece added
to the work of others.

The surface we have sanded and stained
and carefully leveled across strong iron supports—
the pine rests perfectly, patiently
for us to give it weight.

I choose clear jars of colorful dried spices,
and you place the coffee pot
upon its honey-brown home.

I craft a round mirror
to hang above your gift for me—
a ledge that sits beside the sink,
just sized for the small silver box
that holds my necklace each night.
We choose curtains to frame the snow
settling softly over the eaves outside,
and you hang my painting in the bedroom
where we dream about a drop-leaf table
in the kitchen—
where we whisper of window boxes
come spring.

Dance at a Bar

Mary Margaret Miller



mixed media
18 x 24"

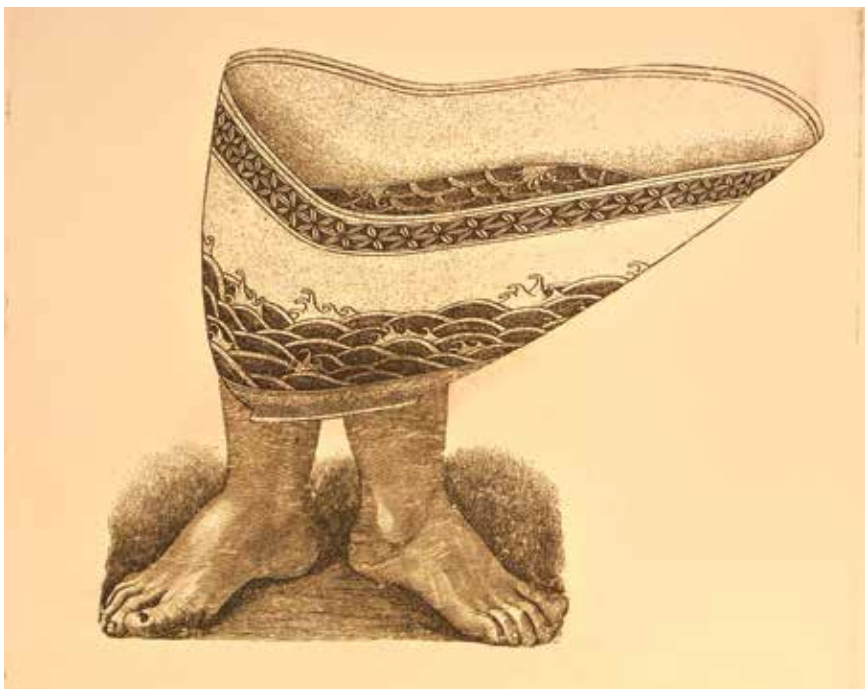
Class

J. Chester Johnson

I won't be believed, for I can't be trusted because of my clean shaven puss and peek-a-boo smile. I'm not worth spit if I don't get rid of deodorant and if I bore the piss out of them. No, that was a long time ago, I think. We, a bevy from Adams House, should have known right from left, but we couldn't add up from down. That was then, and now, it's the Harvard Class of 1966 Reunion, and I have nothing to swear. Bugger, bugger. First's Oxonian accent four decades after he sojourned for just a few weeks in England, and the Second's still sporting his high school SAT scores on a yellow wad fastened through a lapel. Reunions—oh, such sweet hooey. So, there's the Third, saying he scans poetic meter in Shakespeare's verse while selling hog futures. And then poor Four, keenest actor, who went to esoterica and lost his mind and soul. We've gotten limpy, of course: courtesy cups half full, half drained; wrappers convulsing in devolved circles; or like the Fifth still reciting Sartre and Beckett in triple time to get perfect attention again—oh, yes, I remember the torque: it's better some things are left unbettered. Hooey, Timothy Leary; honkers, James Watson; honkers, you too J-K Galbraith; hooey, Nathan M. Pusey. Big men are big crappers.

15th Century Hip Shake

Jennifer Koch



ImagOn etching
17 x 18"

Steeped in Tradition

Megan Beattie

This afternoon,
I lift the painted blue willows,
my ceramic heritage,
to sip,
as I get lost in her stories:

First, the one
about the German paratrooper,
whose legs crashed through
the ceiling of the infirmary.

He knew no English—
but accepted
a cup
of English Hospitality.

I sip, again,
and listen, again,

to the one
about the German paratrooper . . .

and the one
about the soldier's legs,
hanging from the ceiling of the infirmary . . .

I smile along,
ruefully realizing
how the brain deteriorates—
a tea bag,
over-steeped.

The Great Fire

Timothy J. Fitzmaurice

London's burning, London's burning.

Fetch the engines, fetch the engines.

Fire, fire. Fire, fire!

Pour on water, pour on water.

-Traditional English Nursery Rhyme

The doctor is wearing a tailored voice.

It's nice: crisp lines but with enough wear
at the lapels and cuffs to hint at pathos.

My wife is wearing her old standby: quiet grit
with piping like catharsis. As for me,
I'm not really listening, which isn't unusual.

I can't help but think of that odd old nursery rhyme
about the bakery in London, Pudding Lane, in the 1660s.
Owned by Farrier or Farnier or something like that.
By the time the mayor, Bloodworth, I think,
decided to knock down some buildings,
it was a storm that consumed half the city.

The fire made history, but the fallout was legendary:
native Londoners beaten as papists, foreigners
lynched from sign posts, especially French and Dutch,
enemies in the war du jour. Hundreds,
maybe thousands, died between the fire and the vitriol
and the long winter that followed.

The doctor is still talking and Lisa
is nodding, interjecting with questions,
writing down the answers in a journal,
leather and tooled, she got in a Yankee swap
two Christmases ago. Until now it lived
in the bottom drawer of her desk, purposeless.

Which one of us is the baker? Me?

Farriner. That was it. Or is it the doctor?

Lisa is the city, of course, and the kids.

Why would you teach a song like that to kids?

My head is Pudding Lane. Am I Farriner?

Is the doctor Bloodworth, waiting to act?

Or is he the fire brigade commander, pleading

with me to create a break? So,

I'm the mayor, too, then.

I look at my wife, but she isn't looking back
and I wonder where our fire line will be.

And who will get lynched along the way.

What will the city become when half of it

burns to the ground. With my family

standing on the far side of the Thames, watching,

remembering the baker from Pudding Lane.

Outside, on the street, a siren moves close.

Eve's Defense

Lauren Murphy

What's so wrong about an apple?
What's so wrong about a tree?
There are trees and trees bear fruit
And that red fruit was right for me.
And yet I'm down in history as sinful, shameful, foolish Eve.
What about that Lucifer?
Wasn't he an angel once?
Didn't you once praise him and then he fell and now he's cursed?
And yet he slithers from the ground and takes the apple from the tree
And you did not go banish him so why would you go banish me?
In my defense, I simply ate.
I ate in Eden's gold estate.
I ate what serpents are free to take
But I, you say, made a mistake.
A sin, rather, curse to my kind.
With half a rib, I wouldn't mind.
But I was born of another's flesh.
I send my descendants to avenge my death.

Upstate

Timothy J. Fitzmaurice

The sun over the Hudson
and the popping sparrows
are enough.

For a moment, for a sip
of coffee, the town's surplus
of drugs and deficit of jobs

are gone. The woman,
the kid, everything
ever gone wrong, went right.
Just a minute, maybe two,
my life is intact
and in 24-hour storage,
a key in the pocket of my bathrobe.

In this space before the church bells
and two-for-one newspapers,
is a palace of nothingness
populated only by trains
clicking off miles and geese
chasing hospitable days.

When I Grow Up

Dylan Ward

I wanna trust the world to give me what I need
like a rain storm to wash me clean
a river or a stream
a smashed fire hydrant
and dandelion salad greens
dock and mallow, nannyberry
walnut, acorn, hen of the woods
protein grows on trees
and in dumpsters full of cans full of baked beans
good enough, and still good
I wanna trust my feet to get me there
or a bike that I repaired after “rescuing” from somewhere
I waited a year, I swear!
I wanna trust a free couch will be by the road
trust the crickets and the toads to rock n roll and shake my soul
while I bang along with sticks and bones
with monkey wrenches on rims of chrome.
from inside my straw bale house
inside my clay house, my cave house
my this used to be someone’s house but it was deemed unsafe to live in by
the state of Vermont and they’ve been meaning to demolish it for a while
and haven’t gotten around to it and nobody knows that I live here
house
in my old room at Mom and Dad’s house
or on a friend’s couch
in mama’s old sweater or one I bought in a church basement with 50 cents
I found in the road
I’ll give back
but not tit for tat I ain’t about that
but I’d love to stitch up your old jeans, I’d love to sing you all to sleep
make you lunch, dinner, brunch
“Nah sit down, I’ll get your tea”

or wild cider, bathtub gin
it keeps me warm when she’s not here
I wish she was
I wish I could
help her help me help us
have what our parents never had
what we never had
trust
that the world will give us what we need

Poseidon, Picasso, Pathetic
Mary Margaret Miller



mixed media
48 x 54"

Safe Keeping

Maria Weber



digital photograph

Rebuilding

Emily Houle

Instead of from the top down
we re-built this house from the gut out.
We shucked the walls
to find confessions of no insulation,
tube-and-knob wiring,
and wood that seemed too thin and tired
to hold up to the wind.

But we crawled
into the attic and found the ridge beam,
eight by eight and solid,
mortared to the roof-ribs with wooden pegs.
We admired the workmanship
and let it be.

Lisa Ritter, Left Index

Jordan Douglas



silver gelatin photographic print, bleached and toned in selenium

The Night the Sky Burned

Christopher Ricker

A spark of injustice rioted
across the night in urban fire.
I ponder: Did Romans dream
Byzantine dreams?
Buildings burnt,
with sidewalks cracking
in lightning strikes
rivaled in waves of human fury.
Police taken to act like animals
in violent moments.
The haunted ghost Nero
playing a tune, engulfed in flames
amid West Florissant Avenue.
We will have no peace this evening.
No Justice.
Instead, there will be rage
and hatred and the fall of civil decency.
I mourn for the charred morning,
and for the wretched days to come.
I mourn for Michael Brown
and for the city of Ferguson.
Tension, unrest, will run rampant
in the burning boulevards.
The cries of many will sound
like shattered glass landing upon asphalt.

Silent Supper

Alex Dugas

This kitchen
is crawling
with the subtle waltz

of war. You are chieftess,
and I, chieftain,
a battlefield of two steaming bowls

between us. You raise your eyes
like a tomahawk. I fidget
to sidestep, sniffle an uppercut,

my wicker throne creaking
as you look up to the cobwebs
in alliance. Every breath

you seize and surrender
is another tooth I dribble,
bloody, into my stew.

We are Ares and Athena
gridlocked at the gates of Troy
on the longest night of the year.

And though I have lived
by the sword, I choose to die here
by the spoon, instead.

I have picked many a fight
in my prayers, but tonight
I say grace, instead,

like a peace treaty.
But it's still hot,
so we sign

with a sip.

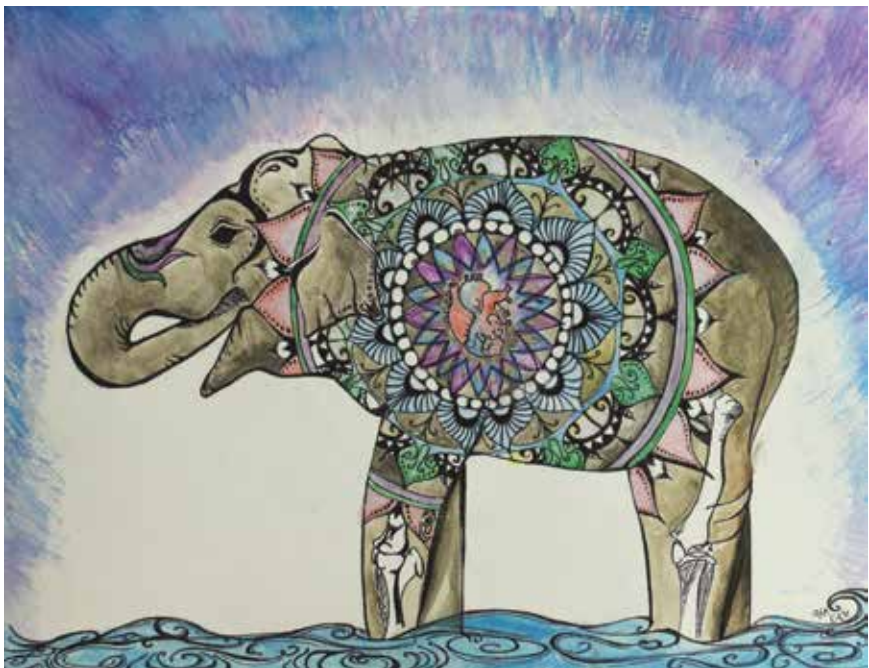
Wanderlust

Kyrstin Gee



black and white photograph

Elephant Mandala
Emma Gilfix



sharpie and acrylic paint on watercolor paper
12 x 16"

Learning Curves
Alex Dugas



digital photograph

In Memoriam

Lily Gardner

Once I would catapult off bridges into cold water wildly and with abandon. Once I would walk to my car under the shadow of the night without key(s) in hand ready to be utilized upon attack. Once I could bravely answer, “No, I have no fears.”

Your hand is ever present on my chest melting into my flesh flattening into me until you reach my insides.

Your fist hits my spine until every inch of me is broken, and I cannot erase the bruises you’ve left me.

When beads of your sweat dripped onto my skin, the salt of your body cauterized me. Sweat hit my skin, absorbed one layer at a time until you forced yourself indefinitely through me.

Tears left unwiped, ignored. Only after satisfaction did drops rolling down my cheek affect you. Cleanse me of my sins.

The smoke seeping through your lips entered my lungs, poisoned. That smoke wakes me in the night, follows me. I walk in the midst of a haze.

Once I felt unadulterated joy in my body jumping up and down with waves of saltwater in the ocean. Waves that reached above my head until I bobbed myself above them, thrilled and unafraid. I reach for those thrills in trodden places. Endangering is no longer a far off image but reality, in which the only thrills are left. Roller coasters used to pump adrenaline into my blood. Now I ride with hesitation.

Palms of Greed

Devin Wilder



digital photograph

Down the Road, with My Father

Luis Lázaro Tijerina

There is no road here, no cathedral
of wax candles to light up before the grave
of my father, Luis Garcia Tijerina.
His fedora is long gone, blown into the wind,
the crevasse in his skull where lightning struck,
astonished us all, except here he is
visiting again in his khaki uniform,
his black engineer boots hitting the ground.

Athena has accompanied me to this grave
with a bitter smile on her face
because Luis Garcia died so young.
She pulls back her braided hair,
tugging in the folds of her white tunic
before she throws her shield carelessly
over clumps of earth where others are buried.

She reminds me of the braceros my father put to work
in fields bursting with potatoes, cabbages, and lettuce,
these men who brought in the summer harvest
laughing as they threw their full gunny sacks
like ammo rounds over their aching backs.

It's autumn in Vermont and the cormorants
are flying over the shores of Lake Champlain.
The Adirondacks have all turned blue in the morning mist
but my thoughts move restlessly with the herds
of cattle on the dusty roads of Hereford, Texas.
That is where I see this youthful ghost
dressed up in his sergeant's uniform,
his photograph enameled on his gravestone.

“What will become of you, my son? You do nothing
but read and kick a ball around in the fields, and collect
toy soldiers. What are we going to do with you?”
I still cannot reply.

Lost in the numbness
of this infinite-starred galaxy,
we still say nothing.
The hands that I've clasped out of desire
or simple love, awaken next to me
while Athena winks, again.
Defying death. This October
is a beautiful ruin of color and memory,
its rusted leaves scattering down the road.

The Boy the Ocean Waved To
Christian Schou

The only lonely Stargazer
sat on an island,
with Poseidon beside him,
the wind at his back—
the world falling through
the ever/turning/cracks of his hands,
he stands,
he stands on no mountain
drinks from no fountain
and his-hands-command
the motion
but without humble hopin'
people to show devotion,
he still sadly sits,
and listens to the ocean.

Reflect, refract/subject, detract
Shannon Conroy



watercolor on paper
8 x 10"

Patchwork
Troy Millette

I'd just as soon
lie here and freeze
as take that quilt
from the shelf.

The floral print
that swaddled you when
you were first given life,
and later calmed your
chemically-induced chills.

I still see you in it.
Once vibrant,
the subject of your
wildest imagination.
A cape. A tent. A magic carpet.
Now—
Lifeless and faded,
lying stationary in the corner.

Never did you fray,
Ever composed.
Delightfully tattered,
yet somehow still intact.

Now—
Warmth and comfort
escape me.
As do answers,
so I sleep.

Spring Innocence
Kyrstin Gee



black and white photograph

Oldtimer's

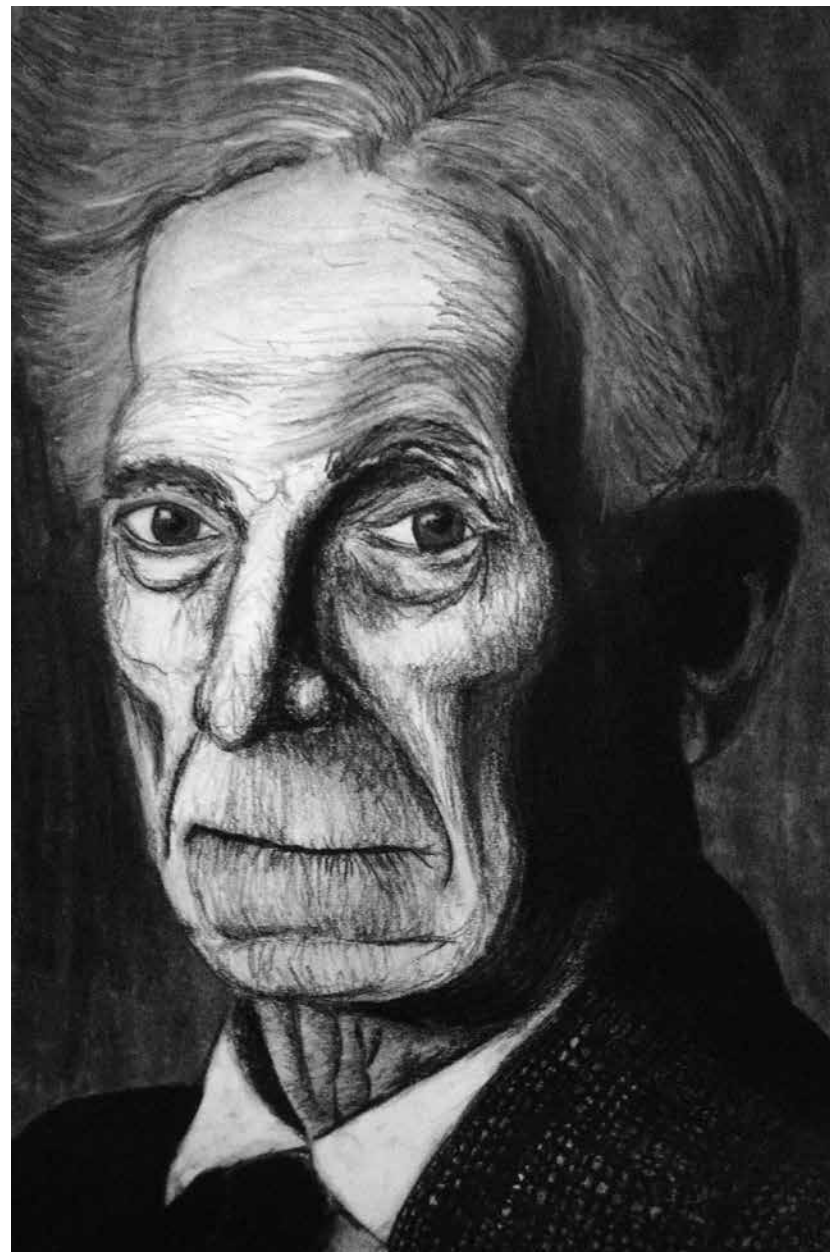
Kenny Giangregorio

The forest
after a snowstorm;
bare trees
thinning hair on
an aging scalp.

The frozen pond
pale white,
a growing bald patch
over a dark,
cold consciousness.

Alfred

Tessa Tomasi



black and white charcoal on charcoal paper
18 x 24"

Cobbler

Great, great grandfather

Ann Giard-Chase

He made shoes
for a living, coming down
from Canada
over dirt roads in a wagon
packed with hammers,
rasps, and nails to settle in the village
of our hometown.

He pounded hides
into harness, sewed uppers
onto thick soles, rising
from his bed just as the sun
unfolded its broad wings,
working well into the night,
mending the torn leather boots
of dairy farmers. I imagine him
sitting alone on the low stool,
his feet rocking back and forth
on the iron treadle, sounds
becoming music, chords mixed
with the spit and fire of logs
burning in the pot-bellied stove.

Maybe he dreamed
of Paris back then, thought
of the soft kid shoes, fancy
ribbons and red silk boots,
the royal slippers, the celebrations
and coronations, the swish of a lady's
heel on a polished marble floor.
Or maybe the simple shop

with its wood-burn smell,
was dream enough for one man,
day after day, glasses perched
atop his nose, tugging strips
of rawhide through the torn welts,
tightening the dark stitches of repetition,
the humble threads of discipline.

My Father's Titans

Emily Houle

There are two graves on the hill overlooking the Black River where my father buried his titans. Their leather tack hangs against the rack in the barn, dried equine sweat and hair caked onto them from years of use. The wooden bobsled and tank grows cobwebs from disuse. A curry brush in the window is housing several species of mites.

During early spring when the smell of melting is in the air, I imagine I can hear my father's voice, coaxing steadily, coming up the road with the heavy jangle of harnesses and the clodding hooves moving in tandem to begin sugar work. They would hulk an easy foot or two above him in mammoth silhouettes, huffing and nickering for him to get a move on. Flanks steaming, they would haul for days through the snow, barrel-beasts beating through the woods with their sleigh.

When they died, the gaping presence was larger than the silence between spring-running maples.

Scenes of the Aoteaora

Amanda Cesario



digital photograph

Mom Makes Lists

Emily Houle

She writes them out on the backs of envelopes,
notepads, sheets of printer paper,
organized neatly by store, with the sale price columned beside it.
When they make it on a grocery trip,
they are folded in with coupons and loose dollar bills
into her pocket, her checkbook,
or the recesses of her purse. I found one
that she gave me to hold a year ago in my wallet.
Sometimes they never make it past the door.
They wait on the counter and listen for the faint disturbance in the distance
as she's driving down the road and realizes where her list is.

The other day, I was cleaning out my bookshelf.
In a copy of the Catholic Study Bible, I found I had sectioned off Genesis
with an envelope bearing one of Mom's lists:
Ragu Marinarra (\$2.50), Peas (.99 per can), and Coffee.
Pulling it out, I noticed that in the margins of what I had marked,
Chapter 3, Verse 6,
I myself had written:
"Socks (~\$4) / Apples (only two . . . \$2?) / Tape (\$1) / Milk (1/2 gal - \$2.69)."

Direction (above)
Find Home (below)
Stephanie Mertens



black and white photographs
8 x 10"

Getting Used to Loss

for my mother

Buff Lindau

We have an encounter sometimes, in the garden.
I see her shake topsoil from each weed to give
to favored plantings that she coddled into bloom:
the way she hoped she could shake missteps from us four,
make us flourish, grow right out of the house, and away.

Half a century later I shake each weed the same,
a legacy in tribute to her gardening skills.
I hold tight in refusal. I won't let her slip away,
though years, visions, memories vanish bit by bit, on and on.

She grew a great blooming bushy garden without help.
She escaped into a world of trees and shrubs and flowering things—
daisies, verbena, pansies flourished along her borders and paths.
Rows of bright red anemones marched straight up to the front door.

She dressed our white brick corner house
in azaleas, camellias, dogwood, magnolia,
daffodils, a grape arbor, a fig tree wrapped in gauze
to keep birds from the lush fruits—
which she fed to us, her greedy young.

She kneels and digs and walks with me
as I toss weeds in a pile or bucket or
quick in a bush, as she sometimes did.
We take the garden cure, the garden refuge.
Her shape, her face, her habit of stealth retreat
follow me from garden patch to garden patch—
you'd think she had a bottle hid, but never did.

Though my wisteria won't bloom,
it conjures hers, hung heavy
with fragrant purple clusters,
perfuming weekend spring breakfasts
of popovers, biscuits, flakey pastry.

With these visions come a plague of her worries
proffered by all four of us—my wrong-headed romances
and the other three. Would one daughter ever marry?
Would the only son divorce?
Would the bookend two take care of the middle two?

In the garden she was free, unburdened,
moving quietly above family issues.
Gone these thirty years, that's how I'll fix her,
taking a lesson for my own journey, above the fears,
floating, beautiful, deep in the roses, grape vines
and glorious floribundas.

Mountain State of Mind

Lindsey Garland



photo montage

Starry Night

Lexi Goyette

He says my body is his starry night
as he kisses constellations to connect each flaw.

Ursa Minor scampering down my spine,
the product of sun exposure
to avoid the name “the white one”
among the Amazonians
who make up my ancestral tree.

With Polaris on the small of my back,
collections of pink imprints from
undergarments bought by others,
and sized “small” for encouragement,
dig in my “medium”-sized skin.

Reserved Virgo against my inner thigh,
littered with scabs and scratches from
my failed attempts at a clean shave,
shaded and contoured
with cellulite from too much
seesawing, craving
a beach body and a cookie.

Tiny Pyxis along my face’s frame.
“You have such a cute face,” they say,
and fail to implore my body,
using back-handed comments to
encourage me not to waste it.

Ursa Minor, Polaris, Virgo, and Pyxis,
a new grace in imperfection.
What once was mine to disguise and deplore
is now his night sky canvas.

He says my body is his starry night
as he kisses constellations into my skin.

Untitled 9:09

Brian Tan



pencil and ink on paper
18 x 24"

Clementine

Troy Millette

Just because
it can be split in two,
doesn't mean it's meant
to be shared.

I have made that mistake before.

Watched as halves became thirds—
fourths—
sixths—
and eighths—

I've looked across the Oakwood plain
as you've dug your nails
into cratered skin,
and forced white flakes
to cover the table.

Then—
with a ragged tooth,
turned the citron pod
to liquid gold

and left me
the seeds.

Waking Hours

Kenny Giangregorio

Sleeping giants
pass the winter
in snow caps,
their wounds scabbed over.

But each spring
they stretch
and crack,
and begin to babble once again.

Wanderers will
ascend and descend
along the banks,
etching wrinkles into earthy flesh.

In Joe Nixon's Cellar

Gregg Blasdel



ImagOn etching
15 x 22.5"

Architeuthis

Sam Burns

And there was, when the robot reached the soft, craggy bottom of the ocean, a constant snowfall of decomposing skeletons and microscopic organisms.

-David Grann, "The Giant Squid Hunter,"
The New Yorker, May 24, 2004

I ask Conway: damn is that not a nice turn of phrase? He agrees. He's agreed ever since we decided to stay at the bottom instead of moving on (a big booming voice asked if we wanted to remain with the wreck or succumb to the great sleep. I told the voice: I'll stay here, thanks, I've got me some squid to catch, and Conway agreed, as he always does; he's such an agreeable companion).

I'd memorized that line because I liked it so much, but when the first carcass came down it looked nothing like

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and today's doesn't look like that either, but I am pleased nonetheless.

When I read the article the first time, in my favorite recliner in the living room, I had recited that line to Sharla (who was working on her knitting in the chair next to me), and afterward asked her how it was that I could possibly like a sentence that made no sense, as is not a snowfall of skeletons the exact antithesis of snow? And yet somehow I do like it, as I just love the picture it produces in my mind? She shrugged with her usual wifely concern (concern that had been building ever since Lily died), and told me *darling, sometimes we just like things that make no sense*. However, this simple answer did not satisfy me in the least, and is exactly what led me to pose the question to Conway again today, for the third time this morning.

Now I tell Conway to quit floating around the boat (he's circled it twenty times over already) because we're going to perform a dissection on the critter headed our way. Conway says that might be difficult given the circumstances, which causes me to reflect internally (or ectoplasmically?) on how disagreeable Conway can sometimes be. He says well, it might be hard seeing as—

Responding to an urgent need to count the new barnacles on the hull of our boat, I glide off the bottom, and after counting twice to control for mistakes I ascertain the new number (87) and feel much better, although I have forgotten what Conway and I were talking about.

Something about snow; yes, snow, skeletons and snow, skin white as snow, lily-white snow, her face white as snow, which was never how her face, Lily's, had ever seemed to me, until four months ago, when I had looked down at her in the casket and felt an electric spasm of surprise overtake me; my mind flopped around like the little fish that sometimes get caught in my squid nets (mostly *clupea*), as I just could not comprehend how unfamiliar her sweet little visage had become, so blank and pale, so unlike the young woman who had been the best student in my marine biology program, the most luminous pupil I had ever worked with, who was now as frigid and lightless as November sleet.

Conway, lingering in my office the day after the funeral, had agreed with me that watching her mind bloom these past four years had been a pleasure almost as massive as the giant squid I'd spent my life trying to catch, a mind that had now been snuffed out by a layer of new snow

and a faulty airbag, and was not the worst part, I asked Conway, how horribly random the entire episode was? How difficult it was to make sense of or find justification for the felling of such a promising blossom?

Conway had agreed, but this gave me almost no satisfaction at all, as it did nothing to help me understand its logic, and then it occurred to me that perhaps there had been no logic? That it had happened, as Carol, the university's primate specialist, told me in the staff lounge, *as these things just tend to do?* Her words did nothing to alleviate the itch building in my brain and under my skin, an itch whose means of scratching I was no closer to deciphering than I was to studying an *Architeuthis* in its habitat.

An itch that only continued to grow until the article came out, the article in which Conway was talked of ever so highly, almost more so than myself, the actual giant squid hunter. He is a damn good assistant, though, so I suppose it's only fitting he received such favorable mention in that article.

However, he did tell that journalist I was a fanatic, which went a bit too far. A fanatic wouldn't have stopped after the tenth failed expedition (that last weeklong trip with the journalist and Conway, just before the snow came down). I, however, did what a reasonable man does when he knows his Kraken-hunting days are over: replaced the (7) pen and ink squid drawings in my university office with pictures of manatees; burned my (6) nets with some driftwood on the beach; even buried the (1) preserved squid carcass given to me years ago underneath my little Betty's sandbox in the backyard.

They say money doesn't grow on trees, but I think it might grow on journalists, because after the article came out lots of people gave me money to scour the soft, craggy bottom, all believing that I would be the most likely of everyone to find the squid; yes, that O'Shea would be the first, and even though that journalist had been laughing at me, he wasn't laughing when all those donations came my way, a constant snowfall of dollars and checks, enough to go on sabbatical, lure Conway out of adjunct professor purgatory, and mount one last expedition because this time I knew we'd catch a baby *Architeuthis*, how could we not with all the potential we had, all that momentum hurtling towards the inevitable

conclusion of man mastering destiny, of scientist reunited with reason and his reason for being, his *raison d'être*, that bitty little raisin of a baby squid, which after we caught it, we planned to take back to land and put in a tank to watch it grow.

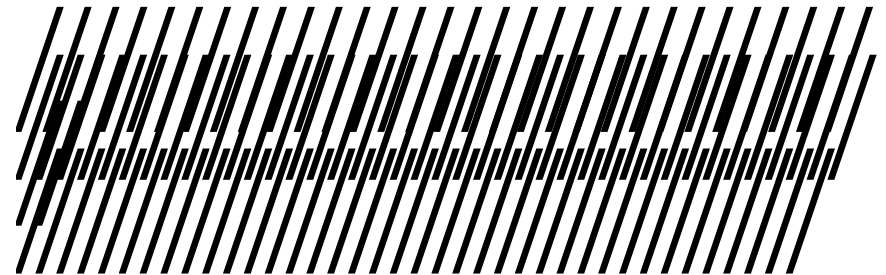
But that didn't happen because what did happen was that it rained like



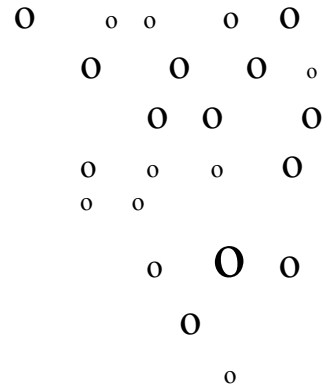
then like



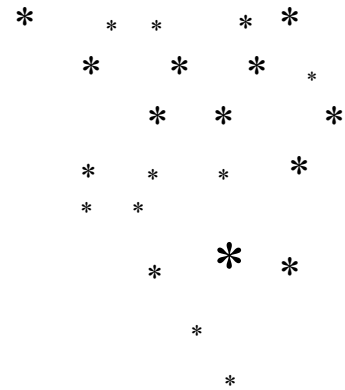
then



the boat

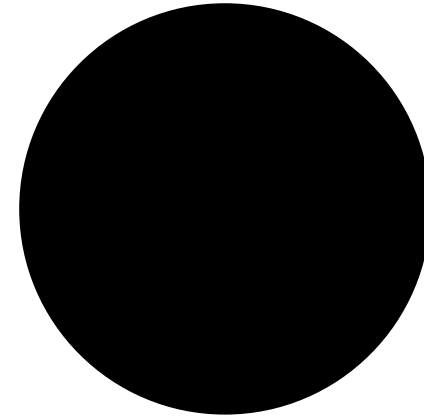


and us



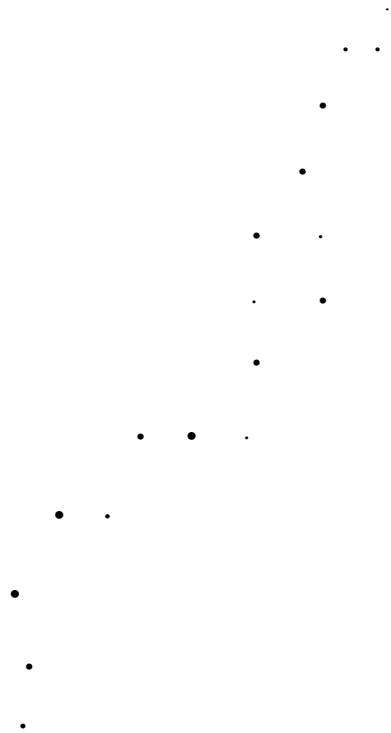
and the voice asked if I wanted to stay. And after thinking about the constant snowfall of decomposing skeletons I decided I did. And now I repeat to Conway for the 88th time that I'm really sorry to have dragged him down here with me, you were a great assistant, but damn, is that not a nice turn of phrase? The snow thing? I just can't seem to get it out of my

mind. He doesn't agree, doesn't say anything, actually it's as silent as the night I dreamed I was staring into the eye of a giant squid, it looked like



until I realized my face was pressed into Sharla's hair, which was what accounted for the darkness and I was very disappointed to wake up from such a dream but retreated to the living room and pulled the afghan off the couch to keep out the chill all that lily-colored snow had caused and completed another tentacle drawing for my office (the only thing that seemed to help with the cold), and she, Sharla, found me there in the morning asleep in the recliner for the 89th time, but didn't say anything, which was nice of her especially since I could tell by the crumples in her face that she knew I wouldn't be around for our Betty's birthday party during the afternoon because I had to get the boat ready for the 90th expedition, and I felt bad but the depths had been waiting for a man like me to count them and birthdays come every year, without fail.

After the voice told me I could stay, I was watching my and Conway's bodies snowflake down to the soft craggy bottom of the ocean and I was thinking that when our bodies hit the seabed particles of sand might float up through a shaft of light piercing down from the surface real pretty, kind of like this:



because there's no light down here and that big booming voice didn't say anything about that and neither did the article Conway made the right choice didn't he how am I supposed to record a giant squid's dimensions tentacle length, thickness of beak, strength of suckers, etc., if I can't even see the thing don't think about that O'Shea just count the barnacles: 91, 92, 93 . . .

but what actually happened was

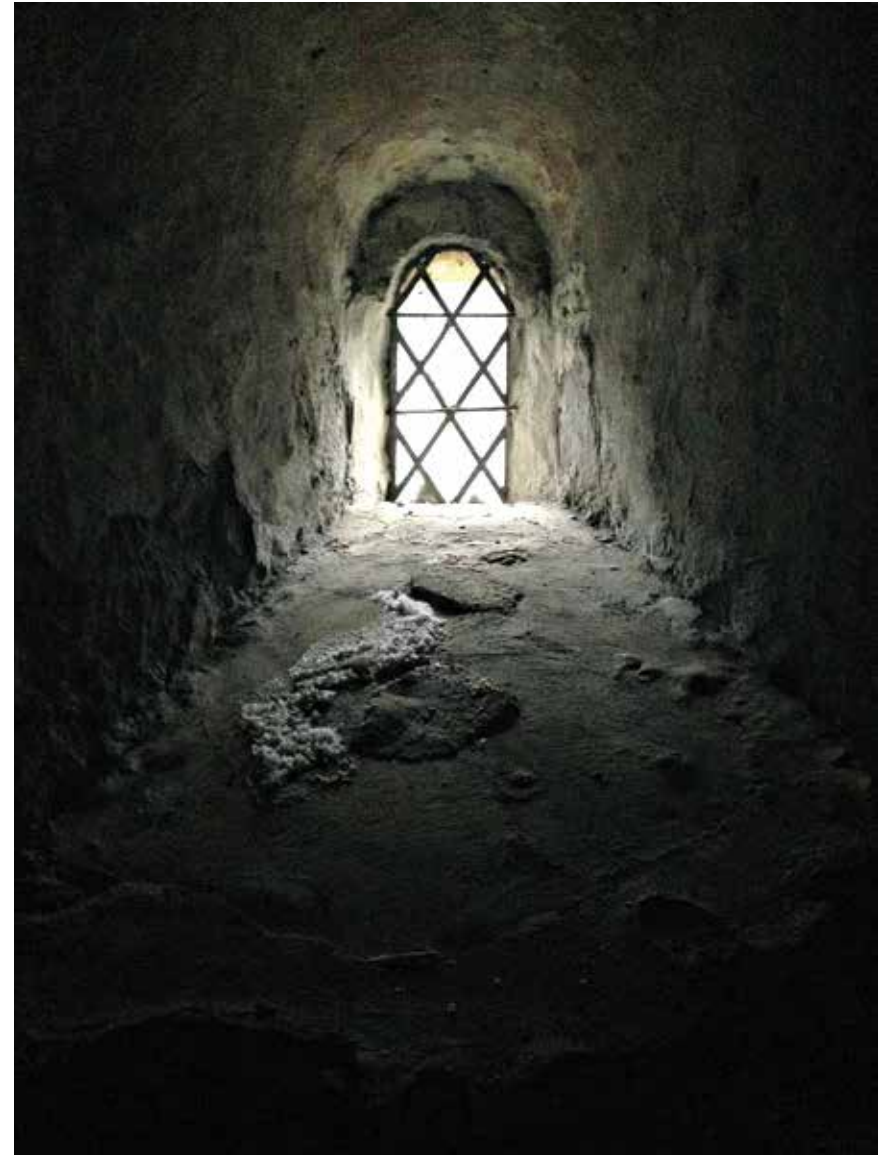
Creases

Jackie Chisholm

There is an outline of you
drawn in the creases of my bed sheets.
We didn't lie beneath
those sheets like lovers in heat,
but on top like lovers in
waiting, that were yet to be
discovered. I did not
touch you. I did not
reach for your hand. I did not
whisper syllables of love in your ear.
Instead, when you left
I touched the creases in my sheets.
I traced my fingers along the
length of your legs, to the
arch of your back, to the
small of your neck, to the
curve of your cheeks and I wished
those creases were flesh.

Beyond the Light

Nate Gabel



digital photograph

Contributors' Notes

Megan Beattie is a senior Business major from Vermont. She firmly believes, in the words of her grandmother, “There is no problem a hot cuppa tea cannot solve.” Megan has always felt poetry to be a therapeutic escape. This particular poem pays tribute to her English roots.

Gregg Blasdel is a Burlington artist who lives on the south shore of the Winooski River.

Briana Brady is a firm believer in the curative powers of Oreos and crunchy peanut butter for any ailment of the soul or spirit.

Sam Burns is from North Creek, New York and is a senior English major at Saint Michael's. She would like to thank her family for all their support.

Amanda Cesario is a graduating senior at Saint Michael's with a major in Environmental Studies and a minor in Global Studies. During her junior year, she studied abroad in Fiji and New Zealand for six months. Growing up in Westchester, New York she enjoyed hiking, skiing, photography, and playing music. She took “Scenes of the Aoteaora” on the South Island of New Zealand.

Jackie Chisholm is a senior MJD major. She likes horror movies, staring at nothing until she feels weightless, and having a significant other to leave creases in her bed.

Shannon Conroy is a super-senior Chemistry and Physics major, who looks forward to catching up on sleep after graduation, among other things such as backpacking and traveling.

Ralph Culver has been a grant recipient in poetry of the Vermont Arts Council, and is a past contributor to the Onion. His poems have appeared in *Albatross*, *Bateau*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *5 AM*, *Off the Coast*, and other publications. He lives in Burlington, where he provides writing and editorial services to commercial clients and nonprofits throughout the country.

Filip Deptula is an Economics major from New Jersey. Now a senior, he spent his Saint Michael's career tackling muddy men on the rugby pitch and enjoying the festivities thereafter. He has been published in *Too Little Time* as well as *Five Words Vol. VII* from the Five Words International Poetry Competition.

Jaimee Deuel is an English major at Saint Michael's, where she is in her final year of undergraduate study. She plans on either enduring more poetic clichés during her graduate studies or selling her kidney on the black market to fall back on law school. Regardless of her career choice, she will most likely live by the words of one of her idols, James St. James, and throw a little glitter on herself, in addition to those around her, and go dancing.

Jordan Douglas teaches photography in the Fine Arts Department. The *Fingerprint Series* was produced entirely through darkroom chemical process and without a camera. Typically a mistake, a fingerprint becomes a subject and can be assessed for its aesthetic possibilities as well as its reverberations of identity. The large-scale prints were exhibited at Burlington's Metro Gallery in the summer of 2014.

Alex Dugas '14 lives!

Megan Durocher graduated from Saint Michael's College in 2012 with her BA, and in 2014 with her MA. These two pieces of art are dedicated in loving memory of her father, Richard, and her stepfather, Dennis. Life is too short to do anything other than what you love.

Mackenzie Faber is a first-year student from New Jersey who enjoys eating pancakes even more than she enjoys drawing them, especially in her pajamas on snowy mornings.

Timothy J. Fitzmaurice '03 teaches English at Albany Academy for Girls, where his bully pulpit looks surprisingly like a classroom. While he is constantly going for walks, outward and inward, in search of good poems, he only rarely finds them. He is grateful anyway.

Nate Gabel enjoys the simple pleasures of life: sleeping and Nutella. He hails from Saint Albans, Vermont and is currently studying media, business, and creative writing as a senior at Saint Michael's College. You can usually find him on a bicycle in the summertime or refusing to wear boots and a thick coat as a protest in the winter. He plans to continue photography in some way and work it into his future career. He took "Beyond the Light" in the crypt beneath St. Edmund Hall at Oxford, England.

Lily Gardner is heavily inspired by insomniac tendencies, adrenaline, rain, and green tea. She temporarily resides in Vermont and Massachusetts, and will until the day she grows up and treks to Alaska to live among grizzlies, but she will only do so if Werner Herzog agrees to document her eventual demise.

Lindsey Garland is a studio art major and media studies minor from the White Mountains of New Hampshire. She hopes to pursue a career in photojournalism while finding herself scaling rock faces high in the mountains in search of her kismet.

Kyrstin Gee is a first-year student from Hinsdale, Illinois. She loves traveling and is a member of the alpine ski team. She has been pursuing black and white photography since her sophomore year of high school and continues to process and develop her own film and photographs.

Kenny Giangregorio is suffering from writer's block.

Ann Giard-Chase grew up on a large Vermont dairy farm. She earned her undergrad and grad degrees from SMC, and later raised four wonderful children in South Burlington. She is an HR Director for a small city. She escapes into the world of poetry often.

Emma Gilfix created "Elephant Mandala" with the inspiration of mandalas, working off one idea into another until the final outcome developed into itself.

Lexi Goyette is a junior English/Theatre major with a Creative Writing minor. She can often be found admiring cute dogs, wooing men with her endearing mediocrity, enjoying a good sneeze in the privacy of her own room, and talking freely about her ambivalence to poetry.

Emily Houle is an English and Secondary Education major from Irasburg, Vermont. When she's not writing, she's knitting, reading, or both. "Rebuilding" is a continuance piece to a project she started last summer, and she suspects said project is far from over.

J. Chester Johnson is a poet, essayist, and translator. His writings have been published domestically and abroad, and have been translated into several languages. The signature poem for his most recent volume of verse, *St. Paul's Chapel & Selected Shorter Poems*, has, for the last twelve years, been the memento card for the 30,000 weekly visitors to the chapel at Ground Zero. Johnson has also composed works on the American civil rights movement, several of which constitute the *J. Chester Johnson Collection* in the Civil Rights Archives at Queens College (New York City). For additional information, please visit: www.jchesterjohnson.com.

Rachel Jones is a sophomore History major from Winnetka, Illinois. Specializing in watercolors, she often paints animals or other scenes from nature. Through her paintings, she aims to capture lifelike textures and colors, and to depict a sense of beauty on a single page.

Stephanie Knoll is just a girl living in her own little world. She enjoys receiving postcards from Reality but if you should like to see her, you're going to have to visit her in her own world.

Jennifer Koch is a Burlington artist who also lives on the south shore of the Winooski River.

Buff Lindau retired as Director of Marketing & Communications for Saint Michael's last year, after some 35 years at the college. She has been writing poems for the last decade, and seems to find her way into gardens or parenting in most of them. She is a big fan of the *Onion River Review*, now appearing in its 42nd year. Bravo!

Brian MacDonald is a photographer who's exploring his complex relationship with ice by facing it head on. "Beach Bubble" was shot using a Canon 5D2 with a 100mm macro lens.

Stephanie Mertens is a senior Political Science and Sociology major hailing from Bethesda, Maryland. The photographs shown in the *Onion* were part of a final series for a darkroom photography class, titled "Finding Home." This is her first submission to the *Onion River*, and unfortunately her last as she graduates this May.

Mary Margaret Miller '14 is some kind of tunafish. As always, thanks to Will, the Onion, and exploded pens everywhere.

Troy Millette is an English major from Fairfax, Vermont.

Lauren Murphy is a Psychology and Religious Studies double major from the Bronx, New York. When she isn't busy busting rhymes to her friends, she sits and writes poetry.

Christopher Ricker is a Vermont transplant from Staten Island, New York, and has been regularly published by Ra Press, Vantage Point, Thread Magazine, and other Burlington literary zines.

Jenelle Roberge '14 says, "Poem inspired by Tayla A. Reo. Entirely for her."

Christian Schou says, "Here I sit collecting crowns / king of kings or king of clowns?"

Jen Signet lives in Astoria, New York. She graduated from Saint Michael's College with a master's in clinical psychology and recommends a visit to jensignet.com.

Casey Snyder is a Business Administration major from Colchester, Vermont.

Brian Tan sends shoutouts and thanks to his parents, Eva and Rolando, the whole family, friends, enemies, lovers, haters, and everyone in between! Much love to all!

“Believe in your flyness, conquer your shyness.” -Yeezy

Luis Lázaro Tijerina has an MA in history, his concentration being military history and diplomacy. Mr. Tijerina’s works are published by RA PRESS RA FILMS in Burlington, Vermont. Besides being a published writer, Mr. Tijerina is a photographer and easel painter. Retired, he made his living as a football (soccer) coach. He thanks his Ezra Pound, Bill Dodge.

Tessa Tomasi is an Art Major from Williston, Vermont. She loves grilled cheese sandwiches and macaroni and cheese, and finds the color purple pretty awesome.

Shelley Vermilya, Ed.D. teaches gender studies at Saint Michael’s and multicultural issues at the University of Vermont. She has learned the most about life from parenting, teaching, and writing. Photography and gardening are also among her creative expressions. Learning to understand people and practicing hope are at the core of her work.

Chris Wallis ’04 is a former *Onion River Review* editor who is currently pursuing his PhD in English at the University of California, Davis. His dissertation, which could conceivably at some point perhaps be completed (possibly), examines how representations of utopian space in early modern English literature can challenge understandings of citizenship that assign value based on [re]productive potential.

Dylan Ward is a junior Anthropology major from Bellows Falls, Vermont (the dirty south). He enjoys long solitary walks and compulsively re-arranging his room, and he feels more comfortable in Alliot than anywhere else in the world. If he had a super power it would be the ability to make hydro-electric dams disappear. When he grows up, he wants to be a teacher, a poet, an environmental activist, a small farmer, and an all-around good guy.

Perhaps similar to Norman Bates, **Cory Warren** does his best work at night. He has loved working on the *Onion River* this year, dropping many a mic and knife(fight) alike. He hopes you think this year’s review is a real thriller.

Maria Weber is a professional photographer from Connecticut. She plans to graduate from Saint Michael’s in 2015 with a Media Studies, Digital Arts and Journalism major and an Anthropology minor. Her photograph “Safe Keeping” was taken on the summit of Las Marias in Puerto Rico, where there used to be a coffee plantation but now all that is left is the infrastructure from the past. It was taken with a Canon EOS T1i and an EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 IS lens.

Devin Wilder is in the flowers, probably. Her photograph “Palms of Greed,” taken with a Nikon D3100, is a detailed shot of hand sculptures that protruded from the ground surrounding the walkway to the entrance of Wat Rong Khun (The White Temple) in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Meant to symbolize the fates of those who succumb to earthly temptations, they were unfortunately destroyed by a devastating earthquake in May 2014 which caused irreparable damage to the entire temple.

Amy Wilson, a 2014 alumnus and former editor, is honored to be included in this year’s Review. She writes from her apartment in Boston, drawing strength through her Vermont heartstrings, and she is grateful to those keeping an Onion vigil in the north.

The *Onion River Review* would like to thank:

Will Marquess, for everything. We love you, Mugwump.

Summer Drexel and George Goldsworthy of Printing Services, without whom we’d still be scribbles on scrap paper.

The English Department, for creative support

The Student Association.

The Auxiliary Editors: Sean Levasseur, Cody Wasuta, Lexi Goyette, Agi Chretien, Jackie Matthews, Jaimee Deuel, Michael Bureau, Charlotte Ferdinand, Victoria Sullivan, Filip Deptula, Nate Gabel, Megan Durocher, Emma Gilfix, Jamison Major, Isabelle Carter, Joshua Kranz, Devin Wilder, and Daniel Kuhn.

And of course, thank you to the St. Mike’s community: to those who submit as well as those who simply take the time to read. Without you, there would be no Onion.





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