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from the Editor

Dear Readers,

This semester has been incredible and successful, from the perspective of both an editor and a reader. The staff and I were given the opportunity to view some pretty high-caliber writing, which was not only beautiful, but brave. I am unendingly impressed with the talented community of writers here in Pittsburgh, and these past works have done nothing but validate my admiration. I would like to personally thank this year’s staff, for being brilliantly sharp and making my job so enjoyable; this year’s graduating seniors, who have been crucial to this publications growth, and to Rachel Nagelberg, for drawing this issue’s cover art. Special thanks to every writer who submitted a work this semester, and many congratulations to those of you featured this spring. I feel so incredibly honored and excited to be part of this process, and I am so grateful to each and every one of our readers.

Thanks again,

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Acknowledgements

Very many thanks to:

The University of Pittsburgh Honors College, for providing us with room for creativity, and the means to produce this publication.

Dr. Alec Stewart, for his unwavering encouragement of our undergraduate literary community.

Karen Billingsly, for her collaboration and assistance.

Jennifer Lee, for her support, zeal and sponsorship.

Navigator Printing, for their consistency, quality and continuous help with all of our printing needs.
first place

A chipped green desk at a window onto the boulevard (for Jocelyn)

by
Justin Hultman,
University of Pittsburgh
A CHIPPED GREEN DESK AT A
WINDOW ONTO THE BOULEVARD
(FOR JOCELYN)

There is a matter of motion.
On dance floors. In car acci-
cidents. We precipitate reality
when we discover our hands.
On smooth aluminum. Around
a tea cup. If ever there was a
chance to take back. To talk to
neighbors. To buy a wooden
shovel. I have scene great cin-
ematography. The forest. The
space between your two front
teeth. It was unexpected. To
weigh you. To weigh options.
Unless of course. You and i had
met. Had you met. There was
never. A glass avocado. A pack-
age of cigarettes. Reservations
were required. To enter the
hospital. To leave the cathedral.
We kept trying to taste. The
checkerboard. The parking
lot. Tomorrow will be bet-
ter. For tragedy. For children.
Everything is wanting. A pen. A
pen. Everything is only. A new
haircut. A pair of boots. The
only thing left is cognition. Or
paralysis. Or capitulation. You
told me you were reading. A
pair of scissors. An elm tree.
The animals are restless. Like
skeletons. Like asphalt. Never
had i thought of being a fa-
ther. Or a salesman. Or a clock.
second place

Leaves (The Left)

by
Michael Hurley,
University of Pittsburgh
Leaves (The Left)

I.

He wakes to read his morning paper. Likes the way it feels in his hands. Likes to lick his thumb to smear the words that are broken by margins, stuffed into thin columns. He reads four this way, each morning, its pages and the sound of the beach, or a ruffle of wings, something in a tree, searching for food.

A sound of gravel, or groveling.

When he sees his coworkers, he is quick to remind them of any murders in nearby towns; two down in Homewood he says, four more on the Hill.

A good man.
II.

Or there is the other one, wet as a dog, squinting at smeared ink just to learn the names of things, sad little bumps for hands and feet, sitting on the street. He brushes the grit from his jeans. It makes a sound like gravel or a car where it shouldn't drive. Nights sometimes have holes in them just like the woods do just like some jeans do just like to sleep he wraps himself in newspaper just like the fine crystal of a friend newly dead.
third place

Like Leaves blown on the wind

by
Hannah Gibson,
University of Pittsburgh
LIKE LEAVES BLOWN ON THE WIND

Twice a year, my family burns a Yarzheit candle to honor my dead grandfather. Mom sets it in the middle of the stove’s four burners and holds a lit match to the wick— it sizzles before it catches the flame.

The candle is meant to burn for 24 hours. The flame sways like a languid dancer, like a man, desperate and parched, leaning towards water.

My grandfather had been on a flight home from a business trip when he died. I still wonder if he bought the stamp collection in London.

Mom knows when the candle is about to die— she whispers over it: I love you, daddy, and holds her hands over her mouth— still the same disbelieving child.

My grandfather’s plane— a plane of entire families, a plane of 21 different countries— was bombed over Lockerbie, Scotland. Bodies— pieces of bodies, clothes, souvenirs, parts of plane— hit the ground. (One stewardess had a pulse still. She had a pulse beneath all that wreckage).

I want to know where he fell. I want him to have floated through an eruption of vibrant stamps like confetti, surrounding him, guiding him gently to the ground like strong, determined butterflies.
honorable mention

A Soaking Cracked Kayak

by
Brian Thoma,
University of Pittsburgh
A SOAKING CRACKED KAYAK

I wish I could bring this city home with me. I wish I could bring it all home and show it to everyone so they’d understand. The narrow tree-lined streets choked with motorbikes and cars. The sidewalks where people spill out of their houses and shops to sit, talk, cook, eat, sleep, and cut their hair. The smell of dirt and gasoline. The endearingly dilapidated temples that wear centuries of history on their dirty bricks and plaster. The murky lake with the famous red bridge and the marooned monument. The smiling vendors hawking six dollar North Face duffle bags to westerners.

I wish I could fit it all in my suitcase. Maybe I’ll bring back a series of little dioramas in bright boxes with accurate dimensions and moving parts, the kind you’d find in Miniature World at the natural history museum or in the window of a vintage toy shop. Packs of mini motorbikes would move slowly and deliberately through the tiny hand-painted streets. I would show them to strangers in the streets of American cities like a peddler selling fake watches out of a briefcase. People would like them. They would offer to buy them but I would refuse. I’d tell them to stop being so selfish, tell them everyone had to see these. But I am not a skilled miniaturist, and these models just couldn’t do justice to the
throbbing, screeching capital of Vietnam.

I’ve honestly never seen a place more charming, a place with so much character, a place so completely bursting with life, or a place that could so easily prove to every American that this country is not only a place of war and death. It’s entirely the opposite, and I’m convinced that one minute on the streets of Hanoi would be enough to show anyone.

Out of the whirlwind city and across the green Vietnamese countryside, I spend one night on a junk in the strange and still landscape of Halong Bay. The unbelievable geomorphology of the bay juts out of the South China Sea on every side of the boat in the shape of colossal lumps of limestone. Plants cling to the vertical columns anywhere they can lay down roots. Obscured by a blue haze of tropical humidity, over 1000 of these islands make up a bizarre and beautiful alien landscape. It’s not hard to imagine the scenery as a backdrop in a classic science fiction B-movie. A plastic UFO glides past our junk. A transparent yet clearly visible thread suspends it from the cloudless sky. It’s natural enough.

In the morning I kayak straight through the belly of one of the towering islands, emerging from a marine cave into a silent serene cove. I’m surrounded by soaring walls of green
and grey on all sides, and the morning sun is high and bright already. Coral formations glitter through the blue green water mere feet below the kayak. I can’t imagine a place more peaceful. I could sit in this soaking cracked kayak for days.
MEAT (FOR EDWARD EYTLIN)
BY BRENNA PAINTER, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

be cause be (cause be) cause pecans taste positively oh so superior to peanuts, you - yes you oh little one - you can be seen coming from a far

you - oh little yes you one - are not your salty nutty exterior you are your chewy

† 18
inside
the shell self
not as essential

oh light hair oh light eyes
oh skin of skin of skin of
days sweet in sun (though sun can burn)
oh sweet laugh and move
men
t
beneath the brows

i suspect chili isn't
as electric or tantalizing or more
more more more than
you [are
moremoremore] than
any or every
shell of things

*
They call this time of the year beliuy nach, or "white night." It's the time of year when the sun never sets. We missed the festivities, and the real white nights by about a week. We closed the curtains of our coupe, and thought about heading north.

***

To tourists, the Square of the Arts is known for two things: the Pushkin monument, and its vicinity to the Summer Gardens. The former handles the hoarfrost better, but isn’t as big. The Square of the Arts is sometimes known for its art, and sometimes its piazza. You can find photographs of all these things.

***

My coffee came with a cognac. “It is... present” the waiter explained in English, nodding at a man across the room. I smiled sympathetically and he came over. His shoulders looked too broad for the little wooden chairs, the wool and wood too close. I pieced together the words to tell him so. He interrupted me before I could begin.

***

Reproductions of old propaganda are popular with foreign students. Enough of them are warnings about railways and trams that I think it must have been a monumental crisis in the former Soviet Union.

***
We started out looking for a place to have a few drinks, and ended up at an Azerbaijani dive. There were tattered curtains and divans, and half the room smoked hookah through absinthe. We bought four liters of Gypsy Caravan. I spoke poor Russian and poorer French to a table of Swiss men. It was the middle one whose lap I was on in the taxi. We were going to go dancing, but decided on the Finnish border instead.

We planned to camp, but had forgotten wolves and tents in our rush. I stole a handful of snow, and the ice burned my tongue. Cuffs still wet, we went back, and I slept in a Russian’s arms under the colonnade of the Kazan Cathedral, with pigeons and guitars in the background.

***

I stirred the sugar into my cappuccino and tried to remember if I had used to stir sugar in it. I think I hadn’t, but I was willing to. I suddenly worried that all of my Russian stories would involve coffee, and placed a new order.

***

Palaces turn gold into something uninspired. Workers were touching up the gilt in a foyer. The paint looked brown. In truth, parts of Peterhof had burned a
long time ago when canals were dug and flames were beautiful.

***

I had a commercial captain to sail me just ahead of Peter’s bridges as they drew closed below the dark-bright cityline. Engaged for an hour, his motor was no match for tradition, and I paid the police half as much.

***

There are stray dogs in Moscow but no stray dogs in Petersburg. In Moscow, a dozen dogs or more loll at every metro stop. A few don’t loll at all. You step over them and step through the turnstile, or step over them and over the turnstile. A few do only the latter, out of cruelty.

***

I had been in Dom Knigi reading a short story about a Soviet writer forced into unemployment. In the story, he would hunt St. Pete’s pigeons when no one was looking. Once he was caught. Like a dream, I crossed Nevsky and saw a man in a soiled suit club a pigeon with his briefcase.

***

In America, a dollar is a dollar. Here, a wink can get you a liter of the cheapest beer (“made for export”) or a crepe filled with mushrooms or caviar. Once I was held in
the April snow, but that was there, and I didn't get anything for it.

***

The pigeons have bred with wedding doves, and now wear stained white cummerbunds. Russia is beautiful.

***
Mister Old Bloody Bones whistles in the wind scuffing up the street where the ladies parade

when the week comes to an end He tips his cap and the ladies toss a dollar in saving grace

like a savior to them who winks and sings a song to dance a little dance to really move his old blood

and bones tapping his toes and tugging his ear as the little sign that the end is near. Mister Old Bloody Bones squeals like a saxophone man who fights stray dogs for supper and the stray dogs slink away to the alley suds so the policeman takes Mister Old Bloody Bones to the cages

in the center of town He shouts about the Keeper of Time and the hallowed trees as the dust fills the sound of what his cracking jaw has to say.
I miss the days when men would leisure in suits. Gray fedoras and black slacks, effeminate cigarettes tapped lightly into galvanized ashtrays. Mothers with pies, simple sexual positions, musk scents, sepia-toned film, a red housedress emblazoned with polka dot pride. A lotus on the windowsill. The New York Yankees on the telly, cockney accents for no real reason. Smoke rings through a Brooklyn apartment; somewhere a bearded Republican pumps his fists as Babe Ruth points a bat against a gray patterned sky, and calls a shot. Electricity through the women’s seats, instagasm propped by bravado, machismo, and the number 3, stitched in dark blue threading. And Ruth presumably exited the showers and the reporters with their reel-to-reel equipment admired his gray suit. He no longer needed that wooden stick, just some wool to wrap his potbelly, the simple rumble of beer and frankfurters from within.

“Who the fuck cares if the UTZ Potato Chip Girl could beat on Little Debbie?”

This answer, though arbitrary and completely hypothetical remains a valid answer. I don’t like people who disregard a nice argument. I know arguments— I live for them. I live in a household where both parents are lawyers. My Aunt Ellen studied the lost art of the argument and theory at Cornell, before she died this week of an aneurysm.
We argued that too. Terry Schaivo made an appearance; I heard her saying something in pidgin, too wrought with love and simplicity for her husband to notice. Fights ruin relationships, arguments enhance them. I fought with my girlfriend; she's in Europe, I'm cemented in Pittsburgh. The UTZ Girl is coy, shameless, her hand reaches for snacks we assume, but for all we know the bag contains hypodermic needles and Philly blunt wrappers. Little Debbie wouldn't see the right hook, two landed haymakers; a roundhouse kick if necessary. Little Debbie wears that white cowgirl hat, easily used not for shade prevention, but as a choking hazard, the cinched string says plenty. Both girls smile, but the UTZ Girl smells no fear. She doesn't actually have a nose.

It might be amusing to you all that my birthday doubles as April Fools Day, but hopefully words and time aren't wasted. Stop it with the "Hey, Happy Birthday!" because I mindlessly pause with the ellipsis, I wait for the "April Fool's!" It happens year after year, so this is why it is going to be classic when my blood alcohol is well past .2 this time. And when the sexually frustrated DJ at Boomerang's on Forbes makes an April Fools comment, I'll vomit on his wheels, all over the hit of the month, all over his club bangers. I'll vomit on her Apple Bottom jeans, her boots wit da fur.

I'm down to my last dol-
lar bill, but I make sure it stays in the comfort of the leather boundary. I make sure the weathered currency stays current, remains linked with an older woman obsessed with Golden Girls re-runs. This was Gram, my grandmother’s mother. She spoke in the light of broken West-isle Gaelic and grimy Bostonian mutter. Years of putting up with the shanty stories of the Dingle Peninsula back in Ireland and being second-class citizens in Boston never broke the woman. I knew her only as the rock in a Long Island corner. She took her position as the house general, cloaked in a New York Mets windbreaker. The jacket hangs in memory. She had this fanny pack which contained one-dollar bills. I’m pretty sure the 96-year-old woman wasn’t going to strip joints so the bills were reserved for the kids. She whispered her mutter from across the bedroom. I remember taking my last dollar from the pouch; Golden Girls flickered in the darkness of a Long Island rainstorm. Bea Arthur nailed an AARP punch line that went well over my elementary head. The dollar was spent, the show was cancelled and Gram’s baseball jacket was enshrined on a wire hanger.

“O Canada! Our home and native land! True patriot love in all thy sons command.”

The eerie crack of bat defined 1993. Splintered wood, the velocity and spin of red thread into padded Toronto seats. My brother
Terence, a boy I tortured for no reason other than older-brother syndrome, was born. I've grown to love the boy now, stooped in a puberty filled aura. I look into his brown eyes and feel nostalgia for all of the lost loves and wasted hours of laced marijuana haze and the idea of the Olde English 40 ouncers for the boys. We would drink them with the Mexicans- I was a Gringo! One hidden for Gimpy behind the 2 percent milk, drink it from a brown bag, listen to the Liquid Swords. It was Joe Carter's bat that met the ball that night in '93. I remember crying after the hit and seeing my Phils cry too. The ferocious Wild Thing, the Phillies pitcher who threw the pitch, looked like a swollen kitten on the mound, his knees to the sky, back rubbed in dirt. Darren Daulton consoled Lenny Dykstra, Jim Eisenreich held Terry Mulolland. Manager Jim Fregosi sat in that dugout for days, his glassy stare met mine and he in Toronto now understood that the dream was over. My television of Japanese wires and lights looked devoid in that Philly corner. My pistachio nuts were nibbled and mulled over, a despondent seven-year-old, with a tear for over grown men in red striped uniforms. Broken candy canes on a dusty diamond.

It was in third grade. Mrs. Galonis rambled on about Pepto Bismol, (it had the recycle symbol pasted on its plastic back,) she was thirtysomething and had a penchant for sea otterdom
and barnacle nomenclature. Tara, my first crush sat in the violet corners. Her laugh accentuated her smile, post braces. She later slapped my face for staring too hard and for years the friend zone isolated me from her. This spawned multiple meaningless relationships. Julia, the Greek, had large Greek breasts and hairy forearms. She taught me to kiss properly, disallowing overly present tongue. Sandy Hill, was a woman with the name of a B class porn star or a sound you’d hear on Little House on the Prairie. She disregard me like salty sailo flats. Treated my heart like sea spit and brine. My first real love came at a sexual zenith, college. Most of the prep boys in high school, (since it was all male, Philadelphia based,) knew little on the opposite sex. We dealt with each other each morning. We sampled starch fueled bacon egg and cheeses, cavorting in unhygienic candor. We straightened our ties, never allowing for too much misinformation on our knowing of “sexual prowess,” we kept our backs straight. We laughed at pranks and class jesters and seldom said our prayers. We were boys posed as men, sycophants dressed in corporate garb, future sinners of the third Reich. I rap battled against three black kids as I waited for my 61 bus. I rapped about 22-inch rims on cars I’d never touched, girls that I’d never smelt and money I’d never earn. I lost most of those battles. Maybe it was the blazer. But it was
that same blazer that got me the girl I spoke of. Katelin. She was Pittsburgh bound and I was the soft gelatinous core her burdened body fell into. Her mother called me on legal advice, primarily aimed towards the alcoholic father in the picture. I told her my parents were in the Environmental/Waste Management business, but the Western-Pennsy woman wasn’t having any of it. She dressed hair and had never even seen a landfill.

I wrote a letter to my current girlfriend. It professed love to her, but I’m slowly realizing that “love” is just a comfort word that wraps up phone conversations. The letter was laced with Abercrombie & Fitch cologne. I bought it in high school, hoping to mask the fact that I was into jam bands like the Disco Biscuits and String Cheese Incident. These food groups made sense too me because I frequently had the munchies. I then turned to my best friend Ian, for he was sad and lonely. He attempted to kill himself to an Elliott Smith record, XO, I think. He failed even though we sat across the table from one another as he glanced at me and said, “I think it’s time for me to go.” How fucking melodramatic. I scooped his slender body like the Pieta and shoveled him into his Subaru. Sans driver’s license, I sped to Lankenau Hospital. My youngest brother Fin was born here. Ian’s wrist bled on my Gap jeans, I pretend spilt soy sauce is his high school blood. But the letter
ended nicely. I completed it with a “love.”

She was the girl that left for Europe, the one I fought with over on an Internet landline. Her name is Caitlin, thankfully spelled differently than my last love. My sister is named Caitlin, as well as my cousin. But the European, technically from Palos Verdes, California, ensnared my heartstrings with a simple gush of Paul, John, Ringo and George. We sit at Soldiers and Sailors field, sharing an i-pod ear bud. The Lonely Heart’s Club Band reminisces on Marxism and Negro League Baseball matches. I read Marx, along with Palahniuk. ‘Marx’ is easy to pronounce. I just heard something very funny: a pickup line. “What is your favorite anime?” I’ll have to use this on my next love. She’ll be into Top Ramen and clove cigarettes. She’ll wear polka dots and her family’s pies will smell of 70’s era cache. Her father will love her, unlike Katelin’s who used baseball bats after gin and tonic baths. Her father will teach me the lost art off Mustangs and Turtle Wax. Her mother will experience regular orgasms. Their relationship is sound.
BLINKING
BY STACEY BALKUN, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

I've dissected a tea bag.

I don't know what I thought I'd find, but the orange rind smelled a little like you and I wanted to touch it, to bury my nose in citrus as if it was your collar. I wish I'd kept that coat, but you're down the shore where you'll need it more and I'm cross-legged on the kitchen table, absorbing the warmth of indoors, chamomile in hand staring out the window as if my eyelashes could bat you home.
THE SADDLE MAKER
BY JADE SHAMES, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

I have cousins in South Africa,
relatives in Russia, The Middle East
Brazil, Philadelphia -
The wandering Jews
making footprints in different shades of earth.

My Dad told me the story, how
we all got here, in bits
of unused leather and scrap metal,
and made lives
far from Kiev and the house of the saddle maker.

My great great grandfather bought hide and steel,
and crafted carefully -
every stitch worked to perfection,
every bit of color soaked into the skin, the horn
of stag, polished, billet strap woven by hand.

When the saddle was ready, it was carried to the market.
A year's work tightly knit and caressed.
The Blevins, the Swell, the signature Concho;
all fit for the ridding horse of a Czar -
all sold for enough to last another year.

One day, the market fell on Passover,
And my great great grandfather refused to go.
The Seder that night was quiet, and the saddle maker's
many children exchanged stares, eating until painfully full,
plotting the upcoming year.
VARIATIONS ON DETACHMENT
BY KELLY FORSYTHE, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

I. Moving

Distance requires the same kindness as death: we move our own bodies as if to replace others quietly. Let us sing together, let us walk.

II. Dreaming

Between us now, slow, my goddess, we dream to displace ourselves from reality—we move together absorbing the pictures of subconscious that show how new your hands are to the back of my neck.

III. Death

O my sweet bird, I take your feathers to burn them and scatter the ashes here with my own straw-colored feathers. I ask that time be kind to this land and the wind give mercy to this fire-lit dust; protect the soft scatterings or whip them into clouds as offerings.

IV. Love

She was a body of flowers, she left her bouquet to wait in the house until he arrived from work, making dinner alone with the heaviness of his own body.
During breakfast the cat brought a sparrow into the kitchen. Mrs. Dunigan and Rachel saw it first, and after they had shooed the cat, I picked it up in an oven mitt. It was bleeding and I saw exposed bone among the feathers of the wing. Debbie, who is an EMT, said there was nothing we or a veterinarian could do and that if we put the sparrow outside again our cat or another animal would kill it.

“We could fill a syringe with air and kill it that way,” I suggested.

The other women laughed but I had been serious. So we put the sparrow into a Cheerios box and set the box on the third floor landing of the outside staircase of our house, the Jubilee House.

Mrs. Dunigan and her husband lived at the Jubilee House year-round. The rest of its inhabitants were transitory. Solly had lived there for two years to work after college. Emily ran an after school program and lived on the second floor for one year. The Dunigans’ children moved in or out according to their needs. Their son Matt had recently come home. No one knew where he had been; we suspected wandering the city. I was there for the summer, working with their backpacking program.

After we settled the sparrow on the porch I had a talk with Mrs. Dunigan about Matt. We went into the second floor parlor.

“Sue,” I said to her, “I was thinking that I would hang out with Matt today. Do you think that’s a good idea?”

Though we lived in the same house, I had only seen him a couple of times. He spent most of his days sleeping. When he came out of the basement he didn’t interact with many people. He answered his parents if they asked him questions. I wanted him to be happier.

“Ellen that would be so great! I would really appreci-
ate it,” Mrs. Dunigan replied. “Um, let me tell you a little about him I guess. He’s kind of a crunchy granola guy and he loves to play the guitar. He wants to be a musician. Um, he gets sort of manic sometimes and I think that’s why he smokes pot, to medicate himself. Only, he hallucinates and gets very strange when he smokes it. We don’t let him live here when he’s smoking, but we’re giving him a chance again because he’s applying to live in a place called The Mansion.”

I knew most of this already but I pretended it was all new to hear. Emily had told me about Matt’s Mansion. It was a farm in Vermont where young men with drug addictions could go and raise animals. There were classes about being responsible too.

At the Jubilee House there wasn’t much tolerance for drugs. Rachel, for example, nearly sprinted away from the deep and dark smell of marijuana smoke one Saturday in Harvard Square.

We all had a purpose outside of the house in the community, and everyone had chores to do inside of the house. On Sunday nights we created new chore charts, talked about our weeks and prayed together. Matt never came to those house meetings. He mostly stayed in his room or ghosted around the third floor to eat and watch TV.

“Would he mind if I woke him up do you think?” I asked Mrs. Dunigan.

“No I don’t think so. I would really appreciate it. I think you two will have fun. I hope you can get him to do something.”

I made my way down the three tight spiral staircases to his room in the basement. He didn’t answer when I knocked, so I tentatively made my way through his room and found him on the bed. I sat on the edge and looked at him sleeping.

“Matt?”

His hair was long. He opened his eyes slowly. I didn’t think he remembered me so I reintroduced myself.

“Hi, I’m Ellen, remem-
ber? I’m here to have the best day with you.” I asked him if he would help me clean his turtle’s cage and then feed Emily’s fish. “I’ve been taking care of your turtle while you were gone. Debbie said I could. Do you want to help?”

My sister tells people that they look or smell or sound like morning when they first wake up. She doesn’t like to talk to people when they are like that; she says it’s gross. Matt’s eyes and hair looked like morning.

“Let me get dressed and I’ll come,” he told me in a morning voice.

We washed Solly Turtle’s Tupperware home with the hose in the driveway. He told me he had found Solly Turtle in a Mississippi river and her name wasn’t Solly and she wasn’t a girl.

“His name is Mike,” he told me. “I wanted him to get really big but he hasn’t grown.”

When I fed Emily’s fish, I suggested that we sing it a fish song. Matt played guitar and I picked up a little copper flute. His fish song lyrics reminded me of Jack Johnson but I was too preoccupied with how good my first little flute song sounded to listen to him closely.

When I showed him the sparrow in the Cheerios box, he picked it up with naked hands and examined it.

“Watch out that you don’t get bird flu.”

“What’s bird flu?” he asked.

He went back to bed after that and I did some work in the first floor office, until I decided it was time for a safari. I took two butterfly nets out of the pile of Salvation Army donations on the little porch facing the old carriage house. I collected Matt again and we played in the yard at catching imaginary animals, squirrels that are dragonflies and that sort of thing. We caught the plastic owl out of the front garden. Matt said the owl didn’t make sense in the garden so we took it to the roof in our nets. Together the three of us looked out over Dorchester.

“Growing up in this neighborhood wasn’t too easy,”
he said.

"Why?"

"I went to a Christian school on the other side of the city. I didn’t have many friends close to home."

"Do you miss your friends now?"

"A lot. I haven’t seen much of anyone lately."

In the afternoon we did some errands for the house. Matt navigated and I drove. Mrs. Dunigan didn’t want him to drive, or maybe he didn’t have his license anymore. In the car we talked about Cat Stevens. Amy Winehouse was on the radio singing that she didn’t want to go to rehab, no, no, no.

I asked Matt about rehab. He told me he didn’t need it, so he had left. That’s why he had been living on the street.

We rented Harold and Maude because we liked Cat Stevens.

Later when we watched it, he was bored. He kept pretending to fall asleep so that I would wake him up again. I don’t think he was following the movie but he sang all of the songs. I declined a back mas-

sage and he went to bed again.

For dinner the house had twenty or so guests. We all squeezed into the music room on the first floor of the house. Matt stirred from the basement to get some lasagna but the strange people made him shy and he retreated.

After dinner I checked on the Cheerios box. The sparrow wasn’t inside.

I asked Mrs. Dunigan and Debbie if they had moved it and they told me they had forgotten about it. I went to see Matt.

He was lying on his bed in the basement, nearly concealed behind the piles of his twenty-years-accumulated stuff. He got up when I came in and we sat on the floor to talk.

"Did you move the sparrow?" I asked.

"I did," he said.

"Where is it?" I asked. I already guessed that he released it.

"I let it into the back yard. I didn’t want it to live in the box."

We looked at some of his clothes and I told him I
really liked one of his shirts. It and stayed there when the was white linen with fat thread hands inside my shirt told embroidery all around the neck me it was time to leave. As he and sleeves. It was the shirt he kissed my neck I whispered, was wearing the first time I saw “You’re a very attractive him, after he moved back into the Jubilee House from living man.”

Afterward we walked out of the cellar doors into the night that hummed with the sound of a generator. He bunk bed and I sat next to it on asked me why I looked sad. I shrugged. I didn’t want to say. We went back inside the house and I crept up the staircase to my own bed.

Outside my window the great beech tree, the elephant tree, spread its branches over the house.

The next morning I told Debbie and Mrs. Dunigan that Matt had let the sparrow out. Debbie seemed disgust-ed. Mrs. Dunigan, disappoint-ed. I just hoped the sparrow was dead.

It wasn’t out of love that I climbed into the bed and stayed there when the hands inside my shirt told me it was time to leave. As he kissed my neck I whispered, “You’re a very attractive man.”

But it wasn’t really like Jesus.

It wasn’t out of love that I climbed into the bed
TAXIDERMY
BY CHRISTOPHER CAROSI, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

You could've been there.
You could've seen it
when it happened.
But you tore your piece
and hide your face.

What is the color
of a cherry tree
to you who sit
indoors and do not
feel sheltered?

In cold weather, under sheets
in the dark I began to notice
little things again, the tiny
hairs on my cover, the way
the window interfered with street-
light.

How difficult is loneliness
if it's just memories now
sitting way down in the basement,
idle, starving, and bloodshot?
It is just a body getting rid.

Down on the street, revolving
wheels and trespassers, lovers
spying on each other, targets
all drunk and dying, feeling
like organized waters and filters.

I understood commotion suddenly, necks and fists and taxidermy, how humans are the only true creature of loss, because they are aware, because they can sing and cry and lose.

I understood other people and loves,

I ventured and pulled my dark side into a ponytail and let it hang. I understood sex and what a room can be to one person.

But I will not stand with dreams, just beliefs, just really great lies or really porous screens, and some drugs I can borrow for rowdy nights.

An inward scar only exists if accepted, if tranquilized and addicted to pain, numbing the soul did nothing for me, ruining it pretty much tied me up.
APOCALYPSE
BY EMILY STOKES, DICKINSON COLLEGE

It was April and I was nearly eleven, just before the heat of summer and years before the fall into adolescence. We were kids still, playing outside in the dark until voices without faces called us into safety, our minds an open path into the futures we held close, our dirtied hands a merit to the lessons still unlearned. The tangles of the millennium had just begun, and I understood it’s mathematical intricacies only through the ways in which fate would suddenly twist one way or the other. Better than most, I learned that numbers and apocalypses were relative; to some the end was sooner than we’d thought when for others, life continued on.

Before dinner on the 20th, they found his body crushed beneath an overturned John Deere in the ditch across the street, and for the first time I felt the weight of what it meant to be human. Beside my younger brother who was still too young to comprehend, I reached for my own arm to feel the pliability of flesh, and I came to understand what it was that I protected.

We were friends, he and I—neighbors. And years later, I can only recall one memory of the two of us, crouching atop the fence that separated our worlds. His paintball gun in hand, I took instructions on aiming, admiring the array of pink stains across the top of his father’s tool shed. So much had yet been unsaid about growing up and opening your eyes to the people beside you. Love was still a mass floating aimlessly through space, thought about briefly before falling asleep at night. The end of it all seemed so unimportant, so far away.
BY ANNA RASSHIVKINA
BY BRIAN THOMA
Sometimes I imagine the room tilting as if on a ship,
the benches and tables and objects all falling to the right
falling,
sliding without sound, without touch - only viewing. Silent film.
Perhaps in death we are constantly turning with the landscape, with the earth.

We have a linear frame of reference in a circular world. Follow the golden bricks to the end
and you'll find yourself upside-down.

How did I get here?

In the desert we are constantly filtering through memory, decoding desires,
becoming more and more scientific in our approaches
to sexuality.
Stillness like pure objects blurring, like
graceful, breathing speed;
legs shaking
suspended in water.

Perhaps it is when everything stops,
a glitch in which you are trapped, where
you wander through the paused setting,
trying so hard to return to this self when this
solitary being is impossible to reach -
because the system is not perfect, just as
organic is not perfect.

I was once told that my grandmother was in my
face, and
I became warm.

Delirium, connection
between production and the theatre,
imaginary and symbolic,
water and air -
Inside of my body seems clearer than outside and
I always felt that something was missing
in this world.
A LOVE POEM FOR THE BODY
BY NICOLA PIOPI   

I am doing a portrait in charcoals;
I try to make the breasts pendulous but perky,
the stomach full but also flawless.
The calves and thighs are lovely—masterpieces, really—but they don’t connect properly at the hip bones,
which are themselves padded. Protected, I like to think,
coddled and safe, immune to breakage caused by countertops.
This also means that all the organs cradled within are safe:
uterus and fallopian tubes, bladder and spleen, the upper and lower colons.

I have not yet done the face because it is a *self-*portrait,
and I never look at my own face.
I don’t know if I should be smiling, or
frowning,
or thoughtful. I might shape the eye-
brows a bit more,
define the chin and cheekbones.

I keep smearing the carbon with my
arms,
blackening the spot where the face
should go.
Our truck waded through the opaque fog
the day we broke ground
to bury you.

The fog gave into a rain that mingled
in the air, easing itself
towards the ground.

We pulled down the cemetery lane:
thin as straw and overcast
from thick headstones.

Outside, my breath grieved earnestly,
ageing white as it passed
from my lips.
Two rows of feeble chairs
waited
as they sank into the turf -
almost kneeling.

Solid green straps lowered you
past the weary iron cradle
and into your green, green
topped box:

the strong green of a grass
prepared to soon fade.
And us - we couldn't even
move, from a cold

that had us lined up like china
dolls.
The men with shovels idled also
along the cemetery walk.
like an orange,
eating itself
from the inside
out,
i am for the first time,
finding myself

bitter.