

Sequoia
Review

The completion of this past semester marks the third year I have been a part of the Sequoya Review—UTC's art and literary journal. My first year, I served as general staff member to the poetry team, where I was exposed to the collective creativity of both UTC's Art and English Departments. It was then I fell in love with the program. Designed to give students an opportunity to publish their creative work, I couldn't help but admire those young artists and authors who—against all sense of self-preservation—gathered the courage to not only produce outstanding work, but to have that work read, reviewed, and voted upon by a democratic party of their peers before reaching print. I realized then what an honor it was to serve on staff, where my efforts were spent fulfilling the mission statement of the Sequoya Review: to represent and preserve creative student work. As is the case with many of the students who sign up to be on staff, I found myself increasingly more dedicated to being an active part of this process.

My second year, I served as Assistant Prose Editor, where I became more intimate with the structure of the organization as a whole. Meeting various members of the Publications Board, Student Resources Center and English Department faculty, I became increasingly aware of the large, collaborative effort behind this program. Once again, I found myself impressed by the devotion so many showed towards the Sequoya Review. Nearing the end of my second year on staff, I applied for the position of Editor-in-Chief. After careful consideration of all applicants for the position, I was approached by the former Editor-in-Chief, Katie Christie, who offered me her recommendation for the position. She looked me square in the eye, and said, "I need you to promise me something. Do the best you can to take care of this program." I gave her my word—something not to be taken lightly.

My appointment to this position proved to be a challenging one. More challenging than I was even fully aware it would be. There have been many changes made to the Sequoya Review, all of which created with the intention of developing a larger audience, increasing our number of submissions, and reinforcing the integrity of the program. Through the dogged determination of the staff and the doubled efforts of all participating parties, this year's edition stands as a testament to what UTC's students can accomplish when they work together. We have received more submissions than ever before, reaching a final count of 207—nearly doubling our previous record. Our new distribution plan succeeded equally as well, releasing 786 copies in two weeks on campus, an amount nearly three times our previous record.

The book itself has undergone many changes. This year, we have included more prose, poetry, and art to better represent growing submissions. We have printed more editions as well to complement growing readership. The organization has been extended to a year round operation, allowing the staff the time necessary to continue realizing the full potential of this publication.

All this was done with a single purpose in mind: to uphold our mission statement to the fullest extent available to us. I hope you enjoy this edition of the Sequoya Review. After all, the fruits of our labor we give to you—the reader—in hopes that you may be enriched by our contributions to the artistic community.

Rick Mitchell, editor

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First Kiss at the Public Execution

Hayden Smith

Figure 1.1: A man, Zac Martin, circa age thirty-five, is standing on the gallows with a noose around his neck. The execution is public and everyone else in the town is there to watch. If you look closely at the old brick store in the background you will notice the sign on the door reads "closed." One should also take note of the fact that the man has refused the blindfold.

Figure 1.2: A sign next to a stretch of highway reads, "Welcome to Dawsonville, Georgia. Home of NASCAR driver Bill Elliot." Below that, in smaller lettering, it says the town has a population of 619 people.

Figure 2.4: Zac, at about age five, is sitting with his father. The lines shown behind the man's hands and the animated expression on his face suggest he is telling a story. The empty beer bottles and red shading in the man's eyes show that he has been drinking.

Line Graph 4.0: This graph charts the correlation between how many drinks Zac's dad consumed and how inappropriate his stories became. You will notice the line follows a mild incline until slightly less than ten drinks. After that, the incline suddenly becomes considerably steeper, with the stories rapidly becoming more inappropriate.

Figure 3.5: Zac's father as a child, somewhere between the ages of ten and twelve, is standing in the middle of a forest trail. His arm is outstretched and a rock is beginning to make contact with a bush in front of him. It is clear from the picture that he has thrown it. A large group of quail is flying in all directions, suggesting he had thrown the rock to scare them. If you look at the top, right-hand corner you will notice one of the birds has flown directly upwards, hitting a tree branch and breaking its neck.

Figure 4.2: Zac, age eight, is playing with a girl, Leslie Taylor, who appears to be similar in age. Zac and his father had built a tree house, complete with slide and swing set. In the picture, Zac's swing is at its highest possible point and Zac is hovering just above it. The lines behind him suggest he has just jumped out of it. Leslie is climbing the ladder to the top of the tree house.

Figure 5.0: Zac is about to get a cast put on his arm. Leslie is leaning over him. Her puckered lips suggest she is going to kiss him on the cheek.

Figure 5.7: It is dark outside and Zac has found a way to climb to the top of the tree house. Leslie's signature is the only one on his cast, showing it is still the same day. Zac is looking in the direction of Leslie's house. Her window is on the side he is facing, her light is on, and the blinds are open. She is changing clothes. Zac doesn't know what sex is yet, but he knows that seeing her excites him.

Leslie doesn't know what sex is either, but her mother has taught her that she must cover herself if people might see her. Leslie changes with the blinds open because she loves the feeling of vulnerability it gives her. She doesn't think there is anyone watching.

Sidebar: Clarification of Terms: He isn't a pervert. That would be a person that experiences sexual arousal of some sort from this. A pervert would be touching *himself*. Zac's pants aren't even unzipped. No, what Zac is feeling is something much closer to *love*.

Leslie isn't a slut either. She doesn't put out, and she doesn't do this because she will one day be *promiscuous*. On the contrary, Leslie will be quite the prude, saving sex for her wedding night. Leslie changes in front of the window for reasons that are much more complex than anything she ever explained to anyone. The small town of Dawsonville was so safe, and Leslie's *overprotective* mother did too much to make sure it was even safer. But when Leslie was nude in front of that window, she felt the rush and the danger that she knew the rest of the world would offer.

Figure 6.9: Zac is talking to his fourth grade teacher. His eyes are red and swollen, suggesting he has been crying. Several kids are snickering in the background. Zac's teacher has asked him what was wrong, but he doesn't know, so he is lying and telling her his dog died.

Figure 7.5: Zac, age nine, is standing in front of the Cinderella Castle in Walt Disney World with his parents. He is holding a stuffed version of the cartoon character Pluto. Everyone in the picture is smiling, wide and genuine.

Figure 8.3: Zac, age fourteen, is sitting in front of a computer. Facebook is pulled up on the screen. If you look closely you will notice he is chatting with Leslie. His father is giving him a small speech about how he should ask a girl out if he likes her. He had asked him if he had a crush on Leslie, but Zac didn't respond. "Even the best baseball

players only bat a .300," he is saying.

Figure 9.0: Zac is getting home from school. He is grinning to himself as he sets his backpack down. He is about to go to his bedroom and call his new girlfriend, Leslie Taylor.

Figure 9.5: Zac and Leslie are holding hands in the middle of the crowd surrounding the gallows. Yes, they decided to have their first date at a public execution. Leslie is shouting at the man, just like the rest of the crowd, but Zac isn't. His head is turned towards Leslie. One can safely assume it's because he is far more interested in her than his surroundings.

Sidebar: Clarification of Events: I mentioned earlier that Leslie felt Dawsonville was a safe town. This wasn't a lie, she did, and she wasn't exactly wrong. The man being hanged was found guilty of murder, but that's a rarity. Most hangings in Dawsonville are due to their Anti-Suicide Act. In Dawsonville, Georgia, the punishment for suicide is a life sentence in prison. The punishment for attempted suicide is hanging.

Figure 9.7: Zac and Leslie are kissing. Yes, they're still at the execution, but they're not extremely concerned with that at the moment. Their lips are locked and they are sharing their first kiss at a public execution.

Figure 10.8: Zac and Leslie, ages twenty one and nineteen respectively, are dressed in their wedding attire and running through the grains of rice being thrown by their friends and family. The car in front of them has the usual "Just Married" on the back windshield and several cans tied to the back.

Figure 11.2: Zac and Leslie are in a hotel bed. They are still clothed, but they are close to being intimate. Zac is on top of her and they are *making out*.

Figure 11.6: Zac is sitting on the floor in the hall next to their hotel room door. His knees are tucked into his chest and his head is in his hands. Leslie is asleep inside and the condom is in the trashcan, open, but still unused. Zac is thinking about how it's almost funny, the way people wait so long for things and they aren't as exciting as the people had hoped they would be. Or sometimes it ends up not happening at all.

Figure 12.5: Zac and Leslie are lying on their own bed, back in Dawsonville. The honeymoon is over and the pressure's off, so Zac was finally able to perform. He is lying on his back and Leslie's head is resting on his chest. She is asleep, but Zac isn't. He is still thinking about how the things we wait so long for are never what we hoped they would be.

Diagram 7.3: This graph charts Zac's ability to perform across the first five years of the marriage. For the first three years the line is consistent with what is expected of any male. There are a few points where he couldn't perform or the sex wasn't enjoyable for one or both parties, but there's no real trend connecting these occurrences. Then, across the last two years, the line begins a steady decline. Zac suspects this is when Leslie began cheating on him.

Figure 13.1: Zac, now age twenty-eight, has gotten home from work early. He is standing in the door to his bedroom, a look of shock on his face. Leslie is in the bed with the sheets pulled up to her chin. There is another man next to the bed, trying to get dressed. Zac is shouting the word "whore."

Figure 14.7: Zac is lying in the kitchen floor, surrounded by a pool of blood. There is a knife in his right hand and his left wrist has a large cut down the middle. Leslie, dressed in just her robe, is standing over him, dialing 911.

Figure 15.4: Zac is in a hospital bed with a bandage around his arm. This bandage is covering the fourteen stitches they had to use. Leslie is leaning over him, their lips almost touching.

Sidebar: Clarification of: She still loves him. She will always swear to that. She says she's sorry this happened. Her carnal desires just took over.

Figure 16.1: A priest is reading Zac his last rights. If you look at the middle of the crowd, you will notice that Leslie is present, but she has turned her back to the gallows.

Figure 16.9: Zac's body is dangling, limp. Leslie has completely left the crowd.

Sidebar: Final Clarification of Events: Zac was found guilty of attempted suicide in the second degree and sentenced to hanging. Leslie cried at the trial. Zac had thought about death many times since his first suspicions of Leslie's infidelity, and when he was found guilty, he was almost excited he would get to experience it. He had heard that a man cums when he is hung. This was simply an urban legend. Zac's final thoughts were that these things we wait so long for are never what we hoped they would be.

Rewriting the Double-Yellow Line

Halley Corapi

Driving drunk along a two-lane 40 minutes from Point B,
I fumbled the knob to shut Tom Petty up
and told myself my story.

I told it the way I imagined its author preferred it:
jumbled, uncensored. In need of a lenient publisher,
one who will overlook questionable themes
and the way the plot holes spread.

I didn't sanction this. All my wants are arbitrary
in the hands of my maker. But I thought if I told it
straight from memory the plot-threads might converge.

The paragraph breaks are off, I think,

or else the turns wouldn't seem so sharp.
And I'd like a few more commas, please. I need a break,
a pause. I only realized earlier as I stumbled to my car,
slid against the window, nails burrowed into the flesh
of my palms, belligerent, loosening fists to see
the curved indentions I'd been waiting to bump against.

I told my story until the point where it stops,
here, now, on the half-blank page with the folded right corner,
crudely bookmarked on the highway
while its protagonist drives drunk.

I begin on the highway and end in the dark.
Every hyphen, every clause, every complex sentence
has led to this, the unfinished phrase. So
I put the car in park, then reverse, tell it backwards.

Direction is knowing not where to go, but how.

Fall Into Water

Megan Denton

Bits of bent beauty, trust must rest in other people's palms,
in their flower beds, in the saucers they keep stacked
on painted kitchen shelves, a stone house, with tiny lights
in every window, where there is the blur of asters,
the brown fern and golden folds, little owl
who lives in the orchard. I was a lily now, too.

I could fall into water, angle into its embrace.
I could go for weeks and then have a small storm
inside my brain, rain falling fast, I falling fast,
a door flies open in my heart and tropical birds spill out.
I lay looking for the mailman on a lounge chair
in the side yard, Pepsi snapping in my glass.

And outside the petals were coming down like angels
shaking dust from their voluminous robes. My blue veins
had an ethereal glow of dawn-dark, a hammock
hanging in the still air. But there is a little motor
going inside me, a key clacking at my back. Trust
is a synagogue, a silence so full of breath,
you know you are close to God—marvelously simple,
a nursery rhyme, a seashell. Let the tide take you.

On a Magazine Rack

Daniel Meyers

I saw my face on a magazine describing
the consequences of failed plastic surgeries
which is strange because I have never had
plastic surgery before and no one
in my family has ever had a procedure
like that done because of our belief
that the next step after plastic surgery is TDR
(theoretical detachment from reality).

My friend John suffered from TDR.

He ran away to Guam because he thought
that in his previous life he was a goddess
who tried to kill all the other gods and goddesses.

He said she wanted to be the lone deity
like an ant without a colony and a queen.

She wanted to be the one to rule everything
including the dead ants (the alpha ant).

One day, when this goddess was tending
her garden of murdered gods and demigods,
she woke up as John and Guam was all
he remembered from her previous life.

He wishes that he never woke up from reality.
Sometimes I think I'm suffering from TDR.

I remember that time I threw a rock in the pond
and it stopped skidding because it never started.

One splash and it was done. Like the click of a camera
my mother took of me staring into the river
which ate my rock that was supposed to fly.

I didn't grab another one because failure
was never two splashes away. Only one.

And there were ants on the rocks. Thousands
of them everywhere clinging to them
as if they were their last meals and to drown
would be better than to starve. I have to stop.

I walked away from the magazine stand
and a lady asked me for an autograph.

I told her that I hadn't had the surgery yet.
Her eyes seemed upside down so I explained to her
that anything is not linear. That different lives
skid for years in different directions—
backwards and forwards—until they find the sinking point
which might be someplace behind the start.

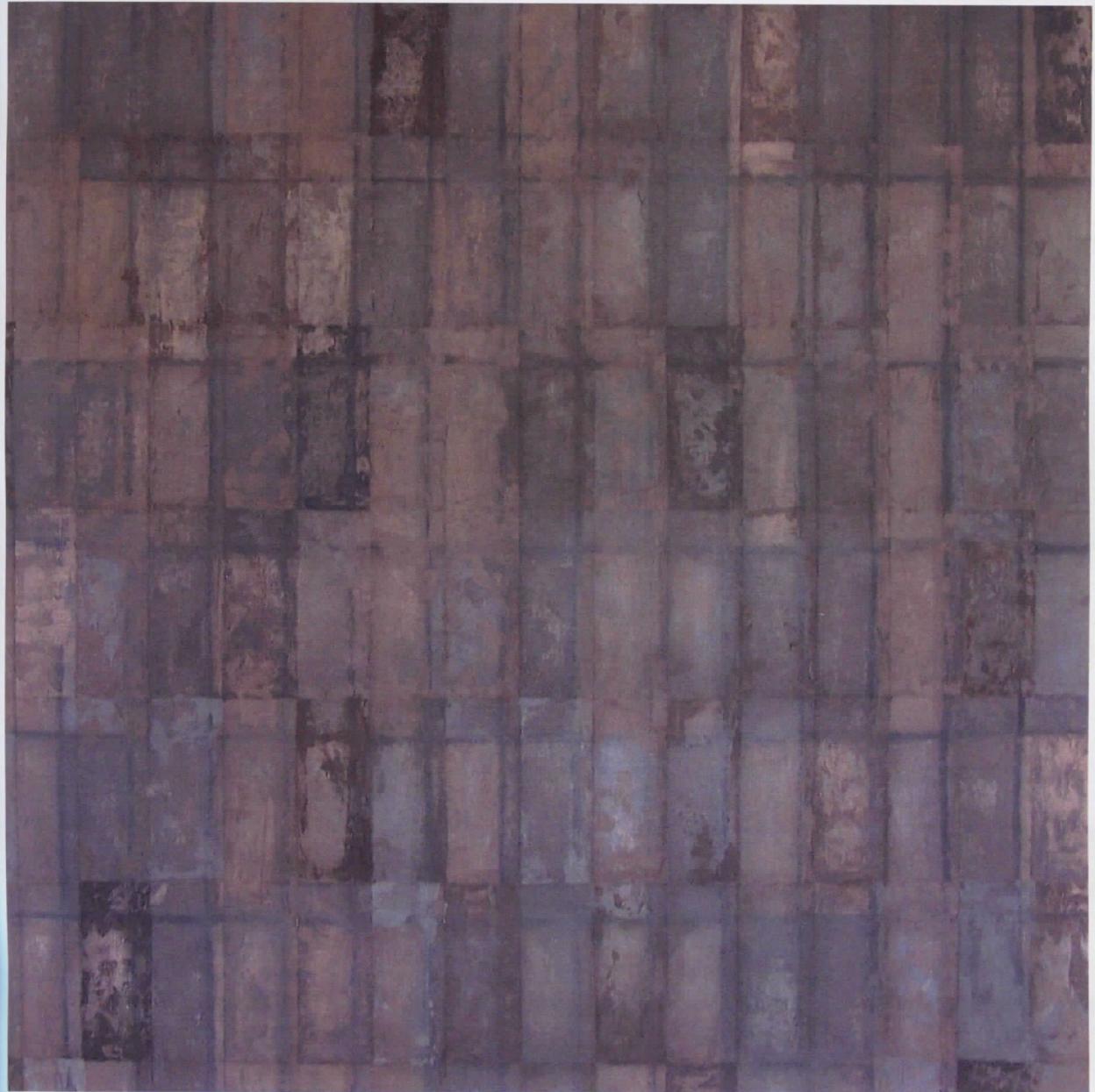
The Professor

Elizabeth Shields



Grid #1

Chelsea Couch



Surviving

Hayley Martin

"I went to the doctor last week, as you know." My mom folds her hands in her lap.

Why is she being so formal? My eleven-year-old instincts knew something was wrong.

"I got the results of the check up. I have breast cancer."

The living room is filled with awkward silence and blank stares.

"Are you going to be okay?" Clay is the first one to speak.

"The doctors found it in time. I'm going to have surgery to remove the cancer next week. I'll be okay." She wipes away a tear.

She doesn't mention the chemotherapy or radiation that follows the surgery.

~

The second night after she started her first round of chemo, I wake up to a loud commotion in the bathroom next to my bedroom. I walk over to see Daddy holding a cool wash cloth to my mom's forehead as she sits in the floor with her arms draped over the toilet.

"Is she okay? What should I do?" I held up my hand to shield my eyes from the bright fluorescent light.

"Go back to bed, puddin'. The medicine is making Momma sick. It's normal." Daddy rewets the wash cloth.

I go back to bed, but I can't go to sleep. The light coming under my door worries me. It shouldn't be there.

The hallway with all the bedrooms should be dark. I hear my mom getting sick again, the last of her stomach's contents meeting the water at the bottom of the toilet bowl. My mom starts crying.

I pull my cartoon fish patterned sheet over my head and shiver.

~

My brother and I go with my dad to the hospital to visit my mom. She was admitted while we were in school.

"Why is she there?" Clay adjusted his seatbelt. He's small for a nine year old, so it still hits him awkwardly.

"Her white cell blood count is too low." Daddy turned into the hospital parking garage.

"What does that mean?"

"The army that fights off germs is low on soldiers. If she catches a cold, it could kill her because there's nothing there to fight it off. So, she's here for protection."

Questions and simplistic answers about medicine have taken the place of normal conversations.

As we get closer to my mom's room on the ninth floor of the hospital, the cancer floor, Clay and I both reach for Daddy's hands. I don't want to go in.

My mom is lying in bed watching Jeopardy on t.v. in her dimly lit room. She's bald, but the shock of that wore off a couple of weeks ago. Nothing about my mom appears any more sick or hospital worthy than usual, but I'm still afraid to go near her. Clay, however, lets go of Daddy's hand and runs to our mom.

"Momma!" He climbs into her bed and snuggles up to her.

"Monk!" She put her arms around him and smiles.

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"Monk!" She put her arms around him and smiles.

We all sit and talk until it's time to go home for supper.

~

I'm lying in bed thinking about the debate my social studies class is having tomorrow. I'm almost asleep when I hear someone struggling to open my door.

The house is old and my door is warped. It scrapes against the wooden frame, making it hard to open.

The door is finally forced open, and the light from the hallway floods my room, leaving a perfect four-foot, four inch silhouette in the doorway.

"Clay?"

He takes a step toward me. I can make out Mickey Mouse on his shirt. It has red sleeves, and the shirt comes down past his knees.

I think I hear sniffles.

"Clay, what's wrong?"

He walks quickly toward me and sits on my bed, his pent up fear pouring from his eyes.

"Momma's going to die." He collapses into me, giving up all hope of strength.

I put my arms around him.

"Momma's not going to die. She's going to come home in a few days."

Clay keeps crying, so I rock him back and forth.

"Shhh. She'll be fine. You'll see. In a few days...you'll see...shhh."

I rock him until he starts to fall asleep in my arms.

~

Daddy takes me to piano lessons. I almost dread going in because it's been a couple of weeks

since my teacher has asked me how my mom is doing. She's due for "an update." Daddy gives me a nod and I regretfully turn the door handle as he takes a seat on the swing outside her house.

"Is your mom okay?" Ms. Pepper marks my 3:30 lesson off in her daily planner as I place my lesson books on her baby grand.

"She is always taking a nap when I get home," I start playing *La'Avalanche* from memory. She assigned me the piece last week. "So, I never know." My voice fades into the forte chromatic scales a couple of measures into the song.

As I play the piece, my fingers go into auto-pilot mode and my mind starts to wander. I can't help but think about all the other people who ask me about my mom.

As soon as I walk in the door at church, the deacon welcoming members and visitors stops me.

"Hey, Hayley. How's your mom doing?" He knows my family but has never talked to me directly.

"She's really tired, but she's okay. She hopes to be here next Sunday." I smile and continue to my Sunday school class.

I go to my best friend's house to spend the night. While her mom is fixing supper, I get called into the kitchen.

"How's your mom been lately?"

"She's fine. She sleeps a lot." I don't feel like talking about it anymore, but I smile before going back to listening to N*SYNC cds.

The guidance counselor at school corners me in the library.

"How's your mom? Is she okay?" She seems overly concerned.

"She's fine." There's no pleasant tone in my voice, and I stare at her.

Can't I go to school and not be reminded that my mom is at home probably throwing up at this exact moment?

I'm at the grocery store with Daddy, but he's on a different aisle than me.

"Is your mom feeling any better?" I look up from the display of frozen rolls in front of me. I've never seen this woman before in my life.

"Yes, ma'am, she's better today."

"That's good." She walks away.

Yes. I'm fine, too. Thanks for asking. Sometimes it gets a little scary, but Clay and I are handling it okay.

She calls over her shoulder. "Tell your mom I asked about her."

"Yes, ma'am."

~

My mom's white blood cell count is too low again, but not to a critical level that requires a hospital visit. I'm home from school sick with strep throat. We're not allowed to be in the same room because I could kill her. Generally, she stays downstairs and works on the computer, and I watch t.v. in the living room.

I take a shower hoping that my gross, sick feeling will go away. The warm water soothes my aching skin. But even with all the lathering and rinsing, my manslaughter germs will not find their way to the drain.

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I take a shower hoping that my gross, sick feeling will go away. The warm water soothes my aching skin. But even with all the lathering and rinsing, my manslaughter germs will not find their way to the drain.

After I dry my hair, I spend twenty minutes attempting to put it in a ponytail because I can't stand having my hair down, getting in my face. It's an art I haven't mastered yet, and I can't have any bumps in my hair. It must be perfectly smooth.

My mom always does it perfectly. I grab the hairbrush and walk to the top of the stairs. I can see Daddy ironing clothes. I'll have to pass him to get to her.

Momma. I haven't seen her in three days, and we've been in the same house. I walk down the stairs as quietly as I can so Daddy won't know I'm coming.

As soon as my feet hit the linoleum, I run full force. Daddy sees me, despite my best efforts, and lunges into my path. He opposes me like a point guard.

"Hayley! No!"

I run into his arm and am lifted off the ground.

"You know you can't go in there."

I start crying.

"Just for two seconds. Just to put my hair up. I haven't seen her all week!"

Daddy puts me down and holds my arms.

"You'll make Momma worse. You don't want that."

The crying has turned into hyperventilating.

"Daddy, please! I'll hold my breath. Promise!"

I try to step around him and reach out for Momma even though I can't see her.

"I'll put your hair up."

"No! You can't do it!" I push my dad and run back and sit on the third stair. My hyperventilating becomes uncontrollable sobbing.

"Momma! Momma!" I know she can hear me, but she doesn't even peer out the doorway.

I look up and see my dad in the middle of the hallway with utter helplessness on his face. I continue crying, but because of a different emotion: guilt.

I pick up the brush and walk to Daddy and hug him.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry! You were only trying to help."

I hand him my rubber band and the hairbrush.

With Wings

Jordan White

As to how and when,
let idle tongues meander
amongst the trappings of
hypotheticals, and further
dance in their wake as
the soft buzz of summer
moves in you

Waste not walks for reruns
and twice baked potatoes. For
now is never ending,
the snares are in the
nevers disguised as displeasures

so escape the finite.

As to how,
with wings.
(and chocolate and your
brother's love)

Ex Operे Operato

Iris Mahan

We are too lazy to stand up and walk on water.

Our bellies are too full of communions,

suppers of carbonated cornstarch and deep-fried fat.

We've sucked out all the sky with a bendy straw

and swallowed all the dirt with greedy fists,

our last ritual for the only hungry god that's left here.

When it's over, we roll over

and press our open mouths to each other,

guzzling bodily fluids and tearing at each other's tumors

with sugar-glazed, rotting teeth, until our skin

is stretched translucent, and with bloated vocal cords,

we pronounce ourselves saved.

The Difference

Case Duckworth

The setting sun on your eyelids
gives the world a hue like the inside
of a cantaloupe, and that hue is
the world. No songs here of love or
light or leaving, only that color
sleeping lightly in a hammock lashed
with warmth. This is the feeling I think
you will feel when you pass away.

When I die, trumpets will announce
my disappearance. The mourning will go on
for three weeks, with everyone in the world
wearing black or gray. It will be cold
in the world, and winter will come early.

No one will speak. Language will be tilled under
with my bones, when the spring comes, finally,
red and already exhausted. The sun will stay low
in the sky from a forgotten shame.

I will not forget you. I will look for you
in the tide pools of fire, but I will not find you.
I will seek you out in the deserts that will be
the entire world, all thirst bleached-white,
but you will not be there. You who died

in silence will be in a silent garden

the color of a cantaloupe. I will be deafened

by the sound of my passing until the mountains

burst open and hell runs out of its closet,

screaming, catching the world on fire.

Reading Torah at Birkenau

Rebecca Sadler

I

Joshua is lying among the
worn leather boots in that pile
by the wall.

II

Miriam dances in
the empty streets, a mote
of black and gray ash.

III

Moses reclines in the burning
pit, among the other corpses,
playing Dureñ with Aaron.

IV

Tourists snap photographs
while God
hangs from the wire noose.

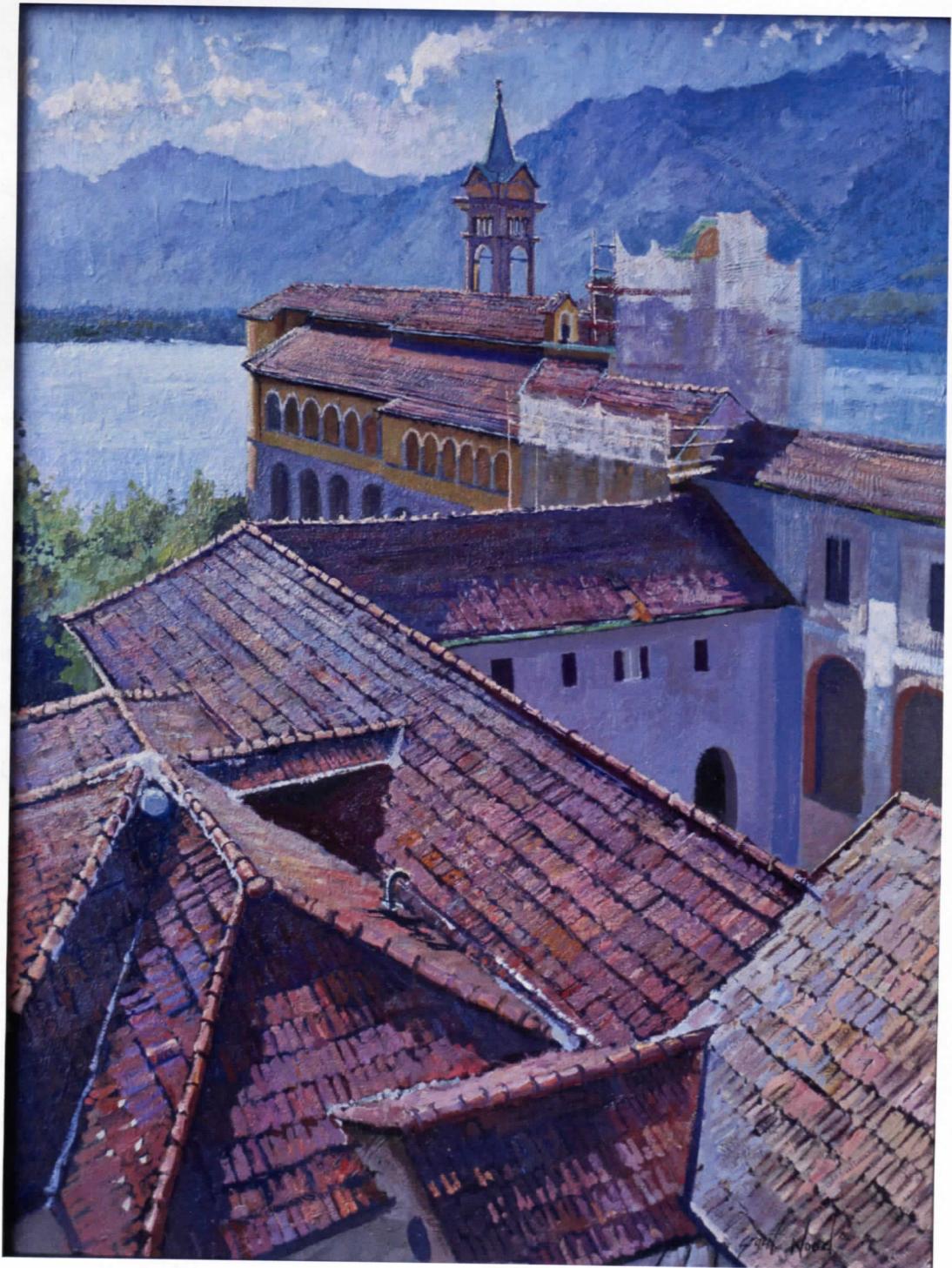
Hole

Rebecca Sadler



Untitled

Grant Wood



Contrast

Kayla Witherow



Down By The Side Of The Road

Jared Sullivan

Everyone in town still called the Doctor a faggot after he died. I wasn't sure at first but I expect they were likely right. He never bothered me any so I never thought about him much, seemed like a man of decent blood. I'd see him down at Merv's or the hardware store from time to time and he'd always say hello and shake my hand. His shirts were always tucked into his jeans and I'd say he polished his shoes near everyday. Never looked or talked like he didn't mean to. Gene Tipton didn't care for him any and that's the real shame in my opinion, but Tipton didn't take to most folks.

When he moved to town that fall I bet Tipton was one of the first people he saw, his place was just up from the Doctor's. Tipton's house wasn't much of anything but it sat right there on the road. Most days you could drive by and he would be sitting out on the porch smoking cigarettes and tapping his boot against the wooden floor, kicking up dirt. I'd stop by sometimes and that old lady would always be in the same wicker chair next to the potbelly stove, skinnier than any living thing should rightly be. Wearing that same nightgown. I think she was his mother's sister but I don't know for sure. He must not of ever fed her much. That old place should have been burned down, filthy as it was.

Tipton first met the Doctor that October. A bone cold day and the leaves were whipping and dancing around in drifts. One of those days where the air feels fresh like it hasn't ever been breathed before. Tipton was out hunting on that stretch of land between the river and foot of the mountain. Same land he'd been hunting since he was a boy, out shooting at squirrels and groundhogs or anything else that would move. He must of known the Doctor had bought all that when he moved to town, but I guess he figured he'd keep hunting it anyways. He was never one for change. He shot most of the morning in the thick and at noon he crossed back over the field to his truck. As he was coming across he saw the Doctor walking along the edge of the field towards him and he stopped where he was and rested the butt of his rifle against the earth and waited.

The Doctor came and introduced himself and Tipton just nodded his head and didn't say much. The Doctor

continued on for a while and ended up inviting Tipton up to his house for lunch. Tipton was never one to turn away anything folks were giving out so he agreed and went up with him. I think Tipton meant good about it. The Doctor had come from up North somewhere and was a professor at some medical school I'd never heard of. The house he built looked like a castle you'd see in a book. Big gray stones and a heavy wooden door. The parlor room was painted this silver pink color, that's where people say he'd have his orgies. I'm not sure if that was true or not. They said he had money too and that was probably true.

The Doctor was as nice to Tipton as a man could be. He fixed him a sandwich and they sat and talked and carried on for a long time. The Doctor told Tipton all these stories about patients he'd had and they both got laughing hard. Said once this man came into the emergency room that was so big he couldn't pee out of his member anymore because of all the fat. They had to cut him open and change his tubing where he'd piss out between his ass and girth, right between the two. Tipton cried he was laughing so hard and the doctor's face turned cherry blossom colored when he finished saying it, but he smiled. They had chicken coops out there. The Doctor told Tipton all about them too, said he hardly spent anything on food because he raised it all himself. Told Tipton he would save money on food and have a chicken to eat every few weeks. Smart man.

As they were sitting there talking this other old boy came in from wherever he'd been and the Doctor gets up kisses him on the cheek. Tells Tipton it's his partner. That they live together like a man and woman. It still makes me laugh a little thinking about Tipton sitting there at the table and seeing those two boys kiss right in front of him. I'm sure it's not polite to laugh about such a thing, but I still do. I know he'd never seen such a thing. I do bet Tipton enjoyed himself that day though, but he wouldn't have told you that.

The Doctor and his little friend ended up inviting Tipton back up for supper later that week. Told him to bring someone else too. Tipton must of thought that they were trying to do something funny with him, wanted him to do things with them that an honest man shouldn't. He told everyone that there were these Satan marks all over the wall, weird stuff and all. I don't know.

Tipton got home that afternoon after lunch and gets to thinking. I wish he would have just gone home and gone to sleep or found some women to run around with. I wish he would have just gone home and gone to sleep or found some women to run around with. But that's not what he does. He thinks and calls on the Tinsley boy, Rusty.

Rusty was the Tinsley that stole all that lighter fluid from the grocery a few years back, snuffed it all and almost killed him. Anyhow, I always told Tipton finding a decent woman was the best way of losing all your money but staying out of trouble but he never liked the thought of that I guess. Said they didn't pay him any mind.

For whatever reason Tipton and Tinsley didn't go up to dinner that week. It was near a month or so later when they finally went out there. When they rode out over that dirt road to the doctor's place that night and they didn't have one decent thought in their heads. The night was deep and full and smelled like warm calf fur. They came and parked their truck under a tree in the yard and went inside and sat down with the Doctor and his friend.

They had this whole mess of food laid out. A chicken and rolls and some greens and a pecan pie. All hot and smelling like something from back home. Tipton sat at the table and took off his hat and ran his hair back with his fingers and didn't say much. Looked down most of the time. Tinsley just smiled, watching the gays carry on. They had these two big dogs too. Mastiffs, big as hell. Tipton kept on reaching down and petting them when they'd come by his side. Beautiful things.

Well, they all eat and get full and are sitting around talking after everything's been had. The Doctor asked Tipton if he wanted to go out and see this chicken coop he'd built. He didn't ask Tinsley. So the Doctor and Tipton got up and went out back and Tinsley and the other boy were left alone in the house. They were quiet for a few minutes until Tinsley told that boy he'd left something out in his truck, so he got up and went out the front. Tinsley went out into all that cold and stillness and waited out there for a while, smoked a cigarette. Then he got Tipton's rifle and came back inside. That old boy was there in the kitchen and saw Tinsley coming back in through the front door with the gun but didn't do anything and just watched him. I guess I might of done the same, truth be told.

And he walked right up to that boy and drew up that rifle and shot the front of his skull off like there wasn't anything to it. As thoughtless as eating or dreaming. When that was done, he went over and shot those pretty dogs next. So there was all this blood over the yellow linoleum and blood freckling Tinsley's clothes. A damn mess. It all looked like dark velvet and there were these little shards of that boy's skull all about.

The Doctor and Tipton are outside when the shots ring out from the house and they come running back from behind the coop, but Tipton already knows what'd been done. The Doctor stumbles into the kitchen and sees that old boy and those dogs lying side-by-side and just collapses and starts screaming. I do think it surprised Tipton a little bit,

seeing it before him like that. Like he was expecting the Doctor to act different than he was or expecting it all to feel more certain than it did.

Well, Tinsley pulls the Doctor up to his feet and starts yelling about money. Points that rifle at him and yells that he better get them money or this or that or what have you. Tipton gets after him too, says this is what he deserves for being a devil worshiper and a faggot, that God is punishing him for standing in the way of sinners and decent men. Something. And the Doctor just cries and cries. Says he doesn't have any money and that they buy everything with checks. Tipton and Tinsley just look at one another for a long moment and that makes me laugh. I guess they figure they don't have anything else to do so they shot him there too. It blows his jaw clean off and it lies on the floor next to him like it was never apart of the same thing. So the two of them and those dogs all lay next to one another and the blood just runs all together like there was no difference in any of it. Like nothing I'd ever seen.

They looked around the house and the Doctor hadn't lied, they found less than a one hundred dollars. A few watches, an old television set maybe. All that killing.

When the sun came up the next morning Tinsley and Tipton had already taken out to the road, heading up through Knoxville to Carolina. They had a friend up there. But no one knew that at the time, they stayed hid for a long while. Every patrolman in the county was out looking for them. Two months later, a state trooper arrested both of them in a motel room outside of Charlotte. The trooper followed Tinsley back after watching him buy a baggie of cocaine outside a gas station. Had no idea who he was or that he was a wanted man. That's some luck.

The Doctor and the other fellow were found pretty quick. It didn't take long for someone to notice they weren't around. It caused a big stir. It was on the front page of the paper for weeks, pictures of the dogs and the blood and what people had to say. But I still don't understand one thing, they found semen in the Doctor's mouth, a little glob of it rolled back under his tongue. And I don't know what to think about that. Tinsley and Tipton were there with them the whole evening, not a second were they alone. It sits funny with me. They asked Tipton and Tinsley about it but they didn't have anything to say, but they weren't talking about nothing at that point.

The city thought it best that the house be torn down because neither the Doctor nor his friend had a next of kin and that's what they did, they tore it down. Now it's just a big pile of rubble and garbage. That's where the kids go to have sex. Sometimes at night if you walk out there real quiet where they can't hear you coming, you can see their

trucks parked there hull to hull, the bare asses of girls pressed up against the steering wheels. And if they lean too hard against the wheel the truck will honk. The only sound out in that big dark.

Decay

Luke Dietz

in young skin I dance
for Springtime
bloom as buds in dew
born naked and form
bare my limbs, lock teeth
and breathe myself

Springtime courts me

I swoon, blush,
crack
white shoulders crease, gray
ice
naked and cold for
Each of us are wet wrinkled things
if we cannot face the mirror

skeleton inside me waits
knobby palm to hollowed wall
my skin now the curtains for his stage
his dance is the dust

Mother's Day

Mary Christa Jaramillo-Bolin

A little night music floats across the water from a distant campground as he pours himself another cup of coffee. He talks about his mother and I talk about mine. We smile and drink and reminisce about the past. Our laughter fades into the night and we sit in silence, listening to the sounds of the crickets bouncing off the pines. Another year has passed without the faintest sense of regret.

A Breeze Like Water

Mariel Groppe

Today I'm content to bring a little
Silence to a room that is so compounded
With nails on the wall
And with a rug where people just stand and stamp their feet
Over and over like a fucking grandfather clock that yelps every minute.
It's defective. Like a seashell that you brought home
And made sure it was all washed out, so there was no sand in your house
And no scent of some tuna fish second cousin love affair.
And then you hold it up to listen, hoping to see the sound in your ear
Some ocean kitten purr. Some cooing massage would make it all worth it.
But you still hear the chime of your oven timer through the shell
and the noise of the people that you want to need.
but can't because all you really want is people to be around
but be silent. You want the breeze from the fan to waterfall over you,
refreshing, recreating that wind from last week. You eat pretzels for the salt.
You made them yourself. You twisted
Them around because you knew you could manipulate and succeed.
Ingredients and dough. Windows and latches. The fan and its chain.
I'm shivering. I'm wet with wind and raw
from the cargo train of laughter rubbing up on my skin
And my silence scratching down into the one
moment where nothing is needed.
And there's nothing to be found.

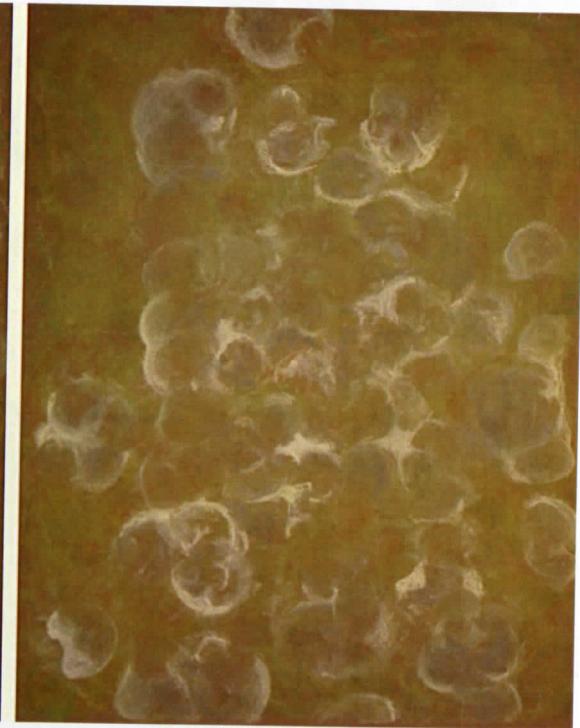
Flow

Rebecca Sadler



Bubbles

Chelsea Couch



Coney Island

Elizabeth Shields



The Hole in the Wall

Greg Kuehn

He watches me through a tiny hole in the bedroom wall, a hole that I'm certain he put there on purpose; my so-called father. He says that he doesn't, that I'm just being ridiculous and paranoid and a stupid little girl, but I know the truth. Sometimes I can feel his eyes groping my budding breasts or sliding below my hipbone down towards the pubic hairs that have only just begun to grow; his accosting, relentless eyes. And I can hear him behind the wall – the muffled grunts and moans and the disgusting skin friction and it makes me hate myself and want to vomit.

I don't know how the hole got there or even when exactly. It was one of those things that could have gone unnoticed forever, but once discovered, could never be overlooked again. I tried to cover it up. First, with a poster of Jacob from Twilight, sweaty and shirtless, which my father called "smut" as he tore it from the wall. Then, I tried things like sticking a post-it note over it, stuffing a sock into its opening, moving my dresser in front of it. But each time he would uncover the hole and tell me how tacky it looked to have a sock/dresser/post-it note, or whatever else there. "Forget about that damn hole," he would say. "Just leave it alone." And my hole-covering efforts ceased. But forgetting about it would have been impossible. That God-forsaken hole was always there, always – exposed and empty just like me.

It started not long after Mom died. He began drinking a little more and a little more. He tried to hide it from me, but I could always smell the alcohol on his breath. Then he started to tell me how I was maturing into a beautiful young woman and he bought me things like skirts and strappy shoes and smaller panties than I had been used to wearing. "You'll look nice in these," he would say, and I would cower behind an awkward smile and thank him and then pray to God to bring my mother back.

I thought about doing all my dressing and undressing behind the closet door or in the corner of the room away from the hole. I even considered taking showers in the girl's locker room at school. But I was afraid of what might happen if I did, of what he might do if he couldn't watch anymore. I didn't want to know what he was capable of. I still don't. He is my father.

So now, as drops of water make their way down my body from behind the safety of a baby blue bath towel, I know he's there, watching through the tiny hole in my bedroom wall. I slip off the towel and it falls to the floor revealing everything. I step into a pair of tiny black panties, one of the pairs he bought me, and I can hear him moan and then finish behind the wall. Then his footfalls fade down the hallway and I hear the distant shut of a door and I know that it's over.

Still, in the back of my mind, I can't help but think that one day the hole in the wall might not be enough, and he will burst through my bedroom door and then into me, and I will cry out and beg for him to stop, and after a while, he will. But the sun will still rise in the east, and crows will still line telephone wires in summer, and the tiny hole in my bedroom wall will still be there, exposed and empty.

Every Day Plastic

Kayla Witherow

Six AM

Clamoring alarm clock

Screaming discord at my head

Flimsy grey buttons

Safety orange numbers

Sleep-numb digits

Toothpaste, solution

Sodium, soap bar,

Fluoride, nitrate,

Alcohol, cleanser

Mixed in porcelain,

Swept off by water and silver

Begrudgingly rub a smudge

Off of perfectly smooth glass

Sea-foam green towel

Cherry red hairdryer

Lemon yellow boots

Sculpted plastic hairbrush handle

Fluorescent beads and bangles

And a much-needed can of Pepsi

For the road

Concrete sidewalk

Dotted with glass,

Gum, latex, nicotine,

Flagstones steering me away

From the warm grass hillside

Studio supply box in my right hand

Muscles morning aching

Charcoal scratching into fingerprints

White glue, yellow glue, aerosol glue,

Bonding with flecks of graphite

Affixing to my fingertips

Wrapping around the coffee cup

Drying ink on my knuckles marking the time

It takes to recreate a fake skeleton

In two dimensions of dry white chalk

Primary blue plastic lunch tray

Held unsteadily

As I take a disposable fork

And stand alone in line

The second Pepsi stays erect

Among Styrofoam, sodium,

Caffeine, cellophane

And wax paper

Coarse lobby bench cushions

Paperback, playing card

Used as a bookmark, well worn

Indoor-outdoor carpet underfoot

See-through rubber portfolio

Expensive water-soluble paint

Cell phone, silent alarm clock

With tiny digits, twitching fingers

Nickel door handle, steel stool

Paint-stained desk was taken, briefly

As he leaves, he apologizes

A hand on my shoulder,

A thousand cells vibrating

In the invisible place between skins

It's three PM before I ever

Touch something that's alive.

An Almost Completely Fictitious Poem

Michelle Awad

I used to live below this couple
who didn't know that I could
hear them through the air vents,
and if they had known, they maybe
would have left some things unspoken,
or maybe they would have seen reason
to speak more,
but their tongues flew and their mouths
spat sounds that I may not know if
it weren't for his drinking and her
nights out on the town, and if it weren't
for both of their
running around.

My grandmother used to tell me that
one who eavesdrops will likely hear nothing
good about himself, but nobody ever talks about
me or my four-door sedan or the change
rattling in my pockets or the band I still wear
around my finger though my wife died two years
ago.

But from my couch, instead, I listened to a hair dryer

hit the drywall, or an oven door slam shut, and
I would have never called my wife those things
even if I thought that's what she was.

My cat would sleep through all of this,
and probably he even slept through the
fire that caused me to evacuate my apartment
late one night in October,
but I like to think he ran out and found a lady-cat
in the city and they live in an alley that the
homeless haven't found yet,
and I imagine he and his new little family is doing
pretty well for itself.

And I imagine that man and that woman would be
doing pretty well for themselves, too,
but I know that she started that fire with a flick
of her wrist, and I know that he watched her
the whole time, and I think, if they'd lived, I'd
still be sitting on my couch listening to
him ask who Richard is, and her pour his gin down
the sink, wishing to myself that they would not
go to bed angry.

But I know that they did, because I never heard them
make up, not once,
and I think that would have been so nice that

I might have closed my side of the air vent

just to let them have something

all to themselves.

Father's Garden

Carolyn Henley

Daddy tends to the garden in the mornings,
Every morning he wakes, one warm mug,
Then rakes away the weeds and midnight debris,
All while the sun is rising and his little three, snug asleep.
Then he waters. He waters and waters with one small hose,
Pale yellow and coiled by the brick and spigot,
Asleep in pesticide thicket, only until he uncoils,
Methodical and slow, and turns on the hose.
The water sprays like selective rain.
At first the garden doesn't grow.
No soft squash, no sweet beats, no tomatoes, red or green,
No peppers, corn or cucumbers or zucchini.
They hardly wonder why he works this hard,
Only care and demand to know the next time they shall eat.
But Daddy still tends in the rising morning heat.
Come noon he breaks from work, checks on the garden,
Repicks the weeds and threads the seeds attentively
Like his fingers are feelers begging the soil's pardon.
The children, running around the sun, hardly see.
And in the evenings while they play,
Again he rakes away the day's dust, kneels and prays;
Kneels by the soil, hangs a sweat-ridden head, bowed

And prays to himself, sometimes out loud,
But prays and prays that God, Almighty Caretaker himself,
Will watch over the soil and help what's planted grow,
Sprout and grow and pour out all their power and good health.

At first there is no growth.

May and June the roadside soil sleeps.

It is after the katydid locust, after the drought, after
All the raking and watering and praying and praying
That sprigs of green up-pop and lock
Leafy fingers tightly around the waiting, strong lattice.

Dad is proud then; Dad is glad.

Tomatoes come first, rising like goblins from the dirt.

He picks some first while they are green,

Round and fat and green. Fish and fried green

Tomatoes that first night.

The children feast and eat and Dad takes no bite.

It's alright. I'll never eat again so long as I can provide.

But gives thanks kneeling in the sleeping night.

Oh how I miss their mother.

The rest of the month and summer

He fills eager plates: slow cooked medleys, juice filled tastes
And steaming casseroles and all things sliced and steamed and good smelling.

The children feast and feast—

His fork hardly lifts.

Yet a smile is whittled in his lips.

When summer is over the garden may smolder

In the fire and ill-equipped attire of all that is to come.

Who knows?

Who knows why some things fade while others grow.

Every evening he kneels still. The young adults watch out the window.

Father kneels next to the garden that's flourished and flourishing still,

Bows the shiny weathered face, prays and gives thanks,

Unceasingly.

The beads of sweat drip into the soil, they sink,

Unceasingly.

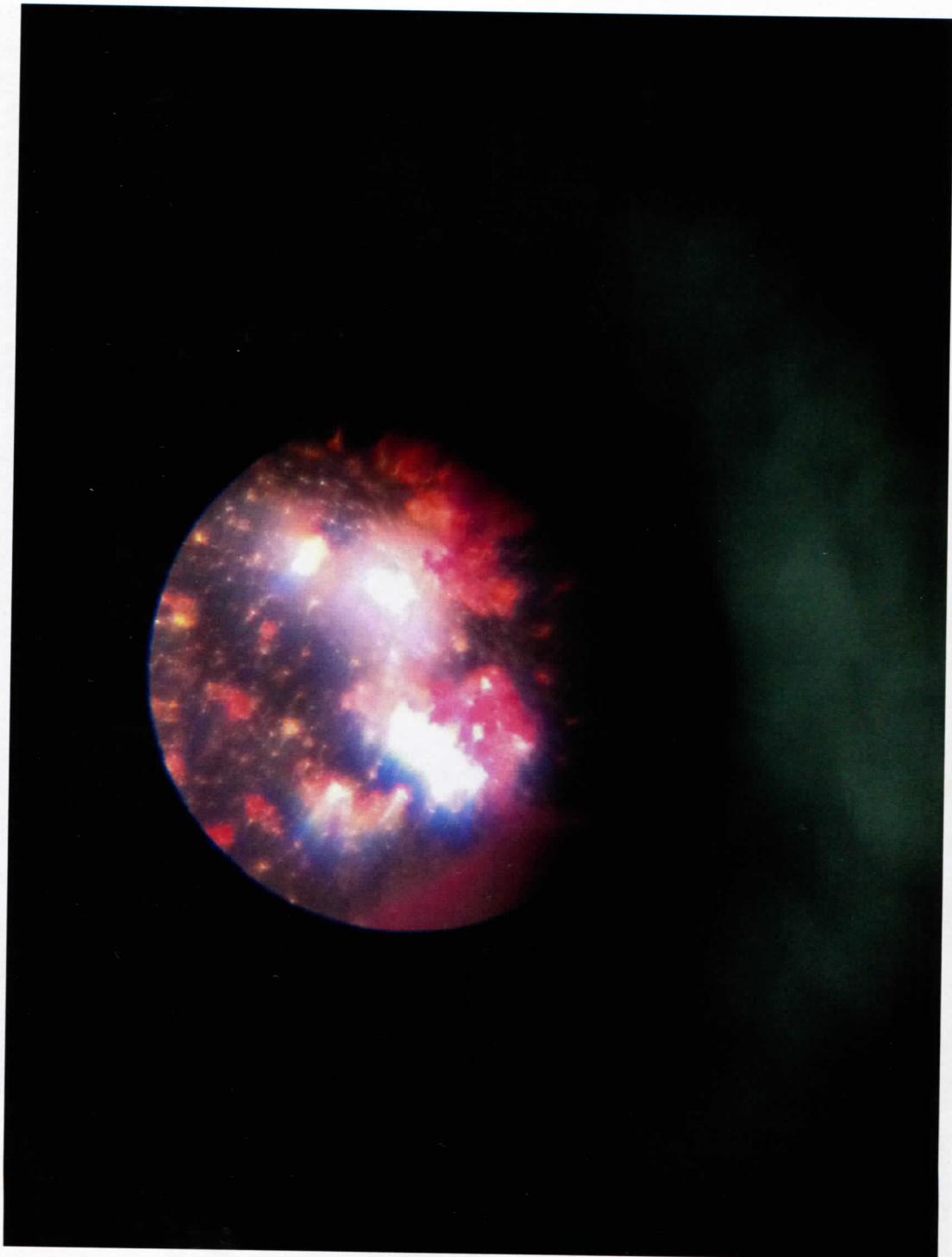
Fluidic Tool

Selina Angotti



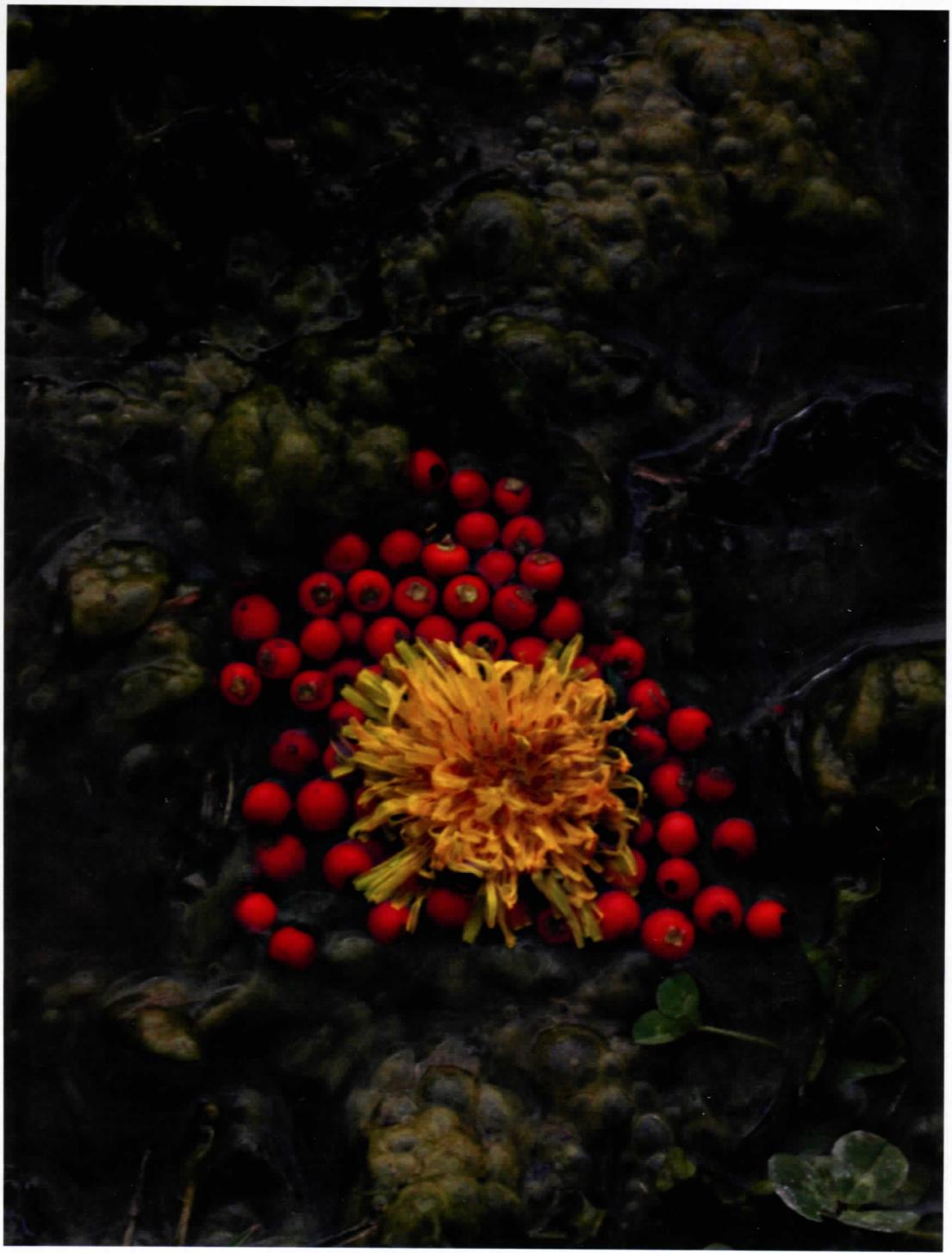
Microscopic Specimen No. 19

Gracie Harvey



Swamp

Rebecca Sadler



Mt. Colostrum

Chelsea Couch



Dust

Mary Christa Jaramillo-Bolin

It's quiet in the house except for the sounds of the cars passing on the nearby highway. It seems too quiet, but no one is home except for me, so I don't know why it would be any louder. The attic is dusty and hot, but it doesn't bother me too much. I sit in front of a mound of old boxes and a few bags tucked away in a dimly lit corner. It's surprisingly dark up here for late afternoon.

These boxes have been sitting in my attic for over a year now, completely untouched and mostly forgotten since I put them there. It's an eclectic group of packing materials; I can tell how little forethought went into packing this stuff up just by looking at it: a couple of orange crates and a used FedEx box, several plastic Target bags and paper Starbucks handle bags, and a large Bath & Body Works bag. I can tell my mom packed these by where the boxes and bags are from.

I pull the first box toward me and peer inside. My heart flutters and sinks down into my stomach, like that feeling you get when you know you're about to get bad news. The box is mostly empty. There's a picture of my best friend from a dance recital, a handful of plastic glow-in-the-dark stars, a magnet that reads "Hurrah! At last I'm 50!", a bendy Bullwinkle figure and a small blue Christmas tree. Under that are a few pictures of me from when I was little in Virginia Beach, a lock of hair from my first haircut tucked into a church offering envelope that reads "Apr 1990," a Koosh ball, and bits of paper with my handwriting circa 10-12 years old.

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Still another bag holds a collection of coloring book pages colored and ripped out along with a few used gift bags and crumpled poster of a play I produced a couple of years ago. There's also a paper turkey made out of a tracing of my hand that says "Mary Christa – age 4" on the backside, as well as some Valentine's Day window clings.

I stop and sit back for a moment, taking it all in. I'm not quite sure what to think about all this. I take a quick survey of the attic. Surrounded by Christmas decorations, old computer parts, and unused luggage, lay every tangible memory of my childhood. Every colored picture, toy, and Sunday school craft project. Everything about me from the last twenty-five years that I accidentally left at my mother's house is in these boxes.

My mother gave me all this stuff January before last. I guess I shouldn't say she gave them to me; rather, she dumped them in my always unlocked Jeep Wrangler while I was at work one evening. It had been almost a year since our already fragile relationship had completely fallen apart and I had moved out. This wasn't the first time she had done this (it was actually more like the sixth or seventh, I think), but it turned out to be the last. Each time before, it had been lesser items, like junk mail or an old computer monitor that I had given her – mostly impersonal stuff. . It would hurt, but not like this. At Christmas she left a framed poster that she had bought much earlier in the year.

On the wrapping paper she had written MERRY CHRISTMAS in the harshest block lettering she could muster. I could feel her anger through the Sharpie marks. These items had been accompanied by an extra special note left on my seat that simply read: *I figured you'd want these since you aren't my daughter anymore.*

I rest my head against a Rubbermaid container sitting behind me and take a deep breath. Dude, the basset hound next door, belts out a long howl.

I can do this; I just have to keep going. Next box.

I crawl around one side of the pile to look into the largest box and put my face into a large spider web. I snort and sputter while grabbing wildly at my face and hair for a moment before determining that there isn't a spider crawling on me after all. I chuckle a little at myself from that display of arachnophobia, which lightens my mood. Maybe I can enjoy this. After all, this is kind of like an extreme display of vanity; everything here is mine, about me, or I gave it as a gift to my mom at some point.

To understand what's going on here, you have to understand something about my mother. For as long as I can remember, she has suffered from undiagnosed, untreated depression. This depression has led her to think that everyone in her life is somehow out to get her, and that she is a "useless leech". As a result, she has systematically cut off everyone in her life, usually because of some unrelated life choice. For my father, it was his failure to agree with her every second of the day; for my uncle, it was when he decided to start dating again after his wife, my mom's sister, passed away. We went through so many child therapists in her search for one to implicitly agree with her that I can't remember them all, but it was court-ordered, so I had to go. She's also cut off every friend she's ever even begun to have for reasons that are even more unclear to me. On top of this, she has been wildly suicidal and is a borderline hoarder.

I turn the box over and start from the bottom. Several school text books and work books from my homeschooling days (I was homeschooled all the way from kindergarten through high school graduation), end up on top of everything. Beneath those are some of my favorite childhood books, which include several Dr. Seuss books. Fox in Socks was the first book I ever learned to read at around age three (and by "read" I really mean memorized from the amount of times I made my parents read it to me). This is where things begin to get really strange, even for my mother. Under the books are an old pencil box, a package of beads, a partial sheet of *Kiss Me, I Don't Smoke* stickers, undeveloped

roll of film, an old church bulletin from Kempsville Presbyterian, a broken pair of sunglasses, and several sheets of unused mailing labels.

But it doesn't stop there. There are countless other items, and I have no idea why they are included with this stuff. The plastic pop beads I understand. The flower-shaped candle from the bathroom that I didn't even particularly like or the unused post-it notes, not so much. And there's so much more. So much that I cannot even begin to catalogue it all. The trash in the other boxes now seems intentional – but why?

My roommate's words from when I first came into repossession of all this stuff last year comes back to me: it's like you're being erased.

I only half believed her then. Now that I'm looking at everything I've ever so much as touched, I get it. I'm still in disbelief, but I get it.

I am being erased. I begin to frantically rip through the remaining stuff scattered in front of me and yet another bag just beyond it. I find medical records, financial aid notices, and even some college letters. I look at each one and hastily toss it aside to look at whatever I get my hands on next. My heart is racing and I can barely catch my breath. I'm too panicked to give up and start crying just yet.

There's one big document missing – my birth certificate. There's a reason for that. The day I moved out of my mom's house, a few days after she originally disowned me for getting engaged and having the audacity to try and tell her, I found my birth certificate ripped to shreds and thrown on the floor. Alongside this I also found all the pictures of me that had hung about the house until now in an upside down stack in the middle of the floor, some of the frames now broken. Not long after that, my grandmother told my cousin that she only had nine grandchildren now. I had broken one of the Ten Commandments, and she could no longer claim me. She refused to give any further explanation.

I still don't quite understand that one.

I continue to ransack what's left of the heap, crawling around on my hands and knees. I'm covered in dust and other attic debris and sneezing uncontrollably. I can't say whether my bleary eyes are caused by my allergies or tears, probably both. After a few minutes of this frenzy, I reach the final box that had been hidden by the massive stack of National Geographic magazines tossed in front of it. It's shallow and heavy and taped tightly shut. I begin to

peel the tape off and the contents of the box shift and clunk like china.

As night falls, the road sounds subside and succumb to the growing chirps of crickets and bull frogs. I sit back on my heels as it dawns on me what's inside.

A box of two dozen or so thrift store coffee mugs is generally considered tacky back-up drink ware (at best) to the average twenty-something (really anybody, if I'm honest with myself). For as long as I can remember, I have always loved coffee mugs. This love led to a love for coffee itself, and pretty much anything one can drink out of a mug. We were poor when I was little, so most of our shopping was done at thrift stores. On almost every trip to the Purple Heart Thrift Store, I would scurry off to the kitchen section in search for treasures. I gave most of these precious coffee mugs as gifts to either my mom or dad, even though they were always purchased with their money. As I grew older, the coffee mugs got nicer, often purchased from Starbucks or Pier One, but it was always coffee mugs.

And here they sit in a box in front of me. All those coffee mugs that I gave to my mother.

There are two layers of coffee mugs inside. I begin pulling them out of the box and placing them on the floor beside me one by one. A few are chipped and cracked, some of which can be attributed to age and wear, some of which I'm sure is because of the way they have been transported in this box, without padding of any sort. Two of my favorites are the Chocloasaurus and the Shopasaurus mugs, based off an 80s comic strip about dinosaurs with personality stereotypes. I found the pair when out shopping for my mom's birthday with my grandmother probably about fifteen years ago and instantly fell in love. I kept the Chocloasaurus mug for myself and eagerly presented the other to my mother a few days later on her birthday. I had always wanted a mug with my name printed on it, and this was the next best thing. We drank out of these mugs together on every special occasion until a few years ago. Also in the box is the full collection of Garfield glass mugs that Burger King sold in the early 90s, many of which still have the black crayon price markings on the bottom from the thrift store.

My mother disowned me the same day my boyfriend of three years proposed to me. No explanation, no argument, nothing. I was twenty-three. I tried to talk to her about it, but she refused to speak to me. I moved out a week later with no furniture and no place to go. She didn't come to my wedding.

The second layer has several World's Greatest Mom and I Love You This Much... mugs in it. It also has a few mugs that I'm pretty sure she got from office or church Christmas parties, definitely not from me. Only a few of the

mugs in this box actually belong to me, but at this point I've stopped trying to think through all this logically.

This is what makes up my life, I guess. A bunch of stuff eventually stowed away in attics and closets that nobody needs, but can't seem to get rid of because of the memories they evoke. Maybe everybody's lives are like that.

Newspaper clippings, old costume jewelry, and well-loved toys with no material worth become priceless artifacts of someone we cherish.

I feel like I should cry, but I just can't seem to. It's a different kind of hurt; a dull ache that flares up in quiet moments and lurks in the back of my mind on birthdays. An incredulous pain.

It's surreal to think that I've been erased to nothing more than fingerprints and dust in my own mother's house.

Everyday Living

Laurel Jones

There are the little rituals, the zipping
and unzipping of dresses, the way
she hands you her glasses
before she goes to sleep. There's something
in knowing you chose that lamp,
those curtains, and the awful tan refrigerator
together, even though you wish you hadn't.

Sometimes you look around and wonder at
this synthesis, this coming together that makes up
the two of you. You think of
the dark bird you saw in the park when
you were twenty-four and thinking about love,
how it hopped across the ground, tilting
its head, feathers puffed out. It was
frightening in its closeness, less than a foot
from the tender tops of your feet,
and you tried to wave your arms, make it leave you
because being alone was somehow better
than this dangerous creature. In this moment,
this mindset, the trees bend and shake,
letting you know that the wind is more than an
echo of the sky, that some seeds fall to wither

and others grow. There is the sound of
traffic, resonating in your head, angry murmurs.

The bees slip into your ears and you focus
on their buzzing. The trees twist and snap.

There is no comfort, no lamp, no awful
tan refrigerator, just the twist and bend
of brick, concrete molding. But you see,
the bird is still there. It stayed, quietly,
close to your ankles as you settled back into
yourself and as you waited, watching it,
you were no longer afraid.

The Hand of God is a Plastic Tube

Martha Hunter

Another planet the size of earth is
somewhere hurling closer toward
the stone age. They reached the
peak of technology and
when they got there, everyone
was bored. They turned around.

The miners in Chile are bored
of staring at the dirt, trying to
remember the hymns they learned
twenty years earlier. The miners
are showing signs of depression,
because after they are rescued,
we will still be hurling towards
another thing to put them in the ground.

No one else wants to go there.

I saw a bird outside the library,
its bones visible, its neck broken.

Two days later, it was still there
and everyone stopped walking that way.

We are all torn apart over Jesus on the cross.

Another planet is trying to erase
the memories of blood.

We are all trying to forget the faces
of the people we bury alive.

Iron

Billy Ritchie

The only cities left are made up of giant iron blocks

that flake sparkling dust into your eyelashes

as you brush against them. There are people,

but they hide behind dark glasses; everything is shining.

Everything is shining, and everything reflects, but there are

no interiors. There are people, but they all wear words

on their clothing. The iron buildings have no doors,

but sometimes as you pass you imagine you hear

shouting from inside, and the faint dull pound of fist on metal,

the sound of something dropping to the bottom of the ocean.

The man next to me on the bus is wearing a shirt

that reads *There is no I inside me, only iron, iron heart,*

iron lungs, iron ankles and the curves of iron ears.

The soft place on the inside of my forearm

that a girl used to caress with the iron tips of her fingers is now

iron. The iron pull of my slackening skin.

Be careful as you brush past or I will flake sparkling dust into your eyelashes.

The blocks end in sand, and as we approach the beach the decaying bus

buckles, drops on its axles as if onto its knees,

and crumbles into dust. I,

along with the man next to me in his dark glasses,

approach the water, throwing sand behind us with our feet,

as well as into the fronts of our shoes.

From the edge of the blocks, the sky bursts away;

the sun is low, and it shatters the light.

The ground takes the shape of our feet.

I step dressed into the water and put my face under

to wash the flakes of iron dust from my eyelashes.

The man next to me removes his dark glasses and in his eyes

I see the soft place on the inside of his forearm

that a girl used to caress with the tips of her fingers.

He sees that I see this and is startled,

and he drops his dark glasses into the water;

they drop to the dark sand at his feet with a dull pound,

the sound of fist on metal. He drops to his knees to find them.

All around us, people are lifting their heads from the water.

A woman's dark hair shines gold.

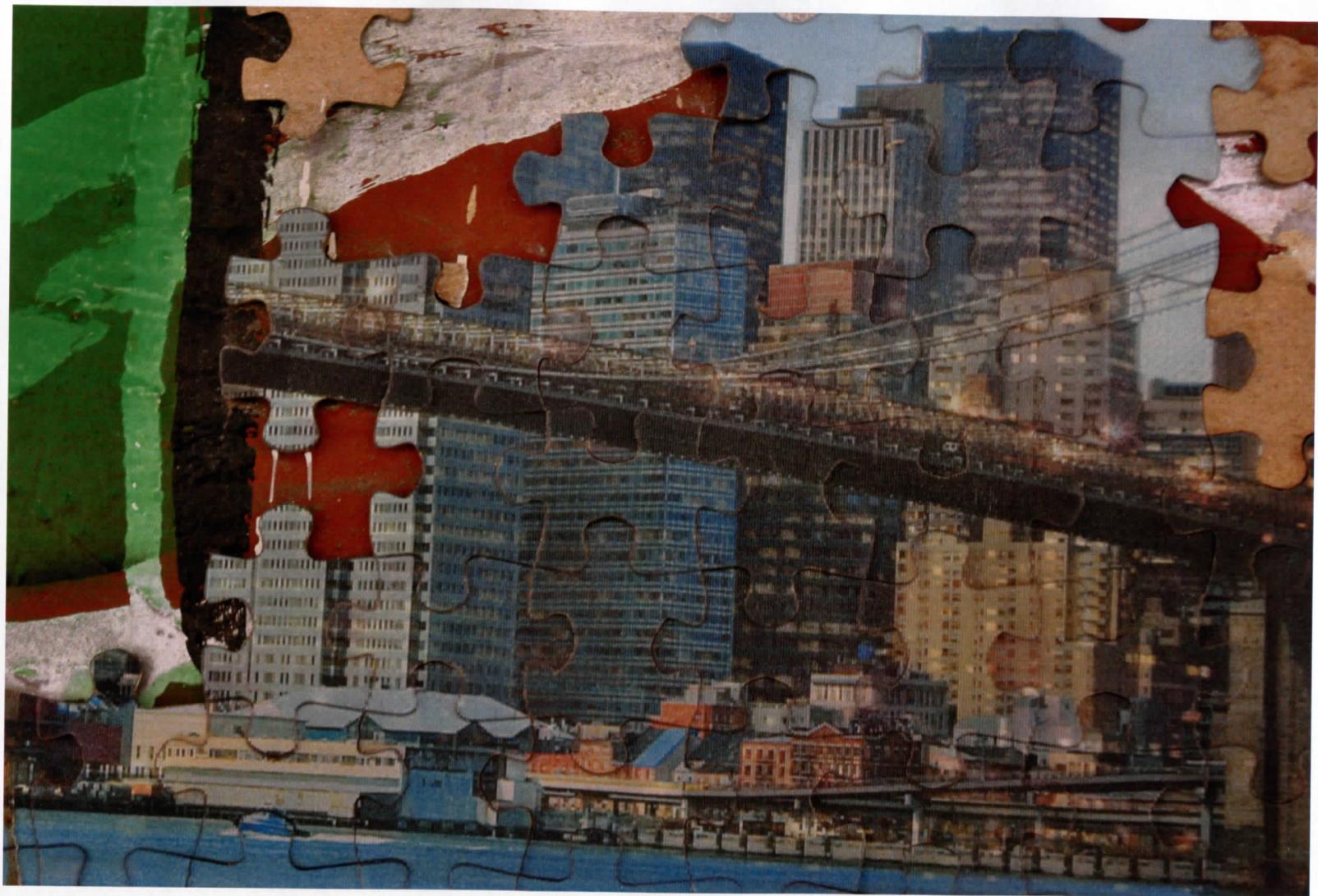
We blink through the salt and light, turn,

and turn again, caught between the ocean

and its reflection, unable to penetrate our home.

Puzzle Graffiti

Elizabeth Shields



Shonichi

Rebecca Sadler



Still Life Study

Antonio Snipes, Jr.



Turning

Laurel Jones

I was eight years old when I saw my first dead body. He wasn't in a hospital bed or flag-covered casket—laid out like some dumb marionette—he was real, raw, lying open on the side of the road, a red corpse that still sits in my mind.

That day, I walked home from school instead of taking the bus. My teacher, Miss Fressie, had kept me after class, most likely her skewed version of kindness, trying to tell me she knew I wasn't paying attention in class, that she had caught the rustle of pages peeking out from the inside corner of my desk, that I couldn't be treated any differently than the rest of the kids and if I was caught reading when we were supposed to be learning about the planets, how they circled the sun mercury venus earth mars jupiter saturn uranus neptune pluto, all in order, then she would have to send me to the Principal's office, give a note to my parents, put me in ISS. I took her warning and my book, *The BFG (The Big Friendly Giant)*, stuffed into my backpack, pencil shavings, crumpled paper and headed out.

The older kids were supposed to help us first graders find our busses even though I lived less than four blocks from school. Mom had gotten the new little house so I could go to Springvale Elementary, away from our old neighborhood that we had left when she saw another boy, my age, get beaten up on the corner of our street by a kid bigger, with angry eyes and scabbed fists. It didn't matter that someone threw a brick through the window, that there were shards of a Jack Daniels bottle on the sidewalk. Everything really was okay until she saw that little boy get beaten up, bruise, turn purple, and she knew that if I went there, to that elementary building with its mold and cockroaches, I would be the outsider because of how pale I was, how small and lonely, so she packed us all up into the moving van to come here, the nicer part of town where we had a smaller house, but it was clean and bright and we could have a dog that wouldn't get run over or stolen from the back yard.

My white tennis shoes scuffed along in the gravel on the side of the road and I could feel a tiny rock pressing against the instep of my right foot, that annoying kind of hurt that I think I secretly liked, even then. I hummed to myself as I walked, sweat beading up on the bridge of my nose where my glasses pressed down. It was early

August and the temperature was stretching toward 100. My backpack formed an oval patch of wet and heat, pressing my Who Gives a Hoot? t-shirt to my back. I reached the stop sign that had been spray painted SLOW over Stop in black and crossed the street, ready to turn onto Frazier. I brought my hands to my face and sniffed.

Something in the air was wrong. It wasn't the hot smell of summer that I was used to, the thick scent of magnolias and chopped grass. There was a different heat in the air, like burnt rubber or hair, a corrosive smell, one I tried to keep out of my lungs but somehow it managed to work its way into me.

It was the same kind of smell I noticed about a year earlier when my sister Susan taunted me with a dead bird. Susan knew I didn't like them, that there was something about the stiff body that made me shiver, feel nauseous, filled me up with bile. Somehow, when I looked at the feathers, all stiff and wrinkled with death, I became angry, wanted to throw rocks, burn the dogwood tree down.

Susan called me a sissy. Said I wasn't a good at being a boy because I didn't like dead things, didn't want to touch them, know what it was like to hold death in my hands. That day, she found a sparrow with its head gone, probably eaten by an animal, and shoved a stick down its ribcage, telling me,

Look Alex. I'm making it fly.

It didn't matter that when she grew up, she put on the white shoes and blue apron of a nurse, trying to push the breath back into the elderly, mend the ribs of the man in the car crash. She had still made a dead bird fly. I knew her secret, her cruelty.

I walked down the road, and as I got closer, the smell got bigger. It smelled of copper, of salt and dark. The way the dogs smelled when we found them on the side of the road when they would find a new way out of the old house. When I saw the sharp skid marks up ahead, I knew there would be a body. I didn't know it would be a man.

He was already dead when I first saw him. There were no moments like the movies, last requests, dying gasps of breath. There was just dead, one dimensional, permanent. Even the flies hadn't found him yet.

His motorcycle still seemed hot from the pavement, all white metal and shaved flesh. It looked like he had been coming off the main road up ahead, maybe going too fast, maybe turning too hard. The bike was tipped over and I could see where his body slid across the little road. He hit the fence, neck broken. I looked at the houses around the street, expecting to see white faces peeking thought the curtains, but it looked like no one was home. Just a dead

boy in the yard.

Because that's what he was, a boy. I hadn't noticed it at first, but he was still a kid, older than me, but not so much. I could still see the shadow of his fat cheeks that had started to fade to the lean jaw of an older teen. I think he was probably fifteen, my sister's age. Maybe he was someone she knew.

As I got closer to his body, I noticed the way his head tilted, chin jutting up, pointing his way to the Sun mercury venus mars jupiter saturn uranus neptune pluto, arms splayed out like he was embracing the world.

I'm still not quite sure why I did it, maybe I wanted him to have something of mine, maybe I thought he would appreciate a small sacrifice, a little hurt. Maybe I did it because I had been meaning to, and had forgotten. Maybe I did it because I was scared or thought he was sacred. I don't remember why. I don't even remember why I never told my mother, not even when I got home, dusty and sweaty and she asked why I was late and I told her the bus had forgotten me and had to come back to pick me up so I could get home, or why I never told her years later, or anyone. Why I stopped reading during class, why I took The BFG back to the library because I knew that if you were really like him and could hear all of the plants and animals talking, you would hear their hurt. As you kept yourself alive, slowly, carefully, you would hear them die.

I don't know why I did it, but as I looked at that dead boy, so much older than me, but not so much older at all, I paused. I reached down, grappling around in my sweaty sock until I found the rock. I grasped the pebble, took it out of my shoe, feeling how hard and sharp it was, how tiny, like a miniature earth between my fingertips. I pressed until it hurt, leaving a small indent of itself on my skin, a bright pinprick of blood. I wiped my hand clean on the grass beside him and picked up a fallen leaf, still green. At its center, I placed my rock, taking the time to wrap it up, carefully as a shroud before I put the small bundle between his outstretched fingers.

Why I Hate Writing Metaphors

Lauren Nettles

from the stem of a strawberry

between your lover's teeth

or the rough touch of brick

against fingers;

you wrap yourself

so tightly in the blanket

of what everything should be

that you forget how

lovely it is that anything

simply is.

Autumn Nights

Calob Kilgore

There are things.

big things.

little things.

dark things.

And precious, horrific

meaning transfused into them through

dark veins.

Flowing like September midnights.

Pulsating hum of warm things

Cheek to chest.

"Don't let the big things break me"

"Don't let the dark things take me"

Movement in the North—

Lips to cheek.

And a sudden burst of color.

(A sudden twitch of flesh)

Unexpected.

Welcomed, nonetheless.

Little creeping things

up my spine

behind your eyes.

As we connect little constellations in my

freckles

When the night-drivers pass

and their incandescence

illuminates us two creatures,

believing in something.

With Me Still

Elisabeth Zachary

Will you gather up your worries, tie string around the bag, carry them, and come to me?

My spirit sister, always with me, with me still,

In sorrow seasons swirling,

Pushed by bad wind sucked through mountains,

From day to week to year after year,

And we sit steadfast and still, still waiting.

Early on, in that bleeding season, I came to you,

Driving westward in borrowed car with bloated belly,

From 101 to 405,

To sit together with you, but knowing we'd sit apart,

Sharing unspoken secrets and huddled like little girls alone and far from home.

Driving from the 405 to Lincoln Boulevard and on to you,

Rancid smoke from red hot burning distant hills,

A harsh Santa Ana blowing uneasy stillness across me, across us all,

I glimpse red-orange rays of saffron hue, burning bright and long,

Glowing orange and strong across puffy layers of cloud and smoke,

Blending slowly to gold then brownish afterglow. And, awestruck, I drive on.

And I am alone, coming to you, witnessing day to night, reminded,

Sister friend, that often,

So often, more than we have dreamt of is given,

For no reason,

And, for no reason, is taken away.

Thirst

Hamilton Barber

we ran down to the river

in the dead of night

surrounded by -

no, overwhelmed by -

what we hoped would be

a troupe of glistening

butterflies -

and expectation for the

tingly ecstasy of the

cold water lapping at our

curling toes.

we ran down to the river

over red, trampled signs

we didn't pause to read.

over broken twigs

from weary pines

and already-cut underbrush

from those that preceded

us.

the ache for that river consumes.

we ran down to the river

with plans to quell

the swelling ache

for the water

and took no time

to heed the weeping,

breaking hearts discarded

by those who came

already.

we ran down to the river

in the dead of night

and walked back

empty

when we found it quite dry.

And still we ache for the

cool embrace of the

water as we cry.

Window

Rebecca Sadler

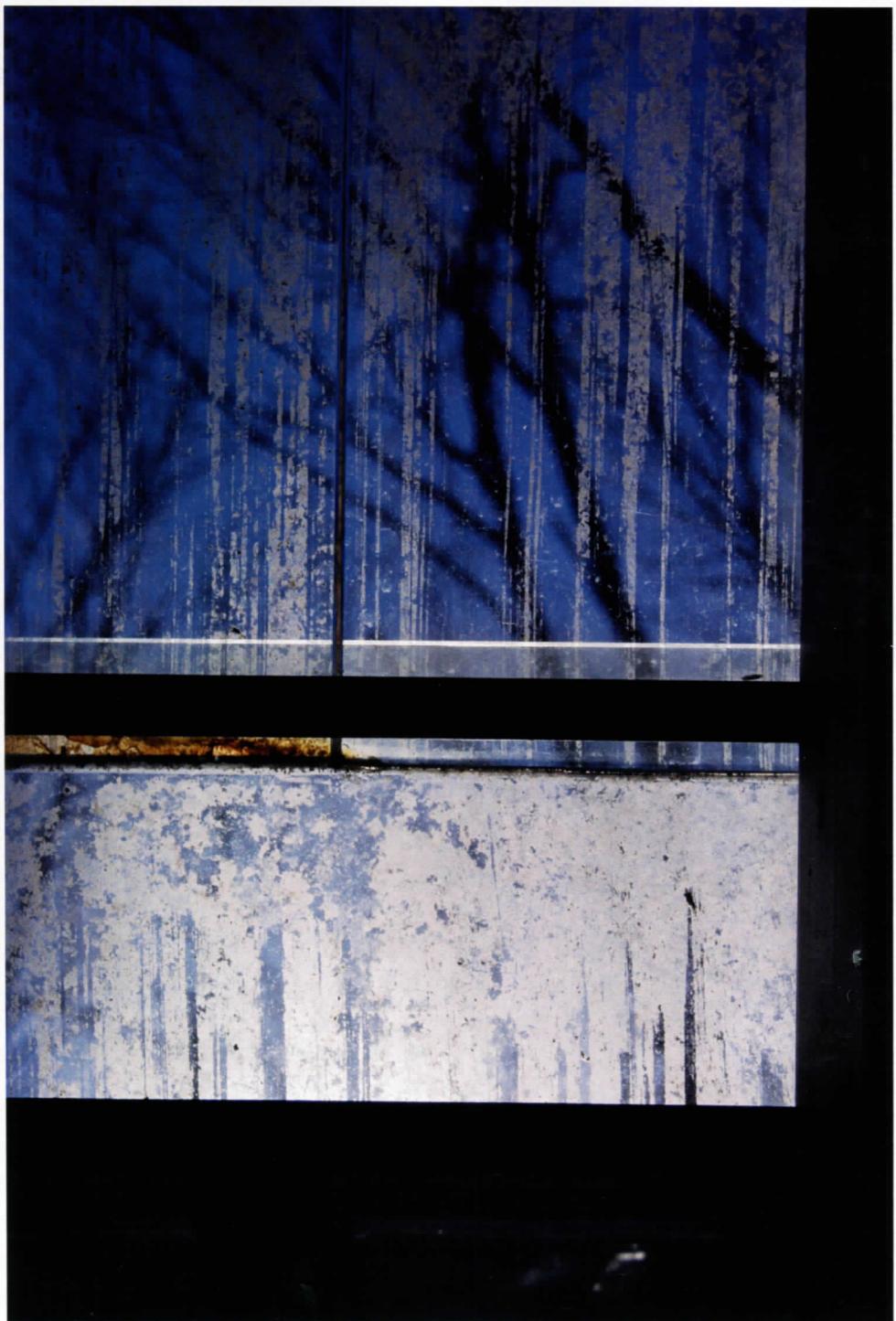
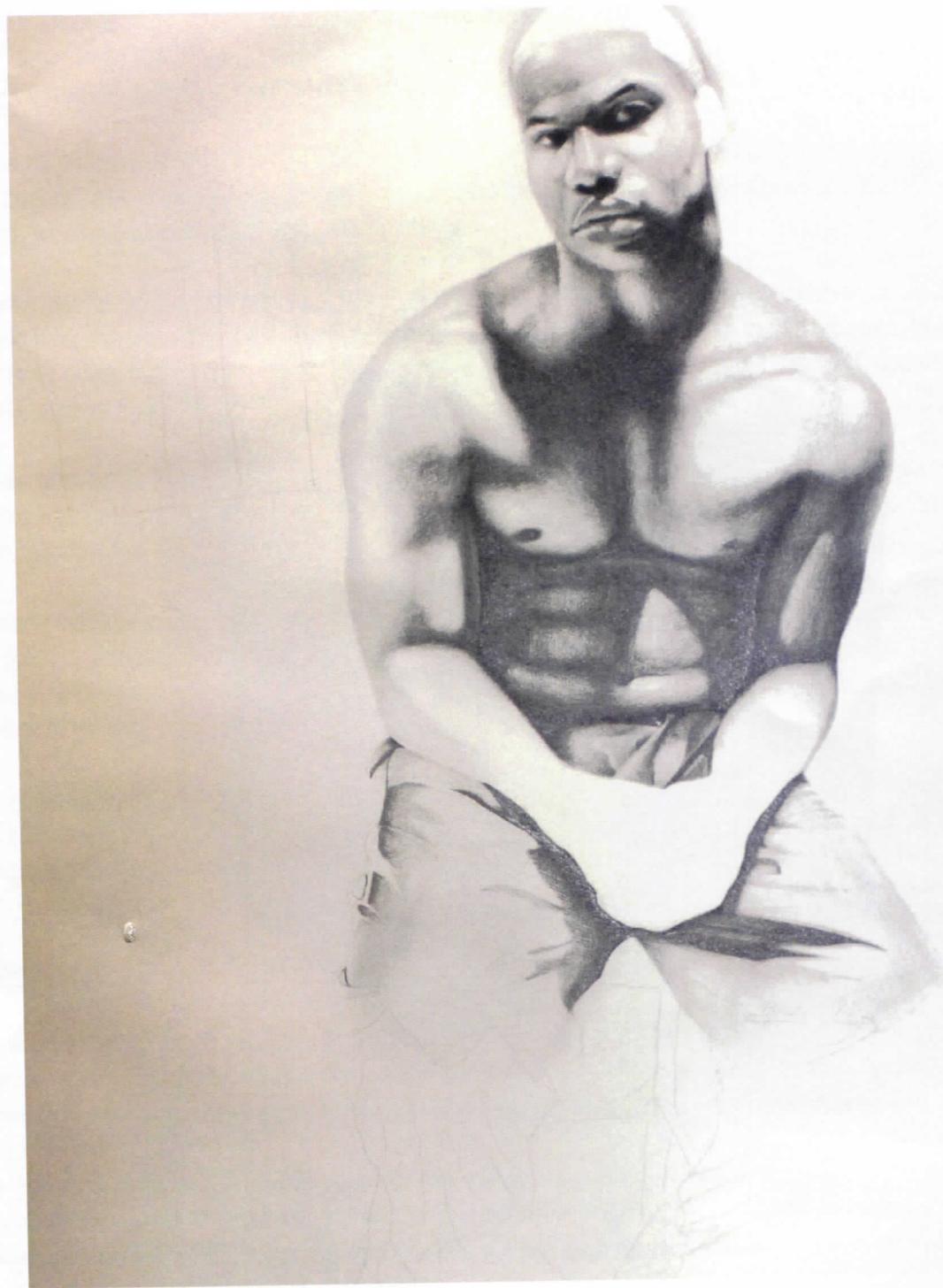


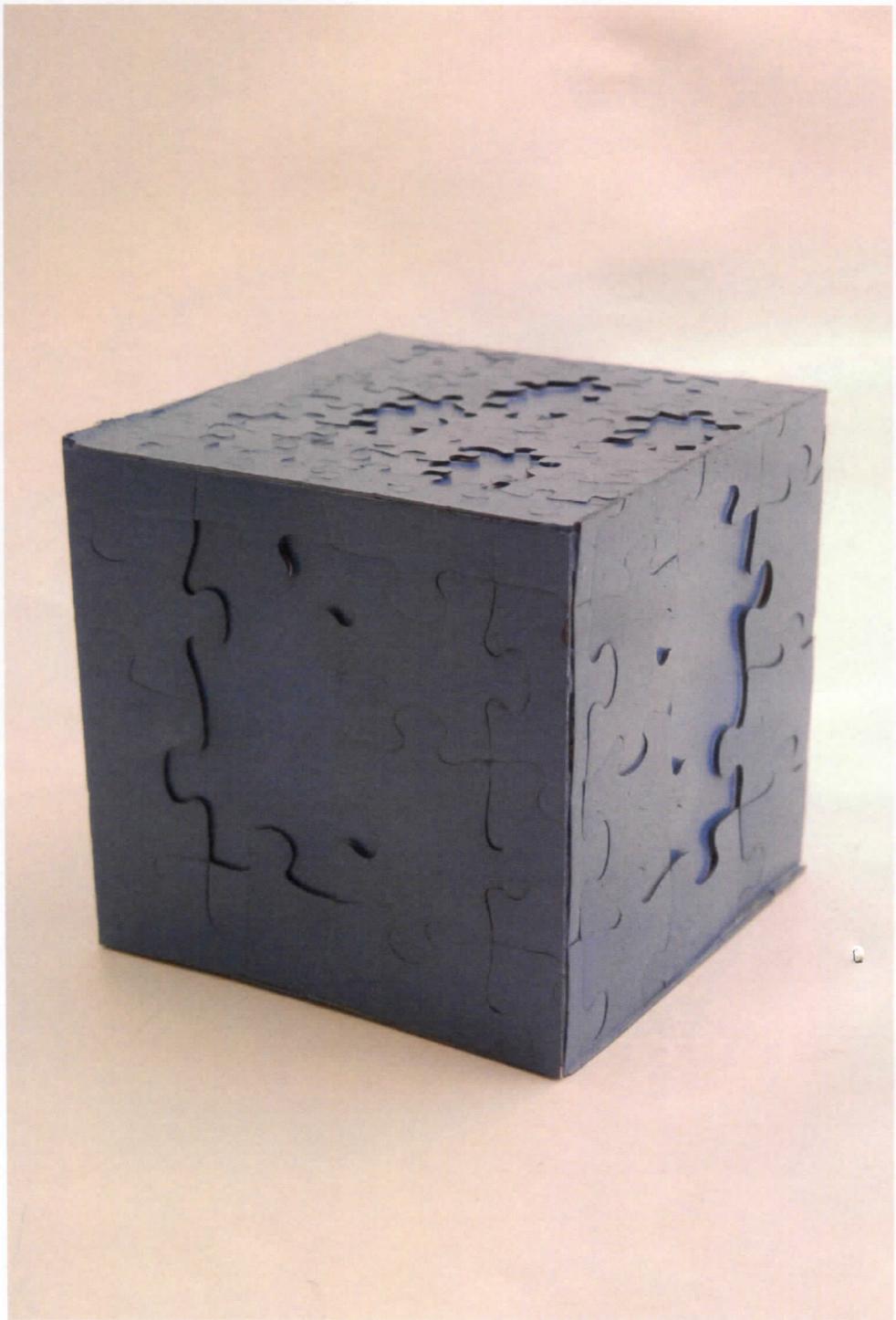
Figure Study

Antonio Snipes, Jr.



Double Space

Selina Angotti



Special Thanks

The *Sequoia Review* would like to thank each of the authors and artists who submitted to this year's edition. Through their creativity and courage, this publication finds its purpose. Also, thanks to the staff, who have shouldered the growing responsibilities of this program with equal parts dedication and commitment. Without you, the *Sequoia Review* would not have achieved so much.

I hope all participants in this program find the same feelings of endearment I do towards this publication, the students who make it possible, the English Department to which we claim homage, and the Publications Board, who has supported us every step of the way.

Thanks also to our Faculty Advisors Tom Balazs and Sybil Baker, who have maintained an unshakable faith in their students. Over the years, both have been invaluable resources to this program. We are grateful for Tom's support of the innumerable changes the *Sequoia Review* has made this year, and equally appreciative of Sybil's desire to continue in the new direction this organization has taken.

Credit must be given to all the professors of the English Department who encouraged their students to submit with renewed vigor, and who will undoubtedly continue to urge future students to do the same. With their collaborative efforts, the *Sequoia Review* will continue to reach new heights.

To each member of the Publications Board and Student Resource Center, the *Sequoia Review* gives thanks. The integrity of the program is strengthened by the hard work and cooperation expressed by these vital departments. I am confident each of you will continue to provide every resource needed to ensure its continued growth.

Lastly, a respectful thanks is given to you—the reader. Ultimately, we devote ourselves to your entertainment; that we might make the ordinary become extraordinary in your eyes. Thanks again for choosing this magazine; for supporting UTC; for playing your part in making this publication what it is: a living piece of UTC's artistic community.

The *Sequoia Review* is the arts magazine of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Any student may submit as many literary or artistic pieces as he/she so chooses. The manuscripts are reviewed anonymously by an editorial board of staff members. The art is selected in a like manner on the basis of quality and suitability for the magazine. The staff reserves the right to edit the manuscripts for clarity, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

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