

mid rivers
REVIEW



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MID RIVERS REVIEW

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St. Charles Community College • Cottleville, Missouri

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For Hal and Kevin and Tana—Fishers of Men

From the Editor

One of the pleasures of working on a publication like the *Mid Rivers Review* is reading submissions from long-time friends of the magazine as well as from those who have never been published. There are delicious lines in every envelope we open, and as the manuscript takes shape, some poems and stories become familiar—the paper airplanes of Lauren Pearson’s “Love Song,” Elizabeth Sheck’s haunting images of “streets growing sick and gold,” James Dodson’s “chilly dusk” laden with pearls.

Most everything, including the publication of the *Mid Rivers Review*, happened later than scheduled this year—an extension was filed for income taxes, an insurance claim was postponed again and again; even my beautiful granddaughter Carlie waited until her due date had passed to meet us. Still, I believe readers will find the work herein worth the wait. As always, I am indebted to Shannon Beahan for the patient accomplishment of countless thankless tasks; Lynn Greenberg and Karen Murray offered proficient and timely service. We are most grateful for the interdisciplinary cooperation of Gene Ditch in Music, Lonna Wilke in Theatre, together with Alison Ouellette-Kirby and Kathleen Sanker in Art for their work in showcasing our talented students. As always, Karen Jones makes things happen; Bob Gill makes things work. Aimee Sagaser makes us look good. Andrew Nicholson is a technological wizard. Once again, we appreciate the continued support of SCC administrators as well as our Board of Trustees.

This edition of the *Mid Rivers Review* is dedicated to three extraordinary members of our campus community whose retirement we celebrate but mark as bittersweet. Professor Hal Berry has led thousands of students through the tales of American History since this college opened its doors. During those years, he brought the stories of others to life on the stage, connecting actors and theatre-goers in experiences they will carry with them all of their days. The tenure of Dr. Kevin Patton, also a founding faculty member of SCC, has been characterized by his intelligence and integrity. More than anything, he is a man of peace. Tana Burton began at SCC as a student and ended as the Division Office Coordinator for Arts, Humanities, and Social Science, but no staff position we have will ever be large enough to hold her. Hal, Kevin, Tana—all are fishers of men.

Jacqueline Gray

Introduction

Playing with the Angels

A very good friend once said to me, “Mary, I believe ideas are your aphrodisiac.” I married him. Over the years, we devised this game called “playing with the angels,” Saturday mornings on the sun porch (evenings were good, too). The object was to let our thoughts take wing unimpeded. Then we’d “watch” them as they flitted and played. We were spectators. The one rule was no holding on, no weighing the “angels” down with over-interpretation. What a funny pair we were: I was the bookworm, passionate about poetry; he was the mathematician, not big on leisure reading. But we met in that metaphor about the angels: sometimes in that spot I almost understood thermodynamics; sometimes he really liked Lucille Clifton. We’d have this wonderful cross-pollination of thought. (Eventually, too, we had three children.) We were caught up in the poetry of everyday life.

In 2005 we left the Chicago suburbs and settled here in St. Charles. It was a joy to discover SCC and the wealth of opportunities it offers in the arts. I enrolled in my first creative writing class that year, and the following year submitted three haiku to *Mid Rivers Review*, becoming a frequent contributor. Mid Rivers is an apt name for a publication that welcomes writers from the college, the community, and far beyond. It speaks of the restless intuition of water: rivulets, underground streams, creeks, bubbling, murmuring, flowing together into great rivers. It feels so right being here in is this fertile confluence, to be taking part in this exciting exchange of ideas.

But let’s return to playing with the angels: whatever we may choose to call them, I believe that thoughts have wings and they thrive on our hospitality. Always there must be a place where they can alight and fly at will, where we can see them and hear them so that we return to our everyday lives refreshed and restored. This literary journal is just such a place. It is a privilege to be here at Jacqueline Gray’s invitation and to introduce this communal work: Volume 14 of the *Mid Rivers Review*.

Mary Kane

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LAUREN PEARSON

Recipient of the 2013 James Haba Poetry Award

LAUREN PEARSON

A Bookworm's Love Song

Every night I try to press myself
into the pages of my favorite book,
and every night I realize that the spine
is too weak to hold on to all the extra vowels.

So instead,
I tear out every single page.
I fold them into paper airplanes,
each with my lip stain on the wing,
and I scatter them in your yard.
I watch every one glide and soar
until it crashes, even after I've
woken the neighbors. Even after
your parents have called the police.
Even after you stand in front of me,
so close that all I can do is crush them
against your chest.

Snail Mail

The day I buried
your memories,
you sent me a postcard
with your love written
in blood. And despite
the pain you've brought to me,
my hands couldn't fathom
how to drop this last piece of you
into the grave.

You left no return address.
No way for me to slap
you with the stinging
knowledge of how thoughtless
I considered you to be.
So instead I filled the
back of a Polaroid
with everything I never said,
and placed it in the postman's hand.

I told him that if
he ever saw the person
from the picture, and
placed the Polaroid in
his hand, that I would
pay him in stories about
a broken life.

Or if he preferred,
fifty one-dollar bills.

My Life in a Week

I spend Mondays pulling pieces
of glass from the bottom of my feet.

Every shard reminding me of you.
Every line of blood bringing out your face.
And I smile with a bitterness,
as I throw the pieces away.

On Tuesdays I try to make
everything symbolic.

I sit at my window in utter bareness,
and whisper to the cold panes that if everyone
stopped lying, we'd all be left naked.

Wednesdays are the days I drink
only water, and eat only celery.

Hoping to purge my body of poison.
Hoping to drop another pant size.
Wanting to get high off double zero skinny jeans.

Thursdays I always attempt to draw,
but never get past the art of words.

It's so much easier to stay in
my comfort zone. Hang out with
punctuation, margins, and lines.

Fridays have a way of
being rather nostalgic.

It's never a happy trip down memory lane.
Too many wrong turns to be made.
Too many pot holes to get lost in.

Saturdays I binge on pizza,
realizing how much I love to eat.

The strangest feeling I'll ever know,
is that of feeling full. I'm so used
to feeling completely hollow.

Sundays are horribly predictable,
that I can always count on.

To diffuse my energy I break wine bottles.
You'd never believe how it feels to walk
over something you've completely destroyed.

Summer Mania

The summer air, I fear, brings a sort of mania.
Starting with the breath of Mother Nature's warm breeze
through my car window, and ending with my face pressed into the ground.
A sort of emotional and drug induced blackout. In between is a madness.
Flowers bursting from their shy buds inside the bones of my arms.
Fireworks up the filaments and out the anthers.
Sparking the tribal chants and patterns trying to live inside
my white blood cells. Forcing them to expand
and break, releasing a fever for sun and soil.
A sort of combustible stage production inside my veins.
Yes. The summer air, I fear, brings an awful mania.

Parts of Speech

Your lips are a permanent marker.
Inscribing your love for me over every inch of my body.
They have written your name on my collar bones.
Covered my hands in your fantasies.
Left adjectives of affection on my stomach and thighs,
and turned my back into a portrait of your lungs.
Promising to spend every breath you have left with me.
You laid out our someday's, and sealed them with a kiss.

More Than a Name

This morning I read your name for the very first time.
The sad thing is, any other day, I would have just seen a name.
But today I saw a cinderblock on the vital organs of those left in your wake.
Laying heavy in the mouths of those trying to remember the
importance of breathing, of moving on.

Today we are forced to remember that no one is ever just a name.
You were a heartbeat. A soul.
A vibration of the universe that felt anger and pain and love.

Someone should have told you that, the night you tried to find wings.

Alone—Hands Burning

There are people in this world who wrinkle your mind.
They talk, or smile, or watch the world with eyes
that clutch at the vague belief making up a soul,
and they redefine the way you blunder through life.

They stain your memory and when they leave,
as it seems precious things always do,
you're left all alone, hands burning,
with a feeling that time has indeed
slipped through your fingers.

ELIZABETH SHECK

Party Like It's 999
Vintage Style Party Tunic, Jewelry



On the Last Days of Summer, Prior to a Move:

When August fizzled out some time 'round ten 'til midnight, I stood at the crux of the hallway and the kitchen in a borrowed shirt that reeked of soap and musk and paper, and I watched my boy watch his, and chewed my thumb. The boxes weren't yet packed; they wouldn't be until tomorrow, and in three days we would start over, somewhere locked in now and someday with a cup of lukewarm tea in my small hands. And I felt it somehow clasped between his fingers and my own, our grip felt loose and chaste above peeled tiles, books, and boots, and I found I would not leave, to keep the summer whole and warm. I tried to break my hold on fragile sunsets, sighs and sweat, and I felt them as I curled against October, and I was old: thin and white in lace and crumbling fleabane, sweet and dry. And he was at the cusp of sky and dusky fields once green and gold, now black, and bent to card my hair through his dark hands. It was too late, you said, and you were right.

On Becoming Her: A Theory of Why I'm Single

A year had passed since She became me, pale and soft and fresh and tangled in the breaths I could not catch, birthed in sweat and screams and like the dew, She reeked of lavender and thyme, sun-starved and dying at the window; and out of wilting evergreens and ice turned black at sundown, She had found the Him that brought Her. And She was here, smooth and white and lovely there against the grey and reigning in the break of spring, cold and bitter as the dogwoods bloomed, and in the growing warmth alone, there was no one to catch Her.

On the Night I Realized I was Beautiful:

I was not there among the brick laid streets we walked and wound away from all we were, but I was here: in days past you and them and out of time. I was the west: past the grey and rolling hills I did not know along no rivers and no plains, it seemed long past the summer dank and peeling off like silt and sweat and youth that we had lost, as he had held my hand in June. And long past reconciling, there was God: from the edge of us and them to all I was, all thin in lace and cream and peach and blushed and burned from lessons I had learned: from him and you and them and Her before me. We were there as we had hoped, I heard Her say inside the glass, and my fear grew, and you promised it would pass. And that night when I believed you, I slept in peace.

Thoughts on September, Now That I Have a Man Again:

And autumn rose so early in our hearts, and in my eyes, and in the cool we were alone and I was cold like spring began: robed in violets in the dark with my red hair before my hands had touched his own, and we could feel the winter raging just past sunset, hot and blue. And I watched the willow sighing from behind a screened in porch, and the leaves along the brook-banks and the river and the streets were growing sick and gold. And I held tight to summer's seams and as I grasped for all the thistles my small hands could bleed for, so it was: that in his hands were mine and I was strong as The Arkansas, and in the growing cool I'd grown to him and he to me. As the cicadas died, I was my own.

There Are Ways:

There are ways
that
I've become me.
Glass skinned
 And bronze back
 and coal heart
 to burn
 The darkness.
And I have come
as brick
 and cot
 and cornflowers
to the rivers wide and deep
and filled
with strangeness
and
with
Mud.
I am my Her:
From him
 And him
 And him
 To
 Him
and not
My Own.
There was no way aside from being,
You had said.
And
 I
 had
 peace
when I believed you
 On
 That
 Night.
Cold

And pretty
And so close against the world
We
held our bones
 And teeth
 And eyes
 against
 The
 Deep
 And
all that killed us.

Dreaming with Daddy's Train Set
Silver Gelatin Print



HARLEIGH HECK

Proof of Birth

I have a scar
From when I was young
melted crayons were tar
and my mother still sang,

The curtains caught first,
Then the couch
This is why I don't wear skirts
And I slouch

No, I lied.

It's from basketball
My head hit second
Right after my fall
The cuts could never mend

I was bald for a year,
They let me wear a cap,
In high school I didn't cheer,
Sorry to cry, I'm such a sap.

No, I lied again.

It's pathological you know
You might be shocked
It's been there since I was born, No.
I'll never tell, that memory is locked.

The Nothing Page

My nothing page consists of nothing,
Not words or sayings,
Not poems or songs,
My nothing page is paper,
Not water or ice,
Not fire or coals,
My nothing pages has lines
Not green but red
Not yellow but blue
My nothing page has pencil on it
Not pen, nor ink
Nor paint, nor oil
My nothing page has holes
No rips, no shreds
No cuts, no dirt
My nothing page is mine,
Not yours or theirs
Not hers or his
My nothing page has nothing
Is paper, has lines,
Has pencil, has holes
And is mine.

Stones and Sticks

Don't tell me
that another memory must
be swept under the rug,
don't say that they were right,
the stones
and sticks
never did break me,
Don't tell me
that I wasn't beaten with them
because I was,
but
I have won
because I know
that they were wrong,
to this day I show my scars
proudly
because my beauty is not in my face
but my soul.

Eve of Spring

Moonlight at dusk,
frosting the dark sky.
The smile is now a husk.
Burning diamonds always lie.

Closed now, not until,
spring arrives. Sleep,
now the winter kill.
The blankets lay steep.

Beneath the slumber,
a single rose lay,
and then, grows numb-er,
with each passing day.

Spring come, Winter flee,
The rose held the only key.

RACHEL MITCHELL

The Forgotten Tale
from the Tomorrowland Series, Digital Photography



GAYNELL GAVIN

Continuing Legal Education Rondeau

Remember to ask at intake, always.
To test sense of time, use holidays.
Misuse of a child for adult sexual gratification
is the working definition.
Use spontaneous play.

Ask who was there, did they
take pictures? Anyone tell you what to say?
Her greatest fear will be retaliation.
Remember to ask at intake.

Ask can this child communicate
as witness? Can she translate
experience into language, express recollection?
Another fear is humiliation.
Listen for idiosyncratic detail.
Remember to ask.

Generations in Transit

The grandmother a table
Away from me looks about five
Years older than the young mother
And at least ten times more stunning
Even if her long, blond locks are a

Bleached cliché. Could she be...
Bunny? Bunny, how did I come
To be so battered, tired, old, such a
Frump? Bunny, help me, help, help
Me, Bunny. Bunny takes a laughing,

Blond, burbling, bubbly baby on her
Lap. I love Bunny, the daughter, the baby.
They are so happy. I want to scream. A
Perfect, perfectly enviable combo of
Glamour and the maternal, Bunny can't

Hear me. Don't leave me, Bunny, please,
Bunny, you want to be friends with me,
Please, please, Bunny. Susan B. Anthony is
Not the mother of us all. It's you, Bunny, our
Beautiful Mommy Forever, take me with you,

Rapture me, please. She leaves. I wander past
Dubya on TV Burbling like a Bubbly Babbling
Baby on terrorists, past: Starbucks, ATM,
Bookstore en route to the gate of my departure.

My Sister Speaks of Cats

I tell my sister our brother is sometimes
not so communicative, and my sister says,
“Well, hello, do not even get upset over it

because that’s like saying, I resent my cat for
not doing the dishes. It’s heartbreaking, trying
to make cats do dishes. We offer to teach the
cat, explain how to wash dishes, explain how

much it would mean to us, it would show the
cat loves us. We show the cat how to do dishes
and cry when he still doesn’t do them. Does
that make any sense? Cats can’t do dishes.”

Maybe not, but I am always for the underdog.
Underdoggerel is my first language.

Alice Paul and Patty Duke

Summer-night sounds, air, awakening, remember 1963?—Mom taking us to hear the president at Miami airport while she and Dad were separated, while the president looked small, far away, fenced in on the airfield, the first, the only Catholic. When I'd looked at the pictures, pointed to his, said, "I want that one," Dad laughed, "All women want that one," and although my parents had left the church, they were maybe a little proud. We all were. A few days before Thanksgiving, Florida, warm, Spanish-tiled, pretty, filling me—as only loss can—with longing for the Illinois-gray November of home, just before Mom picked us up for break, our principal on the loud-speaker, "The president has been shot." A little later, "Boys and girls, the president is dead." Our president is dead? Mom, we just saw him. Home, I watched his funeral on black-and-white TV, the horses' hooves on pavement, thirty years later, my fifth-

grade-school-assignment-Thanksgiving-break-diary

in the attic said more about backyard kickball and wearing my hair in a flip with one of those broad stretch headbands like Patty Duke. So many moves later, I don't know where that diary is, but it fills me—the way loss does—like when my son threw away all his grade-school writing, when I let our little dog out after work instead of putting him on a leash and walking him, a car killed him—it was my fault—, when I told my mom she must leave her apartment and go downstairs to eat, when the note of rambling hysteria in his wife's voice told me her fear my dad would not live out the day, when the day came that he didn't, that my aunt didn't, my mom, no wonder I'm so tired; but Émile Coué, Dr.Phil of your day, every day in every way, aren't we getting

better and better? Look, here's Patty Duke again on the farm on

HBO as suffragist AlicePaulHilarySwank's mom—no, wait, I'm confused. It's mad housewife Carrie Snodgrass, looking like Patty, PattyCarrie telling AliceHilary—who's come home sad and exhausted—to snap out of it, when you put your hand to the plow, you can't put it down until you get to the end of the row, get back on the suffrage trail, and finish the row, yes, by God, here's PattyCarrie, looking at least sixty—we were ash-blond, barely blond, still Clairol promised us, it's true blonds have more fun, so darling, Patty and me, only she was more darling and famous. AliceHilary young and beautiful, Hilary's web site—all those maddening pop-ups—, Alice, decades gone, but not to me, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Lucy Burns, Hannah Senesh, Irena Sendler, Alice Paul, you are not dead to me, although I am not brave. If they were going

to torture me, shoot me, jail me, feed me slop with worms, force slop down my throat with a tube, make my mouth and nose bleed, make me puke my guts out for days, hang me by my wrists in a cell for demanding the vote, I'd say, Hey guys, OK, I'll eat and not vote, not to worry, enough already. I love you Patty Duke. The Diary of Anne Frank, AnneFrankMilliePerkins made me sob my guts out, but every week on TV, better than the Breck girl, Patty—your life secretly hard off-screen—, you gave me cheery all-American-and-Brit-girl stereotypes to live by, helped me put off learning the inevitable great disappointment: World War II did not defeat evil once and for all after all. Years before Mom got our local NOW chapter's Alice Paul Award, you gave me fifth-grade hope, helped me put my hand to the plow, but will I finish the row? I oppose oppression of women, and everyone. I really do, and I oppose mortality too. I'm against dementia and death, I'm against it, damn it, and I want my fifth-grade-school-assignment-Thanks-giving-break-diary. I want it right here, and I want it right now.

DAVID HOLLINGSWORTH

Writing Process

The drill bit stutters,
biting into hair, blood, and skull,
spitting out bone shards as proud as diamonds.
Luminous rivulets of thought
ooze into my eyes and ears,
down my neck.

The drill eats through sleep,
gnawing old dreams and new.
Among the spattering on the walls
cracked fears and hopes,
half-chewed.

The drill whines sadly, retracting.
Coffined thoughts freed,
and from the gory wreckage,
a word.

Tomorrow scabs today.
Begin again.

To Vladimir Nabokov

When I was three and free
(free that is from the ways
of time and memory),
seeing fluttering days
of summer fly and fall
through windows on the streets
in pantomime,
you said the word that cheats
and went beyond the wall
one final time.

I lost somehow a wing
of my world that never
could exist—enchancing
something gone forever.
Twenty years later I
heard it, touched it, saw it,
this long echo:
fatal word of forfeit—
(that's that) which means good-bye
thou too must go.

Nimue at Dawn

The cold is quick coming up the feet to my ankles although the sun is out and bright up in the sky over the swaying trees I feel my hips swaying now swaying in the sun as the river chills my legs naked all the way through head to smallest toe when he stepped on my toe last night in the light of the campfire I thought I'd take it any way I could any contact I could get with him whose hair is soapy in green water I wonder if all that weight makes him warmer than a thin one I was a plump kid don't eat so fast mom said you'll choke famine and poverty are my diet but I need food sometimes he likes warm marshmallows fire-charred the birds smelled bacon this morning I know my feathers twitched when he left my dream don't go before I get to you look up and see me striding thigh-deep in the cold current don't pay any notice to the goosebumps but my sunny skin and lean body in motion for you like the motion of this lake flowing only to wash the lather from his scalp if my hands were watersmooth and quick to chill him when he said my name the wrong name I said it strangely who would've thought your own name would ever sound odd from your own mouth but so natural like music from his three times like a church bell I can taste his name with a smile ask him about the tent why have you packed your tent in the morning today this morning before I came to you in the river naked and hopeful wait there he goes away to shore while I drift like a broken stick open-handed clutching air.

AMANDA PFISTER

Euclid Branch Elementary I, 1966-2008
2008—Archival Inkjet Print (2010)



MARY KANE

La Strada

After "Euclid Branch Elementary I" by Amanda Pfister

A light is on in 104B
Mrs. Doyle's classroom
Down the hall from the band room
But no one is there.

And the tall supply cabinet is locked
Where she used to keep the poster paints
Lefty scissors, Crayolas and glitter.
Mrs. Doyle isn't there.

Her desk is bare
Except for the telephone
In a white Formica wasteland
Its wires dangling.
No one is there.

Daylight frames the edges
Of the arching canvas shades
Making the dust motes shimmer
Star-shine from an alternate universe
Mid-way . . .
Somewhere.

The low bookcases are there
Like the brightly painted cars
Of an abandoned circus train.
Linked together still.

They wait in patient silence.
Only the colors are crying—
Red. Yellow. Blue.
No one is there.

The rug for story time is gone.
Sneaker prints stipple the bare floor
Wild geometries traced on concrete
Footprints in all directions.
But no one is there.

Perhaps the children have run away
To find the lost clowns, the fire eater, the acrobats.
Won't someone please pick up the phone
And call them back again?

Purple Is . . .

The mist that rises
From a field of clover
The dawn's elation
That the night is finally over.

The mulberry wine of summer
Sipped from a Mason jar
The fuzzy pair of purple dice
That dangled in your car.

An orchid pressed in a diary
Strains of a jazz quartet
The lavender scent of aftershave
A memory you won't forget.

It's "Who's Sorry Now?"
Played on a saxophone
Listening to "Deep Purple"
When you're all alone.

The flat, bisque tone of sunset
The softening of the light
The longing low of cattle
Cries of homing birds in flight.

The iridescence of a butterfly
Collecting sunlight on a bough
Gathering strength to fly again
Only, not quite now.

SOPHIE BREITMEYER

After Poe

She moved in the moonlight—
her hair waving in the wind.
Never have I seen such a sight.

Our two spirits the judge will bind,
and our souls shall become one,
but she and I are not alike.

Her life is done
and mine has just begun.

JORDAN STARKEY

Multi-Verses

To Will Shakespeare

When I beweepe my poetaster's plight
And rain upon mine earthbound muse a curse,
I fondly like to ponder rhymes I right
Across the globes throughout the Multiverse:
In realms untold of infinitely more,
"The Bard" each court has crowned me in its eye,
Yet vanity enrobed has bared a bore
With all illusions skinned and boned a lie;
In further kingdoms measureless beyond
Where worse to weeds my laurels wear afoul,
I naked as a poor forked fool despond
Till wretched words be stripped down to a howl;
Most cheering yet are worlds of madness shorn
In which such doggerel here is never born.

DEAN MCDONNELL

Dimensional Travel

Stranded on the edge of sanity...falling...
Desperate grasp for an alternate future,
This awakening past edge of reality
Curing this toxic mind...clean.
Walk beside it too close...too close...
Hurling beyond fathomable spacious thought
While fulfilling out these infinite paradigms
But wait...perplexed...caught...
Exploding ideas of conspired evil fact
Only to shine with collective fractals of opal extract
Fall through the final pass geometrically aligned
All seven energy points are now straight and assigned
Taken aback...speechless...no complete thought
Flash it all came back a second later
Cosmic waves joined as one while the observer remains
Pass through so graceful so true so fun
Only you know what this new imprint has begun

KRISTEN GARCIA

Sometimes I Let Myself Believe

When you laugh, the blood from
your nose runs over your lips
and I can't decide
if I want to hit you
again
or kiss you

The tattoos on your skin
were maps of places I'd never go
But I danced my tongue along them all the same

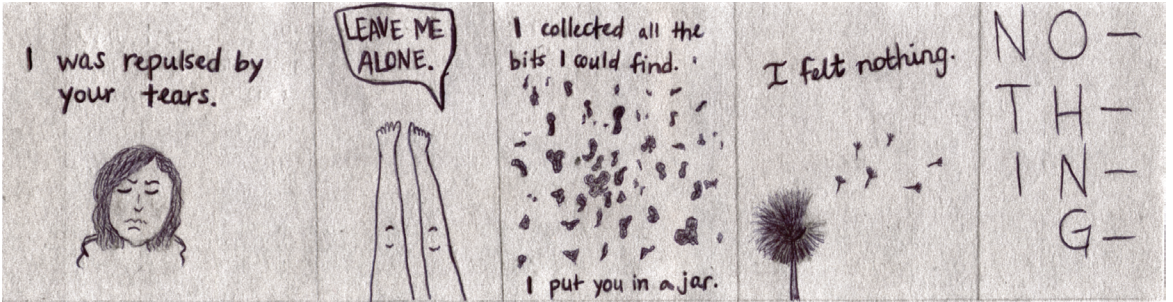
There's blood on my shirt
But it's not mine
It's not yours either
I'm sorry

Light from the passing cars
Frames your head like a halo
Sometimes I let myself believe
You're good for me
Sometimes you are

I wanted to mark you
Show the world to whom you belonged
But the scars faded over time
I think I may have gone too far
With the bullet
in your chest

Loving you
was putting a band aid
on a wound
that required stitches

Guilty



PATRICK DOREY

A Nonconformist's Guide to Self-Determination (or How to Break Your Mother's Heart)

Mothers can be very critical.

Not a startling disclosure, but a welcome unburdening of a closely held opinion.

I suppose the criticisms are meant as teaching opportunities, though my own mother uses them for the secondary purpose of entertainment. I'm OK with that. If it makes her happy to tell me that my facial hair looks like the business end of a bonobo monkey, then I'm happy for her. Her criticisms are harmless, and sometimes they actually are educational. She was right - alcohol is a poor substitute for female companionship. Easier to come by perhaps, but the former is a depressant while the latter is a stimulant.

Mothers also have a supernatural ability to divulge a lifetime of disappointment with a handful of words. Mom's most recent criticism, pronounced during a relative's wake, clearly exemplifies this skill. Her festival of disapproval in her youngest son began when I showed no interest in viewing the body of the dearly departed. Call me sentimental, but I prefer my last memory of my uncle to be one of him quaffing a Miller Lite and reminiscing about his days in the Air National Guard. A horizontal view of him in a taffeta-lined box is not a memory I care to establish.

My approval ratings plunged deeper still when I refused the Memoriam Card she had retrieved for me. Mom is an avid collector. She keeps them in her *Book of the Dead*, a scrap book of deceased relatives. Once you've joined the ranks of the perpetually inert you get a page in the book for a photo, Memoriam Card, obituary and a note on the cause of death. It is an unsettling combination of family photo album and autopsy report.

With the wake only half over the final fulfillment of her disapproval was as inevitable as my eventual inclusion in the *Book of the Dead*. It came as Mom scanned the entries in the guest book. (I think she uses it as a TV Guide type of listing of upcoming events. Aunt Martha's hand-writing looks pretty shaky. I better make sure I've got a blank page and a good picture ready.) My name wasn't in the guest book. I never sign the book. And I've never wondered why I never sign the book. But I was prompted to explore the issue when Mom managed to summarize all my failings with one simple statement.

With disappointment in her eyes and love in her heart, she looked at me and said, "You never do what you're supposed to."

Now use of the word never is perhaps an exaggeration. After all, I almost always keep accurate records of my charitable contributions for tax purposes. But I do tend to be a bit of a nonconformist. I give standing ovations while sitting down. I don't care who won American Idol. I don't even know how to text. And I sometimes begin sentences with the word and. It is interesting that I embrace with pride these tendencies that so revolt my mother. But how can we learn, how can we evolve if we always do what we're supposed to?

Where would we be if the Sons of Liberty had let the king's tea be unloaded instead of dumping it into Boston Harbor? How could Charlie Brown hope to lose his gullibility if Lucy just held the football in place? Would the world be a better place if Tom Cruise had remained at the seminary instead of going to Hollywood? (Well, yes it would actually.)

My nonconformist ways began in childhood, a matter of testing parental patience. I suppose I'm still doing it, though the consequences have changed. When I was a child I refused to exchange the Sign of Peace with old Mr. Grumich at mass. (He had two hairs growing off the knuckle on his index finger - what would you do?) The result was no pancakes with my Denny's Grand Slam breakfast after church. Now when I refuse to look at corpses that are dressed up like department store mannequins I get a gentle head shake and a blunt assessment of all my shortcomings. That, at least, is preferable to a loss of pancakes.

I think my mother must keep a list of *Things You Are Supposed To Do*. Probably has it typed up in an appendix at the end of the *Book of the Dead*. I've no doubt her list is both proper and practical and relates to such topics as cemetery protocol, personal hygiene and public restroom etiquette. But I've my own list, and if it is impractical, it is satisfying none the less.

- *Hold your face up to the rain and let it soak down into your BVDs.*
- *Try chocolate on every food at least once.*
- *Do the Duck Dance like you mean it.*
- *Get lost in the woods once in awhile.*
- *Vote for a principle, not a party.*
- *When you can't get that song out of your head, sing it out loud until your throat hurts.*
- *Remember those who have died in a way that makes you smile.*

I make my own choices. Some are good (I proposed to the only sober woman who accepted a second date); some are not so good (one week beyond the expiration date actually is too long for a package of bologna). But they are my choices, not those of society, religion, politics or peer pressure. (They are, however, occasionally influenced by the consumption of an unhealthy amount of Pinot Noir.)

I don't high five or fist bump; I don't send out Christmas cards. My address is not painted on the curb, and I don't put salt on my French fries. I drink red wine with seafood; I channel surf during Super Bowl commercials, and I never, ever view the body.

LORILISE WOOD-SCARBOROUGH

Entreaty

Take me
Far from here on journeys rare,
Adventures I've neither dreamt nor dared.

Soothe me
Waters calmer than those I've paddled,
Or on sultry afternoons spent.

Excite me
With woven, wicked lies,
Layering contrived alibies.

Scare me
Put me in danger next to you,
Allow me to wonder what is true.

Show me
Faraway people in nations unknown,
Customs, cultures I cannot own.

Release me
From my perceived and real stresses,
Delivering escape amidst redresses.

Love me
In hushed tones, with
A touch that shatters resolve to my bones.

Invade me
Charge my mind with your purchases,
Discount my concerns with strong finishes.

Surprise me
Wind your way through my eras and ages,
Though days ago I closed your pages.

Where I Found Betsy

I looked for you in the sunset
But saw only bands of purple and pink,
Wrapped around the sky cerulean.

I looked for you along the river
Icy current informing me you were not here,
I stayed to cry my tears.

I looked for you in winter's bare-branched trees
Spotting nest.
After abandoned nest.

I looked for you in the sadness
Finding it filled my heart,
Because I couldn't reach you no matter what.

I looked for you among memories
Clinging to remnants of music and laughter,
Mine to hold ever after.

Finally I looked for you in my prayers
Hearing definitively heaven is where
You laugh and dance-now without care.

BRAYDEN PAGLUSCH

Spectre Trees
Digital Photograph



BRITTANY GRIFFIN

Ode to the Sky

I long to feel your chilly breath brush past my skin
Nose numb and eyes stinging, the icy dryness
Causing me to blink before tears blur the scene before me.
Your cerulean gown renders me speechless.
Puffs of white cotton swirl around me playfully,
Evading my touch as I reach my hand out with the
Giddy intent to catch your attention;
However, I know it is a foolish attempt
Nothing can anchor you down, not even the
Passion of a lover who has given up the ground
Upon which her feet stand, just to feel your embrace.

You are freer than life, and death—
Your vast curtain of night and day is the only thing that
Liberates me from the burden of reality
Yet it is far from my reach.

I beg of you, make passage for my lost soul.
Even now I can feel the warmth of your maker
It is calling on me to spread my wings and join you in a
Celestial covenant.
You have presented me with the wings to explore the unknown
But your azure beauty betrays me, as my mortal feathers
Slip past your ethereal presence, leaving me
Trapped in my cruel and perishable reality, to rot and join
Icarus's army of fools in the depths of this forgettable existence.

JAMES DODSON

Demons

I'm sick for the big sin
And the piercing rain that follows
Scraping and clawing and howling at wind

Watching my soul burn within
Corrupt tears I soon will swallow
I'm sick for the big sin

Rivers run red begin to spin
Malicious eyes are not so hollow
Scraping and clawing and howling at wind

Thunder screams and sheds its skin
As do the crows that soon will follow
I'm sick for the big sin

Rain kisses your lips and rolls from my chin
The fiery faint smell of hell below
Scraping and clawing and howling at wind

My path to madness will soon begin
The demon seed I choose to sow
I'm sick for the big sin
Scraping and clawing and howling at wind

Jewelry
for Jessica Lynn

Bright and warm like rays shone through
Moving through your mind from wall to wall
Bouncing in and down, up and around
Motion in rhythm and harmony

Cascading down like brilliant flames
Burning like the whitest rivers
Trees sing and birds sway to the melody
Created by your memories

As a concert rolls and rocks you through
So to do the jingles you whistle and purr
From the time you wake with the morning sun
To the chilly dusk that brings you pearls

Pillow Thought

Awake in bed staring at the smooth white curves of her legs. Tomorrow I'll leave as I always do, floating away in fear riding a large wave of bullshit excuses. Hopefully, so large it'll carry me south to the icy shores of some random glacier, cold and alone I'll fit right in. Maybe I'll have a swim with the fishes and they can give me a lesson on running. Hopefully she'll know that it really isn't her and I am just a coward. I couldn't say exactly what I'm afraid of as if it would matter anyway, but I most certainly am. Anyone would be fortunate to see the beauty wrapped in blankets before me. Finalizing my plans for departure, she stirs and rolls to face me. She knows. I know she does and she has for a while, but she won't say anything. Drives me crazy, but what do I expect, her to beg me to stay? Don't be an asshole. You're right, I'll just let her know how I feel in the morning, maybe she'll get it, and maybe she'll know that I'd just get in her way, slow her down, not love her the way she deserves. Maybe, but that's all bull, and you know it. If that's true why then why am I leaving? Sure I'm scared, isn't everybody? It's natural. She's so pretty right now, with the moonlight dancing on her skin and her hair in a mess. I stay a little too long while I'm kissing her forehead and she hums a playful groan that most only dream of. Her eyes gently, gradually open and out of nowhere I find myself crying. Placing her hand on my cheek and smiling she kisses my nose, and my lips, and wipes my tears. It'll be alright she says and squeezes me close.

Wings

Are angels aware
of their feathery arms that reach for the sky—
radiating fluorescent hues, like the
peach and cream colored rays
of a quiet and cloudy sunrise
or of the gentle hum
of weightless music that follows in their terrific wake?

Do they take notice to the fluttering vibrations,
that tickles our souls like
the soft kiss of a lost dandelion?

Do they see the brilliant glow
just above their brow
flooding lonely corners with golden mediation?

Can they feel the reaching fingers of desperate hands
and see the dirt beneath their nails
from digging and clawing
at the path laid before them?

Can they smell
the bleach washed sheets
covering the much used mattress
of our house
of healing?

Do they visit
in their dreams, the red-eyed
family of the recently deceased, or kiss the dry cracked
lips of the fallen ill as they lie in wait for
harp music and pearly gates?

Do they nourish
the bulging bellies
of those less fortunate
and do they forgive the misplaced
complaints of those well fed?

SUSAN K. SHORTT

Stonehenge 2012

Crushed by the weight of disappointment
My soul was heavy as I gazed at the ring of stones
Overwhelmed by the sheer effort of it.
The enduring monument of primitive rock, built with acceptance of pain and loss
To reach upward in defiance of impediment—
How small my failures seemed at that. How light compared to the sacrifice.
Did one setback break them?
One obstacle divert their course?
I was shamed at the insignificance of all my discontent
And reminded of the resolution required to achieve success.
As the sun broke the clouds that raced across the plain,
I cut those weights that forced me to ground
And my soul heaved and hoisted its stones back into place.

KIRSTEN IVERSON

The Four Right Chords

It took the four right chords
to leave everything behind,
the four right chords that inspired me
to cut my hair
and sink my teeth
into a damn
juicy ham
sandwich—
just because you told me not to,
the four right chords that led me
to flee from you on swollen feet.

The next virtuosa
to hear the four right chords
will rock
your heartstrings
like a pathetic,
plastic,
electric
guitar
stolen from a trailer,
the same way
you played mine

and they'll burst
into smithereens
beyond repair
because that's
what the crowd wants.
Because this time
you'll get
what's coming to you.

And I'll be waiting
here with my radio
for that requiem song
whose progression climbs the highest
chromatic scale
with a burst
of forte
that sends a title wave
of goose bumps
over my skin

and she
will smash
her guitar on the amplifiers
like an axe on fire wood
and you
will be nothing but a castrato
emasculated by a fierce frequency
to end
this deceptive cadence
with the four right chords
that could kill you.

And at that moment I'll know
because I've been waiting for that holophonic
high
since the day we met.

CHRIS REICHENBERG

Night

Why does one bother with the rest of the day
the slow lurch of sunrise
waking chaos stirs throughout
sky fades like an old yellow t-shirt
planetary movement is the velvet curtain of the final act

Peaceful song of crickets seep through the glass
the soul has depth, but no window to see
shadows seep over the corners in the room
dust bunnies eerily stare from across the floor
slightest sounds distract all thought

See the beauty in the workings of a web
silken lines, perfectly laid like a hanging snowflake
light refracts in purple, silver, and green
early words still cling to the night

The soul has depth
tops of trees begin to glow
I can still see the world asleep
broken sky is still
breathtaking glimpse changes by the minute
lungs fill with damp air
short lived peace

JOHNATHAN C. LAMBERT

Calamitous Mistress
Silver Gelatin Print



A Woman Knows
Silver Gelatin Print



Clarity

Beautiful is the night
That holds the stars in its palm.
Thoughts have never been so clear
As when I gaze into the diamonds above.
The ocean does not roar—
It sings.
The land does not take—
It gives.

Never has there been anything more beautiful—
More beautiful than the sky, the stars, the ocean or the fields.

This land brings peace to all who know it.

MICHAEL PEEPLES

What Lies Before Me

I stood with the Earth before me,
a beautiful mix of blue
and white and shades of green beneath,
with piercing light cresting the curve
of the vast sphere of life.

And there with the Earth before me
I focused on all the wrong things.

People who had my attention,
and pulled me from the majesty
I saw, are no longer around,
the tears I cried for them have
washed away the blinders I wore.

And there with the Earth before me
I saw the world for the first time.

When looking behind, it all seems
so clear, each mistake obvious
as a black spot on a pure heart,
scars of doubts like canyons across
the scope of a continent.

And now with the Earth before me
I welcome it with open arms
open mind
and
open soul.

BILL KRISTEN

Flight Plan for the Disenchanted

Grant us courage in our audacity as
we linger with irreverence in a shadow cast
by a no loitering/no littering sign near
the loins of a rusted, belching leviathan
that must have been a god of some sort once upon a time.

Save us from red dust coughed by hell-boilers
that would dull and tarnish our image of self
predefined but never redefined by this gritty world
in its zeal to strike a fatal blow.

Give us safe return to *Avenue Whatever*.

Along rows of ruined houses so ancient, sooty, and
sagging we cringe at the wrath of wrecking crews
who deconstruct and bury the yearnings of our youth
under rubble of indifference.

Cleanse us from unconcern for our fellow souls
who wander and wonder with us through a twilight
search for meaning in brief encounters, those midnight
tangles of passion that never last beyond glare of daybreak.

Don't punish us for eavesdropping on conversations
about hope and vision carried on slag-scented April breezes
that can't even hint at what spring is supposed to be or
what it may have been before our future evaporated into
disillusions.

Take away our sins of desperation cum lethargy
In our reach for ecstasy so far from arms too tired to stretch
beyond the foggy breathed sneer and scoff of carbon saints
who preach at *enfants terribles** such as us while we too often
cover in confusion and fear.

Lead us away from evening hikes through trashed meadows.

Frayed at the hem of tomorrow and seduced by anticipation
we dream of spinning scherzo-like toward renewal of morning,
but unable to fly away from enchantment of nighttime darkness
where we clutch and embrace a lust as feeble and faded
as the shine of leftover stars in predawn smog.

While we shiver in a chill of disenchantment too rational for hope,
is our only option a prayer in vain for an ironic parody of truth
in the mechanics of casual love?

**A French phrase referring to individuals who do not always fit the traditional
customs and predefined "normal" of society, for example, non-conformists who
challenge the status quo.*

MICHAEL RANDMAN

In the Garage
Ultrachrome Print



TAYLOR DANIELLE MORRIS

Home

I don't know how I got here.

Actually, that's a lie. I do know how I got here. I drove here but I don't know why I am here. Actually, I suppose that's a lie too. I do know why I am here. I am here because of the dream. It was so real, so vivid that I had to make sure that he was okay.

I gently untangle myself from his arms and silently dress in the corner.

I watch him sleep. The steady rise and fall of his chest. The soft curl of his lips as he burrows his face deeper into my now vacant pillow. He looks so peaceful, so much like my Elliot, the man I fell in love with. I wonder what he is dreaming about.

I trace the outline of his lips before I bend low and place a gentle kiss on his temple. He shifts towards me, perhaps instinctively, and I still, praying that he doesn't wake up. I can't be here when he wakes up.

He only sighs before snuggling deeper into my pillow and I exhale a breath myself that I hadn't even realized I was holding. I watch him for a bit longer, almost as if I am trying to take a mental photo of his face so that I will never forget what he looks like in this moment, the look of pure peace on his face.

When I am sure I have the image permanently engrained in my memory, I silently slip out of his apartment without leaving any trace that I had even been there. With any hope, he will wake up in a few hours thinking last night was only a dream. It wasn't of course. It was so real that I could still feel his lips on my mouth, my neck, my body. God, how I have missed this man.

The tears have already begun to fall before I even get to my car as the memories of last night play on loop in my mind. It shouldn't be like this. I shouldn't be sneaking out of our apartment before my husband wakes up. I should be sleeping peacefully wrapped in his arms, in our bed, in our home.

But I'm not. Instead I'm driving to our home alone, a home that is far too quiet without him and has far too many painful memories of who we used to be, how happy we once were.

I shake my head as the tears continue to fall and I make no attempt to stop them as I back out of his driveway and drive to a house that no longer feels like a home.

JUNE HELEN FLEMING

A Whisper in the Wind

When clover covers the fields,
And dandelions bloom in the Spring...
Will I just be a whisper in the wind?

When the evening breeze caresses the trees,
And moonlight fills the sky...
Will I just be a moonbeam in your eye?

When raindrops kiss your cheeks,
And pitter-patter, on your heart...
Will I just be a raindrop in your eye?

When ocean waves caress your feet,
Where we used to stroll...
Will I just be a sea shell in your hand?

Hold me close, and never let me go.
I feel safe in your arms.
Don't ever let me go, or I fear...
I will just be a teardrop in your heart.

KIM LEE SEAGULL

Missouri Morning - Two Below Zero

Have you seen the gray
Of oaks in wintertime,
Or the frost of February
On the window pane?
Have you seen the deer,
Struggle through the yard
Near the start of year,
When the living's hard?
Or the grape so Holy
Stuck up through the snow,
Like the sacred oak
That will insist to grow

MARY KAY LANE

Reluctant Snowflake Haiku

Reluctant snowflake
Defying gravity's pull
Refuses to land

Where she'll be just one
In a million on the ground
She has never learned

There's no one like her
Falling is what snowflakes do
Melting doesn't hurt.

Winter Reveals Haiku

Winter winds reveal
Black branches against gray sky
Nature's true nature

Summer greenery
Is Nature's benevolence
Leaves hiding the truth

To spare us less strong
From facing eternity
As skeletons do

'til grown strong as trees
and nearly as old, we see
beauty in cold bones.

Ana Coluthon

Ana Coluthon was born in a boat,
her parents were poets of the worst sort
of south and sort of north
they sailed the seas with the wind was in their hair
they held notebooks to their knees and pens
in the air started blowing at 42 knots which is a lot
of wind is it not a word was written that night
fell fast, like the wind of a sudden inspiration
that passed. But it was too late, the baby's arrival
was merely a matter of time and survival. Pens
held to the sky, scribbling stars and ink dribbling
from their lips curled back in agony as they
screamed for help, editorial or otherwise
but preferably a ship full of strong metaphors
would arrive like life preservers, or anchors like periods.
Or words like "The End" of the story is this:
Ana Coluthon was born. In a boat, her parents
were poets. Going north, going east
she never feels quite complete

MEGAN HILL

you always do

the screen is too bright
in this dark bathroom stall
and my fingers too big
to find the right words but i try anyway
and know you'll understand

you always do

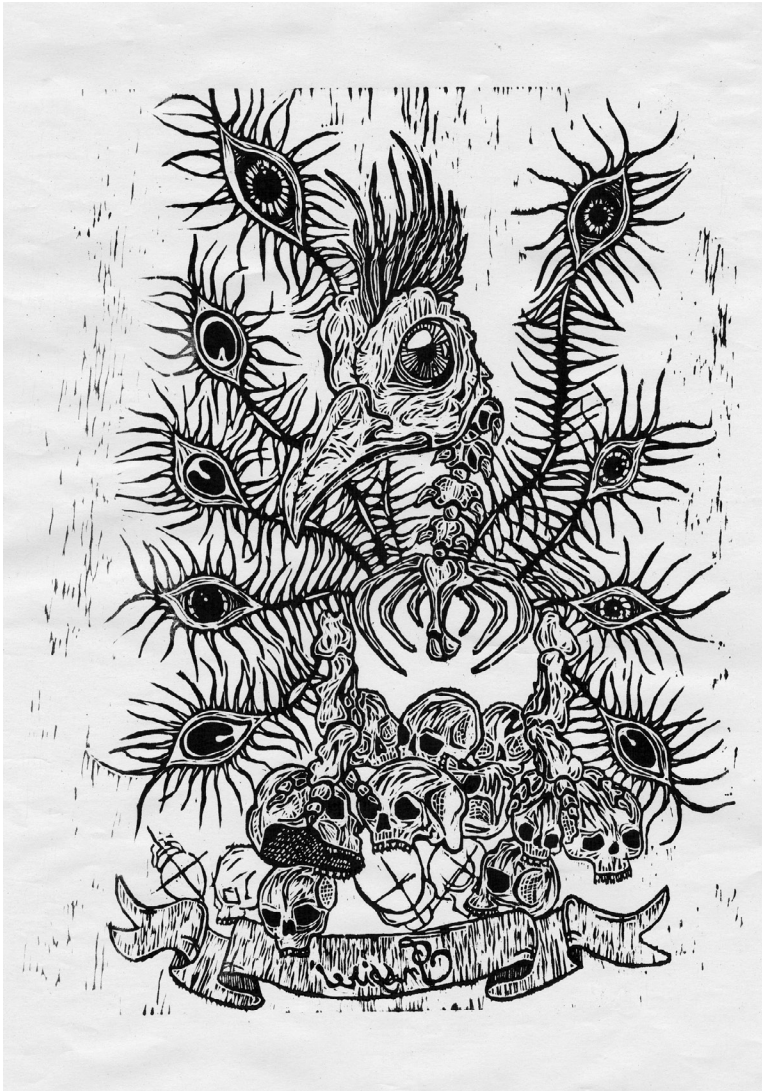
the feeling is urgent
in my inebriated skin
and i know you're sleeping
to rest your weary bones
but i forget the time
and you'll forgive me

you always do

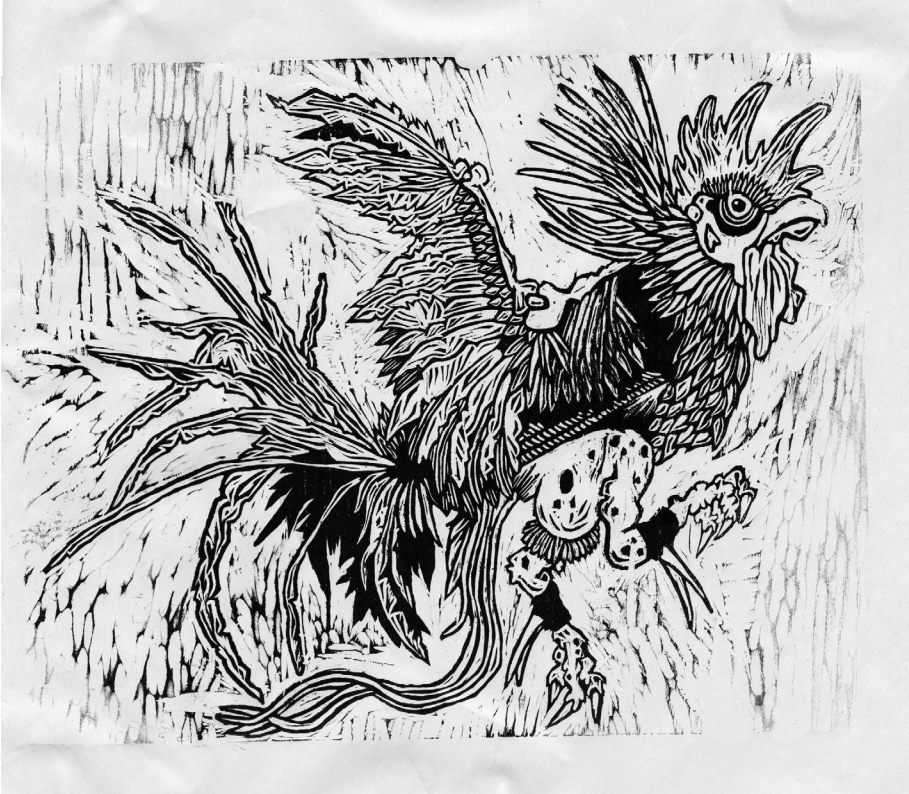
the orange is peeking through
in the small, dirty window
and my excuse is empty
to explain why now
but it's good enough
and you'll believe me
you always do

BRANDON ARNOLD

Inspire
Relief Wood Block Print



Eyes on the Prize
Relief Wood Block Print



VIRGINIA GUNEYLI

Waking Up from Anesthesia

I woke less
Than I was, yet
More. For I wrote in a panic, but
I found me again,
Thank God, after I
Lost myself
To the anesthesia.
What's that mean in Greek?
Where are my babies? I ask
The nurse.
Once I know, I am crushed with
Love by the thought of my husband
And thankful that I
Married him at all, since the first one was such a disappointment.
The anesthesiologist asks what I do, to see
If I know who I am, as if
Those are the same questions.
While I talk, I am really standing outside myself,
Admiring my performance, but
In my murky mind, I
Am seeing my red-headed wonder-daughter,
My Nuri with his uncooperative
Hair standing
Straight off his head.
Marianne the nurse knows this, at a glance, so there is
No need to formalize it by asking, and she tells me that they are fine, my husband has
them. Another
Nurse talks to another one across the room about
Twerking, which I just learned about not too long ago, and I think
I am going to get sick. But then
She looks at me long enough so I know that she knows that this is a hospital. That I
Am a soul, stuck in this problematic body, just like when
I look at my students, my husband, my kids, and know that
We all have to take care of each other, here and there.

Spine

The most captivating beauty is temporal, and shimmering like a rainbow reaching off the side of a cloud into a deep green valley; or a particularly gold and garnet sunset filling up both the sea and the sky, so that the world looks like a sparkling bowl; or the shadow inside your lover's arching spine, separating one curvy half from the other . . . Until the light changes, and the rainbow disintegrates; the sunset dissipates, and your lover hesitates and covers in modesty; but the images remain, frozen indelibly within the soul of the voyeur, and I know that I will offer more to explore if I am encapsulated in snapshot moments, if I pass through time, space, and by you – softly, as Nature intends when the light is just right, as with rainbows, sunsets, and lovers' spines . . .

*Love Work
for Tana*

"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

So, put on
the new self – the full-time grandmother-friend-lover-mother self.
Trade
the fluorescent lights and gray walls for
sunlit jaunts through the zoo and imaginary jungles of your children's children, your
great reward.

For now, you will receive a new kind of compensation: paid in full by
the feel of their chubby arms around your neck and waist, the
sounds of ragged sighs as they surrender to sleep at last.
The benefits include:
cereal for dinner, blissful solitude, faithful friends, spontaneous journeys into
The word and spirit-still self (EOE).

And for those moments of noisy quiet, bereft of bustle and routine, consider
what we now know, the truth about why we work:
We work for love.
And why we stop?
we stop, also, for love.

LEE LUMPKINS

A Work In Progress

I was born deep in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri.
I came close to death at age six of typhoid fever.
I co-wrote a play about our community in seventh grade,
and played the leading role in its only production.
I ran away from home, and hid in the top of the old apple tree
one afternoon and watched my family look for me,
I stayed there until it was dark.
In my teen years, I lived with various aunts and uncles.
On my eighteenth birthday, I stood in front of a mirror.
With scissors in hand, I cut my hair off short.
It had never been cut.
At age eighteen, I had measles, which slowed me down.

I'm a work in progress on the windowsill of life.

Soon after, I left the country, for the lights in the city.
I met a man, who made my heart sing,
We had four gorgeous daughters who give me great joy.
I climbed a mountain and looked down on the clouds,
It's an amazing view that is hard to describe.
I directed a play for my daughter's fourth grade class,
called "Stone Soup" for the benefit of the PTA.
I divorced my first love and went back to school.
To support myself, I had to move on.

I'm a work in progress on the windowsill of life.

I obtained a beautiful German Shepherd to keep me company.
She chewed up my favorite shoes and took me for walks.
We met a man who gained her trust and mine.
We tied the knot, alongside the Missouri River.
My family is growing, I've grandchildren now,
attending school.

We fly kites by the riverbank and listen to jazz in the garden.
My hubby and I moved to the country to gain privacy and peace.
We traveled internationally to Canada, Mexico,
Now look out Greece.
I retired from my job.
I dusted and raked leaves till it hurt,
I couldn't be still, so I went back to work.
My family keeps growing; it's my great- grandchildren
now who are attending school.
I have now lost my husband of twenty-six years.
He loved me and supported me in all my lost causes.
I light candles for him now, when it gets dark.
Once again, I have quit my job.
But my work is not finished.

I'm still a work in progress on the windowsill of life.

TRACY CONERTON

A Dream after His Death

He's naked as a fish
covered not in scales
but slippery matchbooks
with the names of family,
friends on the fronts
and all you care about
is that one of the names
is yours.
You start peeling them
like slick shingles
but they are his skin,
he disappears with each piece taken
and you are selfish, stubborn,
the last name near where his
big toe would be
looks like it might be yours.
But it's at the bottom,
you are practical
and cannot jump ahead.
Your brother's name
is the kneecap,
your mother hovers
around the ankle
and that guy from the factory
you dated briefly one summer
slinks in the arch of the foot.
You gather them all,
fill your pockets
with people he loved
all the time knowing
if you take the last one,
he will be gone for good.
And you want him to live,
even if he is made of just one lonely piece--
your name, a trembling toenail.

Amen

Today in the cemetery
where I eat lunch,
a leaf jumped on its own.

There was no breath
in the trees, the grass a still life
of fading nearly-autumn green.

My co-workers think it's strange
that I eat lunch in the cemetery
sitting on a memorial bench
surrounded by pots of plastic flowers
so frosting-yellow I want to put them in my mouth.

I do not tell them I am learning to pray.

That so far I have shunned the spiritual
in order to analyze, calculate.
The science of grief, probability of loss.

Now I want to trust
in graveyard leaves hopping
like crackling brown toads
over sleeping believers.

How does one truly open to a new want?

Preach me the scripture of soil.
Sing me the practiced chorus of regret,
repeat and repent.

This church of gray stone
forgives my so-far life of moral laziness.
Accepts me sprawled unchastely
under this oak tree
acorn caps lining the bare, warm
bowl of my belly

fingertips raised up, up to this
heaven of wordless sky.

JON E. SLADE

*Obliviously Connected
Chromogenic Print*



CHRISTINA GANT

Friends with Metaphors

Some seeds require fire
to set them free.
The entire forest must burn
to allow this.
Is it wrong, selfish,
that the poppy desires destruction
so she can grow,
damn the forest
so she can flourish
in the flame-charred earth?
It's not like the forest
won't recover from the shock.

Should I say
I like the way smoke slithers
among the leaves,
arousing what awaits?
How do I describe
the welcome heat
releasing me –
and the guilt I feel
about making such comparisons?

Alchemy

In dreams I claim forbidden things,
things daylight can't allow, things made
riotous with capture

that can never be
let loose upon the waking world:

Your earthly body:
with an unintended touch
a wish becomes required,

base metal turned to gold.

Your mouth is my elixir –
sweet collision, storm, a gasp of breath.
But when I look, distill the darkness:

its essence, dream debris.

In daylight I could justify
this chemistry, find a hundred ways
to sin, create a hundred plans and learn

to lie. Set the blaze
and after wash it all away with wine:
I can't regret what I don't remember. This is why

I always have to burn.

She Who Watches

Ave Maria, Hail Mary,
Isis, Gaia, Terra –
by all the names we know
and some we don't,

 this is my prayer for all women:
the wise and wild,
the shunned and feared, the cut and shamed –

See us –
even when we can't see you.

In canyons and cathedrals, by painted rock
and tapestry – with hymns, harps,
bells and beating drums –

Hear us
no matter where you dwell,
in groves of trees, on feet or wings,
in Heaven or in Avalon.

When we write the words
light a candle, count
the beads –
One voice sings.
Innocent, fertile, or barren
as one we cry, we call.
Ave.

Piano Rondo no. 1 in E-flat

Piano score for Piano Rondo no. 1 in E-flat, measures 32 to 61. The score is written for piano (Pno.) and includes various musical notations such as dynamics (cresc., accel., f, mp), articulation (accents), and performance instructions (Andante). The key signature is E-flat major (three flats) and the time signature is 8/8. The score is divided into systems, with measures 32-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, 51-56, 57-60, and 61. The final measure (61) is marked with a forte (ff) dynamic.

Piano Rondo no. 1 in E-flat

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 66-68. The piece is in E-flat major and 8/8 time. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 69-71. Measure 70 includes the instruction *cresc.* (crescendo). The right hand continues with a melodic line, and the left hand maintains the eighth-note accompaniment.

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 72-74. Measure 73 includes the instruction *p* (piano). The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand plays the eighth-note accompaniment.

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 75-77. The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand plays the eighth-note accompaniment.

Andante (♩ = 60)

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 78-80. The tempo is marked *Andante* with a metronome marking of 60 quarter notes per minute. The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 81-85. Measure 81 includes the instruction *accel.* (accelerando). Measure 85 includes the instruction *f* (forte). The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand plays the eighth-note accompaniment.

Pno.

Musical notation for measures 86-89. Measure 87 includes the instruction *cresc.* (crescendo). The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand plays the eighth-note accompaniment.

Piano Rondo no. 1 in E-flat

Pno.

Pno.

Andante (♩ = 90)

Pno.

Pno.

CONTRIBUTORS

Brandon Arnold is studying Graphic Design at St. Charles Community College. He is currently interested in printmaking.

Sophie Breitmeyer is 13, has a passion for writing, and is very excited to be published in the *Mid Rivers Review*.

Tracy Conerton just relocated to St. Charles where she can be found tutoring writing and making strong coffee in the ACE Center, exploring parks with her son Elliot, trying new restaurants with her husband, Nate, and chasing squirrels out of her attic and closet with her old cat, Simon, and blind cat, Helen Keller.

James Dodson is currently attending UMSL in pursuit of a criminal justice degree. He hopes to have a positive impact on others in his field. A veteran at 24, James has deployed twice and has been honored to serve in the USAF. He is an avid outdoorsman and his interested in art and music.

Patrick Dorey is a writer who feels that if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing it your way, even if your way leads to shame and ridicule. With that maxim as a guide his writings have tended toward topics of insignificance with only a smattering of shame and ridicule as a result.

June Helen Fleming writes that her poems are “reflections in my mind of those I love, expressed through the beauty of nature and my internal love for my family. My hope is to bring others to think deeply about the ones they love, because if we don’t make the best of our time here, we may not be given another chance.”

Christina Gant teaches English at SCC and has been writing poetry since childhood. A self-proclaimed tree-hugger, Christy enjoys nature photography, gardening, and exploring the outdoors.

Kristen Garcia writes that her personal talents include writing, drawing, talking to cats, and crying over television.

Gaynell Gavin is the author of *Attorney-at-Large: A Novella* (2012) and *Intersections*, a poetry chapbook (2005), both from Main Street Rag Publishing. Her work appears in many publications. She was a finalist for the 2013 Seán Ó Faoláin International Short Story Competition, the 2012 *Solstice* Creative Nonfiction (CNF) Award, and the 2011 Zone 3 Press CNF Book Award.

Brittany Griffin loves writing creatively. She is a huge fan of film and has an affinity for masked vigilantes. She likes to draw the faces of her favorite fictional characters. She will be graduating in the spring and will continue her education.

Virginia Guneyli teaches literature, poetry, creative writing, and composition at St. Charles Community College in St. Charles, Missouri, where she lives with her husband, son, and daughter. She's currently working on a novel based on her experiences as an expatriate in Mexico City.

Harleigh Heck writes--I was named for the generations of my family before me, who have etched a path of life that is worn with tradition and understanding, yet I choose to take the side roads more often than not. My environment is full of respect and cordiality however; the only thing to ever make it feel hostile is my writing.

Aaron Hill is an aspiring composer and student at SCC. His work has been featured in SCC recitals and with the SCC Symphonic Orchestra. Aaron will be attending UMKC starting Spring 2014 for Music Education/Composition. Aaron would like to thank Professor Ditch and Karen Jones for their support. Additionally, he would like to thank Professor Mary Sweetin, whose guidance and friendship has been a joy and a blessing for all of these years. And he writes—"Thank you for being my community college buddy, Flats."

Megan Hill has been feeling feelings since 1988. She's a foul-mouthed, tender-hearted, scatter-brained city girl who's just trying to figure it out. These pieces are dedicated to Aimee, a dear friend.

David Hollingsworth received an MFA in Creative Writing from UMSL. He has a story published in *Subscriber* and a pending publication in *Space and Time Magazine*. He teaches Creative Writing and English Composition.

Kirsten Iverson has been writing for almost 8 years. There have been some rough patches and dry spells, but getting my name out there for the first time inspires me to write more.

Mary Kane is an expatriate of suburban Chicago. A life-long learner with a passion for poetry, she lives in St. Charles and attends St. Charles Community College. She is a frequent contributor to *Mid Rivers Review*.

Bill Kristen a member of the SCC faculty, is a sociologist who sees poetry as a way to penetrate the facades of the human condition and peer into existential depths.

Jonathan C. Lambert is a student of photography. After high school he joined the Marines and is now using the GI Bill to pursue his interests in fine art. He is very inspired by Gregory Crewdson, Sally Mann, and Man Ray.

Mary Kay Lane lives in Muscatine, Iowa where she pretends to be a farmer in her tiny backyard. She has found that harvesting a decent tomato is as challenging and rewarding as finally finding the right word. She gets most of her inspiration while riding her bicycle or while staring at a blank page for a couple of hours.

Lee Lumpkins lives alone with a parrot, a fish, and 4 cats who have chosen to take up residence at her house. She has lots of hobbies, loves books, music, and art of all kinds. Dean McDonnell is an audio producer creating experimental music. He enjoys exploring the realms of consciousness and reality. He just know has started writing about his conscious experiences.

Rachel Mitchell started the *Tomorrowland Series* in memory of her mother who passed away on Christmas Day. The characters, dresses, and props were all handmade by Rachel. With this series she hopes to take viewers to another world.

Taylor Danielle Morris is currently going to school to be an English teacher. She likes to read and write in her spare time and hopes to become a published author someday.

Kelsey Outlaw writes—"I try to put every beautiful and not so beautiful thing I see and feel into words—just hoping that somebody relates."

Brayden Paglusch is a photographer and a writer of short stories; he is in the third grade, and he writes—"I hope this photograph inspires the essence of love in your hearts."

Lauren Pearson writes—I know what it's like to feel confused, alone, and lost. Like you don't quite know who you are. And I know how important it is to realize that other people are going through exactly the same thing. I just want someone to read what I've written and know they aren't the only ones feeling that way. That sometimes life is hard, and that's okay.

Michael Peeples is a 2004 graduate of SCC, and a 2013 Summa Cum Laude graduate of Lindenwood University. He has hosted, organized, and MC'ed many local and nationally sponsored poetry readings, as well as published numerous freelance articles. He currently lives in St. Peters with his visual artist wife, an old Chocolate Lab, and a passive-aggressive cat found wounded underneath a truck.

Amanda Pfister—Hailing from the Midwest, Amanda Pfister earned her Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Kansas and her Master of Fine Arts degree in photography from Southern Illinois University. Her photographic work for this series explores the transition of various buildings from places of activity to places in decline and change.

Michael Randman currently resides in Marthasville, Missouri with his family. He is pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography. Michael found photography late in his studies and immediately discovered an attraction between himself and the camera.

Kim Lee Seagull writes—“Oh! I dearly wish, if you had some reason to remember me. I hope it would be for my art, and for my poetry.”

Elizabeth Sheck is a freelance photographer, poet, jeweler, yarn goddess, and crazy cat lady transplanted from her home town of Wichita, Kansas at the tender age of pre-teen. She enjoys long walks by the river, eating cheese, not living in the city, and not having enough shelf space for her collectable videogame action figures.

Susan K Shortt is an adjunct professor of English at SCC. She has recently rediscovered her inner poet and is getting to know that person again, albeit in fits and bursts. When not writing or teaching, she designs jewelry for her online shop and struggles to keep her boys in line and well fed.

Emily Simmons is a second year print student. She works primarily with relief printing, but is switching gears to focus on her tattoo apprenticeship.

Jon E. Slade is a fine art photographer currently working toward a BFA in Photography at the University of Missouri, St. Louis. Jon prefers to make moments with photography that challenge social norms and issues while questioning our constructed realities. He works in digital, film, and the 19th century Wet Plate Collodion process. His images have been exhibited nationally and locally and his personal motto is *Work Hard and Be Nice*.

Jordan Starkey—one of SCC’s most eminent poetasters—has recently been published in every literary journal of consequence throughout more than a few parallel worlds.

Lorilise Wood-Scarborough spends time in equal increments with people and words, enjoying their impact on her life.

MID RIVERS REVIEW SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Submissions of original unpublished poetry, short fiction, creative nonfiction, and artistic photos are accepted throughout the year.
- Submissions must be typed as a Microsoft Word document using 12 point type and a standard font. If work is accepted, author must provide entries in electronic format, as e-mail attachment(s) with each entry a separate Microsoft document (or on a CD). All B & W or color photo/artwork entries must be submitted initially as prints (4 x 6 or larger) and electronically if selected. Photos also considered for cover.
- Author's name should not appear anywhere on the manuscript. With each entry, staple a sealed envelope containing a 3x5 card with the work's title, and the author's name, address, phone numbers, and e-mail address. You may include a SASE for notification of status of your entry, but manuscripts will not be returned. For simultaneous submissions, please notify us immediately if your work is accepted elsewhere.
- Poems should be single-spaced, one poem per page, with stanza and line breaks clearly indicated; limit 4 poems.
- Each fiction or essay entry should be no longer than 1500 words (5-6 double-spaced pages); limit 2 prose entries.
- Mail entries to: Editor, *Mid Rivers Review*, HUM-Rm. 203, St. Charles Community College, 4601 Mid Rivers Mall Dr., Cottleville, MO 63376.
- Individuals whose work is selected for publication will be notified within 4-6 weeks and will receive two complimentary copies of the 2014 journal upon publication.
- Guidelines also available at www.stchas.edu/midriversreview

SCC Coffeehouse

St. Charles Community College also sponsors the SCC Coffeehouse, an open-mic format for writers wishing to share their original poetry, short fiction, creative nonfiction, skits or song lyrics with an appreciative audience. Microphone time limited to 7 minutes. Complimentary refreshments served. The Coffeehouse is held twice per semester, on campus. For more information, including dates and directions, visit www.stchas.edu or call (636) 922-8254.

