


2018

et cetera

Marshall University

Follow this and additional works at: https://mds.marshall.edu/english_etc

 Part of the [Appalachian Studies Commons](#), [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Fiction Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Et Cetera

Since 1953, celebrating the *artistic* and *creative* talent at Marshall



MARSHALL UNIVERSITY'S LITERARY MAGAZINE
2017-2018 ISSUE

Et Cetera



Editor-in-Chief	B. Woods
Managing Editor	Morgan Byrne
Fiction Editor	Dalton Monk
Nonfiction Editor	Lydia Cyrus
Art Editor	Ab Feldman
Readers	Faith Hensley
	Hallie Trader
	Megan Brown
	Megan Steele
	Michelle Woodstuff
	Miranda Smith

Cover Image Credit: “Burst” by Bryan Pennington

Acknowledgements

The *Et Cetera* staff would like to thank Dean Hensley, Dr. Allison Carey, Eric Smith, Rachel Rinehart, and the Department of English faculty and staff for their encouragement.

Special thanks to Cedric Gathings and Student Affairs for their continued support. Thanks to our faculty advisors, Dr. Rachael and Joel Peckham, for their endless assistance, mentorship, and patient answers—both for this issue, the classroom, and our lives.

Finally, the Editor-in-Chief would like to thank her parents, Bobby and Clarissa Williamson, for teaching her to love art, reading, and most of all, writing. Without passion, this project would not be possible.

Table of Contents

ART

Metamorphosis.....	8.....	Brianna Taft
Withdrawal of Humanity	21.....	Cassandra Watson
Until Death.....	28.....	Kara Justice
Strokes.....	35.....	Sarah Fox
Grandma's Cupcake Stand.....	39.....	Jessica Ashworth
One Way.....	41.....	Michael Blankenship
Desolation	45.....	Betsy Allen
Two Rivers Meet.....	51.....	Rebecca Turnbull
Suspended	58.....	Bryan Pennington

FICTION

Finches.....	13.....	Alex Simms
February.....	29.....	June Richardson
Birthday.....	33.....	Victoria Endres

HYBRID

Marcum Terrace.....	46.....	Michael Ramburg
I'm Awesome and I'm Fucking Sober	48.....	Breanne Thompson

INTERVIEW WITH RACHEL RINEHART AND ERIC SMITH

Writers in Corbly Talking Writing	22.....	B. Woods
---	---------	----------

NONFICTION

Bereshit	6.....	Michael Ramburg
Breaking from Bitch-Hood.....	9.....	Sophie Ezzell
Reincarnation	17.....	Adil Sattar
The Occasion	26.....	Joe Goheen
The Flaw	36.....	Rebecca Turnbull
98 Cent Tacos.....	42.....	Hannah Bradford
Indecent Exposure.....	52.....	Hailey Hughes
Magic Hair	59.....	Haylee Wilhere

POETRY

Is This Apocalypse Necessary?.....	5.....	Ace Boggess
At Night, All Cats Are Grey.....	12.....	Jessica Hutchinson
In the bathroom of a train station.....	20.....	Nathan Thomas
Steve, Who the Hell Is She?.....	40.....	Rebecca Turnbull
Forbidden Fruit	44.....	Catherine Allison
And Jesus Wept.....	47.....	Michael Ramburg
Ghazal for Insight	50.....	Joe Goheen
As A Girl, I Dream of Horses Part V	60.....	Donna DeRosa

Contributors' Notes.....	61
--------------------------	----

You know what it feels like to hold
a burning piece of paper, maybe even
trying to read it as the flames get close
to your fingers until all you're holding
is a curl of ash by its white ear tip
yet the words still hover in the air?
That's how I feel now.

Dean Young, Belief in Magic

“Is This Apocalypse Necessary?”

ACE BOGGESS

[question asked by Michelle Hartman]

When news broke on CNN that Tomahawks flew toward Syria,
I changed the channel to watch some show about fantasia &
after that a movie in which killing seemed cartoonish.
I didn't want to smell imagined fumes of rocket tails
or see again images of night alight with death departing.
Not questioning the right or wrong of it—those two brothers
wrestling in a snake-infested swamp. I found it easier
to slip away into blissfulness before the first blast
stung my eye & left me lying in bed, wishing I were blind
instead of voiceless. I found other universes to explore
that night, ones with their fucked-up nightmare problems
which never could be real, their crises solvable in an hour,
unlike ours that disappear in a thousand years, or else a flash.

Bereshit

MICHAEL RAMBURG

The LORD said, "I will blot out from the earth the men whom I created—men together with beasts, creeping things, and birds of the sky; for I regret that I made them."

— *Genesis 6:7*

This is 1990, and I am a child of five, and my soon-to-be sibling—tucked like the flap of an un-licked envelope within my mother's womb—is the child not-yet-born. This is 1990, a year since the fall of the Berlin wall, and I am waiting for my own walls to fall, the walls of this once-perfect and once-impenetrable fortress, built just big enough to fit *one* child, an *only* child, a *me* child; a child whose world has been sans-dependent of *another* child, *another* child conceived without *this* child's knowledge or permission. But this is 1990, and despite the pleas of the *me* child, this *new* child is about to make their entrance, the breath which G-d gave on the sixth day of Creation passed through generations of *once*-children, to now, to 1990, to this *new*-child's lungs.

#

This is 1996, and the *new* child is now here, has been here now for more than five years. And this *new* child, whom I call *sister*, is about to start her first remarkable day of school. And I, the *old* child—the child who was once *new*, but now am *old*—I am about to start the first unremarkable day of my fourth school year. This is 1996, the year of the first-day Polaroid, the year the *sister*, the *new* child, wears the bright yellow shirt—to draw attention, I am certain; to stick out like a sore thumb—and I, the *old* child, wear black, to mourn the death of the life I once had, to mourn what was once sacred when *old* was *new*. Yes, this is 1996, the year of forced smiles in first day pictures, the year I watch the *new* child stumble up the school bus stairs, the year when, as I watch, I secretly wish my name was *Cain* and hers *Abel*.

#

This is 1999, and I am waiting for the world to end, watching the clock's black hand *tick-tock, tick-tock* like a timer on a still-unblown bomb; like a still, helpless mouse just waiting for imminent doom. This is 1999, and my unknowing sister just sits on the couch, picking at popcorn like a baby bird, some long-forgotten cartoon blazing through a fuzzy T.V. screen. This is 1999, and disaster is on its way, but the sister doesn't seem to know, or if she does, she doesn't seem to care, and I imagine our lives in little fragmented vignettes, barbecues here and birthdays there, holidays and laughter and celebration. This is 1999, and I feel guilty for some of the things I've done, and the trouble I've caused, so when the *once*-children have left the room, I turn to the *new* child and make my act of contrition. "I'm sorry," I say. "Will you forgive me?"—"For what?"—"For not being the best brother I could." This is 1999, and the end of the world is near, and all the 9-year-old *new* child can muster between on-screen falsettos and a mouthful of popcorn is, "Sure."

#

This is 2000, the dawn of the new year, and nothing has happened, so I ask the new child to pass the popcorn, and I take back the apology I'd made before.

#

This is 2001. And 2002. And 2003. And a decade more. And I, the *old* child, and she, the *new* child, are living our lives. And we, both *once*-children, become children no more. And we go our own separate ways.

#

This is 2013. The year I will want to forget. The year my sister's tears flow like a monsoon from her swollen eyes. This is 2013, the year of the sister with a rambling mouth, whose voice is loud and shrill and anguished, but I can hear nothing. This is 2013, and I've stopped listening, and I've left the room, and I'm cupping my hands around my ears, choking back tears. This is 2013, the year when the words, "She's gone," play like an eerie, broken record in my mind, over and over and over again. This is 2013, the year that G-d became angry, and I regret that He made me, and I wish He would blot me from the earth.

#

This is 2016, and my sister is in a hospital room, and I am here, too. This is 2016, and the room is soaked with the smell of alcohol, with the smell of bleach, with the smell of lotion that the *once*-child has just smeared for the first-time on the *new* child's tiny arm. This is 2016, and thoughts of Cain and Abel are no more, and the world has not ended, and G-d has not blotted me from the earth. This is 2016, and the breath which G-d gave on the sixth day of Creation has passed once again through generations of *once*-children, to now, to 2016, to this *new* child's lungs, for the *new* child (whom I call *niece*) has found favor with the LORD.

#

But Noah found favor with the LORD.

— *Genesis 6:8*



Metamorphosis
BRIANNA TAFT

Breaking from Bitch-Hood

SOPHIE EZZELL

At eleven years old, I became a bitch. It started when my mom refused to buy me a pair of blue Nike shorts because they were “too revealing.” Even the mothers that expected their daughters to stay virgins until marriage bought their kids blue Nike shorts. I kept asking, she kept refusing. After one attempt, she walked across the hall into my older brother’s room and pulled out a pair of his sweat infused basketball shorts from the fifth grade. “Here,” she said, throwing the shorts at my face, “these are reversible.” And I said, “Well, so is my middle finger.” After that, I remember hearing my dad’s laughter float up the stairs and my mother pulling my full name out of her mouth like a clown’s never-ending handkerchief—it just kept going.

The next seven years were a montage of slammed doors, crying in bathrooms, and the phrase *but Dad said I could*.

Somewhere between eighteen and nineteen, I grew out of what my family now refers to as my “bitch-hood.” Retiring the snarky comments that bordered on mean, the unnecessary embarrassment over my mom’s loud existence, and the resentment I made up when I was eleven. Because I finally realized that you can’t choose your parents. And you can’t change them either.

I don’t recall the date, but I remember the night. It was cold outside, and my mom was halfway through a margarita, and because my mother tipped well and it was close to Christmas, it was a pretty fucking strong margarita. She schlepped her shamrock colored purse onto the table of the Mexican restaurant and began pulling out orange pill canisters, receipts with faded ink, and unlucky lottery tickets. After a few minutes of rifling through her bag and trying to use the flashlight function on her phone, she emerged with a flimsy piece of paper that read 5% off.

“Look! I got the coupon! Every week your father swears he remembered the coupon, but he never does and now I’ve got it, so we have to go to the store or else it will expire,” my mom shouted, waving the coupon between her middle and index finger like a frugal housewife’s proxy cigarette.

My father and I looked at each other, trying to suck in our laughter, while my brother angrily ate a taco. A few minutes earlier, Will had been texting a girl that my mom thought would make a good daughter-in-law. She had only just started slurping from her margarita, but it was enough tequila for her to say, “Do you feel that? It just got really warm.” She moved her open hand towards my brother’s face. “Oh, it must just be Will’s burnin’ loins.”

He was still a little upset.

“Tim, let’s go. Let’s go to the store. I’ll buy you pork rinds if you drive me,” she continued. My mom was hanging onto my father’s arm, clinging to him the way a temperamental child clings to their daddy’s leg in a CVS when they want a Ring Pop.

“Ugh,” my dad sighed, raising his hand up to his hair, “but we have to get home and feed the dogs.” My mom turned to me the way I used to turn to my dad when she told me no. “Sophie?” she asked. Her eyes drooped to their knees, big and wide and blue like mine. I took a deep breath, counting my minutes of patience. “Alright. Let’s go to the store.”

The grocery store was quiet at night. The fluorescent lights blinked above us while the static voice of the intercom echoed up and down the aisles. My mom kept reaching for my hand, and maybe it was because of a fear that she would fall down otherwise, I let her take it.

So, we walked hand in hand, impulsively throwing brownie mix and blue Kool-Aid into our basket, and purposely walking by the shelf of pork rinds.

I remember being in middle school, surrounded by girls I didn't know how to be friends with and boys I didn't want to admit were cute. I felt my mom forcing her fingers into the spaces between mine. I snatched my hand away like I'd just burnt it on a stove. She didn't know how to love me when her love embarrassed me. She kept wanting me to shrink back into that little girl who couldn't pronounce her T-H's and called her "Mommy."

"What are you doing?" I asked, looking at my mom with what I'm sure was disgust.

"I want to hold your hand," she replied, her voice shaky and confused, but still demanding.

"Hold Dad's hand. That's what marriage is for," I said, moving myself farther apart.

I'm always cold in grocery stores. My shoulders tried to shake off the goosebumps, but nothing changed. With our hands still connected, my mom felt my shiver like an aftershock. Her fingers fell away from mine and moved to the top of my arms, rubbing my white skin until it turned back to pink.

We kept walking, our hands no longer connected, but my mom's hand hovered near my wrist, preparing to grab it for when the booze reached her feet. I caught my friend lurking behind a shelf. He was dressed in his work uniform: a black apron with a black polo and a black hat, because anything other than black conflicts with his soul.

"Oh, look, it's Cam. Why do they make him work so late when it's so close to Christmas?" Mom asked. "Because capitalism," I responded.

Cam. Cam started out as my friend's weird little brother, then gradually he became my weird friend. And now he's been here so long that he knows where the plates are in my house.

"Cam. Cam, come here. Cam," she practically yelled, motioning him over to where we were standing.

I stood there with my arms crossed, probably halfway through an eye roll, knowing that my mother was about to embarrass me. *Will she tell him to marry me?* I thought, *Or just lecture him on his grades?* And then I remember pausing and reminding myself, *Cam has known me for nearly a decade. And I'm probably stuck with him until one of us dies. So whatever Mom's about to do, he's either already seen it or he's going to see it eventually.*

She stretched out her arms like a sloshed zombie and pulled Cam in before he could react. He tilted his eyes toward me and I nodded, holding a tipsy thumb up to my lips. My mother caught me and slapped my hand. "Shut up. I only had one."

It was a jumbo, I mouthed to Cam. He smiled and nodded and held my mom's basket for her. "Cam, where are the things? The things you use to make pesto, Sophie said she wanted—pine nuts! Where are the pine nuts?"

Cam pointed to a stack of jars in the produce, "They should be over there." She wandered off in the direction of his finger. "I think your mom groped me," he muttered through a laugh. "Well, if she did, it wasn't intentional," I responded through my own choked down laughter. "That you know of," he said, arching his eyebrows.

"How are you still twelve?" I asked. He shrugged and handed me the basket. "Tell your dad and Will I said, 'Hi.'" He moved two steps, then turned around and hugged me. After letting go, he walked back to wherever it was he was supposed to be.

"Sophie," my mom called, "I need the basket." She was standing in the produce, trying to balance two jars of pine nuts and a seasonal tin of cashews in her arms. "Your papaw loves cashews."

We checked out and I watched my mom shove another receipt in her purse. A receipt that I knew would stay there until Coach came out with a new green pocketbook or until I got frustrated and cleaned it out. "What'd you think Will and your dad are doing?" she asked while we walked to the car. "Something we'd hate," I replied.

Later that evening I was sitting on the porch step, counting the stars around Jupiter. The door behind me shook and I jumped.

"Jesus, Mom," I said.

"Why do you always sit out here when it's cold?"

"You can see the stars better in the winter."

She stuck a finger in the sky and asked, "What's that one?"

"I only actually know where Jupiter and Orion are."

She nodded and sat in the chair next to me. "You know, dear, I was surprised you didn't yell at me when I hugged Cam today."

"Well, you only *slightly* scarred him. But more than that, I just didn't care. I think I'm finally immune to embarrassment."

"Does that mean you're done hating me?"

"I think so," I replied. The words hung in the cold air, my mom and I both watched as they swayed with uncertainty, hoping this time they'd stick.

At Night, All Cats Are Gray

JESSICA HUTCHINSON

The bonsai tree he trained for me
is still in the window beside the hand-painted ginger jar
I treat as a ceramic bank. In the quiet, I empty my purse
of the day's change and estimate the savings
by the heavy sound of coins on hard,
yet brittle bisque. So the days go by.
One by one, they drop and collect. Behind me,
they look identical. The little trees
sprouted from grafts of the same branch.
It makes no difference who is in your bed
at night, all cats are gray.

Finches

ALEX SIMMS

Another car drove over the sewer drain at the apartment complex. I stood over Milo, unsure if the vehicle was coming or going. I waited to hear the squeak of Mom's tires park in front of the doorway. I heard the sound of a cat pouncing on top of a dumpster lid, and the sound of my neighbor's muffled sigh while talking on the telephone. No cars. The taste of salt in my mouth still lingered. The sound of the credits rolling from a Bill Nye episode filled the living room. Milo had been dead since the intro.

I hopped over her corpse to the stairwell.

"Milo," I said. Her legs did not twitch. Her ears didn't jerk up. The ceiling fan whirred. Bill Nye was talking about something. Milo's bed still sat beside the couch in front of the TV. There was a trace of dog hair that led from her bed to the kitchen. She wasn't supposed to be inside. My anxiety to clean it up slithered throughout my body, although I wasn't sure if it would matter now. I said Milo's name three more times.

I leaned on the banister, my room just a few steps away. I thought about taking a nap. If Mom came home, I could imagine how she'd react. She would holler my name like a question for no particular reason, even before she'd close the door. Then, she'd notice Milo in front of her, asleep. She would feel too invasive to wake her, letting her frustration that Milo was inside simmer. The heat in her body would rise, and she would think it was because of the expensive coat she hadn't taken off yet. She would think about hanging it up in the closet beside the doorway, so dog hair wouldn't get on it, but she'd settle for flinging it onto the chair beside her.

She would crouch down to Milo and stroke her curly head, whispering her name, and the thread of intimacy between them would get cut. The stench of Milo's decaying body would overpower the lavender from her bath the day before.

Mom would put two and two together now. She wouldn't cry, not yet. She would first catch the words about to spill out of her mouth. She would think about calling my name again, but instead she would saunter up the stairwell. Eventually she would reach my bedroom, the door cracked at my own doing, so she wouldn't feel inclined to knock. She'd be able to see me asleep, assumingly safe from what she knew, and the decision would come to her then.

The details here would become a bit fuzzier, but I think she would use a trash bag to put Milo in. She would wonder if we had any black trash bags instead of white ones. Could a dog's body be noticeable through a white trash bag? It was something she had never considered before. She would grab Milo by her back legs, too emotional to look her in the face, and drag her into whatever bag we had. This would maybe take ten minutes, taking small breaks in-between to recompose herself. She would look up past the stairwell, into the darkness, reminding herself that I could wake at any moment to see what was going on. She would permit herself to remember times when Milo would run down the steps with her tail wagging, the jingle of the tag on her collar only ceasing as soon as Mom would give her a treat.

I don't know how she would get rid of the body. I only know that when she was done, she would first put her coat in the closet properly. She would stare at her

coat in disdain, she would wish she hadn't spent an extra twenty bucks on the wool blend finish, now favoring for the cheaper cotton instead. Maybe, she thought, the twenty dollars could have been used to take Milo to a doctor, or to buy more treats. She would pluck dog hair off the carpet and sprinkle it over her coat. She would try to shove all of the lint rollers we owned down the garbage disposal.

I could imagine Mom sitting on the couch, fanning her face to stop the stream of tears tearing through her make-up, unsure if she still needed it on for the day. "Oh, hell," she'd say, and mosey to the restroom and shower and cry there but become paranoid if even a trickle of water could awaken me. And I would hear it, and everything before, because I would have my ear pressed against the crack at my door, allowing myself to be the closest I could be to our own ways of grief meeting. Mom would wait until the water would turn cold and then dismiss herself to her room. Neither of us would sleep a wink, too afraid to move at the risk of the smallest creak from our beds becoming audible. We would readily interpret any voiceless sign of correspondence between us that wasn't there, even though we ached for it, letting the sheets of our loneliness pin up on the clothesline.

Milo died almost an hour ago. I needed to do something. I raced downstairs and Bill Nye was still talking and Milo resembled taxidermy. I went to the kitchen to see if there were any trash bags. The kitchen was chilly, fog glazed the sliding door to the backyard and snow was hovering the lawn. Outside, everything looked untouched. I opened the door and a blast of air crawled up my toenails. I turned around to see if Milo could feel it too.

"Sorry," I said as I jumped over Milo another time. I opened the closet to grab my boots and one of Mom's jackets. The snow cracked and formed veins when I stepped on it. The sky was a grey glass screen, a cloudless impenetrable layer creating a bubble surrounding the town that seemed to stretch for miles. The air held its breath. There was the sound of no sound. I imagined one snowflake shaped grenade parachuting down from the sky and landing on my tongue, shattering me into pieces all over the ground. The wind wouldn't sweep me up because it was all suctioned into the snow. Milo's doghouse leaned against the yard fence. Its discoloration was more prominent in the winter, planks of wood were missing a few nails, giving the doghouse a slouch over time. It looked warm inside. Patches of grass were spared from the snow, but the dimness already had chills cascading down my back. I shrunk my head into my jacket collar until it could cover my nose, blending through my mouth for boosts of warmth, and threw my hood over my head, letting the fur lining blanket my ears. I looked back at the house and could see my footprints creating a map of my guilt from here. I crawled inside. My knees had to be pushed up to my chest. My back pockets were already soaked with water from the muddy ground. I hoisted Mom's jacket up to my ribs so it wouldn't get dirty. Puffs of my breath flew up my collar like cigarette smoke.

I was nearly comfortable in my own way, huddled in my dead dog's house. I assessed the silence again. I thought I could hear the hum of the street lights turning on. I heard a few cars wading through the slush, a shovel or two scraping someone's driveway. The snow wasn't thick enough yet to hear any kids screaming, being chased by someone gripping a snowball in their knitted gloves. There were no echoes of adults calling for their children to dry off and drink a hot cocoa in front of the fireplace.

A stray finch quietly scavenged the backyard for food. Mom hadn't refilled the bird feeder in months. I watched it aimlessly swivel its head left and right, not knowing what to do. Maybe it was looking for me. I decided not to move until it flew away, although five minutes had already passed. It didn't tweet or flex its wings. I couldn't remember where it came from, if I may have walked past it. It started bouncing towards the house near the sliding door, its pencil-led sized footprints distorting mine. I wished for it to snow. I wished for the snow or the wind or God to take the time to stop a single finch. None of those things happened, although it didn't seem to matter. The finch made it all the way to the porch, briefly looked to its left, and finally flew away. I didn't know if birds knew what dead dogs looked like. I followed its path until it flew past Mom's window, and I didn't notice the lights from her room on before. I squeezed myself out of the doghouse and inched closer to the sliding door to the kitchen, stopping midway when I saw Mom there. We were close enough to where I could see the wrinkles on her skin, or even the cut on her hand from slicing carrots last week. I don't know how long ago she must have found Milo, I only knew that she seemed to know what happened. She had her back pressed against the kitchen counter with her head down and her arms crossed. She wasn't wearing her coat. She was standing beside the Keurig and I could hear its gears churn as it started to brew a cup. I watched her until the cup was full. She was still motionless, and the coffee was getting colder than me.

By the time I got to the door, she had already seen me. She remained at the counter until I got inside and sat at the kitchen table. We didn't say anything or didn't know how. We both played our cards for a while. I realized I didn't look to see if Milo was still in the living room. She certainly wasn't buried, not because I would have seen it happen, but because we didn't own a shovel. Maybe we'd buy one now. The sleeves of my jacket began to dampen the table runner. My eyes darted to the sliding door, and I noticed I left a track of snow on the linoleum. I watched it become marble sized puddles during our stalemate.

"Are you okay?" I asked, still staring at the sliding door. It was a dumb question. I thought about asking again more passionately. I thought of the times Mom would shake a box full of dog treats outside while only in her nightgown, whenever Milo would get loose. The inside of our neighbor's house would glow when I would peek behind the living room blinds and watch them peek behind theirs, watching me watch Mom, when I was really watching them. I should have been helping her. I heard the suction of the fridge open. I heard Mom open the lid to her favorite creamer, and then open the cabinet above the fridge, rummaging past the numerous half-finished boxes of crackers until she got to where the sugar was kept. I ripped myself up from my seat to find paper towels to dry the floor. Mom materialized in front of me like an apparition, held my shoulders like I might slip out of them, and kissed my forehead. I resisted to wipe the lipstick off while she drifted her head back a bit from me, her eyes closed. She suspended herself like this for longer than a moment. Her eyebrows and mouth formed into small hills. My arms expanded like a net, ready to catch her, but nothing happened. We were both frozen like this for some time as it began to snow outside. It was falling in a fury, piling sporadically like candy being poured into a bowl.

I thought about the snow getting high enough to cover the sliding door, or even Milo's doghouse. Then I thought about the snow covering the whole house, but only ours. People in the neighborhood might drive by and try to remember if there was ever a house here. They might see and hear the sound of snow occasionally plop to the ground from the roof as the weather got warmer. If they listened closely, they might even hear the same rhythmic sound of the thump of one's heart, from two people unable to articulate loving someone into words.

Reincarnation

ADIL SATTAR

Residency years are the most myth shattering years for any doctor in training. Interns every year have their image of *Scrubs* or *Grey's Anatomy* invalidated as they present a plethora of overnight patients to the attending physician during morning rounds after a night of constant admissions. Residency is where reflexes are formed, personality is chiseled, and interest in subspecialties is sparked. My experience was no different.

I liked the excitement of mending hearts, broken or not, and chose cardiology. The hospital that I trained at had a tradition of playing Brahms' "Lullaby" over the announcement system with each successful delivery in the hospital. I remember it clearly because every time the tune played, I felt a wave of gentle rejoice and acquiescence drench my body and with a rejuvenated spirit, I would carry on my toil. My years at this place were stressful and exhausting at times but always meaningful, both for myself and the patients I cared for. Life is fickle, something one doesn't realize in the utopian world of a medical student, where all diseases have a cause and all drugs work as they should. Intern-year pitches you face to face with terminal conditions and enigmatic medical conundrums. Important clinical lessons are learnt amid a bustling day in the wards. Experienced doctors are good clinicians because they have a bank of anecdotes which have all taught them something invaluable. I am several years out of my intern year, but I still find myself occasionally reminiscing about a 'code blue' that I ran as an intern.

This happened on an especially murky and stiff October day. Morning rounds were over, and I had signed out my patients to the rest of my team. The grey skies peeking in from the windows seemed to slow down my work pace. I had notes to finish. As I walked briskly towards the lounge, my stream of mental to-do notes got interrupted by the loud chirping of the Code pager buried in my lab coat pocket. 'Code Blue. 90. Male. ICU Bed 21,' it read. I was still early in my training but had been a part of enough such events to be the code leader.

I ran towards the ICU and watched a swarm of the rapid response team members converging on the mentioned room. Once there, I found out that the patient had been admitted for pneumonia. I started with heavy breaths and managed to squeak out a few orders. My code team was extremely experienced and quite capable of handling an apprehensive young physician. Soon, I found myself flipping the cards of my ACLS manual in my head and hastily reviewing the situation. Chest compressions initiated promptly. The designated nurse briefly updated me with the patient's most recent labs and the pertinent recent happenings. I digested the information as the patient lay lifeless in the middle of the room. A team of highly orchestrated performers surrounded the bed, working smoothly in harmony, as if trying to raise the phoenix from the dead. We coded the patient for twenty fruitless minutes, losing the patient moment by moment into the unfathomable expanse of death. The chaotic rhythm dancing on the telemonitor signaled that our efforts were approaching futility. My thoughts were racing as fast as the jittery lines on the monitor.

I felt an encroaching numbness from the intensity created by the situation, but I remained expressionless. 'This is supposed to work,' I thought. The room felt silent despite the loudly shouted time updates and the hustle surrounding the haste. As I ran checkboxes in my head, I couldn't help but notice the sound of medication vials being broken and pumped into syringes. Every new round of epinephrine meant a preceding round that didn't work. The cardiac monitor's periodic beeping seemed to be counting aloud the last moments of the patient's life. From amongst the pool of arms, a hand emerged and passed a strip with the electrolyte readings that I had ordered earlier. Desperate to search for a probable reason for the patient's unexplained unconsciousness, I stared hungrily at the strip. The paper strip just echoed the same inscrutable tune to which the rhythm on the monitor was dancing.

Frustrated by our efforts being thwarted by a mysterious cause, I dabbed the sparkling sweat on my forehead with the back of my hand and glanced at the monitor. The anarchic green lines continued to frolic around all over the display. I recognized a pattern I could safely shock and found a glimmer amongst a rapidly extinguishing sense of hope. I ordered a shock delivery. The nurse pushed the charge button and the defibrillator angrily mustered up what felt like a thousand joules of energy with a terrifying tweeting sound, raring to unleash havoc to whatever came between the defibrillator pads. The tactfully placed fingers of one of the nurses failed yet again to appreciate a pulse. We cleared the bed and held our breaths. The shock was delivered by the push of a glowing button. The patient's chest sprang up from the bed and came down with a thump jerking from the electric energy sprayed over the heart. If only I could hear the patient scream! All I heard were the code team's breaths and inconsolable sobbing of the patient's daughter somewhere outside the room.

Yearning for signs of life I glared at the monitor and saw the patient's heartbeat resume the fatal turmoil all over again. Bereft of answers and hope, I ordered to resume CPR and the room went back to be the bedlam that so often marks the end of a life well spent. Baffled by the irreconcilable clinical deterioration of the patient, I ordered some more labs. Anything. 'Everything!' I ordered aloud. After forty-five minutes of coding, it was probably time to stop fighting the inevitable. I felt betrayed by all the text books I had crammed to that point. The caustic taste of failure burning in my throat stemmed from a naïve inability to grasp the inevitability of the human condition. I was a young trainee built to cure, not to call off futile attempts. 'Maybe one day we will invent the potion of perpetuity,' I thought to myself. Maybe one day we will encage Immortality in a pill.

Take twice a day, with meals, to live forever.

Till that time arrives, we will cherish the memories we build. Miss the friends we do not see anymore. Enjoy summer, fall, winter, and spring cycle into each other. Look forward to that date we marked on our calendar. Ponder in a quiet moment and let nostalgia soak our eyes. Cry, when in pain. Cry, in happiness as well. Be mindful of the choices we make. Think, contemplate, and digress. Explore and implore. Regret our mistakes and glimmer with contentment over our achievements. Struggle and strive. Idolize our heroes and foster traits in our subconscious. Till that time, I will pump my patients with all the anti-arrhythmics under the sun to cure them of their condition. Till that time, I will keep on believing that life is only beautiful because it ends.

“Doctor, what are your orders?”

Fifty minutes into the code and the monitor had reverted from the bizarre rhythm to a flat line with the rhythmic bumps of CPR. I looked questioningly around the room and got confirming stares in reply with the daughter’s deep and damp sobs in the background. We had lost the battle. It was time to stop. I gathered my thoughts and braced myself to face the daughter. I thought of ways to tell her that we tried our best. I thought of words to tell her that I was sorry for her loss and that I could feel her pain. All the sentences popping in my head seemed pale and silent. ‘All solace dies with death,’ I thought.

As I waded through a sea of emotions and prepared to exit the room, my feet were stopped dead cold by the overhead hospital announcement system. They were playing Brahms’ “Lullaby.” I thought of the countless moments in which I had hummed along the tune and how it had helped sooth my nerves during a busy day. An angelic sound. But why were they playing it? What were the heavens celebrating? A birth somewhere in the hospital? A death? Or just the reincarnation of a demising soul?

In the bathroom of a train station in Philippi, West Virginia

NATHAN THOMAS

you can pay a dollar and see a pair of homemade mummies.
An experiment of a farmer, Graham Hamrick,
who when he went to the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum to buy the bodies,
both unnamed women left behind by their husbands,
he asked for patients without families to claim them.
The mummies saw the world traveling with the circus,
before being kept in a barn, before being caught in a flood,
before sitting in the bathroom of an ex-train station.
Graham Hamrick considered himself an amateur scientist,
which means he was a scientist.



Withdrawal of Humanity
CASSANDRA WATSON

Writers in Corbly Talking Writing

On Finding the Light: Two Poets Talk Craft

Rachel Rinehart grew up in Chuckery, Ohio, and currently teaches at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. Her poems have appeared in journals including The Southwest Review, The Georgia Review, New Ohio Review, Prairie Schooner, Massachusetts Review, Mid-American Review, and Colorado Review. Her poetry collection The Church in the Plains was selected by Peter Everwine as the winner of the 2016 Philip Levine Poetry Prize and was published by Anhinga Press in January 2018.

Eric Smith is the author of Black Hole Factory, forthcoming from the University of Tampa Press. His work has been published most recently and is forthcoming in the Arkansas-International, the New Criterion, and the AWP Writer's Chronicle. He holds an MFA from the University of Florida and an MA from Northern Michigan University, and co-founded the text message poetry journal cellpoems. He has received grants and fellowships from the Sewanee Writers' Conference, Convivio, and the North Carolina Arts Council. He has taught at Marshall University since 2010.

Transcribed by B. Woods

ES: I think you can see in the poems how much place matters. I was just curious if you wrote out of the place the poems are set in, or did you realize that you were writing poems that were about the place?

RR: I think it was a combination of both. For me, there is a six-mile radius where the world makes sense. So, I'm writing out of that belief. *The Church in the Plains* is based a lot on the world I grew up in and some of it is true, and some of it is not true, and that's what I'm working out of. Its west of Columbus and flat as a pancake, corn fields as flat as you can see. Being away from that place most of the time while writing allowed me to step back and reflect. When I began to think of it as a collection, I started thinking about filling in the gaps, and things like that. But ultimately, I wrote what I needed to write and then it came together.

ES: It feels effortless to me, completely organic. Every poem knows the rules its playing by and is also in conversation with the adjacent poems. There's a neighborliness to the collection that seems so natural, which to me, suggests that there's actually a tremendous amount of effort that went into making them.

RR: Thank you. I feel like I spend a lot of time trying to squeeze water out of stones so that's good to hear. Sometimes, I feel lucky to get a poem a month.

ES: I throw a party if I get a poem a month!

RR: Yeah, I noticed in your book, you work a lot with the ancient world and modernity—trying to figure out how we got where we are. For instance, there's one line about Coleridge and Cobain. Can you talk about that a little bit?

ES: Well, thank you. I think there's a kind of honesty there that speaks to my interests. I think the book is a book of collisions, of things smashed together and I think it just came naturally to me. I didn't read Coleridge when I was listening to Nirvana. Like you were saying, its true-ish. I don't have any real fidelity to the truth. I think a lot of poems are a marriage of opposites—the unlikelyness of two elements together. The resulting instability and friction of that marriage seems to be where good poems happen. If nothing else, they help me move down the page, whereas, if I move with any sort of certainty, I find myself stopping short. So those unlikely occurrences allow me to play, “what if?”

RR: There's a lot of surprising imagery in your book. This image, in the first poem, the church and the steeple, butterflies... When you were writing did you have an idea in the back of your mind that you explored through imagery or did you start with an image and go from there?

ES: I'm sure there's some intentionality in my imagination, I just try not to be conscious of it. There's a sort of frantic accumulation of stuff and I'm just trying to push them together to see which one gets me to the next line, or stanza, and then I just try to clean it up after I'm done.

ES: My reaction to your poems was initially very visceral. I think that comes from how embodied the poems feel. They are so interested in the intimacies of the body and the poems have an impossible architecture to them. I think you find yourself as a writer wondering if you could switch things around just to see what it looks like. But when I was looking at your poems, they seem to have grown out of themselves perfectly made. I'm just curious: there seem to be a very sort of German oriented approach to description. I want to know how those are made. I wonder where that comes from?

RR: I don't know if I have a good response. Usually, when I write a poem, I start out with a page of jumbled notes. I work in that form for a while and then on the next page, I slowly start assembling. I guess I listen to my ear a lot—I talk to myself, read aloud while I'm working. I think if I thought too much about it, then that's when I'd lose my confidence, or things would start to sound forced. I feel like when I'm writing a poem in my head, I have this sort of perfect idea, and I want it to come out on the page wonderful. Then, when I spend time trying to render it, instead it becomes like a bright light that I'm looking at sideways. I can see it in my peripheral vision, I can see what it's supposed to be, but I'm trying to get it down by only looking at it sideways, so it comes out half-formed. It never comes out the way you want it to.

ES: That's the idea. Yates says something like, “What you hope for at the end of the poem is the satisfying sound of the box clicking shut.” And knowing, 99% of the time, you're not going to get it, but you might've made a decent box, even if it doesn't quite close all the way...to imagine the energy of a poem as a thing you can visualize and hear just outside the range of possibility and you sort of write your way toward it.

ES: I'm going to ask, at what point in your writing process do you know a thing is going to be a poem or a thing is going to be an essay, or something else?

RR: Well, that's a good question. There is something I would like to explore further in another book; there is a heart defect in my family. Even OSU studies my family. My grandfather and uncle had it. They've even found people in Germany with the same heart defect. That to me feels like a creative nonfiction project just because of the practicality. Plus, I would want to tell it for the people where I grew up who have the defect or died early. It's just sort of a distant project, though.

RR: What is it like for you getting started again since you finished the manuscript? Was there a pause, where you were like, "Oh god, what do I do now?"

ES: No, because I had given up. Two years ago, I shelved it. I had been sending some form of it for six years; I kept "almosting" in contests. Then, I started writing some poems that were in a different mode which felt like a different project. So, after a while, I accepted that it would be the "desk drawer book." I started working on a new manuscript and I took a couple of poems from the newer project and put them in the first book and decided to send that out. And, frankly, when I got the email that asked if it was still available, I was like, "Well, yeah, I had forgotten I had even sent it to you." So, there really hasn't been any interruption. I've always been lucky to have something to work on. What about you?

RR: I have a clear idea now what my next collection will be, at least the title. But, I've had significant periods of writing poems that amounted to nothing, and I'm okay with that. It's been extremely unpleasant. I think that's probably a common experience when you finish something. This book was part of my manuscript thesis in graduate school. So, to be in the world of that manuscript for so long and suddenly it's over now...and figuring out where to step off, it's been a little intimidating. But I feel like I'm starting to find my footing again.

ES: What do you do to find your footing or get yourself working especially on those days where you don't feel like doing the work?

RR: Reading to get in the mood is always a good thing. I'm in my head a lot. I think about writing every day. I have to sit with images and ideas for a long time before I can put them on the page. Sometimes, I'll sit down for an hour-long chunk, but a lot of times I get up and clean something and then sit back down. It seems to help. I know it's strange; people want to get in the zone and be in the zone. The zone scares me a little bit.

ES: It scares me, too.

RR: How do you work?

ES: However, I think I'm just skeptical of over-ritualizing the process. I try to get up and do the work, but sometimes work just means sitting there and reading the same poem over and over, or getting up to tidy something, or a song pops into my head and I need to go listen to it. I just trust that as part of the process as a manifestation of my imagination.

ES: I wanted to ask, what do you know now that you wish you had known then, you know, “I thought I might try to do this?”

RR: Do you mean, write the collection, or be a poet?

ES: Commit yourself to one of the world’s wonderful fruitless endeavors.

RR: I don’t think I could have been dissuaded by much. I will tell students, if you can imagine doing something else with your life, you probably should. It’s hard, because at the end of the day, even if you’ve had a great day and you finish a draft of a poem, you’re left with a draft of a poem. It’s not something tangible or something to take home. Sometimes it’s hard to feel like you’re accomplishing a lot. So, it really must be something you love and if it’s something you don’t think you love that much, and you can imagine doing something else, maybe you should.

RR: Is there anything you wish you had known then?

ES: I don’t know. I figured if you knew and could tell me, I could be like, “yeah, that’s what I would say to myself.” I’d build the time machine and go back and tell myself whatever Rachel said.

RR: If you’re going to do it, you’re going to do it. And me telling you not to do it will not make you not do it.

BW: It’s hard to explain why you willingly do that to yourself.

RR: The poetry must be its own reward.

The Occasion

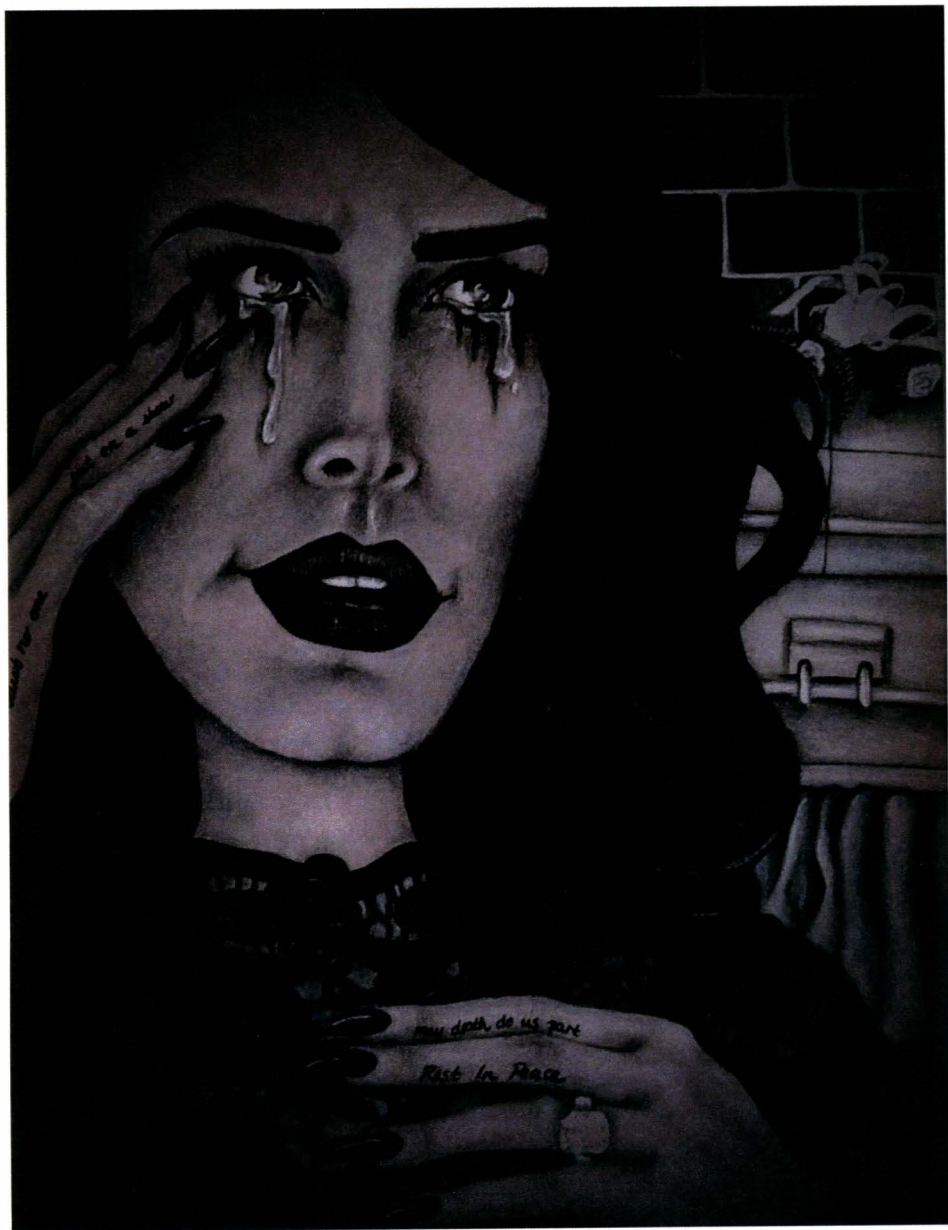
JOEE GOHEEN

It can happen anywhere – that silvery glimmer of opportunity that dances like Salome out of the eye's periphery, seductively lurking on the corner of any good story and impossibly too delicious to pass up. Writers know this persnickety and mischievous Willow-of-the-Wisp as *the occasion*. Its proximity can be felt by a welling up in the chest, similar to indigestion or the tight symptomatic revenge of caffeine that demands a cathartic release characterized by a fidgety hand which aches for a pen, or any instrument, capable of preserving the imp in ink. The eye may twitch. The stomach may rumble. The body responds to the heart's enthusiasm and the mind's facility in capturing the fleeting snatch at long last. Often it hides in plain sight – sitting atop the counter at the convenience store with headings like "MISSING: Have you seen me?", twirling round and round in a friend's steaming cup of tea as she recounts last night's gossip, or chirping like a starling outside the window in the neighbor's lawn where two lovers quarrel and slam car doors. Other times, it evades the obvious and beckons from a distance in unlikely places. It whispers from within the old man's shoes, it covertly jumps from tall reeds to the unsuspecting dog's fur, or it hides deep within the unconscious like a slumbering genie until the right words awaken its latent power. No matter its frequently fickle nature or willingness to cooperate, the occasion is always there.

However, the writer also knows that with it comes a zeal undoubtedly rooted in self-interest – a thirst to control the diegesis—to own, to claim, and to morph it into one's own. To voice the voice. For instance, yesterday, I attended a funeral. I arrived late in brown—not black—and wore my sunglasses inside. I said a few meaningful things to family members and friends that I may or may not have meant. It did not matter. I was preoccupied searching for something I could use. Lola—the deceased—lay in her casket frowning at my antics. I probed the busy wallpaper of the funeral home from top to bottom, impolitely listened in on different circles talking in hushed, respectful voices about the deceased or family pastimes—paid attention as to who talked to who and which of those gave hugs and those which did not. Which of those cried and which of those silently lingered near the coffee pot. I did not cry. Lola was the mother of my Aunt Terri—my uncle's wife whom he met when I was in grade school. She is many things, one of which is adopted. I watched her as she sat in the front of the funeral home in fold-up chair next to her adoptive father, mourning Lola—her adoptive mother. I felt that I would never understand this kind of loneliness. Then I wondered if they had told her as a child that she was their child, but not by blood. I imagined how she responded to this and recreated a scene in my head I was ready to commit to paper.

Suddenly, while sitting near the back of the funeral home next to coughing church members and elderly friends, I saw what I had been looking for manifest itself in the form of a fifty-year old midwestern woman with short, auburn hair and a stalky build draped in all black. She sat opposite of the family but in the front with my aunt in full view of Lola—the occasion I sought was attending the funeral, seven rows ahead of me—the biological mother, found, and paying respects to my aunt's mother. I flew like a hummingbird to sticky, sweet nectar and began drinking in the spectacle before

me, aching to write it and blissfully phrasing the first couple lines of the narrative I wished to tell. When the formalities commenced, the prayers said, the thanks given, my racing mind came to a halt. As my grieving aunt sat between two mothers—the one that raised her, now dead, and the one that birthed her—I felt ashamed. Partly out of a lack of reverence for Lola, but because I thought my selfishness astounding. I knew this was not my story, but I chased it across my aunt's outstretched arms, past the mystified gaze of her biological mother, and across the casket where I caught it and wrestled it onto a clean page. I plucked its shiny wings and greedily made it *my* occasion.



Until Death
KARAJUSTICE

February

JUNE RICHARDSON

I remember standing in the cold, red cheeks and numb fingers, filling my gas tank up. I'd been putting it off for a few days by then; it was just too cold to stand outside for five minutes, and I'd become an expert at ignoring things that demanded my attention. But alas, my gas tank's warnings had become unavoidable. I pleaded with the rising numbers on the pump's screen, begging them to move faster. An icy February wind blew through my hair as I put the nozzle back. Half a tank was more than enough to get me to my shift at Ruby's Diner, just a few miles away.

I considered sprinting across the parking lot to the warm gas station but settled on a hurried walk. Once inside, I immediately began to thaw, the feeling in my fingers flooding back in a painful prickly sensation. I stepped in line behind a tall man in a khaki trench coat, the dawn of a bald spot forming on his head. He held two magnum bottles of Chardonnay, one in each of his hands. They were placed on the counter with a clink.

I was staring intently at the spot of scalp that was becoming visible to the world, wondering if he suffered from the cold more because of it. After a few moments of this, I realized that there was some sort of standstill. Peeking around the trench coated man, I saw that the cashier had made no move to ring up the wine bottles. They sat there on the counter, ignored in silence, an unmovable weight.

The cashier's eyes were fixed on the face of the man before him. His expression was urgent, desperate. At first mildly annoyed, I was now intrigued.

Finally, the cashier spoke. "Richard. . ." The name was quiet yet firm, seemingly hopeful that any other words would be unnecessary.

The man in front of me shifted his weight, tilted his thinning head to one side. His voice came harsh and quick. "What, Craig, what is it." It wasn't a question, but a statement, a dare to say more.

The cashier sighed, glanced at the bottles, at his hands, at me. He turned back to the man, his face renewed with determination. "Richard, I can't sell those to you." His gaze didn't falter once the words left his mouth. It was fixed on him, decided.

I watched the coated man's right shoulder fall a little. His head tilted to the other side.

After another moment of silence, he began to shake his head, the sound of a cynical laugh leaking into the room. "Right. Okay. Well, you have a nice day, you bastard." And with that, he hurried out the door, a rush of cold air taking his place.

I stared after his khaki figure, no longer warm, no longer aware of the cashier, of the twenty I held in my gloved hand. A memory lit up in my mind, urgent and bright, eager to have my attention. I knew this memory, I knew its effects. I read it as a warning sign, and quickly tried to suppress it. My gaze shifted to the wine bottles that still sat on the counter. Despite my efforts, two words managed to seep their way into my conscious stream of thought.

My father.

The cashier's fingers wrapped themselves around the bottles of Chardonnay. I watched him lift them and set them on a shelf behind the counter.

“Can I help you?”

My eyes shifted back to the cashier. I wondered how long I'd been standing there and muttered an apology of some sort and quickly paid the man, telling him to keep the change. I hurried back outside, not noticing the cold wind the slapped my cheeks red.

Sitting in my car, I watched my breath come and go, little white clouds swirling about before they disappeared into the air. I pushed the memory's warning light out of my mind, started my car, and drove to Ruby's Diner. My thoughts groped about for a focus and settled on the gray skies above. I absentmindedly wondered if it would snow.

“Hey, guys, how are ya?” I stood before a man and his little girl, seated in a worn leather booth. The sound of cutlery clinking against plates mingled with customers' conversations. It was warm in the diner, and the happy background noise made it feel even warmer.

“We're doing just fine, aren't we?” the man replied, gesturing to his daughter.

She looked up from her coloring book, purple crayon poised, and nodded at me, pigtails swaying. “We're on a date!” Her voice rose above the chatter with ease.

I knelt down so I was at eye level with her. “Oh, really?” “And we're going to see a movie too.”

I smiled, surprised at myself for envying her place. “That sounds like a really fun date.” She agreed, nodding her head emphatically.

I glanced at her father; he was smiling at his girl. “Can I get you guys anything to drink?”

“Coke, please!” Remembering herself, she risked a look at her father, who nodded in approval.

“Excellent choice.” He turned to me. “I'll have what she's having.”

“Alright.” I nodded and stood. “I'll be right back with those.”

I walked quickly to the server alley to fill their drinks, focusing on my steps, dodging a busboy, a food runner. I paid particular attention to the amount of ice that was in each cup, my thoughts desperate for a focal point. A drink in each hand, I made my way back to my table, training my focus once again on my shoes. I moved my gaze from my feet to find the man and his daughter, and once I did, my steps stopped.

I could hear her giggling from where I stood, her blond curls bouncing as she shook her head. “Daddy, how do you do that?” Her voice rose above the diner's more sophisticated conversations like the tinkling of fine china. There was a lull in chatter as more than a few patrons paused to locate the source of her enjoyment.

The man sat across from her with a spoon balanced on his nose, hands raised, palms facing her. His eyes were wide and happy, albeit focused on his act, his lips unable to keep his smile from showing.

The light in my mind demanded my attention once again, flashing fast and bright.

I heard an irritated voice behind me. “Hey, what's the hold up?” I turned and thrust the drinks in the hands of my coworker, his annoyance fueled. I asked him to take them to the table for me and turned away before he could object.

I found the nearest door and walked out of the diner into the cold evening air, unaware of the goosebumps that were forming on my arms. I could no longer ignore the reminder, could no longer focus on my feet before me. I gave in and let the flood of memories come, praying it would be over soon.

I could hear the laughter in my four-year-old voice as I cried, "Daddy, show me how you do it!" We were seated at the kitchen table, my mother clearing away chili bowls, my brother helping her.

He picked up his spoon and polished it slowly with his handkerchief, relishing in my impatience. I could taste the sweet smell of tobacco coming from his shirt, from his being. "Alright," he said. "I'll let you in on the secret." His smile was warm and patient, his cheeks a faint shade of pink. "Here's the trick: you have to breathe on it." In one fluent motion, he blew warm air into the bowl of the spoon and rested it on the tip of his nose. He raised his hands, palms facing me, and smiled victoriously.

I laughed and shrieked, unashamed of the noise I was making. "Okay, let me try now!"

"Dear," I heard a quiet voice say, "are you alright?" I turned to my left and saw an old woman sitting next to me, small and fragile. I looked around and saw I was sitting on a wooden bench, Ruby's Diner half a block away.

I began to internally reprimand myself for leaving my shift, for not grabbing a coat. For not ignoring that memory.

"Uh, yeah," I stuttered.

"Well, you must be cold. Here, I think I have an extra blanket." She began to rummage through the items held in the grocery cart parked beside her: a stack of blankets, neatly folded, a worn pillow, a faded yoga mat, mismatched dishes, stale granola. Wal-Mart bags full of folded clothes and miscellaneous belongings hung off of the sides.

"Here we are." With mitten clad hands, she placed the faded patchwork quilt in my lap. For a moment I stared at the mosaic of patterns and colors in front of me: clouds and rainbows, smiling caterpillars and happy flowers. The shapes and pictures on the patches made me long for a warmer season, a different time.

Then I looked up at the woman. Her eyes were blue and cloudy, her face pale, her nose red. She sat facing me with hands folded in her lap, bundled in two oversized winter coats. Her lips were chapped and broken. A burgundy toboggan covered her head; wisps of white hair peeked out from underneath.

Her mouth was smiling, though I knew the pull of her lips had to be painful. Her face was kind and warm, expectant. I quickly unfolded the blanket and wrapped it around my shoulder, subconsciously making sure my hair didn't touch its fabric. The quilt was warm against my bare arms. I tried to ignore the scent of musty dish towels mixed with cigarettes.

"Thank you."

She patted my knee. "Oh, dear, no need to thank me." She looked at my uniform. "You taking a break from work?"

I shrugged, more so to myself than in response to her question. "Yes, I suppose so."

"Well, you shouldn't walk around without a coat. You'll catch a cold."

I nodded compliantly. The few streetlights along the road flicked on, their cold light bulbs mere glows.

“Dear, are you alright?”

I felt a single tear roll down my cheek, hot and evasive. I hoped it was too dark for her to notice. She pulled out a pack of tissues from one of her Wal-Mart bags and placed it in my hands. I turned to her.

“I just—” I began. “Today I remembered a lot of things. Things that I thought I’d forgotten.”

She waited patiently. The lightbulbs were now warm, their rays bright.

“But I haven’t forgotten them. And I can’t even ignore them. And it just. . .”

“It hurts.” She patted my knee, and I knew she understood.

“Yeah.” I pulled out a tissue and wiped my nose. “It hurts.”

“Some things,” she said, “don’t get forgotten. Some things are better remembered.” I looked at her, and her chapped lips smiled at me. “I think you’d best be getting back to work now.”

I shrugged off the quilt and refolded it for her. I looked into her cloudy blue eyes and began to thank her.

“Oh, dear,” she interrupted, “there’s no need to thank me.”

I didn’t go back to work. I’ve found that when my thoughts succumb to a memory, it is difficult to stop its effects from rolling, growing, and taking me with it. And this time, I didn’t want to stop it. I wanted to give my mitten clad friend’s advice a chance, to venture into this long-ignored part of myself, fearful though I was.

So, on a familiar porch step I stood, unable to recall the drive to the little white house. My cheeks were numb from cold, my pulse fast. A part of me was chiding myself for being so foolish as to let the memory take control, to open myself up to the possibility of pain. To be vulnerable.

I sucked in a breath, the cold air a burn in my lungs. And then I knocked on the door. I wondered if he would answer and what words would be passed. I watched a snowflake fall to rest on my shoe, then another.

Without warning, the door opened wide. Warm air blew into my face, through my hair. It was him, my father. I wonder now what expression my face must have been making, whether it looked as surprised as his did.

I heard myself speak. “Hi, Daddy.”

A laugh in disbelief, a smile, lips unable to keep his joy from showing. These are the things with which my cold self was met.

Another snowflake fell between us before he spoke. “Junie, I am so happy to see you.”

I felt something in me change, a shift. I realized that my memory, the one that had lit up like a warning on my mind’s dashboard, was quiet.

And I was warm.

Birthday

VICTORIA ENDRES

By the time I crawled out from under my parents' bed the white curtains glowed red from the setting sun. Dust and its musty smell clung to me, as I held the new book close to my chest and quietly poked my head out of their door. My fingers ran themselves nervously over the book's smooth sky-blue spine, the final installment of my favorite series. It was a story about a girl who loved books. A girl who got physically lost within the pages. My dad had given it to me as a birthday gift before I left the party.

The hallway was dark, and I could hear the clattering of dishes as my mom cleaned up the mess downstairs. I took a deep breath. My heart was pounding, trying to escape the confines of my chest. *At least the party is over*, I told myself, *it's not like I wanted it in the first place*. I was clutching the book so hard my knuckles had gone white. I tried to relax, but I knew she would be furious.

It was my birthday. I was turning 13, and teenagers are supposed to rebel, right? If Todd wasn't such a jerk maybe I wouldn't have had to leave the party. The heat flooded my face as I remembered the way my friends had laughed as I struggled to pull my pants back on. Todd was a notorious clown and pantsing was his specialty. Yet, somehow, I had convinced myself he wouldn't mess with me on my birthday. As everyone stared at the too-big princess underwear mom made me wear, the skin tight black jeans didn't seem like such a good idea. Frantic, I spotted Dad in the corner of the living room, red solo cup frozen on the path to his mouth. His eyes round and unblinking, he took a step towards me, but she was there. She was laughing. Just like Todd, like all my friends.

In an instant, I freed my pants from around my ankles I ran for the stairs, trying and failing to keep back the tears. I caught a blurred glance at my mother's disgusted face watching me go. Her laughter dissolved as I pushed past Todd, trying to escape. My breath came in short bursts, strained and forced. I felt like an enormous weight was suddenly laid on my chest.

I sat down on my parents' bed and tried to calm my breathing. *An asthma attack is not what I need right now*. The moment I heard the slow, heavy footfalls on the stairs, I knew she would make me go back. I could practically see her, wooden spoon waving in her hand, eyes red from barely contained rage, telling me that I was too old to cry, that boys only mess with girls if they like them. If he teased me I shouldn't be embarrassed, it's a compliment. No daughter of hers would cry like some pansy.

I hid. I slid as quietly onto the floor as I could and rolled under her bed. When she came into the room I held my breath, trying to be as still and quiet as possible. I could see her feet, those callused, pale white monstrosities, once beautiful, or so Dad says. Size 13 with nails painted bright red by my hand to try and make them look less masculine. The rough skin underneath always looked dry and cracked, despite the expensive moisturizes we coated them with. She hated them. A sharp sigh escaped a mouth I couldn't see. Still retaining some of the dancer's grace they once mastered, the only remnant of her famous beauty, those fearsome feet returned the way they came.

She wasn't always this way, fear-inspiring and angry. Or at least that's what Dad tells me. When he first met her, she was delicate and graceful. A thin girl with a lean dancer's build flashing perfect teeth. Somehow the accident that stole her ability to leap also stole her ability to smile. It stole any empathy she used to have, the gentleness Dad loved so much. The only remnant of her previous joy are the laugh lines etched into her stone-like face. Now, things are different. A good day means a day when shouts are replaced with sullen, brooding silences. Now Dad and I are the graceful ones, tiptoeing around the house, trying not to draw attention to ourselves. I have mastered the art of hiding in my own home.

Only after I heard the creaky door at the top of the stairs close did I let out the breath I had been holding. I was left alone with dust bunnies and old socks, all of us forgotten under the bed. The familiar sense of relief filling the space under the bed. She was gone. Knowing I couldn't go back to face both her and my friends, humiliated, I reached for the book my dad had given me less than an hour ago and settled in to read. Trying to forget them just for a moment, the way they seemed to have forgotten me.

That was hours ago, and I knew the sound of my stomach growling would give me away the next time Mom came to look for me, it wouldn't be long. So, I braved the stairs, watching my bare feet, small and slender, padding quietly down the red carpeted steps. I paused on the last step, my feet parallel to the edge of the step, unconsciously moving to first position. I could hear the water running, spraying over some metal pan. I bit my lip to keep it from trembling and made the short walk into the kitchen.

But she wasn't there. Instead it was my dad cleaning up. I let out a long breath, "Where's Mom?" I slipped onto a wooden stool next to the sink and started drying the pile of wet dishes.

"I told her she should go out with her friends tonight, she had a busy day," he set down the pot in his hand and turned off the faucet. "How ya feeling, Cat?"

I opened my mouth to tell him I was okay and instead the tears I had held back for hours returned. He turned and hugged me with hands still wet from cleaning dishes. He threw me the birthday party I wished I could have had. We finished my birthday cake and watched *Sixteen Candles*. It was just the two of us. Like so many other nights, quietly waiting for the moment the door would slam shut, shattering our peaceful silence. Just the two of us.



Strokes
SARAH FOX

The Flaw

REBECCA TURNBULL

2007

“Hi, Becca!” She pats my butt multiple times, as one would a baby. As a girl no longer in elementary school, I wonder how we’re not past this odd salutation yet.

“Hi, Grandma.” I open my arms for the hug she is lunging in for. A quick squeeze, then a number of moist kisses on my face in quick succession. *Msk msk msk msk*. The sound is of a chipmunk tapping its teeth at a tight nut.

She leans back and pats my face. Her eyes jump to my eyebrows.

“Stop pluckin’ those brows!”

Her serious expression quickly shifts to a smile, like she just told a joke. She even chuckles.

She does this almost every time I come in. A comment on the length of my shorts. A mention of my eyeliner. A question like, “So how many of those little holes do you have all over your ears?”

“Just seven,” I answer, before counting each earring for her as she looks on.

When I share this with Mom, she tells me she was in sixth grade when she shaved her legs for the first time. Grandma didn’t know. She had been showing Grandma a dance she made up in her brother’s bedroom when Grandma noticed her newly hairless legs, smacked them, grabbed Mom’s arm, pushed her onto the nearby bed, and screamed chastisements at her over the jovial sound of the record still playing.

“You got it easy,” Mom reminds me.

2014

After graduating high school, I decided to get a pixie cut. I wanted something new to mark the occasion of my moving on from adolescence.

I went to a salon and sloughed off what seemed like miles of exhausted hair that had been over-dyed and over-styled throughout the past decade.

I caught many people in town off-guard that summer before I moved away to college. I looked like someone different. Some thought I was much older than I looked. Some thought I might be a mother. Some thought I might be a boy.

“Don’t you just love short hair?” Grandma eagerly ran her fingers through it when I was in on my Thanksgiving break.

“You should keep it that way!”

It must have been the first time I had heard her say those words.

Her own hair had been short her whole life. It had been a bouncy, jet-black bob when she was a child, transforming into a pixie cut in her youth. And it had stayed that way through her courtship with Grandpa, their wedding, the birth of their son seven months afterward, raising their son with two additional daughters, and so on.

It’s slightly longer now, but her hair, tinged with gray, has still never breeched the base of her head.

Anything more is too much of a hassle.

2015

I decided to grow my hair out again. It had gotten too boring. You can’t do very much with only a couple inches of hair but idly twist it around in your fingers.

2016

I lost my virginity. The night it happened, my hair was already reaching down to my shoulders, barely spilling over onto my back. But, pressed against the pillow, you couldn’t tell.

Just one month before that night, I went to visit my maternal grandparents on my own for the first time, without a family gathering to provide the rationale.

Grandma hugged me when I entered the kitchen, then resumed her position leaning against the countertop.

“Your hair is getting longer!” Grandma looked up at me smiling as I scrambled to set my luggage somewhere.

That night, I found Grandma’s old wedding dress in the basement. I took it out of the large gold box that enclosed it. The dress was thick and white with long sleeves and a vine of big, shimmery, cream-colored roses trailing down the middle. I dared to try it on.

I undressed down to my underwear. I slipped the great dress on that had only been worn once before.

It was way too small. It pinched around my waist. I couldn’t button up the back.

Yet she had been my age when she wore it.

I marveled at it. How young Grandma was. How small her body had been, even with a baby growing inside.

How people must have searched along the floral line of the bodice, under the shadow of her Bible bouquet, looking for some sort of bump in the opaque fabric—a flaw—to give her away.



Grandma's Cupcake Stand
JESSICA ASHWORTH

Steve, Who the Hell Is She?

REBECCA TURNBULL

Don't feel ashamed, Mark. I don't really know you, either. I only know your tanned hide of folding, wrinkled skin. Your smile that barely cracks through the right corner of your mouth. The way you never really do smile. The cross of your withering legs when you smoke. Boxes of Blue Camels. I know you've been abroad. Trinkets from Vietnam scatter across your living room in the most organized way when we're playing Tripoley. Or at least trying to. *Aw shit... here, Steve.* You don't recall the rules of poker anymore, so Steve plays your hand. A royal flush. A sigh. A small oriental bronze gong glinting in the TV room that can clang louder than your constant gibes. All in good fun, huh? *Oh, shut the hell up, you.* You've shot guns, haven't you? You smile through a grayscale headshot on the wall among others of your fellow Sailors whom you cooked for. Young, young men, all glowing forever in sinless gray haze. You had to have known your desires then, among all of them. Their able bodies abounding. Your own, slender and supple. The way you flip your wrist. Cigarette dangling. Can I call you Queen? *Oh God.* The air about you. More than smoke and Iowa wind and medicine. More like mystery of emerald jungles, of skin damp with sun, of eyes foggy with the memories you no longer see clearly. But, oh, today I relish in the moments you kiss your husband, Steve. You have still won this war of resistance, at least. Once, you did know me. You hugged me through the window of my car, met my eyes with a strained clarity about the blues of yours, and you told me to please come back again. *Soon.* When I asked your grandson, my boyfriend, if, maybe, you remembered who I was, he said, *Maybe.* One month later, I remembered you, the three states between, the three years left of memory, and I wept in the westbound I-64 traffic home.



One Way
MICHAEL BLANKENSHIP

98 Cent Tacos

HANNAH BRADFORD

Looking out the car window at the mountains of Mexico in the far distance, I try to forget about the two crockpots full of soup buckled in the back seat like passengers. I try to figure out if it's my mother in the seat beside me who's making me uncomfortable, or if it's the thought of soon seeing the *Slabbers*, the name many of the homeless call themselves at Slab City.

Slab City is a place you only visit to see Leonard Knight's Salvation Mountain—which, despite its name, smells more like the waste tank to a porta potty than it does a dedication to God and a gift to the world. As we near it, I see the people, ranging from sixteen to fifty, all walking on the side of the road with their thumbs out, looking for a ride to the same destination. In the distance, looms the colorfully painted hill of Salvation Mountain.

"Remember not to touch them, and don't go anywhere alone," my mother tells me again. Her gray hair escapes her hair-tie like a spider web that's been dismantled. Her hair is the longest I've ever known it to be, touching her waist, a visible stripe at the point where she stopped coloring it, after so many years. Even with several multi-colored hair ties leading down the pony-tail, it still looks untamed.

I think back on the way she looked a year ago, before I left for college. Her diet of Del Taco most certainly took its toll. She appeared puffy, yet too thin, at the same time. Her face a sickly tomato red. Her worn out baggy clothes and sagging skin hiding the skeleton you only noticed when you were forced to hug her. Her eyes dark sunken into her skull. Her blue and green eye shadow doing little to hide the corpse she had become.

I look back out at the *Slabbers*. The desert sand baked onto their red sunburned bodies. Their matted hair. Most of the people I see are like this. Some with shoes, some without. Some carrying large back packs, others taking a casual stroll away from their camp.

As a child, Mother would pull me in close and tell me not to make eye contact with the homeless and beggars outside of the markets. I was taught to tense up my body and pretend to be invisible. Little did she realize then that that would be her one day. For two years, she lived out of her car in the Kohl's parking lot, underneath one of the hundreds of trees that lined the lot. She would use the bathroom of Kohl's to wash herself with a rag and brush her teeth. In the hundred-degree sun, she would bake in the tin can of her car.

When my family and I drove by Kohl's, I'd look to see if she was there. Sometimes she was, and my father would snicker and say, "It looks like your mom is home." We'd laugh, because there was really nothing else you could do. "I'm sorry," Dad said, "I probably shouldn't joke about that." I knew he was right. But I welcomed the relief as well. It was hard to think about her sleeping there every night. In the heat during the day. At night when even I was shivering in my bed. I would think about her old, poorly insulated jeep and wonder if she would be found frozen the next day. I wonder if my dad was up worrying as well. I wonder what it is like to love and lose

someone like he did. I wonder if that was what I experienced all through my high school year. Sorrow turning into bitterness.

We had always laughed at the sad in my family. Funerals were never sad, that I remember, on my father's side of the family. We would sit and talk and laugh and remember the good and the bad of the person who had passed. It was always a celebration.

But this was different. My mother was not dead. We were not celebrating her. We were mocking her.

During those two years, I hated spending time with my mother. It meant waiting for her red jeep to pull up to the house. I felt suffocated by guilt and discomfort sitting in the very place I knew she slept. As a high schooler, it was hard to explain my mom to my friends. It was hard to explain why I hated this woman who'd given life to me. I felt the need to punish her for being homeless, for making me feel uncomfortable, for leaving my dad. She taught me to look away from the Homeless. To lock the doors and avoid eye contact. To walk quickly past them as if they were not there. To avoid conversation with them.

In high school, she often took my sister and me to Del Taco on "Taco Thursday." She was still homeless, but this was her way of being part of our lives. Out of spite, I'd order an item more expensive than the 98 cent tacos. I knew she couldn't afford it, and I knew she couldn't deny me it.

I was cruel to her.

Nearing Leonard Knight's Salvation Mountain, my mother pulls off the main road and onto a dirt road. We stop behind the church truck. As I get out of the car, I look around at the desert-worn people amassed around the truck offering canned goods, clothing, and hot food. My chest tightens. I tell myself that it's my mother speaking inside my head. But I'm not so sure. I stand behind the loaves of bread and give two slices for each person who approaches. Some ask for more than two. I indulge them.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

CATHERINE ALLISON

they say we one of the poorest states
they say we bring nothing to the table, plates empty, some aches hungry
but those plates that we bring were made here
those hands that hold them, forged here
they say we a shadow of what we once were
the only thing they say we rich in is the elderly
that's true.
but they are some of the wisest, seen it all, the taste of the fruits we once brought on the tongues
they say we stupid, hillbilly mountaineers
but a shadow still lands on something



Desolation
BETSY ALLEN

Marcum Terrace

MICHAEL RAMBURG

You could count the rows of bricks on these gritty apartments like wasted gravestones, like memorials for forgotten bodies scattered on hillside tombs. But bricks don't make flesh worth remembering—lives do. So, you remember: thumping bass from opened windows, young lovers with locked lips. Rebel flags drawn back to let the sun in. Jimi Hendrix played on broken guitars. Busted bottles. Floors scrubbed fresh with the scent of pine. *Happy Days* reruns. Strangers calling out for a cigarette or the time. In one room, an old lady hums *How Great Thou Art*, an opened Bible on her lap. In another, a lost soul with a grimy shirt for tourniquet, a needle poked halfway through sagging flesh. The Olive Street Market—busy for this time of day—but still, you'll wait, talk to neighbors, a buck and a quarter for a banana, fifty cents for a Charleston Chew. Outside, neighbors sit on rusty lawn-chairs, bitter brews in wrinkled hands. They'll tell each other tales. How the law caught up with the Adkins boy, after he went and stole the copper from out the cable man's truck. How Jeffery just come back from St. Mary's—triple bypass, too much fried food—but he'll be OK. In the distance, HPD sirens—*Which one they come to get today?* Everybody knows the routine: stay close to your door, hang out your windows, keep watch, but don't seem like you're staring. They line the suspects on broken concrete, hands in plastic ties behind their back, lost dreams on their blank faces, *yes, ma'am* and *no, sir* on their tongues. In a moment, they'll be gone—a momentary pause, an abrupt semicolon in their fractured lives—off to the Regional, worn cots and three-solid-meals a day. And back at the T? You'll watch the whirligigs outside Mrs. Whitecraft's door spin, watch your mother braid your sister's golden hair, blow bubbles through twisted metal coat hangers, know first loves and first heartbreaks and first cars—junky as they might be—until you're old enough to leave, or young enough to die—whichever comes first.

And Jesus Wept

MICHAEL RAMBURG

the preacher man says, and I believe—even though I'm a Jew, I know everyone cries, so I figure it plausible that the different parts of a godhead could too, and I keep listening, and he says: in seven days God made the world, and I've heard that one before, so I wave my hand to say yes, yes, and he says: look around and you will see all of God's greatness, and he points to the mountains, to the creek, and I think How Great Thou Art and someone sings, someone shouts Alleluia, and I watch them weep.

"I'm Awesome and I'm Fucking Sober"

BREANNE THOMPSON

Remember, you screamed this as we were driving through Westwood at about two in the morning. You were hanging your body out of the window of the car. Shit, at one point I had to grab you by the waistband. You were leaning so far out. It was crazy. Your mom kept calling your phone and you were in no shape to speak to her. I answered and told her you had food poisoning so she wouldn't worry. I got you some bread to try to help absorb the alcohol in your system, but that didn't really help. As soon as you started eating it, you threw it back up. I was so mad at you and Chris. I warned him not to challenge you. I told him you were way too stubborn to back down, but 13 beers in less than an hour, Bre? You know better.

Black Out 1: Told from the perspective of Whitney Pope

Sometimes, looking inside of myself, I feel as if nothing there points to someone that is real. All it seems to be is a body, a physical mass caught up in a world of auditory and visual illusions. My limbs dense, pricked incessantly by a needle. Pushing their physical pieces tighter and tighter, yet adding nothing of substance. There is no strength in them. No muscle mass, just impacted fiber. A needle felted figure that sets on a shelf. The ties to reality, fragments of memory, a sense of connection, a purpose for being here, all are lost to me. I sometimes feel as if I can point myself in the direction of reason. I can try to find

[1] Nothing seems funny or endearing about a scenario where you force yourself into a drunken stupor, but this was one of the funniest and best nights of my life. Sticking my head out of a car window and yelling will always be one of my fondest memories. For the first time, I felt seen.

these lost and lonesome memories. They begin to feel almost real again. Then I Fall

Fall

Fall

into a world swirling by me and around me as I stay still. Lost in finding reality. Trying to break apart that wall. My mindless form falls off the shelf of reality.

"That's Little Eli for you." [2]

Aunty, my mother's brother's wife had just referred to me as my grandfather, and I was young. This was a comment on general temper as opposed to the derision seen as no more than a shadow of my mother. A vague offshoot of her temper to add another foreign personality to my identity. One met with much less un-

Average amount of alcohol consumed per sitting: 6 I'm
Alcoholic binge= 4 or more drinks in a 2 hr. period. on my
The amount of times I have been black out drunk: 5 eighth
or

ninth beer of the night. At this point I've lost count. I learned a lesson from the last time though. 13 beers in less than an hour, mixed with shots was not the way to go. Probably won't entertain the idea of going drink for drink with a 6' 3" man again this lifetime either. His mass takes up so much space. I can't tell where he begins and the woods begin. Through the flame and my inebriation, his edges blur. His dark complexion mends with the forest around him. His skin dances with the smoldering coals of the fire, the shadows that play against his hair partake in games unseen in their blurry, blend. The only thing held in stark contrast are the spark of his teeth in his smile against his earthy face, like fire flashing against the wooded night. I begin walking around the bonfire to the log on the other side. Walking, that concept is an incredible stretch. Try stumbling. I feel the patterns that my steps are taking:

1-2
1, 2-3
1

[3] The acceptance friends irked Josh. Every night he comforted himself with a bottle of Tvarskies bodka He called me every night and hurled abuse at me. He was mad that I was finding my voice. He feared the day that I wouldn't need alcohol to stand up for myself.

1
123
1-2-3

My body wobbles in cadence with the flame. I feel like the way they move are directly connected with my perception. I...

"Fuck, you allright?"
My nose is almost touching the topmost log in a pile that spreads at least three feet in any given direction radiating from its center. It is not stacked in any particular way. Logs seem like stalagmites growing from the bottom of a cave creating a pattern of interrupted lines and shadow.

"... thankyou, I wouldhav broken mybac if I woulhav fallen into tha"
"No worries, I'm jus glad Iwas hereand yah didn't get hurt."

rrringg
rrRringgg [2] My family others me. I refuse to allow prejudice to slide by unchallenged. I am harsh.

RING
Josh. My boyfriend's name shines brightly on the screen of my phone. These traits make me like my mother and Grandmother. These traits make me, Me.
"Shit, I've got to go take this." {3}

epithet usually reserved for my mom. I have been called "Little Shirley" since of character naming someone "Eli" implied in my family. I was used to being ament; her child, not myself, not me, not an individual. Now I was being asked derstanding and good will.

cking Sober! [1]

Ghazal for Insight

JOEE GOHEEN

I wait for the moon to see my eye's rods and cones swaying like wheat fields
And the soil to flame green buds of light like a crop of fallen stars for harvest.

I wait for the horizon line to curl like an orange peel and encase the world in perfume,
And the tumble weed to unravel its arid secrets tangled in branches and desert plume.

If the untrained body could twirl its turbines in a burst of cosmic energy like creation,
And the rhinoceros beetle could have consciousness and thought as great as its name,

I would not wait beneath the canopy of the Bodhi tree and search leaves for inscription,
And the marigolds would not mingle in streets like mice shellacked in turmeric, awaiting
affliction.

The jarred mind ferments and imbibes on the amniotic fluid of formaldehyde,
Doubt hones its scalpel on skull like a whetstone, before slicing the vulnerable lobes below.

I wait for my palms to grow thick with asphalt and form a one-way over the absolute
And the sea foam to speak, its bubbly tongue in prayers, as its ebbs deliver the dead.

Tell the ground to open like it had for Orpheus, and dip me in the gold mantle's light.
Sound the lyre from the molten core as I emerge anew, dripping in perfect insight



Two Rivers Meet
REBECCA TURNBULL

Indecent Exposure

HAILEY HUGHES

We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. — John Berger, Ways of Seeing

Pablo Picasso's *Blue Nude, 1902* hangs on the wall in my living room in my apartment. In it, the woman curls into herself, knees pulled tightly to her chest and head bowed. She has turned her back on us. Coal black hair fashioned in a tight bun high atop her head sharply contrasts with the deluge of pulsating blue. The striations of her shoulder blades, brief flashes of muted yellow, flex with movement, emotion. The curvature of her back and buttocks exposed, like a fetus in a mother's womb.

The paradoxical qualities of the painting force me to stop mid-thought or mid-step and look. The woman is in a vulnerable position, certainly; yet, she is defensive, shielding much of her body from the viewer's gaze. I appreciate that her face is obscured and we cannot truly know her. *This is my body, not my identity*, she seems to murmur to herself.

Shut the bathroom door. Slap the syringe, alcohol swab, and needle on the vanity. Stand on the plush pink rug to undress for bed. Your ribs protrude from both sides of your chest, if you inhale sharply. Your fingers graze over the curved bones. Twenty-four. Everyone has twenty-four ribs: twelve on each side. You once believed that women had an extra rib. In Sunday school, you were taught that Eve was created from Adam's rib. A rumor started or maybe you made it up in your own mind that women had twenty-five ribs and men only had twenty-three.

Uncap the syringe. Twist on a small needle. Half an inch. Adjust the dosage to 2.5 mL. You pinch a fleshy part of your thigh. You have to look as the needle goes in. *One, two, three*. The needle breaks the skin. Push the plunger down. The medication burns. *Breathe. Breathe*. You curl your toes into the pink softness under your feet. A swipe with the alcohol swab will disinfect the tiny red dot left from the injection. Cap the syringe and needle.

You try to see if your breasts have grown at all. Still flat. No breasts, just nipples. Like a boy. You are just sharp angles and concaves. You decide to use the toilet. The golden door knob turns and giggles bubble up from the opposite of the door. "Just a minute! Getting dressed." You say as you try to toss on a long t-shirt at your feet.

The door opens and the new friends who've invited you over for a sleepover burst into the bathroom, camera phones in hand. You begged your mother for a cell phone, but she refused. *When you need one, we'll talk about it. Not until high school*, she'd said. These girls had been so nice to you at school and even invited you to sit at their lunch table. Still on the toilet, you drape the t-shirt over your chest. The girls laugh, tell you to smile. This is unbelievable.

"Get out, I'm changing! Out!"

They slam the door. You wonder if they deleted the pictures. You never ask.

"Well, we think she has *growth retardation*—a failure to thrive." The endocrinologist tells my mother. "At this point, we could start growth hormone injections or you can forego treatment."

"What do you want to do? It's up to you." My mother turns to me. She sits on a green molded plastic chair in the exam room and looks up at me on the table.

"I dunno. What happens if I don't do anything?" I swing my legs back and forth against the cabinets under the exam table.

"Well, you will go through puberty; it'll just be late. Your biological age is 13 years, 5 months, but you're only showing the growth of someone who is 9 years, 8 months. You won't finish with puberty until early adulthood." He explains.

On the wall, behind my head, there is a diagram of a skeleton. All its bones are labeled and numbered. *Phalanges. Ulna. Radius.* I list them in my head. The only three that I know from science class. "He's talking to you. Pay attention." My mother's voice pulls me from my thoughts.

"Sleep on it. You don't have to decide right now." The doctor smiles at me and writes something down in my chart.

You've always been small, compact. When you play hide-and-seek, you can curl yourself into a ball and hide inside the kitchen cabinets. No one can ever find you. All the girls at school, your sisters, and friends' bodies have changed, though. Acne medication, tampons, and bras have become common fodder for teenage girl gossip; the games we played seem foolish, childish now. You walk back to Kelsey's bedroom and throw your clothes next to the closet.

"Look at this! Oh my god! How can anyone fit in this?" Kelsey whips your bra out of the pile and holds it up by the straps. The fabric of the training bra ripples in the air. Two rectangles of white cotton with lace edging attached to two straps. A little white bow accent is sewn onto the ribbing in the middle.

"Give it back, *Kelsey*. That's mine!" You yell at her and try to grab for it, but she's taller than me and dangles it out of my reach.

"There isn't even any padding here. What size *are* you, anyway? She laughs and puts it on over her pajama top. The other girls fall back on her bed and scream with laughter. Kelsey dances around, twirling in your bra. You stand still next to the closet door and stare at your chipped nail polish.

"Please, that's the only one I brought. You'll stretch it out," you complain. She takes it off and I snap it out of her hands. I shove my clothes in the closet.

"We were just having fun. You take everything so seriously. *God.*" Silence envelopes the room. And everyone stares at you. The little girl who still wears a training bra. A child who doesn't wear make-up or have any use for Tampax. You'll never be invited to another sleepover.

Everyone changes in front of each other for gym class in high school. Except you. The novelty of nudity and sexy underwear has faded. You will fold yourself into a disgusting bathroom stall to change clothes for gym class until you graduate high school. The floor is damp and your calves scrape against the stained porcelain toilet bowl. Drape your jeans and shirt over the top of the stall. Thump your elbow on the broken toilet paper dispenser as you step into gym shorts.

Lydia Lake, my best friend, is a photographer. Old cameras and film canisters clutter the shelves in her bedroom. She ties her chunky dreadlocks together with bits of fishing line from her dad's tackle box and bits of old thread. A silver septum ring is jammed through her nose. Every morning she draws a tiny heart beside her right eyelid with eyeliner. Her dresser brims with secondhand store finds. A pair of men's clogs. A yellow sweater adorned with hand-sewn patches that cover moth-eaten holes. A purple and white flannel nightie circa 1963. So much of herself—her image—is patched together like a mismatched quilt, from other people and at the same time, is totally unique. Lydia is a careful curator of her "self."

We chased each other around the fellowship hall of our white steeple church in West Virginia as children. And giggled at racy verses in *Songs of Solomon* from the back row of the sanctuary. We listened as the women of our church taught us to honor our bodies through modesty and celibacy. *Your body is a vessel for the Lord. Honor God in your choices.* My mother instituted a rule at our house: no bellies, no butts, no boobs. The 3 Bs. At 16 now, I'd grown almost four inches and my body seemed to unfurl as 50 lbs softened the sharpness of my hip bones and accentuated the dimple in my chin. V-neck t-shirts show off new cleavage, but I am uncomfortable with wearing tight hip-hugging pants. I am too visible. Too much of a target.

Lydia has saved her babysitting money for a Canon digital camera. Throughout high school, I pose for her. I grip a book about sailing and stare into the camera when we have a photoshoot in an old, musty library. A shiny new tripod allows her to take pictures on a timer. Of herons. Glass bottles on the windowsill in her parents' kitchen. Us, sitting together in a beautiful gazebo as the sun sets, pink and purple hues streaking the sky at dusk.

I modeled for Lydia's photography portfolio in college. In white long johns, so my body could be photoshopped out. Sitting at a desk, writing with a quill. In a musty, old wedding gown picked off the clearance rack from Goodwill at the ritzy Fredrick Hotel. In a flannel nightie at a condemned apartment building--- *for the aesthetics*, she explained, as I tried to step over a stained mattress without tripping over rotten floorboards studded with rusty screws.

"Mom, I need to tell you something. Don't be mad." You tell her as she drives you home from the airport. You just moved to Georgia for graduate school and didn't want to sour the visit by making your mother angry. You wipe your sweaty hands on your jeans. "Two years ago... I posed nude for Lydia." You stare at the houses that blur past in the window and try not to look at her. "I'm writing about it, just so you know and aren't surprised."

"Well, you've always been an exhibitionist."

"You're not mad? What do you mean by *that*?" She starts laughing, amused that you're flustered.

"I'm not surprised. Heck, when you were a little girl, you'd run naked around the house. I'd have to yell at you to put a towel on after a shower. Why'd she ask you?" She flips on her turn signal to turn onto Spider Ridge, our road.

"That was a totally different situation. I was comfortable doing that at home. You guys didn't care. Everyone else backed out and it was for her final project. She needed to pass the project to graduate."

“No, I don’t care. You’re an adult and it was a class project.” You loosen your grip on the armrests of the passenger seat, as she pulls the van into the garage of our house.

“You remember what happened in junior high at that sleepover. I’d never pose nude for anyone else. Ever.” She pulls the van into the garage and you unbuckle your seat belt. You sink back into the seat and breathe. “Anyway, the pictures are gone. She used an old camera, a box camera from the ‘30s. The film was exposed to light—the pictures didn’t turn out. *Thank God*. No one needs to see this,” you half-joke, pointing to your body.

“Well, I told you those girls were awful. I tried to protect you, but you needed to figure out that on your own. I think that was the first loss of innocence for you.”

“Yeah, it just sucks, though. All I want is an apology.” You concentrate on the air freshener attached to the air conditioner vent.

“You’re not going to get it. An apology would require self-reflection and empathy.” Your mother, who is a therapist, decides.

“I just gotta move on, I guess.” You start to open the door to get out of the car.

“Right, you gotta move on, Bug.” She squeezes your shoulder. You’ve missed her.

After a dinner with his friends, Carlos Casagemes rose from his table at the L’Hippodrome Café in Paris on February 17, 1901. Pressed the barrel of a loaded revolver to his right temple and fired. He was smitten and pined for a married woman, Germaine Pichot, a model for Picasso. When she rejected his advances, he became distraught and decided he could no longer go on with his heart ensnared by unrequited love. Upon hearing the news of his friend’s (Casagemes) death, Picasso spiraled into an irreconcilable depression.

The painter loaded his pallet with mournful blues and sorrowful browns. He painted several portraits of Casagemes’ corpse. Female prisoners at St. Lazare. Prostitutes. Homeless men and women. Women and children. All depicted in overwhelming, somber tones of blue. I have searched and searched for any clue to the identity of the model in *Blue Nude, 1902*. Was she a social outcast? An unwed mother or a prostitute? I want to humanize her in some way, help her down from the place on my wall.

John Berger in his foundational text, *Ways of Seeing*, discusses the objectification of nude models in early European paintings. He writes of the nude female subject: “She is not naked as she is. She is naked as the spectator sees her. [...] To be nude is to be naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude.” *Blue Nude, 1902* becomes a painting. An object that I tuck carefully in a box and tote with me whenever I moved from my dorm room to an apartment. The power of the original spectator, Picasso, has been transferred to those who now stare at her bare back. I wonder if she was happy to pose for him; I wonder if she was happy at all.

“Try this,” Lydia says, slinging her arms over her chest as if she’s been strapped into a straitjacket.

“My boobs are freezing. My Lord, I don’t know how people do this for a living. No one can know I did this.” You gripe, as you pose.

“You’re doing a great job and I just want to get a few more. No one will find out, I promise” She smiles at me and gives me a thumbs-up.

“Okay, now, can you dangle your right arm over your head?” She arcs her arm around her head in a sideways C shape, like a fish hook.

“Lydia, you look like Captain Hook! You laugh and dangle your arm around your head.

“I need you to have a straight face. I know it’s hard, but don’t laugh.”

The wind prickles your bare, hairy legs. Why shave in the winter when you’ll only wear long pants? Unless, of course, you pose in the buff for your friend in early March. You are all outside: Lydia, with her box camera and other equipment; Kayla, a mutual friend, holding your clothing; and you, balancing on the barrier of a retention pond in the middle of Huntington, West Virginia. A ramshackle factory building sits behind a chain link fence to my left and the B&O railroad track cuts across the desolate landscape behind us. Shimmering specks and fractured hunks of glass litter the gravel below. Shards of crack pipes or old Coca-Cola bottles. The retention pond is grimy, with weeds sprouting up from the murky water, just waiting for you to fall in.

“Lydia, I swear on the life of my sweet grandmother, if I fall in this cesspool, I will pull you in with me,” you warn as a bee grazes your cheek. “That was a *BEE*. *Oh my gosh!*”

“You’ll be fine. I’m right behind ya,” Kayla says to my left. “The bee’s gone.”

“Put your hands on your hips and look above my lens.” Lydia demonstrates a Wonder Woman pose and then drapes the camera hood over her head.

You mimic her pose and try to stand up tall. Digging your nails into the pale flesh of your sides, you hope that somehow this warms your hands. Your body on display. But you won’t give the camera any power. A flash of white flickers in your peripheral vision. A sour pang gurgles in your stomach. *A white, plastic hard hat. A man wearing a white plastic hard hat.* He walks out of the ramshackle building.

“A man! Holy crap! He just walked out of that building.” You start to crouch on the barrier, hoping he doesn’t notice the sudden movement and turn in your direction. Lydia whips the hood from her head points to the kimono fluttering on a tree limb behind me.

“Kayla, give her that robe. Quickly, please,” Lydia says in a calm, measured tone, as Kayla scrambles to help me down off the ledge. She tosses the kimono on your shoulders and you cinch the sash tightly around your waist.

“I thought this would be private, Lydia.” I thought no one would see and no one would know. That’s all I wanted: privacy,” you whispered angrily, a blotchy red heat creeping up your collarbone to your face.

“I don’t think he saw you. We’ll walk back into that group of trees by the floodwall, past the railroad tracks. I’m really, really sorry. I thought we would be alone, I swear.” She starts to pack up the camera and hoists the equipment bag on her shoulder.

You can’t stay irritated at her for long. You breathe and put your hand on your chest. Your heart thwacks against your palm. Swallow. *She couldn’t have known that guy was going to come out of that building. It was an accident.* You repeat this to yourself in your head.

“Let’s just go and finish. It was an accident. At least he didn’t see us.” You sigh and tread carefully on the gravel in foam flip-flops. And tuck strands of wild brown hair behind your ear.

I imagine the model who sat for Picasso in a cotton robe, perched on the edge of a wooden chair. Splashes of colors on canvas adorn the walls of the artist’s studio; masterpieces in varying stages of completion. Maybe she clasped a cup of coffee in her hands as she watched him gather his oil paints, brushes, and easel. Warming her hands while the steam rises and cools from the cup. Picasso might have instructed her how to pose: *Like this*, he might have suggested, as he crouched with a cigar between his lips, *like a stricken bird*. How her back must have grown sore and her arms heavy as she waited for that last brushstroke. I’d like to imagine that when Picasso finished his work, he helped her up and kissed her on both cheeks.



Suspended
BRYAN PENNINGTON

Magic Hair

HAYLEE WILHERE

In my early childhood science classes, I was taught that our hair and nails are the “dead” parts of our body—“dead cells”—yet my daughter’s hair is a sumptuous blend of moon and sunshine, of curls and waves, dryness and moisture. It is dark yet shimmers in the sun with new shades of honey highlights every time; constantly growing and changing with new life in an ever-spiraling whirl of health and vivacity. A voluminous cornucopia of fragrant happy cells, it smells of beachy coconut and warm vanilla.

Before her school day, nothing is more satiating than running my fingers through her bountiful, bouncy locks with richly hydrating creams and oils quickly absorbed by her garden of curls like basking sunflowers drinking in rays. A plethora of colorful hair products dot our bathroom counter as daylight trickles through the window and onto her hair. Her hair—tiny buds of black-eyed susans—illuminate like waving embers of grain under the sunlight, showcasing her honey highlights as I coat her mane with shea and olive oil beneath the window. Her curls spring and elongate, lengthened and dewy. Her skin and hair absorb all light, then radiate its warmth like the regal lion luxuriating in its own pride on a hot stone beneath the sun—that blazing, indifferent, white orb.

In my early childhood science classes, I was taught that black is the absence of color, since it absorbs all light, yet nothing is more colorful than black. I imagine the coat of a black panther—smooth, hot, and heaving after a long day’s hunt along the densely rich, emerald banks of the Kwa River. Hearty, vibrant villagers gather to employ magic traditional charms—hot red, wrapped around their chiseled onyx arms—to harvest the majestic black creature’s potent strength.

Like her proud Nigerian father, my daughter lights up every room she enters with her larger-than-life personality and charming charisma. Her inherent self-centeredness is not obnoxious; rather, it’s absolutely natural, loveable. In pan-Nigerian culture, your name must have a meaning, since its energy is believed to carry with you the rest of your life. “Zoey,” chosen by her father, means “life” in Ancient Greek.

“It’s Zoey!” squeal her kindergarten friends, as she skips past them every morning entering school—smiling and paying them no attention as she flaunts her voluminous, bouncy puff of hair atop her long, taut characteristically African frame—a walking sunflower. Like moths to a flame, Zoey attracts all people.

Blackness is warmth and life—it is truth. I am white, but my daughter, Zoey, is biracial. My daughter is black.

The “deadest” part of the body has the most moisture on a white person—cascades of grease and wetness overcome our manes like swamp monsters at even the slightest change in hormones and stress levels. My hair changes the same way the moon changes the tides. Black hair is dry and stoic like the powerful sun above. The sun never moves—everything else just orbits around its greatness. My daughter’s hair is not dead. It is Persephone traveling to and from the Underworld and Mount Olympus. Her hair is alive and oscillating between two opposites. It’s her special, magic hair.

As A Girl, I Dream of Horses Part V

DONNA DEROSA

A physical creation of hymn
to organic lifeblood, a symmetry of hearts
pumping and trusting our psyches
to learn how to follow or abet,
without separation, we'd walk... gallop! Building
a road through the trees, the horse
was a way to walk
without walking—
Speak in movements. A language
only for us. Dagwood, his flightiness
a remnant of little Eeohippus' rabbit heart, his ears
the architecture of survival. Dismount me.
Muscle beneath the polished seat,
translated a haul up hill into a wood
trimmed with copses, thickets of deer brush
and fetid fenceposts. In an air of sodden earth
and fresh mushroom rot, we traversed desire-paths
etched by deer freight and horse hoof
to patches of honey suckle, ready for plucking,
stringing and dripping onto tongues. Horses.
They brought untouchable felicity from the eyes
of the forest— did I issue from any seed
of my humanity, a root
of that arrowed feeling
of felicity for him? The horse,
a myth for the telling, or
evolved for me alone.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

Betsy Allen is a senior at Marshall University. She is an assistant editor, reporter and photographer for the *Hurricane Breeze* newspaper in Putnam County, which has been in her family since 1913. When she is not working on projects for college or the newspaper, she enjoys writing poetry and drawing comics.

Catherine Allison is currently working towards a Political Science degree at Marshall. She lives in the northern panhandle with eight cats and has a strong affection for coffee.

Jessica Ashworth will be graduating from Marshall University during this Spring semester of 2018 with a BFA in Visual Arts. Her work revolves around the ceramic and photography and enjoys trying new processes. She currently lives in Hurricane WV, surrounded by family and her pound pups.

M. Dane Blankenship is a Huntington native in his senior year at Marshall University to get his BFA. His work also appears in *Photographer's Forum*.

Ace Boggess, of Charleston, West Virginia, is author of three books of poetry, most recently *Ultra Deep Field* (Brick Road, 2017), and the novel *A Song Without a Melody* (Hyperborea, 2016). His poems have appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Rattle*, *River Styx*, and other journals. His degrees are from Marshall ('94) and the WVU College of Law ('98).

Hannah Bradford is an undergraduate senior at Marshall University. She is double majoring in Creative Writing and English Literature Studies while pursuing a minor in Latin. Her hobbies when not writing include various outdoor activities, fencing, and art. Hannah is from California and hopes to return there to teach and pursue her writing career.

Victoria Endres is West Virginia native and undergraduate student majoring in Literary Studies and Creative Writing. After graduation, she hopes to pursue a graduate degree in English. She has been published with *Thoreau's Rooster*, *Underscore Review*, and *The Manhattanville Review*. Her works focus on problems of identity and relationships. When she isn't working or writing, Victoria enjoys reading, video games, nature hikes, and spending time with loved ones.

Sophie Ezzell was born and raised in Knoxville, TN, where she continues to argue with her mother about the length of shorts. She is currently a sophomore at Marshall University and is pursuing her undergraduate degree in creative writing. Her hobbies include reading, driving to the grocery store in the car she named Heathcliff, and telling people she named her car Heathcliff.

Joe Goheen is a senior at Marshall pursuing degrees in Creative Writing and German and a minor in Religious Studies. Her work has previously been chosen for the English Department's 3 poetry nominees for the AWP Intro Journals Project. She plans on graduating May of 2018 and has dreams of eventually taking time off to travel, write, and meander around drinking coffee to her heart's content.

Originally from Parkersburg, WV, **Hailey Hughes** is an essayist who graduated from Marshall University with a BA in Creative Writing in 2017. Hailey's creative work has been previously published in *Et Cetera*, *Thoreau's Rooster*, and *Queen's City Writers*. She currently resides in Carrollton, Georgia, where she is pursuing an English MA degree at the University of West Georgia. Hailey loved her educational experience at Marshall and is so pleased to be included in this edition.

Jess Hutchinson will graduate in May 2018 with her Master's degree in English from Marshall University. She is in the process of applying to MFA programs with plans to continue her career in creative writing. Jess lives a life of spontaneous improvisation. This applies to her roles as teacher, stand-up comedian, poet, writer, creator, and human-being. She lives in West Virginia with her three pets: Molly, Celia, and Baby.

Kara Justice is a freshman of Marshall University, working towards a major in Psychology. She has had a long history with art, even taking AP Art at Spring Valley High School. Her art is based mainly on her interest in the evils of human nature. She has also competed in Marshall SCORES twice and placed 6th in Visual Arts in the year of 2017.

Bryan Pennington is a visual artist from Huntington, West Virginia. He is pursuing a BFA at Marshall University. His work has been exhibited internationally at the *Color 2017* Exhibition at the CICA Museum in Gimpo, South Korea, and he was awarded a *Marshall University Creative Discovery Research Grant* for the Spring of 2018.

Michael Ramsburg is a former journalism student at Marshall University. He currently lives in the Charleston area. His creative work has appeared in a variety of publications, including *Human Parts*, *The Junction*, *Coffeelicious*, *Literally Literary*, *CROSSIN(G)ENRES* and *Literati Magazine*, among others. He'll one day be published in *Brevity*. He swears.

June Richardson is a Marshall University student that enjoys writing fiction when she has spare time. She is excited about the prospect of being published in her university's literary magazine *Et Cetera*.

Adil Sattar graduated from medical school in Pakistan and moved to the US in 2010 for further his training. He is currently a fellow in interventional cardiology at Marshall University School of Medicine. He believes that the human body is nature's masterpiece of artistic expression and that all concrete science stems from abstraction and awe. He strives to, one day, get just the right amount of milk in his tea.

Alex Simms is a MA English student at Marshall University. He has always been interested in storytelling, whether through writing or photography. His photographic work has been published in places like *Rookie* and *Oh Comely Magazine*, whereas this is his first publication for his writing. Some of his favorite storytellers include people like Mary Karr, Greta Gerwig, Sufjan Stevens, William Eggleston, & the two hosts of *Great British Baking Show*, just to name a few.

Brianna Taft is currently finishing up her BFA at Marshall University. She has artwork displayed in *Earth, Wood, and Fire* at Wheeling, WV and *10x10* at Dayton, Ohio. Her work has also been previously published or is forthcoming in *Sculpture*. She currently resides in West Virginia with her husband and their rescue dog.

Nathan Thomas is a journalist, filmmaker, writer and comedian from the unincorporated community of Loudendale, West Virginia. His work revolves around the idea of telling Appalachian stories that have gone too long untold, whether it be in fiction or non-fiction form. He also works to promote the work of Appalachian musicians in various visual forms (documentaries, music videos). He has previously interned for West Virginia Public Broadcasting and NPR Music's Mountain Stage.

Breanne Thompson currently attends Marshall University working towards degrees in Creative Writing, Literary Studies, and Spanish. She is a non-traditional student at the age of 27. Her work is confessional, attempts to be funny, and, through graphic design, aims to physically show the world her muddled mind. After graduation, she intends to pursue an MFA with the intent of working as a professor.

Rebecca Turnbull is a senior journalism student at Marshall University. Her nonfiction work has been previously published in *Thoreau's Rooster*. She currently lives in Huntington and works for West Virginia Public Broadcasting as a part-time reporter, but she'll soon be moving out of state after graduation to try law school on for size.

Cassandra Watson is a freshman at Marshall pursuing her dream of becoming a high school English teacher. This is the first time that her work is being published. When she isn't writing, she enjoys playing games, experimenting with her outfits, and eating milk chocolate.

Haylee Wilhere is a current creative writing student at Marshall. She has a beautiful daughter named Zoey and considers the entire globe to be her home. Haylee's favorite word is "enigma."

