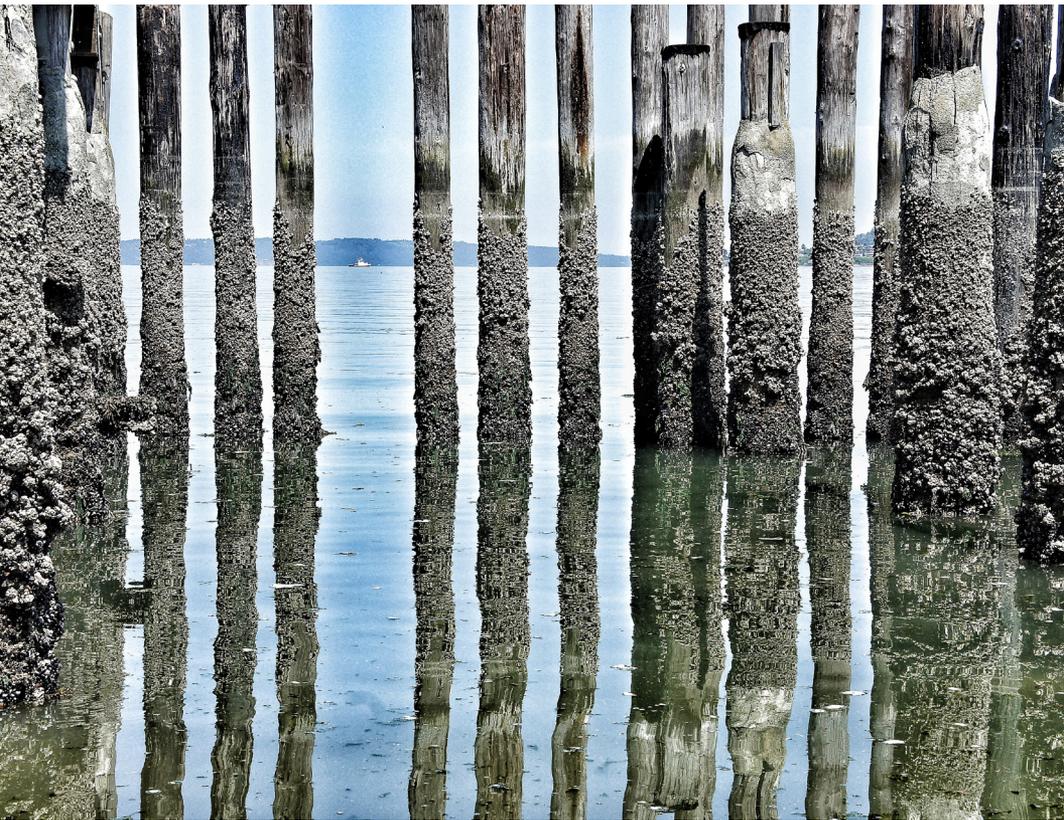


TRUTH & Lies

^
and what lies between



THE LABYRINTH 2013
US NAVAL ACADEMY

The Labyrinth
Literary Magazine
2013

We would like to extend our sincerest appreciation to the Brady Family for supporting the Labyrinth and making the publication of Midshipmen talent a possibility. We would also like to thank the English Department, particularly Professor John Beckman and Lt. Commander Jason Salinas, for fostering an environment that promotes such creativity.

The views represented herein do not reflect the opinions of the United States Navy or the US Naval Academy.

Contents

- 1 Introduction- Karl Marlantes
- 3 Pitt Poetry Prize

Poetry & Short Stories

- 4 Tired Generation -4/C Paige Ward
- 5 The Veer Option -1/C Erica Leinmiller
- 5 Dying Embers -1/C Andra Florea
- 6 Body Image -2/C Lindsay Boyd
- 7 Untitled -2/C Kenneth Piech
- 8 Morning Person -1/C Brandon Martin
- 9 Under the Oak Tree -2/c Maddox
- 10 Cadillac Ranch -2/C Erin Bacon
- 12 The Rug -1/C Brandon Martin
- 15 Ice Fishing Shack -2/c Kenneth Piech
- 16 This Is Winning -3/C Conor Cross
- 17 The Roads -1/C Christian Heller
- 22 Shadow -3/C Marjorie Ferrone
- 23 None know the sacrifices I make. -1/C James Turner
- 24 Short Straw -1/C Andra Florea
- 25 Mosaic -1/C Erica Leinmiller
- 26 Home Comfort -3/C Conor Cross
- 28 One Stitch at a Time -4/C Allyson E. Franchi
- 30 Up on His Down's -3/C Zachery Hebda
- 32 Seasoned Shirts -2/C Erin Bacon
- 33 Ma Belle Rose -1/C Jacob Fox
- 33 For B, A True American -Anonymous
- 34 The "R" Word -1/C Brandon Martin
- 37 A Painless Decision -2/C Emily Strong
- 38 Story of a Year -2/C Jorge Garate
- 39 Gears of my love -2/C Tanner Anjola
- 40 Racing -1/C Brigid Byrne
- 42 POSE A VISIT TO HER GATOR. -1/C Erica Leinmiller
- 45 Christmas Tree Short Story -2/C Marissa Lihan
- 46 Nursery Time- 1/C Alex Gentry
- 47 Portrait of the American Family -1/C Andra Florea
- 48 Bibliophilic Passion -1/C Hunter Herron
- 48 Exeunt Omnes - Anonymous
- 49 Beloved -2/C Erin Bacon
- 50 Down and Unwilling -1/C Anthony Robinson
- 51 Unanswered -1/C Alex Gentry

- 52 Sonnet Satrua -4/C Paige Ward
- 55 Untitled -3/c Perla Rodriguez
- 56 Herodias' Daughter -1/C Hollis Capuano
- 57 Impeccable Stagemanship -4/C Jett Watson
- 58 Addiction - 1/C Sarah Jaeger
- 58 Lobotomy -2/C Haley Sobrero
- 59 In the Parking Lot -4/C Paige Ward
- 60 Patience -1/C Jacob Fox
- 61 An Ode to Admiral Miller- 1/C Roman Klimchuk

Artwork

- 7 Untitled -3/C Anton Ekman
- 11 Cadillac Ranch-2/C Erin Bacon,
- 21 Untitled -3/C Anton Ekman
- 31 Infinite Symmetry -3/C Hope Jones
- 32 Pont des Arts -2/C Susannah Johnson
- 37 The Only One Left by Imperial Obsession -2/C Bea Cayaban
- 41 Bryce Harper -2/C Andrew Fenton
- 44 Of the Living -2/C Bea Cayaban
- 46 Untitled -4/C Olivia Yeager
- 51 Dragon -2/C Mohamed Saudulla
- 53 Erlang with Art -1/C Matthew Yates
- 54 Untitled -4/C Jeffrey Martino
- 61 Chapel Dome -1/C Ben O'Neill

Music

- 1 Cavern - Baasik
- 2 Becca's Song -4/C Rebecca Chamberlin
- 3 Bounce Flashback- 3/C Chris Joseph
- 4 Kill the Beat -2/C Bobby Nefzger
- 5 Painkiller, Judas Priest cover- 1/C Chris Kliebert
- 6 Power of Thought - 2/C KhalifYisrael, 2/C Tyshaun Spencer,
4/C Andre Truss, 2/C Brandon Carter
- 7 Titanium, David Guetta cover- 3/C Amber Lowman
and 3/C Katrina Herrera
- 8 You Need Me, Ed Sheeran cover- 4/C Mark Clanton

Introduction

Written by Karl Marlantes
Author of *Matterhorn* and *What It Is Like to Go to War*
2012 Brady Series Speaker

When I visited the Naval Academy last fall, the question that was asked most often concerned the scene in *What It Is Like to Go to War* where I chose to lie, telling everyone present that the joint that popped out of P-Dog's pocket was really tobacco. Labyrinth is devoting its current issue to Truth and Lies. Clearly, truth and lying is on a lot of middies' minds.

It should be, for several reasons. Here at the academy you deal with the Honor Code and all of the perplexing moral issues raised by adhering to it or not adhering to it. You have entered a profession where, unlike lying in business, academia, or politics, lying can get people killed. Lying is closely associated with justice because justice needs to be based on facts. That's why perjury is a serious crime. You have also entered a profession where managers also perform judicial functions.

I won't expand on the Honor Code. I'm sure it is discussed plenty.

No organization or even society can function effectively when trust and justice are problematical. In an organization where ineffective functioning can lead to unnecessary death, truth telling and justice become deadly important. Take a simple family situation. Your daughter has returned home after the family curfew several times and you find out that she has lied about where she actually was. You ask her where she is going tonight. You do this because you are concerned for her safety. She could now tell you anything, the truth or a lie, and you would have no idea where she is going. You may as well not ask the question. If she doesn't return that night she could be in trouble, but your ability to act with confidence to come to her aid is severely compromised. Once trust has been shattered, effective functioning is shattered. Police states that encourage ratting on your neighbors and mendacity never function well.

But wait, the concern here is effective functioning.

There are times when lying and not adhering strictly to the law or the rules is actually better for effective functioning. Let's say you are at the helm and have been told to strictly adhere to a certain course. To not do so would be a serious offense. Helmsmen don't get to arbitrarily decide the ship's course. Otherwise, no one could plan on it arriving where and when it is supposed to. You see rocks dead ahead. Will you adhere strictly to the rule and continue on

course as told? Of course not. Veering momentarily off course makes perfect sense. The reason for the rule is to get the ship where it is supposed to go. Veering off course gets the ship to where it is supposed to go. It is similar in situations such as the one I faced with P-Dog. Smoking dope, just as drinking alcohol, is prohibited because the organization won't function with high and inebriated people. Rules regulating drunkenness and getting high are made to ensure the effective functioning of the organization. But, adhering strictly to the rules when a Marine, who has served with honor and even bled for his country, is about to go home where everyone smokes dope with impunity, would be perceived as blatant injustice. No organization, or society, can function effectively without justice. This situation is the rock in the designated course that needs to be avoided so the ship stays afloat.

There are two kinds of justice: strict and loose. Societies and organizations need both. Starving children who stole bread used to be hanged. That is strict justice. There is a sound argument for strict justice. To not adhere strictly to the law will only invite more law-breaking and society will cease to function effectively. On the other hand, a society without compassion will also fail to function effectively. Hanging a starving child for stealing bread is seen as unjust by most people. Insurgencies and revolutions are primarily about perceived injustice. At some point, compassion trumps strict adherence to rules, just as at some point, lying trumps telling the truth, because both lead to the goal that the law or rule is trying to achieve in the first place.

In any given situation, an effective naval officer needs to make the correct choice about where this point is. This will never be easy. It will be far easier, however, if one is at least clear about the dilemma. The more experience one has with such dilemmas, whether in actuality by confrontations with the honor code or vicariously through literature or this edition of Labyrinth, makes one better at getting it right when the time comes. The time will come.

Pitt Poetry Prize 2013

The A. Stuart Pitt Poetry Prize, awarded in conjunction with the Academy of American Poets, is open to all midshipmen and judged by a panel of English professors. With numerous contestants, it is a true show of creativity and talent to be selected. The four honorable mentions are featured throughout the book.

Sunrise in Chefchaouen

In Chefchaouen, it's light before the sun rises
because the village perches on the mountain's western face.
The roosters know when to wake, though.
Busses barely climb the twisting roads,
and green hashish fields follow the river's course below.
A girl sits on a bench where the houses end
and the skeletons of half-begun apartments stand,
with her legs tucked up like a lotus,
hands resting on knees, eyes closed.
The air is chill enough to raise goose bumps.
Footsteps echo on asphalt, slowing.
The young men in dark shirts and tight jeans sit on either side.
She unfolds quickly and starts walking,
heads down the switchbacks
towards the bus stop and the town center.
Through the unfinished structures,
her bright skirt flits between uprights
then disappears behind a complete wall.
The cats turn their heads lazily, then start following;
the little black one chases her sandal's ties.
She ducks into the dimness of a cinderblock room
and crumples beyond the door's reverse shadow.
A yellow and cream striped kitten sniffs suspiciously
then curls into the cave walled by her calves
and roofed by her long skirt.
Older cats saunter in and out like they own the place,
which, for now, they do.

-1/C Erica Leinmiller

Tired Generation

We are not the future.
We are the future's shimmering disappearance
Becoming beautiful, brilliant, blackness.

We are staring through opaque eyelids.
Concrete is crumbling, vision crumbling,
Delicate with weary indestructibility.

Stream of consciousness
Sweetly, slipping, consciousness
Awoken to sounds of sleepy apocalypse.

Destructive interference between
We tangled wires, we overflowing storage centers
Worked over, over worked, over has just begun.

Subjective, suggestive, not successive
We are not what we are,
But what we are becoming.

We are decaying remnants
Gandhi, Genghis, overgrown grass,
Idealized greatness yet to die.

Tick, tick, the clock has hit,
Prophesize becomes realize,
The meek have inherited the earth.

-4/C Paige Ward



Dying Embers

The blue vase smashes
on fragile human skull.
Words clashing around
the place called a home.
Alcohol consumes
his whole demeanor.
Tears keep pouring down;
her face full of fear.
They argue over
nothing and no one.
Or maybe they find
something and someone.
Violent fighting
only shows the passion
that kindles the last
embers of a love
not worth fighting for.

-1/C Andra Florea



The Veer Option

It's going to be a lively evening here in bed.
Illegal motion, on the offense-
bites make hickeys, hard to hide
even under collared shirts or scarves.
Defense is applying heavy pressure,
letting nothing go up the middle.
Her face a mask, he wonders of her thoughts,
rocks back to a three point stance. Timeout.
Her eyes black in the shadows of bedside lamp.
Pursed lips slowly turn to an inviting smirk.
"Gametime," she says, sitting up.
Facing off, on a silent count she blitzes.
He's down by contact. Set for the next play,
He counters with a kiss to the collarbone.
Oh and it's a fumbled ball. Turnover.

-1/C Erica Leinmiller

Body Image

The eyes of men
All different
But the same from within
The product of society
Women must be thin
I think that's what they want
A good one I must win
Skipping daily meal blocks
Running against the wind
Down another pound
His heart, I must win
My jeans are loose
Sweets in the garbage bin
Swallowing those small four pills
Forever attached to porcelain
Then one day,
I can't exactly remember when
His eyes look at me
Temptation, like a sweet sin
Finally he sees me and my progress
I have to be someone he wants, finally someone thin
But alas it was only lust he wanted to satisfy
Why does it seem like I will never just win?

-2/C Lindsay Boyd



Untitled

It's a sparkling laugh and a front flip
Off the pier at the lake. Solar imp
Dance on the rippling surface of murky, green-blue water.
A white grin flashes, a hand coquettishly splashes.

It's the barely heard groaning of boughs overhead
As you walk on a blanket of their shed fur. A crisp wind
Sneaking its fingers down your collar.
White birch trees standing sentinel over a hoard of golden leaves.

It can't be found on a television screen.
It's never been to the Jersey Shore.
Elusive, yet ubiquitous, it's always different
And always exactly the same.

-2/C Kenneth Piech



Untitled, Anton Ekman, Digital Photograph

Morning Person

The sun is preparing to rise between the mountain's cleft. Tall sage trees stand their solemn guard, watching the tenuous line between clearing and forest. In the morning's calm twilight, the landscape seems picturesque. In a few minutes, the sun will rise fully and the scene will be revealed to be a facsimile – a golf course so old that nature itself seems to have accepted man's imposition. But at this moment, the rolling fog and morning dew create an image man could never hope to capture or emulate. It has always looked to me like a Scottish highland, though my family is never up quite early enough to weigh in.

I jog through the fog, the sound of the drawstring bag bouncing against my back and my shoes slapping against the old stone echoing in the still morning air. A blue-grey sign with ridged backing emerges from the fog, standing resolute and tall like a sentry. Its faded-white letters quietly state "Table Rock Resort." In the early-morning fog, the sign's muted colors and age make it seem like part of the landscape – considering its age, it might as well be.

The path takes me by every hole of the golf course, though like everything else here it does so at its own pace. The way loops lazily up a hill to the putter's mark, and to its side a stone plaque sits on a raised platform. Weather and age has worn the letters to an unreadable series of swoops and lines, erasing whatever it was meant to commemorate. These plaques are dotted throughout the path, always placed into the encroaching trees like ancient altars, the gods they worshipped forgotten in time.

As I pass down the hill, I see the condos in the distance, cresting then descending on a distant hill. The word condo never sat well with me, though. They look like wooden cabins, each slim and two-storied, like man-made trees. The glass of their windows glints like the dew.

I pass from their sight into a deeper trail – one that my cousins and I forged all our own. Here, the morning twilight dims to a benevolent gloom that only forests can create. The silence is replaced by the occasional bird-call, the snap of a twig, and the distant sound of rushing water. I press on through the rough-hewn path, leaping above half-rotted logs and over creek-chasms. I could do it with my eyes closed.

The path is familiar – everything here is familiar.

The hill looms before me, and I drop my upper-body forward, pawing myself up the path on hands and feet unconsciously. My hands press into damp soil as I climb, and my pace increases parallel to the crescendo of rushing water ahead. At the top, I stop short and turn to the same view I've had since I was seven:

A smooth rock face slopes down before me, cool mountain water rushing down from the waterfall pool behind me. The rock is unbroken and seems to glow as the sun finally makes its appearance between the tree branches. I stand on a small outcropping of rock above the smooth slope – the “sliding rock,” we’ve always called it. I sit and cross my legs, reaching for the drawstring bag and opening it for a bottle of water a simple cheese sandwich.

In an hour or so, I’ll be back in my room. The family will all be awake, and the “vacation” will start up again – a busy schedule full of swimming, horse-riding, and other sundry activities, scheduled and executed by my aunt like a drill sergeant. Time permitting, my cousins, sister, and I may even sneak back to the sliding rock as a group. This place is our secret, and we’ll have fun, in that strangely competitive sense that has always bound us together. But they’ll never see it like this. This place may be our secret, but this time is mine alone.

-1/C Brandon Martin



Under the Oak Tree

That old oak shades my tired soul
and the day’s light fades from my eyes.
Night lays a starry blanket from the cold
while leaves above whisper their goodbyes
as my fire’s flame flickers out.
Nature’s choir sings a lullaby
to calm my words’ once great shout
into a relaxingly humble sigh.
That ancient oak welcomed me
from the journey far and wide.
My sail saw the seven seas
and bathed in their foreign tide.
I learned in war to fight and fend
the enemies of my great state.
My rifle shot true, my rifle my friend.
At last familiar fields and an open gate
beckoned me to enter and end my quest.
Under this oak I lie. Under this oak I rest.

-2/C Maddox

Cadillac Ranch

I thought it was perfectly ridiculous. The way people flocked, battered by flying dust and the scream of Texas highway cars, to those graffiti monuments was just perfect. I almost missed the exit—this was one of the few sights unmarked on our month-long cross country adventure—and it was worth the near wreck to see. The Cadillacs stood like forgotten darts in a board, a meticulous column of half-buried, tattooed machines. Empty cans of illegal spray paint were scattered on the ground like seeds; even the ironic sign forbidding the art was its own graffiti statement. An orderly row of lost cars sunk halfway into the earth, like maybe they had dreams once of getting to the center. The last week of our road trip, a whole month alone with my mother, and it seemed perfectly right to find splattered antique vehicles stuck halfway between this world and the next. Like maybe we talked about our past and my future just enough to get me back to college without slipping through the crust ourselves.

We parked our Maine Prius, squinting eyes to keep that curious sand at bay, and followed the trickle of people to the lonely row. Mom and I regretted not thinking to buy paint. We liked to imagine leaving our mark until the next travelers erased us, buried us deep under their own memories. Who thinks to do this, we thought, who grows Cadillacs on the outskirts of Amarillo? Posing for our picture in front of the slanted rainbow and metal line, we smiled our same smile, and thought maybe someone like us. A month on American roads, and it's just about time to find a surprise when you reach Amarillo. Anybody who's done it will know.

Looking at those trapped cars, it was hard to tell if they were coming or going, or if maybe halfway was good enough. What was easy was forgetting everything else. Mom and I wandered through the neon wreckage, laughing at airbrushed vulgarities and cheesy sentiment. We laughed at the characters who also had time to stop and see a metallic ranch. Everything prompted nostalgia for the rest of our trip, all the oddities we uncovered and all the wonders that uncovered us. Colored chaos occasionally stuck to my fingers when I scrambled up the hood for a picture, and for once my mother just laughed at being reckless. It was a laugh that I knew was only a month long.

We left that rainbow Cadillac row behind, grinning our way back to the gate and graffiti sign. So ridiculous, we said, perfectly so. Cars that left their butts in the world to be decorated and loved for never having the courage to leave it. My Mom and I stand in that picture with those halfway machines, same smile and same forgetfulness that we'll walk away in a moment. We decide it's better to pretend we don't know how they got there, those tattoo cars, as we drive into Amarillo. And I decide it best that travelers break the law: keep the Cadillacs from sinking straight through, drag them sunny side with the weight of airbrush memories.

-2/C Erin Bacon



Cadillac Ranch, 2/C Erin Bacon, Digital Photograph

The Rug

Jake entered the three-story wooden building, ushered on by a man named Hakan who wore a loose-fitting brown-red dress shirt and smelled of singed meat. Hakan jostled him forward with enthusiastic entreaties in a thick Turkish accent and an aggressively polite demeanor. He was lead into a small room to their immediate left. There was a family – clearly and almost stereotypically American – seated in puffy couches lined to the far wall, with a dark-skinned man in a suit standing in front of them eyeing a series of rolled rugs propped vertically against the adjacent wall. He picked one up and, with a practiced gesture, flipped it into the air, where it unrolled just in time to land flat on the ground. It sidled for a moment towards its original trajectory before coming to a full halt. The sound of the rug hitting the floor – a solid smack – echoed for a moment as the old floors creaked. The man walked over to Jake; his smile was more subdued and honest than Hakan’s – which set Jake all the more on his guard.

“My name is Metehan,” the man said with only the barest hint of an accent, his face beaming. “And tell me, my friend, if that is not the finest rug you have ever laid eyes on.” Jake glanced at the rug – a fine red piece with tassels on the longer sides at a tasteful length – and nodded. “It’s beautiful,” he admitted. Metehan nodded, his eyes gleaming. “Great! I’ll put you down for ten!” He laughed and patted Jake on the shoulder, as if they were old friends rather than complete strangers. With his other hand, he gestured Hakan over. The man brought a small cup of tea on a saucer and a plate of what looked like a bagette split at its side and filled with meet and cheeses, then cut into horizontal slices. Pide, he’d heard a waiter refer to it as. Jake took the tea but waved his hand at the pide, nodding his head in thanks. “I insist, try! My wife made!” Hakan coached, his accent more prevalent than his associate’s. Jake sighed quietly, hiding it with a forced smile, and took a slice. Hakan nodded appreciatively, then moved to the next patron, a middle-aged man in khaki shorts and a sweat-drenched polo. The man took both, nodding and thanking in full earnest as Hakan moved to the man’s assumed family.

Jake ate his pide – which was admittedly delicious – and turned to see the man to his right extending his large, sweaty hand. “Hey there, stranger,” the man said, smiling. “It looks like we’ve got another hostage!” He chuckled at his own joke, and Jake’s forced smile made reappearance. “Tyler Lawson, paterfamilias.” Jake shook his hand and replied, “Jake Williams, expecting pater.” Tyler laughed as though this were a great punchline – he seemed to be the kind of man who laughed easily and often.

“Where’s the expecting momma, then, Mr. Williams?” Tyler asked. Jake shook his head and chuckled lightly. “Back outside Hagia Sophia, with the other

smart people,” he replied. “It turns out she was right – this free tour isn’t so free.” Hakan had proven to be a good tour guide, despite his wife’s hesitation. He’d also proven to be a good advertisement/guilt-trip afterwards. Tyler shrugged. “It’s not so bad,” he replied, gesturing with the pidge and tea. “The food’s good, and the people are nice.” He nodded towards Metehan, who was showing the rug to the man’s three children and enamored wife. He had an air of showmanship about him: the measured hand-gestures and rotating eye contact of a perfect salesman. Jake shook his head, emboldened by his relative anonymity. “He’s not being nice out of sheer kindness, he’s doing it for your money.” Tyler tilted his head at this. “Oh, come on” he replied, “the man’s alright. I mean, he invited us into his house – he lives here, you know, my son Eric had to use their bathroom and he said he saw the beds and everything. He invited us in, strangers – heck, even strangers of strangers.”

Jake rolled his eyes. “They’re nice to you so that you’ll buy a door mat for a grand,” he replied. Tyler looked at him for a moment and studied the man. “Maybe,” he said. “Maybe they are. Or maybe they’re decent people trying to make a buck, just like most of us.” He gestured to the rug backhandedly. “Think about anything you’ve ever bought back home – I’m assuming you’re from the states, too, sorry – that ended up being over-priced and no good. Then look at that rug. Really look at it.” Jake turned his focus back to the rug. It really was a nice piece – a little over an arm’s length on the shorter ends, full of intricate patterns of varying shades and tones all throughout. He found himself standing to get a closer look, and noticed the fine material seeming to shimmer and change colors as he looked at it from a different angle – the reds seemed almost sea-green. Metehan nodded at him appreciatively. Tyler tapped him on the shoulder, drawing Jake out of the strange trance. “You were right; it is beautiful. And it took half a dozen women over a year to make it, all by hand.” Jake looked at him for a moment with a hint of disbelief and then looked back at Metehan.

For a moment, Jake found himself thinking back to when he’d bought his first car. Just out of college, he’d gone to a used lot where a man in a hairpiece and garish yet oddly pristine suit asked if he could be of assistance. Jake told him what he needed, and the man exclaimed he knew just what he needed – and what a deal he’d lucked into! What followed were two hours in a small, fluorescent hovel of an office going over a mountain of paperwork. Two weeks later the transmission started acting up – of course – and when he returned for more assistance, he found the same man in the same lot. Jake had walked up to him and almost put out a greeting before the man turned to him, big fake grin glowing and rug on his head slightly askew, and asked, “How may I help you, sir?” Not even a hint of recognition.

At this, Jake saw Metehan a bit differently. He, too, was wearing a suit, a clearly older one, but it was tastefully low-key and suited for him. The golden-glow lamps placed all around the room gave a homey feel – which made since, of course – and the laughter was real. Focused, perhaps, but quite real. Tyler clasped the younger man by the shoulder and nodded. “Yeah,” he said, “they may be a bit pushy, but I’d take a decent Turkish salesman over what we got.”

Later, after actually enjoying himself a bit, Jake bid goodbye to the Lawsons and shook Hakan’s hand as he left the room and took the stairs to the street level. He brushed up against Metehan as he made his way to the door and turned to apologize. Metehan beat him to it. “So sorry, Mr. Williams,” the man said, nodding respectfully towards him. Jake smiled. “No damage, no problem.” Then he stopped short. “Excuse me, but how did you know my name?”

Metehan looked at him curiously for a moment and smiled. “Mr. Hakan told me, of course,” he replied. “This is my home – I would not let a stranger into it. So I learned your name, and now we are not strangers at all, are we?” Jake remembered mentioning their names to Hakan at some point during the tour, but he hadn’t made a point of it. Strange – yet not in a bad way. Jake smiled. “No, not at all,” he agreed. “Thank you for your hospitality.” Metehan beamed at him warmly and shook his hand firmly. “Anytime you are in Istanbul, my friend.”

Jake smiled and turned to leave – but then stopped short again.

Fifteen minutes later, large bag in hand, he found himself looking for directions back to Hagia Sophia – as well as a way to tell his wife he’d just spent \$1000 without her.

-1/C Brandon Martin



Ice Fishing Shack

Four grainy timber walls
Topped by a nondescript brown roof.
Physically utilitarian, recreational in purpose.
An ice fishing shack.

It is a perfect convenience
Erected after the thickening of ice
And serving one purpose:
Fishing.

It houses three men, or two and a dog
Who, warmed by a hearty wood stove,
Sit upon coolers and camp chairs.
Minding their rods, not their p's and q's.

At season's shift from harsh to fair
The shack is left undisturbed.
Its purpose fulfilled, it settles in and
Waits for the inevitable.

Days lengthen and the lake's frosty skin
Begins to perspire, then, to sweat profusely,
Until suddenly there's a resounding "Crack!"
And the shack plunges under.

And the three men,
Or the two with the dog,
Now gather by campfire
Sharing stories and songs.

-2/C Kenneth Piech



This Is Winning

Screaming, hands waving wildly,
I jump up and down. A t-shirt
hurled in my direction rewards my effort.
With arm outstretched and perfect timing,
I snag victory from the air then
gaze at my trophy only to realize
I've won it before.

I give the t-shirt to the boy across the aisle
and his parents make him thank me.
A smiling cheerleader, a distant witness
to my actions, approaches me in the stands
and hands me another t-shirt, rewarding
my unintentional selflessness. This is
winning.

-3/C Conor Cross



The Roads

Everyone stares at you awkwardly when you eat alone. Not so much in a, “Wow, look at him, he must have no friends, that’s so sad,” sort of way, and not really an, “I wonder what’s wrong with him that he eats sushi at an upscale restaurant on a Friday night alone,” sort of way. The emotional intrusion forced upon me by crowded little tables of birthday parties and college dates merely puts me apart from the other two dozen or so patrons of this fine establishment. Even the sushi chef looks at me occasionally with questioning eyes, though most likely because I’m not sure how or what to order and am attempting to distract myself with a game between arguably, actually most likely, the two worst teams in the NFL.

Dining alone on any day for any meal is a trial, a test of personal sociability and isolated self-discipline. At least I keep telling myself this. Somewhere in the course of recent human existence it became socially unacceptable to sit and eat at a table in public alone, just as it is to walk down a road in the nude or eat sushi with a fork (Two of the three aforementioned activities will take place this evening, but I have not yet decided on which two). Before the first cocktail party I attended on the east coast I was ‘properly’ instructed that one is to carry only a drink or a piece of food, never both, in order to keep one hand empty for handshakes. Also, in the great big black book of public etiquette instruction, one is to only refill his drink or plate three times at a maximum. Yup, social norms. This series of uncomfortable minutes is exacerbated by the numerous cute waitresses walking around, peers my own age who, also by pre-established communal context, I must under all circumstances attempt to impress, befriend, and obtain phone numbers from.

Colorado Springs is a marvelous city situated at the base of the Rocky Mountains. I think. At least it looks that way from my window. Its inhabitants number about half a million but it retains the feel of a village of 4,000 similar to my home in North Dakota. The streets are wide, few business complexes extend upwards over 10 stories, and the sidewalks are crowded just enough to maintain a sense of population while appearing desolate and abandoned. Quite literally, every fifth store is a coffee shop advertising a new slogan like Mocha Madness!, Keep calm and caffeinate!!, or Best coffee this side of the street between Cascade and Nevada!!! (a distance of around 200 feet). Each tries to out-compete every other for the number of exclamation marks it can fit on its wooden chalk advertising board inviting patrons inside. The biggest challenge I’ve faced during my 48 hours here is the overwhelming number of homeless/hippies/hipsters/colorful individuals. I can no longer determine which is which, but they are all incredibly friendly and wear the most decorative beanies.

A surprising email summoned me to Colorado Springs two weeks ago to interview for a Rhode’s Scholarship, called by numerous academic journals and news outlets as the most prestigious scholarship in the nation, if not the world.

Why they invited me is yet beyond my grasp, one of the questions preoccupying my thoughts over the largest salmon rolls created by mankind on earth. Probably close to four inches in diameter, the hopes of applying soy sauce are all but dashed when each slice falls to pieces at the slightest touch from the liquid. 32 young men and women, all seniors in university or recent graduates, make up the entourage and come from 16 separate districts around the United States separated by population. Proudly calling North Dakota my home and place of residence, the nearest scholarship district is three states and 700 miles away in Colorado. No, there was no dinner offered on the flight as it is still not common procedure amongst domestic flights. Judging me and the other 11 finalists are six overly accomplished men and women, all former Rhode's Scholars, and each vastly more intelligent and capable than myself: Janice, Martha, Susan, Paul, Tall George, and Short George. Paul seems most comfortable around me since I study at the Naval Academy and he has taught at the Air Force Academy for quite some time. Martha is a biochemist and resembles in both appearance and mannerisms one of my closest friends at the academy. Tall George never smiles. Short George likes poetry theory (not my strong point). After two days of receptions and interview the occupation and interests of Janice still elude me, though she has a beautiful smile, a wondrously personable atmosphere, and two young children to whom she read each of our applications and essays. She claims the majority of her decision process came from which stories her children stayed awake for while she read them.

Back near my home in North Dakota, just north of I-94 and slightly east of Highway 49, lies a gravel road not dissimilar from the other hundreds of one way gravel highways crossing the plains. Unlike most states and inhabited areas of the United States and the western world, North Dakota claims only a few paved major highways. A large number of gravel roads connect highway to highway and separate land into acres and quarters and more acres and more quarters. Fly over the state in any form of airborne vehicle with a friend and you could play out a game of chess across neighboring farmlands. The gravel roads are made of a red, shale-like gravel, sharp and pointed on the edges unless broken down into miniscule fragments of dust. Listen to the song "Red Dirt Road" by Brooks and Dunn for a musical description of our transportation medium.

The house of my best friend occupied (and still occupies) the intersection of two of these roads. A traditional, white farm-like house complete with barn and work shed, small deck on the front, three floors of occupied space, and an overabundance of clutter consisting of every imaginable piece of equipment, clothing, entertainment, cook-ware, or tool that one can imagine. North Dakotans, and I would imagine rural dwellers everywhere, have an uncanny ability for collecting massive numbers of 'things', for lack of a better word with which to describe the overgrown forest of objects which fit the corners and open spaces of homes. We planted trees around the house one summer for a week to serve as a block against the snow drifts

piling up against the house. Deer and wildlife ate nearly all the saplings. At least a sunset over the empty hills of the Great Plains is no less than a holy experience.

Nerves remind our conscious selves of their existence in strange ways. The paradox seems to be that they appear at the worst times, usually unexpected, such as those last minutes in bed as your mind plays in a half-asleep sort of way and your heart beats at a 100m dash pace and your focus tries to slow your breath to slow your heartbeat and it works to no avail. If biology classes imprinted any scientific knowledge into my mind, faint memories of a sympathetic nervous system and a fight-or-flight mechanism secreting epinephrine and cortisol to make energy more widely available to our cells causes what we colloquially call 'the jitters'. Brilliant professors with Ph.D.s and renowned expertise in human physiology assure us that nervousness is a necessary part of survival and beneficial for the body. Whole-heartedly, I disagree, with the amount of scientific evidence to back up the claim equal to the number of times mankind has witnessed a particular member of the *Sus* genus attain aerodynamic lift, i.e., zero. At least to my recollection, never once has feeling nervous made speaking to a cute girl, running a road race, skydiving, watching a horror movie, or being elected to a Rhode's Scholarship easier. Never.

The first interaction with the selection committee and other finalists is easily comparable to the Hunger Games, though I will instead use a Battle Royal metaphor in reference to the South Korean classic from which Hunger Games cross-pacific-plagiarized its storyline. Oh well. The angel on one shoulder softly massages your back and reminds you to be friendly and cordial and that the other 11 men and women waiting in the cold outside an obtrusively large office building on the main byway in C. Springs are just like you. The evil, self-doubting, temptuous, enticing demon on the other shoulder demands you to shun them, ignore them, hate them and everything they stand for because they are your competition. Luckily, my angel slightly resembles Mr. T with a battle-ax while my demon is that conniving kid with messy hair and evil scientist glasses from second grade who was friends only to use your sweet Playstation.

I wore a suit for the first time in over four years that night. Various uniforms for varying levels of proper dress had been my only wardrobe during my time in Annapolis, occasionally broken by jeans and a t-shirt on the weekends. Suits carry a special air to them, especially a fitted, tailored suit. Every man who has ever once in his life owned a fitted suit knows how it feels to be President and carries a sense of invincibility on his shoulders. Unless, of course, that suit is gold-tan with a stain on the back. Somewhere in the process of packing and preparing for the interview of a lifetime, no one informed me that every other member of the male gender and half the women that evening would be wearing Navy Blue blazers. Six extra inches of height and forty (at least) extra pounds of weight combined with an induced subconscious sickness of never knowing what to do with the two ends of my uppermost appendages and a severe lack of even minimal conversational ability made the

evening. . . . remarkable. At least the sushi dinner had been with good enough company.

The last advice heard before departing for the airport on a beautiful Maryland afternoon was how not to be nervous. "Find your happy place." Find your happy place. The most useless advice given to someone since William Henry Harrison's cabinet agreed complacently to a two hour long inauguration speech. Worse yet is having no remote idea as to where your happy place may be in the 21 years of memories stored inside the temporal and occipital lobes. And without a known happy place one is left alone in his thoughts, searching through years of memories to try and find a location to deem peaceful. Good luck.

Through the gravel roads near the large, white, wooden farmhouse, a 1998 Jeep Wrangler with half a body of paint and half a body of mud, dust, and rust cruised every day every summer for half a decade. The radio never worked so the inhabitants resorted to the ancient music delivery system known in lore as the CD. Truthfully, three CDs, together containing the top 50 country songs that a group of friends from rural North Dakota could drive the hills, plains, and red dirt roads of North Dakota to, singing all the lyrics in only a way that young men with no musical background or sense of pitch can do.

People like Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan, and Tom Brady repeatedly say that at their top moments of performance they enter a trance-like state where actions are natural, even supernatural. The games, the events, the challenges become one of them, a phenomena experienced by a very small portion of the population, the small number of people with travel opportunities to their happy places.

The Rhode's interview took place on a road south of Beulah, North Dakota, though truthfully any road in the Midwest would have sufficed. Oddly enough, I was the only one there. Just me, the nature around me, the wind, and faint questions carried by voices on it. Alone, without awkward opinions, social pressures, or nervous raggedness. Only then did my 'happy place' appear. The road to my home, the road to the Rhodes. And luckily, the conversation and companionship on that red gravel was the best I have ever experienced, equally as wonderful as the calzones and frozen yogurt eaten later that evening in celebration. Alone, of course, with the best of company.

-1/C Christian Heller





Untitled, 3/C Anton Ekman, Digital Photograph

Shadow

I've saluted many men like you
In whose eyes I've seen
The lust for life of long ago
Reflected back at me.

When words fail you
Maybe actions, too
Honor takes the place of tongue
I see it deep within you.

But I am a shadow of the mind,
A memory walking back from time
My face is blurred, my body morphed
And you see what you will.

Am I the blue-eyed blonde
You dreamt of all those nights?
Or maybe the picture in your breast pocket
Branded in your mind?

Will you speak to me like you spoke to her
The day you said goodbye?
Or thank me for my service
Like all those men you thanked who died?

But wait! I must be your drinking partner – was it Jimmy, James, or John?
Who got you through sleepless nights
While you wondered how the stars could shine
During such an unfair fight.

Still I do not know if I am your hopes
Left in empty cartridges
Buried with the years
When hope was standard issue.

Only you know who I am
And that's who I shall be
Until you close this chapter
With a salute back to me.

- 3/C Marjorie Ferrone



None know the sacrifices I make.

I leave my family, not knowing when we'll meet again.
I go minutes, hours, days, and weeks without sleep.
I eat my breakfast, not knowing if I'll make it to lunch.
I say goodbye to my friends, not knowing if I'll see them again.

There are some who know the sacrifices I make.

Those soldiers to my left and to my right,
Who share my pain, my hopes, my dreams.
They know the only thing we want to do,
Is make it home again.
The only thing we want to do is hold our little girls again.
To kiss our wives again.
To hug our mothers and fathers again.
To go to sleep and know we'll see the sun again.
They know the sacrifices that I make.
Yet, we knew the danger.
We know the cost of freedom.
We have all seen comrades, torn apart by war,
Have lost brothers-in-arms; friends, all.
Still, we press forward.
We believe in a world that is totally free,
Unyoked from tyranny and despair.
One that does not need the warriors of yesterday,
But instead, requires builders for tomorrow.
We are willing to die for that world,
To make that final sacrifice.
With our heads held high we walk,
Forward into the fight.
And if one thing is said,
When I am gone and all is done,
Let those of us who remain
Look at those yet to come and say,
"We know the sacrifices we made."

-1/C James Turner



Short Straw

I could not feel the sun coming through my window or smell my mother's delicious French toast that morning. It is always the small things that wake us out of vivid dreams, or the absence of those things. Missing that scent of oil, eggs, and my mother, I opened my eyes reluctantly hoping, as all children do, that this was the dream and not the reality. I wished that I was home before I opened my eyes. Instead I woke up in the hospital, my third to be exact.

I counted the number of hospitals; the third one was also the furthest one from my home. I was placed in this hospital two weeks after escaping the second, which was in my home town. They said this hospital was the best place that they treat children, so of course my parents took me. I left our home; got into my dad's blue car; and drove away from my small town. Though it was a big town to me as a child, I would laugh now to know that its size is three times smaller than my first town in the United States.

After the drive, my father and mother kissed me goodbye and they set me up with all the hospital tests I've already been through twice. The worst test was pricking my fingers. The nurses took a small needle and pricked all of my fingers, after which a sample of the blood was collected and tested every three days. The nurses always tried to console me by saying my blood was magical and it was necessary for them to find out why. Back then I believed it was magic, but that quickly vanished. I wanted to believe that I was sick because a witch put a spell on me, but my own curiosity dispersed that notion. Sometimes when my fingers start to go numb in the winter, I am reminded of those days.

Hospitals became my way of life. Daily routines consisted of a vaccine here, pills there, new pills, no salt, no walking, no running, no playing, x-rays, blood work, no and no more sugar. The fondest days were in the last hospital. My mother stayed with me at this hospital. The most painful thing for my mother was to watch all the tests the doctors did on me. I knew this because her face would get all tight when the doctors came in the room. She watched them insert a steel needle in my hip to draw bone marrow samples. She heard my cries and she could not do anything except hold my hand and tell me it was ok. I had several nose bleeds where my bed would all be red and my mother would be waking me up in terror. They plugged my nose with foam cotton. I could only breathe through my mouth. I met a young boy my age with the same problem I had, this was the first one I had encountered someone like me. The boy laughed and said I was a stuffed pig. I oinked and we laughed together, my mother never laughed.

The hardest thing was my surgery. That day the boy and I drew straws to see who would go first and I was the lucky one. What I looked forward to most when I woke up was seeing the boy. I never saw him again, or his father who was always around like my mother had been for me. When I was getting in the wheel chair and out of the hospital two weeks after the surgery I looked back towards the building with so many questions. My mother never said anything but I already knew, he died and I lived. I tell people now that I have been an adult since I picked the short straw. To think that those six months are the most memorable and life changing times I had.



Mosaic

Oh
he exclaimed
when she brought home a baby boy
wrapped in blue crying all night
as she slept he rocked
it's all for
love

-1/c Erica Leinmiller

Home Comfort

My silver Toyota Tacoma climbs the steep slope of Melanie Lane towards home. Cars are precariously parked at the hilltop, overlooking the lights of South Ogden, Utah. A landmark boulder that has been painted purple by a group of punk-ass teenagers infamously marks this location as “Make-out Point.” I round the bend that becomes Spring Canyon Road, approaching what is known to my family and me as “Critter Corner.” I slow my speed and shine the high beams onto the surrounding forested area. I make guesses as to what type of wild animal will brazenly cross the road in front of me tonight. As if on cue, at the most inopportune moment, a deer bounds from the bushes on my right into the center of the blacktop. I stop to let it pass then pause a little longer to allow his posse to casually follow at the leisurely pace their leader has established.

I continue past the Harry Potter Halloween house, the gargoyle-gated mystery mansion, and the house where Speed Racer Grandma lives with her Italian Mafia husband. At the end of the road, my crazy, legally blind neighbor, Susan, walks her dog in the dim moonlight for what is probably the hundredth time that day. As usual, I offer a friendly, but unacknowledged wave. The Troll, who still owns the house across the street, occupied by his estranged wife, is also awake. He is intent on driving one of his many tractors in circles about the cul-de-sac, which he views as an extension of his own private driveway. Maybe he is attempting to steal landscaping rocks from our property again, or maybe, in a drunken stupor, he killed someone and is digging a hole to hide the body. I wish the hijacked crane that he rolled off the side of the mountain last week had crushed him.

I ascend the driveway and skillfully reverse the truck into the garage of my square-ish, barn-red house. When I turn off the car, I hear the high-pitched beeping of the alarm system, notifying me that I have only thirty seconds to disarm it. I rush to grab my dirty work clothes from the back seat of the truck and sprint up the stairs to the door that leads inside the house. Tired after a long night of bussing tables, my mind blanks on the four-digit code required to validate my entrance. As punishment, a variety of deafening alert signals blazes directly into my eardrum. Furthering this annoyance, a lady with a British accent begins screaming, “WARNING! INTRUDER!” from various alarm stations throughout the household. My dad, an Apple product fanatic, disarms the system remotely from bed with his iPhone, and knows that it is only me who causes the late-night disturbance.

I briskly walk past the laundry room to avoid lingering in the waft of cat turds recently deposited in the litter box. Once in the kitchen, I open the freezer to find a box of my favorite Stouffer’s macaroni and cheese. Items on the overstocked shelves topple onto the tile floor. The resulting rumble, not the earlier

alarm, awakens Greta, my family's geriatric weimaraner. Her fading watchdog instincts prompt her to investigate the situation. She limps across the adjacent dining room floor and smells my backside, somehow, through this method, affirming that I am, in fact, a trusted member of the family. Alone, under the dimmed overhead kitchen lights, I stand relaxed at the counter and eat my mac' and cheese while reading the newspaper comics my mom always sets out for me. From underneath her unibrow, Frida Khalo smiles slightly from the painting on the wall next to me.

I proceed to climb the secret, spiral staircase from the kitchen to my room and think only of collapsing into my oversized queen bed. Years of practice have made it possible for me to complete the task without turning on a light. I change into the pair of Under Armour gym shorts that are readily draped over the back of my wooden desk chair. Despite being six foot three, I have to step on the bedframe to hurl myself atop my two mattresses. I stretch my arm across my body to turn off my nightstand lamp and then gaze into the backyard through the window at the foot of my bed. A damaged stone angel stands there, faintly illuminated by a solar-powered garden light. Her sunken ocular sockets were once blackened with a Sharpie by the same psychopath who buried it in the yard for my mom to unearth when we first moved to the house. I used to shudder at the creepy image, but now it comforts me. Her tired eyes reflect the same fatigue I feel. As I close my eyes to the dark, I know a tough, guardian angel protects me while I sleep peacefully at home.

- 3/C Conor Cross



One Stitch at a Time

Reach through, hook the yarn, pull through, slip off, repeat. Stitch after stitch. Reach through, hook the yarn, pull through, slip off, repeat. This was my mantra. Moving my hands as quickly as possible, closing my ears to the hushed voices down the hall. Reach through, hook the yarn, pull through, slip off, repeat. Everyone wanted to know my secret, how I picked up a ball of yarn and created a blanket so quickly, how an amateur became an expert.

The secret was the voice repeating the mantra, a voice that was not my own. Nice and steady, hold it there, let me see what you did. Down the hall the whispers continued, and so did the hook in my hands. Every now and then she would leave, join the whispers down the hall, but she always came back, her footsteps steady as they returned to the room.

The lessons began on Christmas day, when things had just started to get worse. Years of traditions had been interrupted by the dreaded C word, the word that was still taboo within the walls of 166 Esplanade Avenue where my grandfather had become a recent resident. This year he didn't have to drive over on Christmas morning, he simply had to shuffle from the hospital bed in the dining room to the Christmas tree in the living room. That was the day I learned to crochet.

On the foot of my bed has lain a blanket, half my size, tattered and torn, slept with every night of my life. I have always loved the blanket because it kept me safe and warm, but I never understood the meaning between the stitches. It was a gift from a woman, chosen to be my guardian if I was ever left alone. But as a child, a godmother was simply the woman who could be counted on for extra birthday and Christmas presents, the woman who would visit at Christmas and in August, who would bring my cousins, and take us to the mall.

Hook two, pull through, wrap around, hook again, slide through and off. A new stitch, but not too complicated. Something new to think about as Christmas turned to January. The room was no longer the dining room, but Pop-Pop's room. Schedules were rearranged to make way for doctors' appointments. Whispers turned to conversations behind closed doors. Hook two, pull through, wrap around, hook again, slide through and off. But no matter what the test results said or the medications caused, the week instantly became better when that silver car pulled up out front, the door opened, and the Long Island accent came floating up – how's the blanket looking my favorite god daughter?

I had spent the past week preparing for that question. Every free minute I would pick up my yarn and go, wanting to impress her, wanting to show her how far I had come. I wanted her to see progress somewhere within the walls of

166 Esplanade Ave. Downstairs it seemed as if everything was regressing. The number of medicine bottles were growing; the naps were becoming more frequent; the whispers weren't even taking place behind closed doors any more. But I didn't want to listen. So I would escape to my room, I would escape to my four walls of sanity and I would make progress, to prove to her there was.

January turned to February. My first two blankets were complete. I gave them away, because that's what you do with blankets. You pour your heart and soul into the yarn, making every stitch perfect, held together with love, and then you give it to another, so that they may be covered and warmed by the makings of your hands. It was at the moment I saw a child wrapped in the blanket I had made that I knew why the tattered baby blanket still lay on the edge of my bed. I knew why my aunt had made it. And I knew why she had taught me to crochet.

The visit every two weeks turned into weekend visits, and all the stitching in the world couldn't drown out the conversations throughout the house. Since Pop-pop was always asleep nobody bothered to whisper anymore. New skeins of yarn, larger needles, a new pattern. Unfortunately, the winds of change coursing through my crocheting were not passing through the downstairs. Slide through here, loop two around, hook through, loop again, hook through, pull out, repeat. A new project was underway, making much quicker progress as my aunt's suitcase became a permanent being in the house.

She was there when I said goodbye, when he left to spend his last night at the H word. And she was the one who texted me the next morning to pass on the message that he loved me and was sending me a giant hug. She was there when I came home from school to comfort me. And she was there the next day to crochet when I couldn't bear going to school.

One stitch at a time I made it through the viewing. One loop at a time I made it through the funeral. One row, one strip, one blanket at a time, I've made it through since, but not without her voice in my ear, over the phone, through a letter. A blanket is not made in one sitting. It is picked up and put down in moments of free time. It is worked at diligently for days and weeks and sometimes months. It is built one loop, one stitch at a time, much like a relationship. And as I sat and stitched each blanket, the bond between my godmother and myself was stitched. And like the baby blanket I cherish so much, this bond will never falter or fade. It was there during the good, it was there during the bad, and it will keep me safe and warm through whatever life may bring.

Up on His Down's

We always play together. He and I love whiffle- ball. Playing. Laughing. Brother loves B-ball most, and he sinks every basket. Always he surprises me. He's athletic. He does understand how it feels to win, but when I beat him, my ability never surprises him, and unaffected he remains.

Sometimes I use my wits to boss him. He remains angered by this. He knows it. I can't outsmart him always. He'll storm away, he'll pout about. My brother will even toss me out of the room if my aggravation is too great. And yet he remains untouched on a personal level. It took till now for me to understand.

My mom yells at me "Zachery, he does not understand," the truth, the reasoning for my strengths and his extra chromosome. Always he accepts it. He never questions. He lacks in knowledge, logic. However he remains superior to all in patience, overall contentment. Brother

"What are you doing!" Oh brother. He knows when he's wrong too. He is actually quite clever, yet to understand his actions is impossible. My only guess, my only answer is that he does it on purpose. He remains amused by everyone's questioning. He loves the attention, always.

I often imagine, "how does it feel?" Always last in the race. Never to understand Shakespeare, or sweet victory. He longs to have a girlfriend, "to be like me." He remains a man who will never have best friends, or drive fast. This brother would surely cry if he knew the truth. My

experience proves otherwise, for this is not the case. My only observation is that he's grateful for life. My brother loves his movies, his dog. He loves food. I now understand. Once he ate nine yogurts, and he's fit as hell too. He remains loyal to my parents, happy to do chores. Always looking forward to when I come home. Full of excitement is he.

I learn much from this guy. He always
laughs. He cries. He eats. He loves. He remains
a human being- one not all can understand, but he's my brother.

(This sestina is about my brother, Jeremy, who has Down's Syndrome)

-3/C Zachery Hebda

2013 Pitt Poetry Prize Honorable Mention

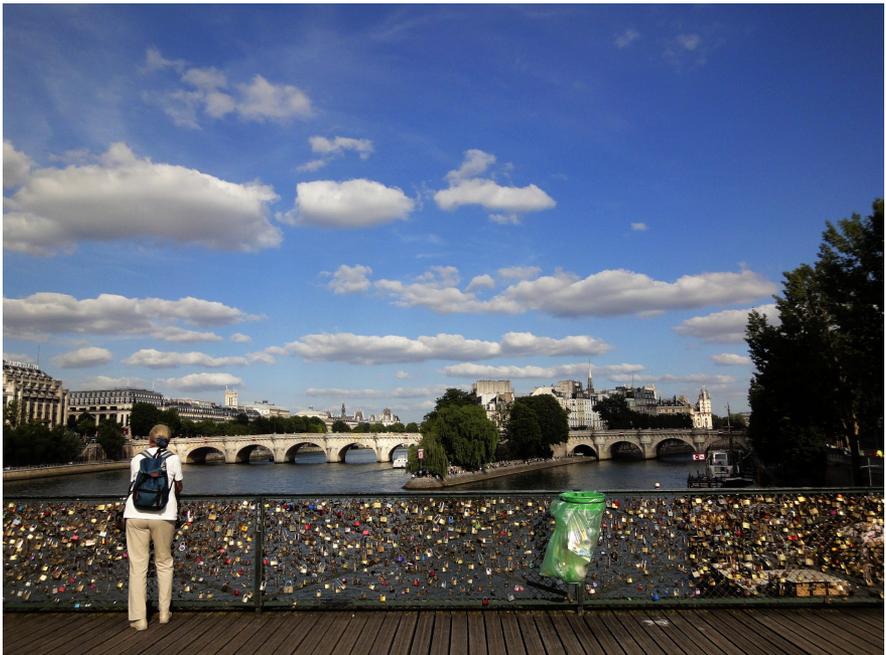


Infinite Symmetry, 3/C Hope Jones, Digital Photograph

Seasoned Shirts

Saran wrapped in damp cotton,
my outside is shrinking
and shrinking as the thieving breeze
steals water from my skin,
leaving the tight and tingling crust
of drying tide pools,
or salted and baking seaside rocks.
Ladies glow, my grandmother says,
but this glow sticks and stings
and is shrinking me still.

-2/C Erin Bacon



Pont des Arts, 2/C Susannah Johnson, Digital Photograph

Lovers lock a padlock to the bridge, then throw the keys into the water.

Ma Belle Rose

Ma Belle Rose does possess some Saintly traits;
Three best of which I shall in verse display.
Sweet holiness for lives of damned orates
With rose white heart, her Gard'ner to obey.

Ma Belle Rose is by name lovely to see:
Her sweet skin, fair or tan concerns me less
Then, in her, fairer personality.
For time will wither beauty with its stress.

To keep Ma Belle Rose pure, she wisdom seeks.
Like wish of David's son in prayer's request:
That Sovereign Lord would lead him through life's bleaks;
Since money cannot satisfy God's blessed.

My Rose, until sweet day your love I find,
I'll pray that you will in His love abide.

-1/C Jacob Fox



For B, A True American

Oh say, can you see,
'Tween the drapes and the door,
Where the I met the You,
And the day never came?

By the Dawn's early light,
We were lying so close,
When I took you by hand,
And intoned "Will you please?"

What so proudly we hailed,
Was a thing wholly new-
Cool my head, catch my breath,
You said Yes! You said Yes

-Anonymous

The “R” Word

Danielle was fuming; seething; very, very mad. And Allen wasn’t happy to be its focus.

Two weeks ago, the idea of a road trip with her had seemed like a stroke of genius. Both of them needed to get to Florida for Thanksgiving, neither had the cash for a flight, and Allen had a car: Two birds, one stone. Danielle was like a kid sister to Allen, and they got along well.

Which is why Allen had no qualms speaking his mind with her – after all, they’d been friends for ten years and had never had a fight before, so why should that change? Unfortunately, he’d chosen to speak up for a topic that even he should have known wouldn’t go over well: the “r” word. Rape.

It’d been innocuous enough: Danielle had mentioned a comedian, Daniel Tosh, who made an off-color comment about a woman in the audience being raped, which is clearly not a nice thing to say to someone you don’t even know – even if she had heckled him. But the mistake Allen made was opening his mouth at all after Danielle stated, “Rape jokes are never funny.” With high-definition hindsight, Allen wished he could kick his past self square in the shin and tell him to shut the hell up. But past-Allen had instead said, “I’m not sure about that.”

Matches, meet stick of dynamite.

After an initial explosion of opinions, of which neither party had given themselves time to collect opinions for or think about, they were now sitting in an uncomfortable milieu of silence masking their mustering arguments. Danielle alternated between texting in a flurry of thumbs of screen flashes while Allen sat stock-still, eyes focused entirely on the road.

After twenty minutes of this, Danielle broke the silence.

“I disagree with you.” Allen let out a half-chuckle and replied, “That’s putting it lightly.” Danielle turned her head to him. “I don’t think you understand how big of an issue rape is for women,” she said, her face impassive but eyes still smoldering. “Women have to change their behavior to avoid rape. We can’t drink too much or go out at night alone or wear certain clothes without inviting the idea. It’s a fear we live with every day and night.” Allen let that hang in the air for a moment before commenting, “Sounds kind of like death.”

“It really is,” Danielle said quietly, looking forward again, thinking it was over. Unfortunately, it wasn’t. Allen continued: “But people make jokes about death all the time. It’s a coping mechanism, and it helps us loosen our fear of death.” Danielle whipped her head back to him. “But just because it’s LIKE death doesn’t mean it IS death,” she replied. “It’s not the same and shouldn’t be treated

the same.” Allen continued to look forward and replied, “No, its not the same. Death is worse. Death is forever, done – you can’t undo it, like rape, but you can’t recover, unlike rape. As traumatizing as it is, people can still come out the other side, but not with death.”

Danielle jumped on this immediately. “But there aren’t people threatening you with death every day and every night, hanging over you, are there?” Allen shrugged. “You could die any minute,” he replied almost nonchalantly. “Get hit by lightning, fall out of bed the wrong way, get into a car accident while having a discussion about rape with a childhood friend – 24/7, it’s there and it’s unending.” Danielle’s eyes narrowed. “But there isn’t someone holding it over your head,” she replied. “There isn’t a psychopath haunting you every night and day. Death is just there – rape has a face. It’s someone holding you down and making you less than human. With death, you can die a person, but with rape it can make you into an object.”

Allen didn’t know how to rebut that – clearly this line of argument was done. And he could have left it there with a friend whose anger would (hopefully) blow over and a little bit of egg on his face... But he didn’t.

“So maybe death isn’t the same,” he acknowledged. “But there are still a lot of things that comedy tackles that are dark. The point is to shine light on them, take the fear out of them by showing how wrong they are. Jokes like Tosh made are wrong – they put the victim down and make them the butt of the joke. It should be the other way around, and those jokes are the ones worth telling.” Allen had thought this made sense; apparently, according to Danielle, he’d thought wrong.

“A rape joke still hurts,” Danielle said derisively. “Look, can we just drop it? I don’t want this to become a problem...” Allen shrugged... And then after a minute: “You know, LOTS of topics hurt.” He replied, as neutrally as possible. “But that’s the beauty of humor: you can use it to shine some light on the dark corners and make them less scary. Learn more about it and cripple it.”

“No,” Danielle replied. “Rape is different. And if a joke reminds a victim of what they went through, it can really hurt them. It’s better to just leave it out of comedy.” Allen propped up an eyebrow. “How does that help?” he asked. “Wall-ing off the topic only makes it worse. If people are afraid to even talk about it, it makes fear of the thing itself even worse. Not to mention that it alienates the victims, since we talk about everything else in comedy. Wars, death, the holocaust, priests touching little kids—“

“It’s NOT the same,” Danielle said, facing Allen with cold eyes. “I’ve been texting a bunch of my friends: one of them is a social worker, another’s a rape victim, and the other is her sister, and all of them agree with me.” Allen sighed. “So I’m supposed to give in just because you made a coalition against me? And you’re

using text and the internet while I can't – you're cheating.”

Danielle replied, “I'm not cheating, I'm proving my point.” Allen shook his head. “No, you're not. You're just rallying your buddies together to back you up. There's a good article you should look up – it was written by a female.” Danielle cut him off. “So she gets to speak for all women? We're not a hive-mind.” Allen gave her a curt glance. “And your group CAN speak for all women?”

“GOD, you have ALWAYS been like this!” Danielle was shouting, her hands balled into white-knuckled fists. “Whenever we'd play pretend as kids, you'd ALWAYS be the bad guy just to stir up a conflict! You just HAVE to be devil's advocate, don't you?!”

Allen glanced a hawk-eyed look at her. “Better to look at both sides than just one,” he quipped back. Danielle groaned in frustration. “But you do it all the time! You're not trying to be fair, you're trying to be right, even if it makes you look like a dick!”

Allen dropped his shoulders and turned his head to her. “And you're just reacting without thinking it through!” he shouted. “I get it, rape is a terrible thing – we agree on that. But one, its not an excuse to abandon all critical thought and two, its not something only women can understand. Men get raped, too – not as many, but still, it happens. It's used as a weapon in some third-world countries, and did you ever even READ *The Kite Runner*?”

“Pull over,” Danielle said, turning forward and refusing to look at Allen. “I'm not doing this.” He groaned. “What, not having a rational conversation?” Danielle grabbed at the steering wheel to pull over, and for a moment the two grappled over it – the car moved shakily down the highway, and the cars behind him gave a warning honk. But Danielle was shorter and didn't have the leverage, so after a moment she abandoned the siege. “WHAT THE HELL?!” Allen shouted. Danielle stared daggers at him. For a few minutes there was an awkward, angry tension in the air. Then Allen flicked on the radio and turned it loud. Danielle turned away towards the window while Allen stared straight ahead, fuming.

The two didn't talk for several hours; Danielle fell asleep while Allen continued to stew. But after a few hours, the anger settled down and he pushed his mind to other things. He stopped by a gas station to refuel both the car and himself. When he came back in, Danielle was awake and pensive. Allen sat down and handed her a Mountain Dew Code Red – her favorite drink. She mumbled a thanks before opening it and taking a swig. They sat there again in the quiet after the motor started up, unsure what to do or so. Finally, Allen broke the ice.

“... So... Know any good jokes?”

A Painless Decision

My phone cord is caught, tugging gently
At my hair as I settle into my pillow.
I forget it's there until I shift and
It grabs again, greedily.
I could move it, but I don't.
I don't because it feels like your fingers
Combing my curls, untangling the knots,
Working out the remnants of sleep.
Those gentle tugs are bliss.
I don't move the cord.

-2/C Emily Strong



The Only One Left by Imperial Obsession, 2/C Bea Cayaban, Digital Photograph

The Story of a Year

Ah year, my maiden fair
my time but unto me alone.
Impart to me one last dance
before the dusk
before the dawn.
Ah year, slide your gentle fingers into place
between my aching, tired grasp,
fit your kindness into its place,
into its lock
into its clasp.
One left, one right, step front, now twirl,
minutes, days, and weeks – your gown,
your lace
spins around in revolve, resolve,
resounding “taps” across this hall,
large enough and blank to hold
the catacombs dark as your soul,
now spin,
spin ‘round once more.
Step your way across the floor
through memories, still shots, framed,
in front, beside, surrounding me,
back, now back again.
Your laughter to the deadened
darkened deep as
now ending sorrows seeping
into our dance, throughout our ball.
Goodbye my sweet,
my selfish heart,
my grace, my work of art,
the pedestal on which once stood
the world in all its glory.
Glide your way out my door,
a new mistress waits outside it.

-2/C Jorge Garate

Gears of my Love

The gears of my heart tighten
They lock into place forever.
The blood flow through the
Aortic valve has ceased and
With it my heart has stopped
At the sight of her beauty
And hopefully it shall only beat for her.

The Flow of blood no longer
Reaches my brain, it just sits
At the bottom of my skull.
The higher functions no longer work
I struggle to say even
The simplest of sentences.
My tongue has become a knot.

My skin slowly rises off of
My bones when she
Is near to me.
Every glance causes
My hands to quiver and
Become full of sweat.
My body betrays my fear within.

-2/C Tanner Anjola



Racing

Tension is high.
Thin, muscular girls pace anxiously,
Jogging, sprinting, now jogging again.
Avoiding eye contact with competitors,
(they say it slows you down).
Race time draws near,
And they approach the starting line.
No handshakes,
No smiles.

A loud, startling gun
And they're off!
Commentary, like a horse race,
Left turns, like a racecar derby,
Bib numbers, like it's the freaking Olympics.

It's all strategy.
They pace,
draft,
stall,
now surge.

The bell rings
Final lap!
The race goes to the craftiest:
Fast means nothing.
Heart means nothing.

How I long for the days when I leave
competition
preparation
anxiety
pressure
strategy
pain
behind.

And go for a run instead of a race.

-1/C Brigid Byrne



Bryce Harper, 2/C Andrew Felton, Graphite

POSE A VISIT TO HER GATOR.

These waters
 I behold
 a wild seclusion
 is dark the sky
 10
 unripe fruits,
 lose themselves,
 run wild
 in silence !
 20
 The Hermit sits
 blind
 in
 weariness
 felt along the heart;
 restoration 30
 , perhaps,
 of life,
 of love. trust,
 sublime; mystery
 Is unintelligible 40
 blessed ,
 gently
 the breath
 In suspended,
 quiet power
 life
 vain ! 50
 Unprofitable fretful stir
 beatings of
 spirit,



Of the Living, 2/c Bea Cayaban, Digital Photograph

Waiting room of Forest Haven, an abandoned children's mental asylum in Silver Springs, MD

Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree! Thy leaves are so unchanging!

You can tell a great deal about a family by looking at their Christmas tree. Its size is normally a clear-cut indication of the family's economic means, or how much they're willing to pay for a short-lived luxury. The lights, either colored or white, small bulbs or large, flashing, twinkling, or solid, can tell how traditional the family is. The ornaments, or lack thereof, are perhaps the most revealing. A hodgepodge of homemade, kindergarten quality (even if the kid were in 5th grade when he made it) popsicle stick reindeer and Santas indicate how the parents use the tree as a giant storybook to keep all the memories of their kids alive...even if only for one month of the year. The other tree trimming accoutrements, especially the edible ones, can indicate whether or not the family has pets, since the strings of popcorn do not usually bode well with curious critters roaming about. Finally, the tree topper makes a bold statement. Is the family religious? If so, chances are a seraphic angel will be overlooking the whole domain, guarding the household. A more secular family might place Santa Clause in that role, forgetting the history of St. Nick entirely.

My Christmas tree also talks. Looking through family photos, our tree has not changed in appearance for over twenty years. Every year, we buy the biggest Frasier fir that will fit in our living room. My sister and I are tasked with wrapping the boughs with boring, solid white lights. However, we make ourselves scarce when our mother comes in with her buckets of fake flowers and droopy red bows, exhausted after so many years of use. When we emerge from our hiding places, we find a tree, the only tree we've ever known, and our mother beaming with accomplishment.

For yet another year, she's done it. In her mind, she's created a perfect facade of a beautiful, unbroken home. This tree, despite all the changes to our family over the years, remains a brightly lit beacon, one that can be seen by all passers-by on the street, a shining example of our family's solidarity...at least if you're that easily fooled.

On the other side of the tree, the side shoved in a corner and deemed unfit to see the world, is perhaps a better image of our family. There you'll find that we were running short on lights, so we just strung the bare minimum to make it around the tree and make the other side look complete. There you'll see all the flowers missing petals or the bows that are coming untied. There you'll notice the giant hole in the tree, bought specifically with the mindset that we'd be able to hide it. There, if you look hard enough, you'll see my family, sitting in limbo, waiting for someone to finally say the words, "Sign here, we're getting a divorce."

Nursery Time

Hey, let's play in our sunny nursery,
It's time to ignore mommy and daddy.
And while I talk and sing to drown the yells
I do not know that this life is a hell.
Instead I think it's just another day
That I should distract my sister with play.

And when at night I soothe her back to sleep,
I know that this is our secret to keep.
But this time I decide to peek out the door,
He says keep talking if you want some more.
And I think, "Please, mommy just keep silent!"
But she doesn't and so daddy gets violent.

That's when he hits her with the kitchen chair
And drags her around screaming by her hair.
Soon I can't see any more through the crack,
But I can hear another angry smack.
He locked her again in their own bathroom.
I can't see yet how this house is her tomb.
I silently creep back into my bed
And let the image fade out of my head.

So this time when the sun decides to rise
Mommy leaving will not be a surprise.

-1/C Alex Gentry



Untitled, 4/C Olivia Yeager, Digital Photograph

Portrait of the American Family

It is a photograph of me, my brother, and my father. I am wearing a white graduation gown with my high school diploma and a red rose clutched in my hands. I actually have not seen the two of them in weeks. I moved away from “home” since April. The last I knew of my brother was that he was in Florida. I am somewhat surprised that they made it to the event: that is the one thought that crosses my mind as I was standing on the hot auditorium stage. The lights reflecting off the other white and maroon gowns blinded me. I see their faces vaguely in the crowd of gathered families.

I woke up that morning in the old house where I was taking care of Virginia. She is an eighty-six year old woman on oxygen. Her life when she was younger was surrounded by the glamour of the 1920s. She tells me stories about her husband taking her to the “Big Apple” and the Ritz. She has to show me all of her old photographs. I take care of her and the big house. She is alone, her children long grown, her grandchildren ignoring her. I take her outside in the backyard and weed her garden, which has not been touched in years. She yells at me that I am doing it wrong. Her oxygen tank gives me anxiety attacks. I stay up at night listening to the mechanical puffs and hoping they do not stop. It is my little prayer in the evening.

The night before graduation she had me try on all of her white dresses. I need one for graduation, but cannot afford to buy one. We settled on a knee length white beaded dress. The beads are old and fragile. When I put it on in the morning and go downstairs she makes me spin around. She puts real pearls around my neck. Her frail, paper, blue veined hands brush my hair back. She hates that I have it colored pink. She tells me I would look beautiful with blond hair. I laugh the comment off. She waves and tells me to take care. Her farewell is “You look like a doll!” It is her favorite phrase.

I walk on the stage; the paper is handed to me in a leather binder with a rose. I hope I do not trip. I am afraid my sweat will stain the beautiful dress. We throw our caps in the air leaving them behind. Everyone claps. The auditorium gets empty. I file out with the crowd of white and maroon gowns, all of us smiling. When I meet my brother and father outside they hug and congratulate me. My father looks proud and for once is not drunk. Hattie comes over to take our picture. I’m put in the middle. I awkwardly smile, my lips closed to cover up the gap in my teeth. My father is on my left side, beaming like he has achieved something on this day. My brother is on my right side, I am not even sure he wanted to come and see this. Here we are, pretending to be a happy family, perfect smiles, except for me. The families surrounding us do the same, some more genuine than others.

Bibliophilic Passion

Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers stand tall
Beside Nabokov's Lolita and Hemingway's Frederic Henry.
Stiff in their bindings, they
Wait silently, wondering who among them
Will be the next hot date for
Some sleepless college boy,
Playing out his fantasies in the late hours of the night.
What more could they want in a lonely bedroom on a Friday night
Than to share their intimate secrets?

-1/C Hunter Herron



Exuent Omnes

Tell me Bill, tell me Bill, tell me where are you now?
There's these words, all these words that I can't figure out,
They rush round in my head and around on this page
And I can't seem to grasp the right verb or right phrase.
I need help, you see Bill! I mean, how'd you do it?
You made up so many- did you know or intuit
That you'd open our eyes! Make us live, make us die!
Make us mourn star-cross'd lovers five beats at a time.

Was Othello your friend, or that merchant in Venice?
Was the Scotsman so hateful that he had to die friendless?
Did you care for them, Bill? As I care for these lines?
Did it hurt at the end? Did it hurt every time?
Is that why you killed them, these children and kings?
I want answers and soon, 'cause I'm struggling.

You see, you were the one who taught me to love it,
But now more than passion, its solace I covet.

-Anonymous

Beloved

Once I read that victims of suicide bombs,
their wounds are emptied of cooled metal
or wooden splinters,
to be repacked with antibiotic and gauze.
But the doctors know that often,
once these manmade tracks seal,
mounds surge in exodus weeks later,
slivers
of leftover life.

Alien goose bumps rise sickeningly
from the heat,
satisfied by conquest and ready
to be painstakingly plucked,
chilled at last by sterilized tongs.
What shuddering relief
to sift human debris,
fleshy bullets too long invasive.
Repugnant, human burden.

I read that victims of suicide bombs
often carry their shattered radical
under the skin
like walking memorials.
Organic shrapnel,
I think,
and wonder when shards
of you
will be ready for extraction.

-2/C Erin Bacon

2013 Pitt Poetry Prize Honorable Mention

Down and Unwilling

A dragon crash lands down into a jungle.
Many vines tangle his wings up in a bundle.
They will not let him leave no matter his struggle.

Anger welds up from deep inside the beast.
He is wounded. A larger species wanted him for a feast.

This particular dragon was known for being a fighter.
The flames he breathed were hotter and burned much brighter.

His survival had its own cost in flesh and blood.
Skin and muscle tissue torn, crimson fluid ran like a flood.

Energy exhausted, he was completely out of breath.
In his soul he could feel the imminent approach of death.

Out of the dark trees comes a beautiful young girl.
Her heart is compassionate when she sees his quarrel.

She tries to get closer and undue the vines' tie.
The dragon roars fiercely at her. He'd much rather she die.

He is paranoid to no end. Kindness was foreign to him.
Older wounds from battles past reminded him of where he'd been.

So here the dragon remains, unable to accept her assistance.
Still she continues and hopes that he will drop his resistance.
His anger and paranoia is only rivaled by her love and persistence.

-1/C Anthony Robinson



Unanswered

How can you all ignore my plea?
I've been praying for my saving grace,
Why doesn't anybody help me?
My heart pounds uncontrollably
As tears pour down my face.
How can you all ignore my plea?
I know the bruises are plain to see,
So why don't you put him in his place?
Why doesn't anybody help me?
I'm starting to feel a little bit crazy,
They're telling me my stories aren't precise.
How can you all ignore my plea?
Trapped, I feel the need to break free,
Who would blame me in this case?
Why doesn't anybody help me?

If only someone had helped me
I wouldn't have left a trace.
How could you all ignore my plea?
Why didn't anybody help me?

-1/C Alex Gentry



Dragon, 2/C Mohamed Saudulla, Computer Graphic

Sonnet Satura

I contemplated writing you a poem
with metaphors and imagery and rhyme.
So eloquent that you would never roam,
about how our whatever outshines time.
Then I recalled how snobbish sonnets are,
Abused romance, four-letter shallow lies,
Like a pretentious writer's northern star,
Fanatically misused seduction tries.
I figured I could tell you how I feel,
How I fit perfectly inside your arms,
Then awkwardly affections I would steal
With r a n d o m spaces, and, cute comma charms.
Then end with something passionate, sort of
Somewhat alike that feeling known as love.

-4/C Paige Ward

2013 Pitt Poetry Prize Honorable Mention



Sylvan

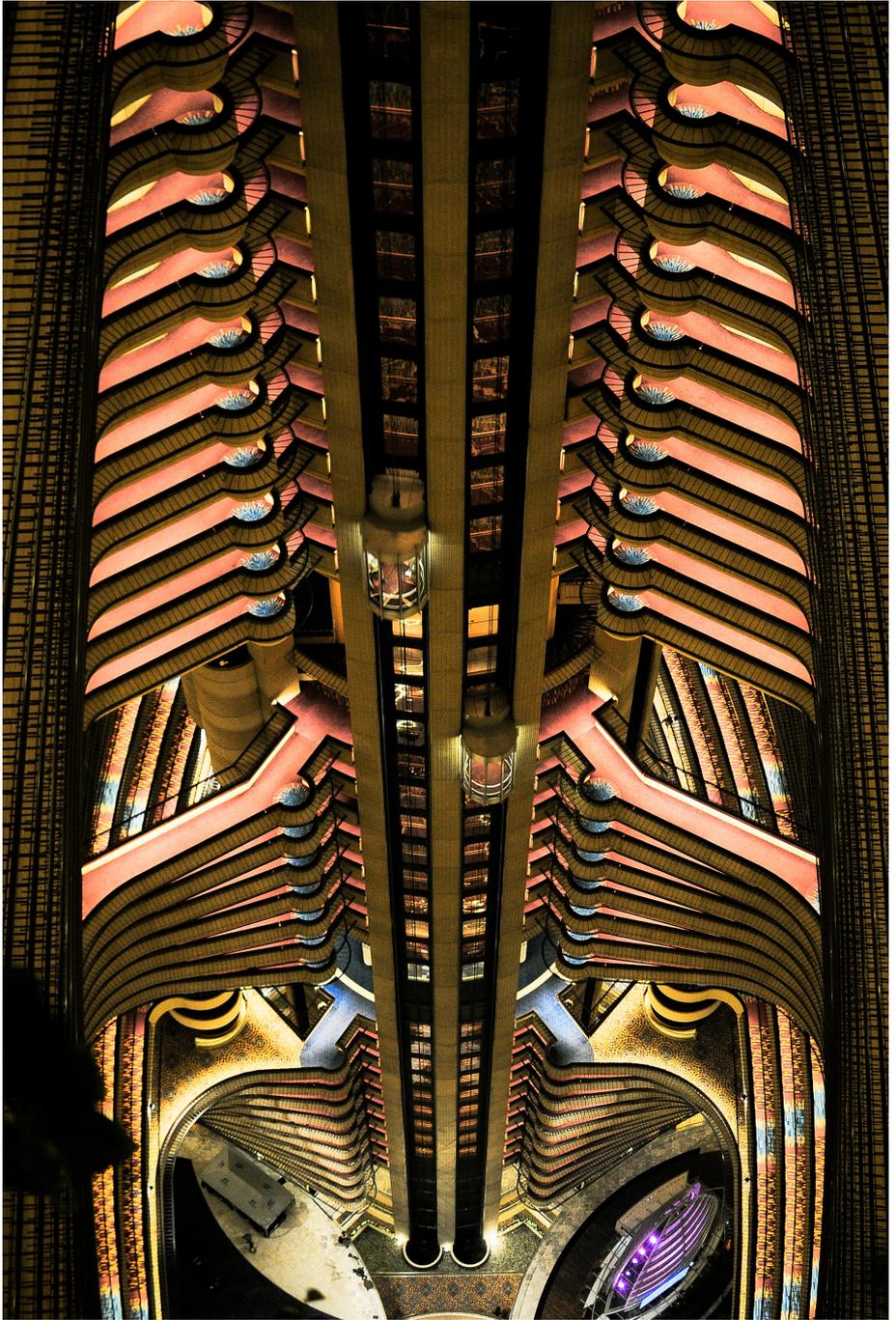
Clicks and staccato bursts of plastic
Are the new songs of man's night.
In Maryland, where crickets once chirped, the insect symphony
Has been replaced by the widget's whir,
Sputtering and frothing caffeine and cream.
The landscape, no longer bathed in moonlight, is instead
Illuminated by the gentle glow of a computer monitor.
Man's synthetic surroundings wear at his pith,
And he, spurred by forces innate and primeval, wanders
Out into the sylvan night, deeply breathing air heavy with
The enchantment of wood and star, and reclaiming that
Which has been lost through progress.

-2/C Kenneth Piech

```

1  % MIDN 2/C Matthew Yates, USN
2  % m137428
3
4  %
5  % -----?^"-----o-----
6  %
7  %      o
8  %      o      (X_>)
9  %      o
10 %      o      (X_>)
11 %      o
12 %      o      (X_>)
13 %      o
14 %      o      (X_>)
15 %      o
16 %      o      (X_>)
17 %
18 %
19 %
20 %
21 %
22 %
23 %
24 %
25 %
26
27 % This program is an erlang implementation of the UNIX make Utility
28 % Some interesting features include (but not limited to):
29 %     * executes each rule in its own thread
30 %     * allows for user break by means of entering a number
31 %     * if the prerequisites for a rule are modified while the
32 %       thread is still alive then the commands are
33 %       redone
34
35 % Abandon all hope ye who read below here
36
37 -module(proj).
38
39
40
41 % allow main to be called
42 -export([main/0, hurryUpAndWait/3]).
43
44 main() ->
45     % call the worker funtion
46     fileReader().
47
48 readALine(Lines) ->
49     lists:reverse(Lines).
50 readALine(Lines, InFile) ->
51     case file:read_line(InFile) of
52     {ok, Line} ->
53         readALine([Line|Lines], InFile);
54     eof ->
55         readALine(Lines)
56     end.
57 readAllLines(InFile) ->
58     Lines = readALine([],InFile),
59     file:close(InFile),
60     Lines.
61 % here comes some stright sick nasty bash to go get the last modified date
62 % it wasn't even fair I felt like I was Darth Vader and
63 % had the Imperial March from Star Wars playing
64 getTimeStamp(FileName) ->
65     TimeString = os:cmd(string:join(["ls -l ", removeNewLines(FileName),
66     " --time-style=%s%N | rev |cut -d ' ' -f2| rev"], " ")),
67
68 case lists:prefix("ls: cannot access ",TimeString) of
69 true -> 0;
70 _ -> {NumberOfMillSecs,Rest} = string:to_integer(TimeString),
71     NumberOfMillSecs
72 end.
73 %I'll give you a few lines to recover

```



Untitled, Jeffery Martino, Digital Photograph

Untitled

You look at me, and then you lie
On the soft grass. You hold my gaze.
You say you'll never make me cry.

You call me lovely as I try
To hide my face.
You look at me and then you lie

Gracefully beside me. I watch you and fly
Away, lost in a beautiful haze.
You say you'll never make me cry.

We sit in the summer evening as we defy
The laws of science and set the night ablaze.
You look at me, and then you lie

Gently on my lap. You kiss me, and I
Entangle myself more and more with the passing days.
You say you'll never make me cry

But to your fallacies I can no longer turn a blind eye.
I refuse to be another participant in your love maze.
You look at me and then you lie.
You say you'll never make me cry.

-3/C Perla Rodriguez



Herodias' Daughter

She was too young to even comprehend
the chain of events unraveling at hand.
The dance in the silks proved her undoing
when mind was lost from incestuous viewing.

His eyes were pressed upon her dance
as she performed the devil's romance.
Her body was secret up 'til that moment,
he never allowed her needed atonement.

The man in chains had much renown;
all her innocence was starting to drown.
It was fated that she become the assassin,
she must have known what was going to happen.

Her story is short, but can't be missed.
She was too much for a man to resist.
Will she forever be the baptized villain,
the devil-siren hidden in women?

Is she hell's fire made into flesh;
the first she-devil manifest to sex?
Is she to blame, who couldn't say no,
because he died upon her yes?

-1/C Hollis Capuano



Impeccable Stagemanship

Up right enter plus attitude of joy,
Cross down left slash grasping at a toy,
Cheat out smile freely circle S as she sits
Unaware of audience - oh God his role just fits.
Such sympathy of character!
Such grandeur and elegance!
The voice of a generation really
Haven't seen one so handsome since –

Costume off no smiles now just living now it's me
I'll go away I'll be happy grab my coat and just leave,
Out the door smile pose smile pose
Flash flash flash yell smile pose pose pose pose flash gone

Tonight's news tomorrow lunch dinner brunch booked so busy sorry
Sign sign flash pose but please running very late
Family man yes let me yes pose please sign smile
So sorry please really thank you yes
Need something need someone
Down another suck air hard gonna puke
Can't stand it

I bet you didn't read about this one

-4/C Jett Watson



Addiction

What demon possessed him to poison himself?
To drink fire to numb another pain
That clouded his eyes and destroyed affection.
And what a feat to destroy that demon,
What courage to pour the poison down the drain,
To sweat and crave and deprive himself
The comfort of forgetting.
And how my pity for him morphed to pride
When I witnessed him breaking the bottles,
And the tears he wept when the whiskey was gone.

-1/C Sarah Jaeger



Lobotomy

Together, we're alone in white jumpsuits,
feet bare, thick straps clasp arms still, messy hair.
Endless needles administered by brutes.
We don't need them! I scream, "This isn't fair!"
Our screaming echoes off the bare white walls,
but no one ever listens to our pleas,
from the room where electroshock enthralls
its victims, trying to cure our disease.
Endlessly thrashing, we try to escape
the bonds that keep us tethered to our beds.
We scream; hallucinations take their shape,
and captors try to choke us with our meds.
While we kick, straps pull tighter with a click.
Click. Click. I know what comes next: the ice pick.

-2/C Haley Sobrero

2013 Pitt Poetry Prize Honorable Mention

In the Parking Lot

Behind the dollar theatre
and empty Save-a-Lot
a rusty Trans-Am
stalls, igniting bad excuses.
Outside, hazy
streetlamps pollute
the night with scorn
as acid drops
fog windows
and flood asphalt.
A balding raincoat
pauses, glances,
tugs soberly at
the car's slippery handle,
then shuffles home,
chin tucked and alone.

Inside, underclothes,
cast beside
a ticket stub,
cheap admission
to back-seat movie.
Choked eyes stare wanton
at his naked chest, salty
like her aching eyes.
She breathes his exhaust,
thick with acrid flattery,
gasping for love
instead, drowning in
Teenage asphyxiation.

-4/C Paige Ward



Patience

All teachers have to keep a score
For students; Though we beg for more
Time to delay and stall our work
Good students always play the whore.

Among three groups we split our time
According to the weight assigned
To class and credit. Busy work.
Too soon, too late; We choose our crime.

Most teachers choose the simple path
By grading with some simple math
Or predetermined scores for work
That's late, invoking red pen's wrath.

"Love is patient" Saint Paul said
After the church in Corinth read
About his past of murder: Evil work
To kill first martyr. Stephen's dead.

Discipline and patience must collide
Since just scores must be served. We ride
The line, refuse to ask, but work
As though our good will help us pass.

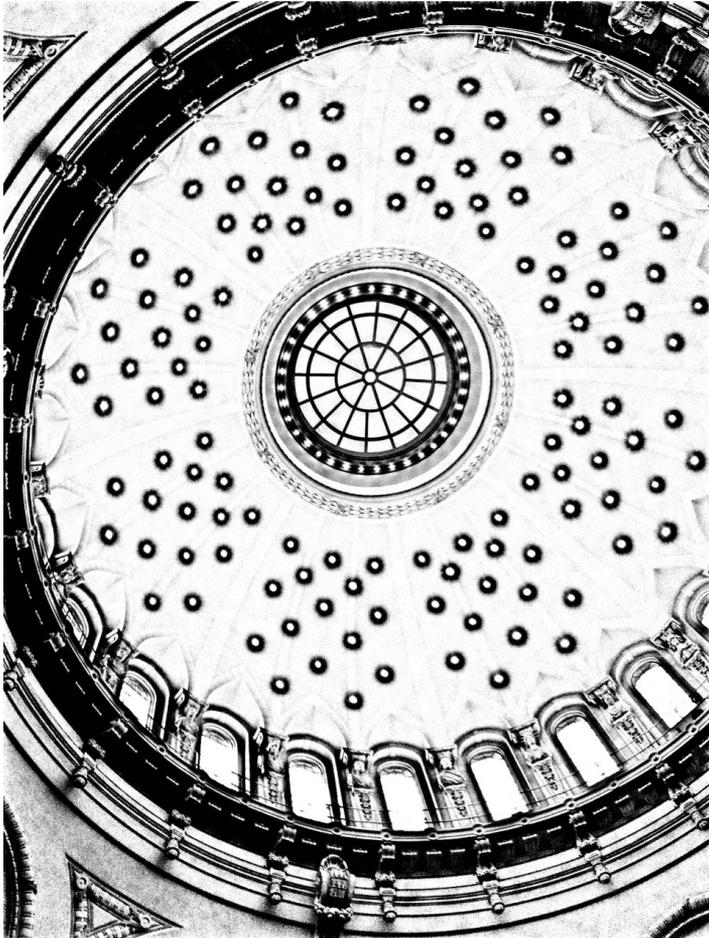
-1/C Jacob Fox



An Ode to Admiral Miller

Sodium light reflects off blank pages.
Hours gone, words not created.
But maybe my roommate could help;
A prizefighter of adjectives, nouns, and phrases.
Gone, yet his notebook left out.
A peek at a paper and then a nasty realization:
The pen may be mightier than the sword,
But stealing the weapon is useless
When the wordsmith is lazy.

-1/C Roman Klimchuk



Chapel Dome, 1/C Ben O'Neill, Digital Photograph



The Labyrinth Staff

(left to right) Erin Bacon, Erica Leinmiller, Susannah Johnson, Marissa Lihan,
Virginia Burger, Heather Bui
(not pictured) Jorge Garate, Raymond Sudduth, John Williamson,
Olivia Yeager, Paige Ward

The Labyrinth's Fabulous Editors



1/C Erica Leinmiller
Editor-in-Chief



2/C Susannah Johnson
Assistant Editor-in-Chief



2/C Marissa Lihan
Poetry & Prose Editor



1/C John Williamson
Treasurer, Editor



4/C Virginia Burger
Junior Editor



2/C Jorge Garate
Poetry & Prose Editor



3/C Heather Bui
Junior Editor



4/C Paige Ward
Webmaster



4/C Olivia Yeager
Art Editor

Cover photograph by 3/C Anton Ekman