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contributors



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“All the stars are different, and when standing alone are much less impressive than collectively presented. The *Apogee* brings together different students, stories, and talents to create a unique and beautiful literary work, just like the stars comprise an awe-inspiring sky.”

Paige Clark
Cover Artist

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A P O G E E

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(*) indicates that the selection was awarded a prize of distinction

A P O G E E

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

Why, you may ask, do we call ourselves *Apogee*? What even is an “apogee”? These are questions our staff has been asked many times through the years. The official definition of “apogee” is “the highest or furthest point; a climax or culmination.” And that is precisely what our journal strives towards: the highest point, the climax of student art at Franklin College.

As an editorial team and a collection of artists, we want to push the boundaries of expression at Franklin. Though our campus community is small, the artistic diversity of our students is incredible. *Apogee* offers an outlet for this diversity and creativity to flourish. We provide a platform for students to showcase their work, talents, interests, emotions, desires, and experiences. *Apogee* highlights the freedom of art and the uniqueness of our artists.

Our staff is entirely students; our selection process is entirely anonymous. *Apogee*, its staff, and the submissions we receive are constantly changing; no two years are ever the same. We are proud to have facilitated immense change and development over the past three years. From the addition of two international contests to the creation of a multi-faceted web-presence, each change pushes us closer towards our main goal. Even though *Apogee* has gone through many changes our goal remains the same: highlighting fantastic art and creating a community for our artists.

We hope that you find our 2016 edition to be one step closer to our own apogee.

Sincerely,

Kristin Stephens & Caylie Guinn
Editors-in-Chief

A P O G E E

NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

EMILY STAUFFER POETRY PRIZE

Having grown up in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey, Emily Stauffer earned her B.A in English from Gettysburg College, her M.A. from the Pennsylvania State University, and her PhD from the University of Connecticut. In addition to liberal arts courses in writing and literature, she regularly taught Romantic, Victorian, Modern British, Canadian, and world literature classes. After 31 years at Franklin College, Dr. Stauffer retired after the 2014-2015 school year.

KATHY CARLSON FLASH FICTION PRIZE

Carlson grew up in Rockford, Illinois and attended Wheaton College. Her teaching areas included composition, writing about literature, literary studies, American literature from colonial times until the 20th century, and watercolor painting. After teaching at Franklin College for 35 years, Carlson retired after the 2014-2015 school year.

EMILY STAUFFER POETRY PRIZE WINNER

IN THE JAPANESE GARDEN

MAX HEINEGG

Portland, Oregon

I. Strolling pond garden (Chisen-kaiyu-shiki)

Our guide is a learned, stout
white-haired emissary of kindness
his speech as light as a twig

for us, in our uprooted life
there are no clear
or clean lines, no harmony
of water and stone, no plan
for symmetry or balance
as we walk from crane and tortoise stones
dotting the Lower Pond
Across the Zig Zag bridge
through a prelude of irises
to The Heavenly Falls
a three hundred foot ascent
above the pond where fifty koi swim

the aether, in the form of water
crashes and safely recollects
like shadows folding
into trees at twilight.

II. Tea Garden (Roji-niwa)

Two gardens:

A circle within a circle
for the ceremony of tea
the outer circle, *soto-roji*
for waiting, *machai*
and the inner, *uchi-roji*
for the ritual itself

In the center of the inner circle
is *Kashin-Tei*,
or Flower Heart House
built in Japan with pegs
in place of nails

III. Natural Garden (Shukeiyen)

Elsewhere
so much beauty is imposition
symmetries hammered out and framed by hand
to defeat the natural sprawl
the inclination of vines, of water
to climb and spill
all about us, as our way
is never as the crow flies
but to wind, to follow the thread
out of the labyrinth

The Natural Garden is balance
without control
the hands of the parents following
the shaky, daring footsteps of the child

In the center of the garden is the only human form
in all five gardens,
bodhisattva, the stone guardian
of the path of changes

we observe
in the growths of tree, moss, and fern

IV. Flat Garden (Hiraniwa)

White sand is water for the eyes
repose from the azalea and evergreen

in the sand are shaped
the symbols of pleasure:
gourd and sake cup

from the pavilion,
where the female staff writes kanji
with brushes for visitors

we ask her to write “love”
to see what it looks like
in a formal hand

and learn three Japanese words for love:
ai, *koi*, and *rabu*.

V. Sand and Stone Garden (Karensansui / Zen niwa)

These small islands of
sand and stone

where the sand is raked
to seem the sea
ripple away
or return

to the stones
that stand
within
gray fields of water

solitary
as thoughts
that will not
join the others.

HONORABLE MENTION

RHONA HOLDS THE GIRLS AT NIGHT

ABBY CHEW

When the wind rattles leaves
down the gulch, she hears planes
flying low. They head further north
to the new airstrip—the one with asphalt,
not this cracked concrete that burrows
deeper and deeper into the honeysuckle,
Joe Pye weed and nettles.
There's the particular smell of wet earth,
dry fur, of milk breath.
Rhona walks. Leans into
air the way trout lean into current.
She wants to stay here for a long while,
teaching the twins to stalk
grasshoppers and mice and rabbits.
She wishes she could remember how it was
to hunt that first morning alone,
no sisters biting at her ears.
The grass would've led her on, showed
her how it braided into soil. How
it became tobacco juice
in the grasshopper's mouth.
Rhona sings to her pups now.
She sings a song about how the mouse flipped
from its frantic burrow can land just so,
snicked in a coyote's teeth,
warm and feeding a sharp hunger.

HONORABLE MENTION

GYPSY GIRL

MARY BUCHINGER

Franz Hals, oil on canvas, 1628

One lost Saturday, I wandered cobblestones
where bicycles clattered and swept me dizzy,
closed my eyes but didn't dream of art, only
of myself, believing this was life
ever after.

Inside, in the long gallery, portraits
lined the walls, gazed from their frames,
examining me.

Undone by the crowds of black hats
and pink-cheeked faces,
I pressed against fleshy presences,
all of us shuffling through a darkened room
in a trance.

Looming over me, the Hals
snickered, demanded I offer myself.
I backed away, without answering,
imagining the paint finding that girl,
her blouse sagging below her collarbone,
the men in the pub noisy in her roughened ear.
Then she beckoned me
with a smile that asked,
Why so sad?

All the way home, she haunted me,
the lavish frame shivering in
my mind like a heavy emotion
I couldn't explain.

Nights my eyes can't penetrate
the dark, I wander again into the art of another
whose vision I can succumb to, the paint
rising into spirits before me.

KATHY CARLSON FLASH FICTION PRIZE WINNER

TIPS ON CHOOSING A TOPIC

CODY MULLINS

In high school, become obsessed with Hemingway. Feign a fondness for fishing. Nevermind you're afraid of the fish, surprised by the dryness of their scales and the alacrity with which they buck under your touch.

Watch a bullfight on a snuff film. Throw up copiously.

Decide you want to be a journalist. Decide that you haven't seen enough of life. Enroll in a liberal arts college known for its academics and its hard partying. Feel the guilt of the trust your naïve parents put in you. Never get carried away at parties. Have an affinity for vacuous, dangerous women. Involve yourself with only the most wholesome, upstanding, blonde-haired, blue-eyed woman.

Eat food out of dumpsters. Never explain why, though you are ostensibly undernourished, you are obese.

Continue to date the same virginal woman through college. Move to the south for her. Forget that you have a divine wish to write. Be surprised by the wetness and the alacrity with which she bucks under your touch.

Read only books by authors canonized by the Library of America. Enroll in a Master's Program. Tell your family it will result in a better life. It is your vocation. Tell your fiancée that she doesn't factor into the plans. Hemingway had four wives. You don't intend to have any.

Fall in love again and again. Lose weight gain weight lose weight gain, the Dow Jones and S&Ps of your life intertwined.

Cut your hair into a Mohawk. Drink PBR and write shitty poetry. At 23 you've figured out how to live. Try to impress a punk chick with your love of Tom Waits. Only listen to Frank's Wild Years. By 24 you're over it. The Heart of Saturday Night is more your speed. Love blonde-haired, blue-eyed church mouse.

Become restless with church mouse. Be surprised when she takes the action. Leaves you couchless and bedless. Blow up a mattress and sleep on your living room floor.

Rediscover Ernest. Refer to him as if he were an old friend.

Grow a mustache and travel to Madrid. Bake in the sun in the Retiro. Gorge yourself on paella at the Botín. Be painfully aware of your bloated thighs rubbing together. Forget the Spanish you had in high school. Get lost on the Metro. Get stuck in the turnstile.

Be an embarrassment to your blonde-haired, blue-eyed wife. Look into her clouded visage and realize that Hemingway is the marlin. You, Santiago. She is not Brett Ashley. You never needed her to be anyway.

Decide that Barcelona is more your speed. Sit on the beach, your pale, burnt wife perfectblondefreckled in a bathing suit beside you. Decide that everything you've ever needed is on a beach in Barcelona, Spain. Read thirty pages of *The Sun Also Rises* and weep as the Grapefruit Moon rises on the horizon. Grab a fistful of sand. Be surprised by its coolness and the alacrity with which it bucks under your touch.

HONORABLE MENTION

THE HOOK AND THE WORM

R.C. NEIGHBORS

The father and son sit along the shoreline on a rotted log surrounded by dirt, pebbles, and Bermuda grass, the kid's head as high as the man's armpit. To their right the boat ramp, slick and moss-covered, plunges into water, the concrete fringed by two wooden docks. The air smells of decaying fish, and the lake resembles warm bathwater after a rinse, silt so thick the water appears greenish-brown, so thick they can't see below the surface.

As the father prepares his rod, his forearms flex, their skin tan, except where flecked with pockmarks from welding, from old sprays of metal slag. Waiting, the son rubs a hand along his own hairless arm. The father hands him a pole and offers a Styrofoam cup of dirt—the man's knuckles calloused and hairy, his fingers drumming against the side—but the son doesn't take it.

"They're just worms," the man says, irritation in his voice.

"They're gross."

"Fine." The father swivels around, his movement swift and back dismissive. He sits the cup on a shaded rock, plucks a night crawler, his hand like an eager sparrow, threads the worm on the hook, and casts. The son watches the bait and line splat into the water. Their ripples spread in concentric circles until they form a V-shape as the father slowly reels in the line. Then he casts again.

Already bored, the son sets down his pole and searches for a smooth rock, a good skipper. Eventually he finds one—round, flat, and black—an old igneous, he thinks. He brushes the dirt away, places it tight in the crook of his forefinger, and sidearms it over the dark water. One, two, *plunk*.

"What the hell are you doing? Trying to scare 'em away?" The father finishes reeling his line and casts again, the hook sprinkling drops of water onto the son's face. "We came to fish. So fish."

From his spot the son stares over the lip of the Styrofoam cup, at the morsels of dirt, the fingers of flesh that poke through. The dark soil clings to them like cake crumbs. With a glance toward his father, the son takes one in his hand, the hook in the other, gripping toward the ends, the hook and the worm—feels the flimsy metal, the barb, the slimy, segmented furrows, like the lines of his fingertips but prickly from unseen bristles. Slowly the prong approaches, and the animal retreats upon itself. No sight, or pain, or even touch, but it recoils. And the boy pities its failure to escape the role assigned it.

When the hook strikes, the worm continues to squirm, at least for a moment, and excretes brown onto his hand, a tar that sticks and stretches between his fingers, then smears against denim. Its body hangs limp now, subdued against his smooth knuckles, and he casts it into the water, aping his father's skillful flick.

But the boy feels nothing, nothing like the man.

HONORABLE MENTION

PUZZLE PIECES

R.C. NEIGHBORS

From the sofa arm, Lucas mimicked his brother's movements, one hand, then another waving behind Dylan's back, caressing the air as Dylan caressed Janessa on the cushions. When Dylan's fingers spread through her hair, Lucas spread his fingers. When Dylan's hand tightened around the strands, Lucas's tightened. Kissy-face, kissy-face. Moan, moan.

Janessa pushed Dylan away. "Do something about your brother."

"Stepbrother." Without another word, Dylan grabbed Lucas around the waist and jerked him off his feet. He carried the boy like that, his little head ramming against partying bodies, through arms and legs, the panting, the stench of sweat and cologne, then down the hallway and to his bedroom.

Dylan dropped him onto his bed. "Stay."

His arms crossed, Lucas glowered at Dylan. "I'll call Dad..."

"My dad." Dylan smacked him on the back of the head. "And if you wanna see tomorrow, keep your mouth shut."

Dylan marched through the doorway and left him on his comforter in the dark. "Asshole," Lucas muttered.

From the bed, he heard the beat of the music, felt it in his chest like his own heart, along with the shouts and laughs of the teenagers. He squeezed his arms against himself, as if squeezing his chest were squeezing Dylan's throat. He paced, from his shelf of trophies covered in webs and dust to his nightstand, where a photo of his father sat—not Dylan's, but gone now for years—and back to the shelf.

At the doorway, he peeked around the frame, through the hallway filled with photos of three families, his family, Dylan's family, and the two together, like a mutation, two puzzles mixed together.

But no teenagers.

He flopped onto the carpet on his stomach and crawled down the hall like a soldier in his cartoons, under imaginary wires spiked with prongs and razors, and at the end, he spotted the table of liquor. He smiled and jumped into the crowd, bobbing his head up and down as he pushed through and grabbed a bottle.

He found his brother on the couch, on top of Janessa with his hand up her shirt, and Lucas drank. His stomach resisted, but he continued, gulp after gulp. He heard voices behind him, the voices of every little boy—ignored and alone—past, present, and future. Chug. Chug. Chug.

And when he lowered the bottle, Dylan stared at him, eyes narrowed, knuckles popping. With no warning, Lucas clutched his stomach and vomited on Janessa, the liquid splattering against her neck and chest, chunks of hot dog and bits of corn falling in her lap. Janessa jerked to her feet, screaming and brushing at the vomit but only spreading it to her hands.

The crowd erupted, laughing, pointing, and slapping his back. Lucas only watched Dylan's eyes widen, his concern for Janessa, and the boy cried, his sobs shaking his chest more than the retching.

But he felt a hand, Dylan's hand on his shoulder, gentle, like a mother's. Or maybe a brother's.



Water Droplets on Leaf by Kelsey Stouse

FICTION DISTINCTION

THOUGHTS IN FADING

JOCELYN KRULL

I never thought a river could run so quietly. This park is called Riverside Park, but why name it after a river that you can barely hear? Even in the evenings when the park is normally empty, I can't make it out.

I'd grown up listening to rivers flow over rocks and pieces of metal, making such beautiful music. I spent a lot of time alone on riverbanks and not playing football or riding bicycles like boys should, but my mother always told me that if something makes me happy, I should do it. I remember digging my hands in the polluted clay to pick up rocks and arrange them in such a way that the water had the most difficulty crossing over it, like sidestepping over a rickety bridge or a person that just won't die. It'd take me hours trying to find the perfect arrangement for them all; I was Mozart placing notes on a staff. After I was satisfied, I'd climb back up the bank, sit there on the edge of that river, and listen to it, my masterpiece. I never imagined finding such joy in a symphony of struggle.

Behind the rusted dumpster, I hear a girl squealing with delight and the tires of a bicycle scrape against the gravel pathway towards the playground. Not too far behind it, a heavy set of footsteps follows. It's as if somebody is chasing her, perhaps a father chasing his daughter as if to say, "Stop! You're going too fast!" or "Wait! You're growing up too fast!"

It's easy overlooking the hourglass. We put it there ourselves, but when we turn around, the years fall like grains of sand.

The sky is just so blue and the sun is just so bright. It warms my face, melting away the chilling pinpricks making their way up and down my spinal column. It also melts away the one remaining pile of snow left in the parking lot, evidence of the recent winter. It bleeds as it tries to defend itself against the heat and defy the imminent spring. Why does it fight so? Doesn't the snow pile know that it will feed the atmosphere and the earth around it as it perishes? But, then

again, I don't blame it. I'd much prefer to die in a meadow rather than a parking lot. Asphalt has no nutrients, no pathway back to the dirt. It's just black and dead against my face.

It had been windy when he walked up next to me. I hadn't even hear him.

"Hey, there."

"Hey."

I never was one for idle conversation.

"Fine weather we're having today."

"Sure."

"The flowers should be coming up soon, I'd imagine."

"I'd give it a week or so."

"God, I love it when they bloom, especially the rhododendrons. One day you just have this bush and then the next day, you have a bush full of flowers. They just sneak up on you."

"Yeah, they'll do that."

All flowers have a meaning behind them. Red roses mean love, Queen Anne's lace mean fantasy, edelweiss are noble, but why did he like rhododendrons?

"Whatcha drinking, there?"

"Tea. Peach."

"Ah, fair. I'm a tea man myself when the birds come back."

I could have sworn there were already birds singing. We stood there for a moment.

"Listen, I'm new around here and am not too familiar with the area yet. Can you tell me how to get to the post office from here? Need to pick up change of address forms and all of that such and such."

"Just head west on Turner. About five minutes down, you should run into it on the left."

"Uh huh. Now which way is west again?"

I turned to point westward and it happened. A jolt in my side, a catch in my throat. At first, my insides melted around the entry, pulsing coolly like frigid whispers. Then there was fire. Piercing, searing, shrieking fire in my ears and in my stomach. For a split second, the clouds and the trees and the colors and the hairs on the back of my neck and everything screamed. But then, in the next moment, everything stopped. The wind died. The birds stopped singing. The earth stopped moving. I pulled it out. Everything lacked. Everything emptied. As I lay there, I thought about the things that should never see the light of day: secrets, men who kidnap and molest little children, Chopin's heart, blood...I almost missed my wallet being pulled from my pocket as everything got colder. The

scorching asphalt fought the frost that was crystallizing my veins and rendering everything black, but the shivers didn't stop. He looked at me motherly, like I was a child who had drawn all over his face with marker, or painted all of the walls with red paint. And then, so tenderly, he knelt down and reclaimed the knife, wiping it in the grass next to me.

"Much obliged, sir."

Everything wavers now. All I can smell are copper and peaches. My mouth is metallic, like I've been sucking on a mouthful of pennies, and my face feels like radio static. The sky is just so blue and the sun is just so bright. A bee lands next to the spilled mess; he probably smelled this from a mile away. He seems a little skeptical at first, but inches towards the puddle, drinking up the murky, burgundy concoction. I bet iron has never tasted so sweet. It's so little I can offer him for keeping the world turning and for making the flowers grow.

Normally, in the evenings, the park is empty. The benches are stoic, the swings teeter in the breeze, and it gets so quiet, you can hear the leaves filter the sunset into a lullaby. But there's somebody here. There are footsteps on the path. Is it him again? Mr. Rhododendron? He's already taken everything on me; what else could he possibly want? The steps sound different, though. Lighter. Mr. Rhododendron had boots on, I think. Wait. She's talking.

"Yeah, mom. I'm cutting through the park. I'll be back home in like five minutes. Yes, I got the bread. You wanted white, right? Wait, you wanted wheat? Well I'm not going back now 'cause it's getting dark out and it's creepy here."

Just a little further.

"Mom..ma..MOM. YES I know to scream and run if someone tries to take me. Stop worrying so much."

Almost.

"Nobody's even out here, mom. I'll be fine."

There.

"Jesus Christ! Shit! Fuck!" She drops the phone and rushes towards me. My blood is getting all over her shoes. I'm sorry.

"Oh god, oh god, can you tell me what happened? What's your name?"

She takes off her sweatshirt and covers the hole in me. My blood is getting everywhere. I'm so sorry.

"Can you hear me?"

Her voice comes and goes like March.

"Say something! Come on!"

In like a lion.

"Oh, god. Where's my phone?"

Out like a lamb.

“Don’t move, I’m calling 911. You stay right there, man. You stay right there with me.”

My mother had a garden. She grew all kinds of flowers in it: tulips, daffodils, tiger lilies, and she had purple and yellow irises lining all sides of the house. I always thought the purple ones smelled like grapes and the yellow ones smelled like vanilla. They filled the air with a fragrance I’d imagine being the closest thing to love. I swear, the aroma could stop wars. Cure colic. Maybe even cancer. She loved those flowers, as did I. As a child, I made crowns out of her violets, floated the magnolia blossoms down the creek and imagined that they’d reach a fair maiden in a faraway kingdom, and I’d always pick the same, lone red tulip that grew beneath the pine tree for her every Mother’s Day. On days I didn’t come right up to the door after getting off of the bus, she knew I’d had a bad day at school. She also knew that she could find me hiding in the bridal wreath bush away from everybody and everything. She’d walk up the hill to find me and she always asked me the same thing:

“Is this your happy place? Are you going to stay here for a while?” Yes, mom. I’m going to stay right here.

LINEAGE

ANNA MEER

In '97,
Grandma spent a month on the mental ward.
She broke down behind the wheel.
Two cars met in sudden squeals,
and parted to cartwheel into the trees.
Coming to rest in the hollow of two hills,
she laid her hands in her lap and said,
“I only wanted a moment to close my eyes.”

In '01,
my mother came unglued
standing over a pan of red tomato soup.
Throwing down the stirring spoon, she left,
drove the car over the hill. And I,
I ran in the sharp grass until I couldn't breathe.
But the tail lights just kept receding.



Dandelion on Fire by Kelsey Stouse

POETRY DISTINCTION

SHARDS

TAYLOR HEIDEMAN

Around 2015 Clay drunkenly calls me beautiful for the last time.

Around 1999 I fall into the D.C. Reflecting Pool.
I want to pet the ducks, but when I reach
out with my 4-year-old arms,
they fall short and I fall in.

Around 1998 my sister falls asleep in our locked attic playroom.
My father calls the fire department
and they call CPS. I am questioned with a
wrinkle-suited Child Advocate in the room.
My mother weeps in the kitchen.

Around 2014 I come out of a blackout to find myself kissing someone
I don't recognize.
I avoid his gaze in shame for a week until he drops out.

Around 2004 Matt Okerman bites my finger in Math class. My
reflexes are slow and his are fast, so I don't begin
to move my finger until I see my blood dripping on his teeth.

Around 2001 my father cries into his coffee mug as two fiery towers
fall. He is called in to help evacuate the
Naval Academy,
the mug remains half-full on the counter,
and we don't see him for two days.

Around 2009 I avoid the hospital bed in the living room as her time grows short.

Around 2006 Evan breaks my heart in 5th period history. He laughs at the carnation I sent him before throwing it away. I'd forgotten how to spell "anonymous."

Around 2012 Conner asks me to give the necklace back; his real girl friend's birthday is coming up.
I throw it out the car window.

Around 2010 I steal the red and black checkered flannel shirt from the back of my father's closet. I wear it weekly for three years.

Around 2003 I hover by the armchair in the master bedroom as her time grows short.

Around 2007 I hear "Memory" by Sugarcult for the first time in my grandfather's pickup. "Turn down that trash, I can't hear the NPR."

Around 2013 Clay drunkenly calls me beautiful for the first time.

CREATIVE NON-FICTION DISTINCTION

THE MEANING OF LOVE

RACHEL BERTRAM

Obedience was the only rule with my father. I found out, when he discovered a tampon wrapper in my backpack (which were forbidden), just how important it was.

His rough fingers clutch my throat, stealing the air my body craves. Tufts of dog hair cling to my nose. I want to sneeze. My father always said laying on the carpet is a bad thing—allergies—but today I am against it. The pattern digs into my arms, creating tiny diamond mosaics. His screams accompany spit that flies, touching my face, eyes, and hair. I pray, silently, that he will look closer and see his daughter, terrified, snot trailing down her lip like a river. His eyes penetrate mine and he lumbers up, winded. He kicks my side with his boot, like a mallet. My lungs constrict like punctured balloons, and I wonder if this is what it's like to drown. Each time is harder, and my breath becomes more and more shallow.

His hand clutches my tangled black hair when I cannot gather enough strength to stand as his other drives the faded leather belt against my shoulders. He lashes me two, three, four times. My head feels weightless. Gravity pulls down my legs and arms, weak and heavy like when you've swam for hours. Maybe he will stop fighting his rage. Maybe this will be the time he goes too far—when long sleeves and concealer won't fix me. His parents were smart—they beat him in hidden places.

Between lashes, I hear my aunt Denise in the kitchen. I long for the warmth of her terry cloth robe. The strength of each blow eventually diminishes. The vein on his forehead softens and his pupils stop racing. The next day before school, Denise covers my blue and purple arms with her old sweater. She says, "Teachers are to teach." Discipline was love.

L' ARÈNE DE NIMES

CAYLIE GUINN

Weathered stone looms,
black with the weight of age,
each crevice mortared by history.
Great oval standing docile as
the city peaks above its walls.
Here, time forgets its place.
Past and present mingle in
the nose, hands, heart.
A scent of copper lingers on the damp stone,
forgotten blood diluted by countless storms.
An ancient crowd roars through time,
cries and cheers fueling staged combat—
now just whispered memory.
The benches quake with the
crazed pounding of spectators.
Sweat and fur mingle in the air,
burning nostrils with the heady stench of
Battle. Victory. Survival.
Memories course through these stones.
Here, time loses itself.

MATERIAL OBJECTS

MEG WEST

Dan always readjusted his glasses when he felt awkward. It seemed like the right thing to do at this moment, like it was proper to push up glasses right before you tell someone bad news, as if he could physically see things a bit clearer by pushing the lenses closer to his face. Ignore the crumbling self-confidence, try to keep some color in your face. You're fine, just readjust the glasses, breathe, and say something. Don't just watch Abel go about his day like nothing's wrong, not after what you've just heard. She's gone, he needs to know. Dan swallowed hard and attempted to speak, but couldn't seem to find words. Feeling completely inadequate, Dan began to tell his story the only way he knew how.

*Glasses observed its dominion and
watched words fall onto pale lips.
How did everything become unraveled so quickly?*

Abel looked at his friend quizzically and attempted to piece together the strange note written on a napkin Dan had slid towards him. Dan seemed to be extremely distraught. He constantly adjusted his glasses so that they would sit evenly on the bridge of his nose. It wasn't like him to not tell Abel his current issues, but then again, Dan didn't exactly talk either. The man was practically mute, but incredibly observant.

Abel swallowed the bite of ham and picked up the napkin. This note didn't make any sense. I mean Dan could be rather poetic but this note hit Abel ominously. Did Dan know where Stella was? She hadn't shown up to lunch. Dan should just say something, but Abel didn't want to press him. Dan wasn't a forward man to begin with, and pressuring him to say more could cause him to say nothing. Maybe Stella was just running late. She tended to do that. Abel

wanted to go back to eating his sandwich, but he felt an unexplainable pit in his stomach. He attempted to grab another napkin, and Dan handed him a note instead, just as cryptic as the last.

*It was Pen's job to tell.
Glasses could only bear witness.*

Dan and Abel had been friends since they were six. They were next door neighbors, attended the same schools, and even dated the same girls. In middle school, Abel was the one who would sneak out at night, hop the wooden fence separating the two yards, and throw rocks at Dan's bedroom window. The two of them went on the craziest adventures. Dan always said at night you could be anyone, and Abel believed him. They would softly sneak out of their rooms on those summer evenings and run down the street, their worn-out sneakers pounding the pavement as they chased their shadows. One night they climbed to the top of the water tower and watched the cars on the interstate slowly make their way across the flat landscape. Abel had almost fallen off of the ladder on the way down, and that's all he really remembered from that night, the feeling of dangling thirty feet above the ground and reaching for Dan's outstretched hand. That was the night Dan stopped talking.

*Glasses merely observes what
Pen imagines.
Pen lies.*

As young adults, the two shared an apartment on the outskirts of the city and were virtually inseparable. Their place was a simple two bedroom apartment with an open floor plan. Dan had his office in one corner of the living room and Abel kept a studio on the opposite side near the windows. The landlord was rather lackadaisical with the rent, so the two had managed to keep the place even though they hadn't had work in weeks. They never really invested in furniture and preferred to spend the majority of their time working or outdoors. They had met Stella a few years previously while walking through the park on the way to their cubicle jobs. She was new to town and 110 pounds of blonde ignorance, but she did something Abel could not. She got Dan to laugh.

*Pen wrote what it pleased
where it so desired, and Glasses
could only visualize.*

Abel continued chewing bits of his ham sandwich and thought over what Dan had written. He was used to weird notes from him because he had been finding them all over the house over the past few weeks. Stella said he was just exploring his more poetic side, but Abel was worried. It wasn't like Dan to be disorganized. His desk usually had several files on it, color coordinated and organized by date. The notes, however, they were turning up everywhere, obscure references on the refrigerator door, citations of this journal or that written on crumpled newspaper on the kitchen counter, even an entire toilet paper roll filled with sonnets neatly folded next to the bathroom sink. Dan had been an editor for a newspaper or something, but these days he was freelancing, writing articles for whatever interested him. He had recently been published, and that check had provided enough dough to get the two of them up to date on the rent. The flurry of notes happened whenever Dan didn't have work. Inspiration could seize him in the oddest moments, but as annoying as it could be to never have a blank piece of paper in the entire house, Abel loved it.

*It was Pen's fault too, penciling in
whatever detail reality left
out in order to make life
interesting.*

Writing notes in public, this was definitely something different. Abel figured playing it out like a joke would help Dan open up, so he let out a big hearty laugh as if the notes were supposed to be a riddle that he just now understood. Dan was startled by this and dropped his glass on the table. Not a joke. Where was Stella? She could help Abel figure out this mess, because for some reason she could read Dan like an open book. She had been around the house more than usual, crashing on the couch after studying for final exams last night. Stella was a university student going for her masters and working as a secretary at Abel's old place of work. He had quit two months ago because the boss was a racist and no one believed him. Aryan Stella didn't seem to mind at all, and if she was happy, more power to her. Abel catered to his hobbies now instead of having a formal job. He was sick of cubicle work for overbearing bosses and preferred to do his own thing. After all, he could only be young once. He pulled a night shift working security at a local bank. In the day, he slept, kept track of the house, and painted landscapes for Dan's clients. It wasn't much, but it was a life, and as long as Dan was in it, Abel was happy. Looking at the man scrawling notes on the table, Abel realized he loved him. Maybe he should say it. It might cheer Dan up.

*Pen believes it all happened sequentially,
a chronological accident,
cause and effect.
Glasses' vision: blurred by
the smudged attempt
to refine sight.*

Dan didn't get why Abel hadn't figured out the notes yet. It was so obvious. With shaking hands, Dan mopped up his spilled glass with the napkins scrawled with letters. The napkins seeped with Coke and now the note was practically illegible, but that's fine. If Dan didn't understand now, he wouldn't ever comprehend their meaning. Stella wasn't coming to lunch, and she wasn't at the apartment either. She wasn't anywhere and Dan doubted she'd ever come back again. It was Abel's fault. Dan needed to tell him it was his fault, and that they would never be the same again. He looked up, breathed, but Abel interrupted him.

"Hey Dan, I've got something you should probably know." Abel was nervous. I mean it's not like he'd never said anything like this before. Surely Dan already knew.

"Yeah? Well I've got something for you too." Dan looked at Abel's sheepish grin and knew the guy was probably going to restate how great of friends they were, maybe romanticize their relationship again. Abel was a romantic in Dan's eyes, and Dan, well, he was a realist.

"I love you, man. You know that right?"

Dan wasn't fazed by this statement. He'd heard it before and wondered if Abel was out of work again. Whenever Abel lost his job, he relied on the power of friendship to see them through it all. It was pointless. Dan looked at his friend and studied the man's expression. He was twiddling with his napkin again with baited breath.

"Abel." Dan sighed. "Stella's dead."



The Lonely Island by Rachel Bertram

THE “D” WORD

JOCELYN KRULL

A separation of mind and body,
church and state.

A detachment.

A dead man's fall through the storm clouds
until you catch a thread on a lightning bolt:
the jolt that brings you back.

You put yourself at the bottom of the box
to tape others back together.
*Ignore your bleeding fingers.
Just make sure they smile.
You can wait your turn.*

You rank yourself second to dirt,
let yourself be dug up,
trodden upon,
washed out just for the flowers.
*Don't worry about me, YOU need to grow;
Bloom. Be beautiful.
I'll be down here if you need me.*

A crusader for others,
but never for yourself:

a knight who sheds his mail
when the lance comes charging forward

and it hits you.

The darkness crawls into your head—
drags you through deserts.
You bite your knees on the bathroom floor
'cause the booze can't stop the Itch.
You kick,
you scratch,
you scream,
but it's there like a goddamn phoenix.

You're neck deep,
toes scraping the riverbed.
There's a branch,
but it doesn't need the weight.
Sink to the bottom,
swallow as much as you can
to give yourself some breathing room.
You can't hold much more,
but out of sight, out of mind.

You look at yourself,
find a new blood vessel creeping,
a new wrinkle etched into your forehead
and you think:

Okay.

So you break your ankles getting out of bed,
pick out a smile from the bottom of the closet,
and paint yourself yellow;

but you know
that on a scale of red to violet,
everything is grey.

SKIP DINNER, WAKE UP THINNER

BRITTANY LOVE

Welcome to the broken, those who fade.
It's from cruel words that we are made,
and we're stuck in this hell every day.
Skin and bones, skeletons on parade—
we call ourselves the beautiful display,

we have a ring leader, Ana Marie.
She goes by Ana for short, if you can read what that means,
she runs this show—
the whole forsaken scene.
She's so cruel but she's pretty, our thinspiration's so mean.
A creation like God in our eyes, we're deceived.
She goes by Ana, our Ana Marie.

Ana doesn't need much, just some water, some air.
She's as light as a feather, our favorite nightmare.
She's not who she seems, the promise she brings.
She's a monster, a sickness, the reaper of dreams.

She burrows in heads, and hosts on the brain,
others don't understand that she makes you insane.
But God she's so pretty, so thin, that's her name.
She lets you win if you worship her fame.

It starts with just one, but will turn to a game—the more that you
lose, the more that you gain.

Now sticks and stones can break our bones,
those little folk hymns lied.
Our skin is our sin there's no way we can win.
If ribs aren't protruding out of our sides.



Reflections by Kristin Stephens

SOMETIMES, THE MOON WANTS THE SKY TO HIMSELF

MEG WEST

“You know him.
The Bringer of Light,
touches all that he sees,
helps shit grow.
The Big Kahuna, the big
guy up top, the King of All.
Yeah, him.
Yes, he really does have a golden sheen about him,
and yeah he’s rather bright.
Radiant personality. Shining disposition.
The guy really lights up the room.
You know his name, don’t make me spell it out.
Solntse,
Soleil,
Jua,
Shams,
Ghrian,
Shemesh.
Yeah, the Sun. El Sol himself.
He’s my brother.”

Sometimes, the moon wants the sky to himself.

“I know damn well what
you’re thinking. What do I

have against the Almighty
Bringer of Life Abundant?”

I tend to hear this a lot.

“All of humanity worships the Sun.
Every little spec and dot on your God
forsaken blip wants to be him, and—
that’s why you don’t get it, dear.
You live because of him. You
owe him. I don’t.”

It’s true. Sunny keeps me
alive and protects my kids from
getting too cold or burning alive. I love him. He’s warm.

“He’ll kill you eventually.
Don’t you see that? He’s just
biding his time. Why don’t you
gravitate towards me for a change?
I’ll make it worth your while.
I warn you, I’m not the Sun, and the
temperature might bend a bit, but
lean on Alqamar for a change.
Mwezi will take care of you, love.
Yareach keeps the tides at bay.”

I hate being stuck between them. El Sol
doesn’t believe me, but Luna possesses
a dark side, and I think Ghrian
caused it.

It’s only during an eclipse when
they can sort out their problems
mono y mono.
The rest of the time,
it’s just me and Gealach
listening to him
complaining about the Sun.

Sometimes, the moon wants the sky to himself.



Mars by Kristin Stephens

DELTA DAWN

TAYLOR HEIDEMAN

Hope isn't something bright. Hope is something simple. It's the feeling that rests between your shoulder blades first thing in the morning, that crackles down your spine when you reach up to stretch your sleep-laden arms. It's in the first whiff of her perfume as she gets ready for work, stooping quickly to brush her lips across yours before waltzing out the door and down the stairs. It's knowing that there are clean clothes in the closet and food in the refrigerator and an old retriever waiting by her water dish, waiting to lick her *good morning!* onto your ankle when you refill it.

It's that first burst of morning sunshine when you sneak into your baby boy's room, tiptoeing past the shadow of his airplane mobile on the floor, and peeking over the edge of the crib into the smell of Cheerios and laundry detergent and wet diaper.

It's feeling his tiny hand in yours, knowing that all you are, all you will be, belongs to him.

It's the beat between the telephone rings, and the small click of a receiver lifted.

"Hello? Oh, hey, Ma! I was planning on calling you toda--"

When it's gone, it's that cold absence you feel in the instep of your feet, at the backs of your knees, in your elbows, and in the little pockets of air and cartilage in your fingers.

"At least he didn't suffer, right?"

It's the space between hitched breaths and fast-blinking eyes and wet eyelashes and shaking. All of you, shaking. It's hearing the baby monitor buzzing to life and not knowing if you can make it up the stairs.

"Yes, of course. I'll call her. We'll be there as fast as we can. I love you, Ma."

It's the small click of a receiver set down. It's creaking your way up the stairs, the huff of air your mattress lets out as you flop down on the unmade bed.

It settles at your feet as that afternoon, that one afternoon just like all the others comes sneaking into your mind.

The grass was taller than your elbows, but it only grazed his knees when he picked you up, swinging you onto his back. You were safe. Warm. Hot, actually, with that blasted sun beaming down on your curly head and his bald head.

The smell of sweat and grass and aftershave and diesel is the smell of his labor, of his love.

He carried you back to the house, whistling "Delta Dawn" and you felt the high notes in between your ears.

You felt the itchiness of the grass and the dry salt of sweat still lingering on the back of your neck and you know that he did all of it for you. All he was, all he could have been, was yours.

It now sits on your chest, pleasantly, patiently, waiting for you to reach for it. You can feel it, almost purring, just above your heart and its warmth spreads until you're not shaking any more.

The strength you need to sit up, get up, get going lies in the sound of little breaths coming through the monitor. It nudges you, and you pick up the phone. It nuzzles you, and you tiptoe back to the nursery.

...and did I hear you say he was a-meetin' you here today to take you to his mansion in the sky?

VISUAL ART DISTINCTION



Talkeetna Mountains, Alaska by Spencer Wesche

'MERICA

RICHARD MILLER

I am an American, born to a father and mother,
I grew up in America on baseball fields and football,
I go to school in America to learn lessons on American history.
I saw in second grade standing in line leaving school the tragedy of 9/11,
I saw the bodies fly from the towers, hurling heavily to bomb
the pavement.
I went home and played COD BFBC and Fallout,
I watched movies and TV shows, I felt something from *Saving
Private Ryan*.

Then I saw it for the first time, the White House, Washington monument,
the Lincoln memorial, America.
I saw all the names engraved on the black ash marble, the 50 stars for
unnamed Americans
dying from undercover unknown operations.
I saw it all and felt it, the white flash of nationalism, the American dream,
the lilies potted
outside the front door encircling an American flag, Nationalism.
What I saw was the heart of America, what was given to me was the heart
of America, its texture was sweet and smooth, saturated with
sunshine and sunbathers. But then Snowden, a black streak of
light and pain ripped through Nationalism. America was a lie, a
bit, a scheme, a cover-up — a fugazy.
Replaced was the twenty-one-year olds of today reeking 'Merica,
Halloween parties where everyone's an Arab, a rabbi, black when white,
white when black,

where fat, falling fraternity men gawk at their first glimpse of ass,
slurring subjects on race and equality and religion and sexuality.

I am a 'Merican, born to a heterosexual father and mother,
I grew up in 'Merica on baseball fields and football while men masculate
over everyone, I went to school in 'Merica where Uncle Sam died more
than Barbarossa,
I grew up in a Catholic school where safe sex meant sex.
I saw the bodies fly from towers, neckties trailing dresses swirling,
I watched T.V. filled with pathetic political talk about making 'Merica
great again.

America turns into 'Merica, because that's what America is.
The sunbathers hide in the darkest dank halls the backsides of their
hearts, blackened burnt, seeping and singing 'Merica 'Merica 'Merica.
To 'Merica they case race captain and crack open a woman's thighs,
To 'Merica they play their Trump card,
To 'Merica they pledge.

ASSIMILATION

KRISTIN STEPHENS

Rough wood,
comforting under my hand.
Its legs beaten and scarred,
unyielding under the weight
of our meal.

Callouses on my hand catch
the lace table cloth.
Delicate plates hold the bounty.

Her hands are smooth.
Polished long nails.
Slender fingers
wrapped around her cup.

White knuckles disappear
into the china.

I reach for her hand across
no man's land.



1,000 Objects Under the Sea by Cali Wetli

41 HOURS

IAN MULLEN

A month in two places.

A month alone, a month surrounded. Each experience providing the opposite effect expected.

I spent one month all to myself in Los Angeles. I spent one month surrounded by family in New York. I felt more alone traveling east. I felt more connected traveling west. Maybe it was the stacked city. People say the sunlight distribution between New York and Los Angeles has a drastic effect on emotions. People are happier in Los Angeles due to the vast amounts of sunlight, sadder in New York as the city is covered in shadows.

Two cities. Two ideas of hope. Real hope, found in the perfect script, the part that leads to stardom, the hands concreted into the walk of fame. This hope is almost obsolete.

Small, cheap hope that is found in hot dog vendors, a Dunkin' Donuts franchise, knockoff Louis Vuitton street sellers, and mixtape rappers looking for their next 1,000 fans. Both styles allowing people to constantly be in a perpetual state of waiting.

As I drove to the LAX airport, my dad and I made small talk about his flight: when it was leaving, hopefully it won't get delayed. We talked about our Grand Canyon visit, and how a small river could make that big of a hole. I couldn't keep my hands still. I tried to focus on the traffic and the route my dad was telling me to take. I tried to picture the fun I was going to have. But I couldn't. I did not know how I was going to react when he left. I would be alone.

As I arrived in New York, I was thankful when I finally turned the car off. 13 straight hours of driving. My hands had flakes of steering wheel all over them. My car, an '03, is no longer making these long journeys. The moment I turned the ignition off, that car had officially been across the entire country. I entered my

Uncle's house and was bombarded with energy. Two small kids, Luka and Layla, excited to see me, but at the same time preoccupied with playtime. Mike still at work in the city. Tara, on the phone, waving hello as she ushered me to the basement. This is where I'd be staying. My "own" space.

I worked as an intern assistant for a small production company in Los Angeles, Lifeboat Productions. I did grunt work for a month. One would think this is grounds for detestation and boredom; however, being in Los Angeles meant something to me. Being in the film industry was a special introduction to a world I had only dreamt about.

I was a video intern for a podcast in New York. The podcast was hosted by one of my heroes, Neil deGrasse Tyson, an astrophysicist and popular science communicator. I helped shape our social message through media outlets, marketing our videos with hip, trendy graphics, and cataloging hours of videos worth millions of dollars. It's strange watching videos about the mysteries of the universe and having to summarize them in 140 characters or less. Such big ideas on such a small laptop.

The office in LifeBoat was small in the sense that no area of the space was wasted. Bullpens fitted next to editing bays, all surrounding Amy and Jaime's office that overlooked the street. Their office consisted of two desks, a couch, and a table with freshly updated magazines each week. I had yet to be in there when they were, but that day would come.

I took a risk when I first met Amy and Jaime. Taking this internship on emails alone, I had never talked to the co-founders. As they walked in one day, fresh out of their meeting with Microsoft, Amy said as she walked past, "What's your name again?" In this split second of conversation I decided to ignore my abnormal pulse, my sweaty hands, and my "don't overstep your boundaries" mindset and say (with impeccable comedic timing), "At this point it's 'I've Been Here Two Weeks You Should Know!'"

I rode the subway in early to make sure I was at the American Museum of Natural history well before Startalk's taping. It was their first taping in well over a month and I had been invited. I had just perfected an imitation of the electronic voice used to name each progressive stop along the ride. I had not, however, perfected the art of looking business casual. My boss, Jeff, had said to dress appropriately. Going off of this, I went with a button up shirt, khaki pants, and decent shoes. Along the whole subway ride, I came to the conclusion that I looked like an 8th grade boy, who had underdressed for his communion. I was excited to be leaving Michael and Tara's. Crammed in their office on my laptop for three weeks, intensely at work, creating an organized data set of all videos produced by StarTalk, as well as creating video graphics for upcoming videos had started to become flat.

I was also constantly trying to stay out of the way of their life.

A week later I found myself in Amy and Jamie's office. My risky banter had worked. I was not only accepted by them, but by doing grunt work for weeks, I had proved my actual interest and motivation to be in this industry. Running to get coffee, organizing scripts by date only to be shredded an hour later. Running to Costco, wiping the conference table and re-organizing the refrigerator. The small things prove your drive.

As I sat in their office, I soon realized that they were genuinely interested in what I was saying. Not looking at their laptops, not answering calls, not waiting for someone to interrupt...they were focused on me.

Distance makes the heart stronger. This is what I have been told. Being away from people you love for a month is hard work. I would say I had two jobs during my time in Los Angeles: being an intern and missing everyone. I missed my friends for the first time. I now know what it feels like to be 2,000 miles away from anyone who really knew me. They say video-conferencing helps mend the pain, in reality it makes it worse. Seeing the environment I was missing once a week was more heart breaking than the mileage between us. It was exhilarating because it was terrifying. What if I crash my car? What if I get mugged? A phone call away, sure, but the added backbone of a 20-minute-drive for some face-time was no longer in play. What could anyone do?

I video-chatted my friends, I called my mom almost every day, I texted my dad constantly. The time difference was the hardest. As I was leaving the office, I'd be excited to tell everyone about my day. How I just met David Spade or how they let me sit in on casting sessions. Someone needed to know how exciting or heartbreaking it was. But those people were asleep when I was buzzing with energy.

In New York, hope was everywhere. It was a commodity. People would do anything to maintain their hope. They would beat it senseless, wear it out, shave it down, turn it on its axis and make it suffer. In the end, hope did not recognize itself. It had been exploited, thrown up on a billboard — come one, come all. You don't need much to think you have a real opportunity in New York. Invest in a Gyro cart, make \$25,000 a year. Be a door-to-door salesman, sell anything you're told for a good living. Put on a mask, exploit a child's favorite super hero for a quick five dollars. It's hard to single out real opportunities. Luckily, the people I

worked for were in academia and held honesty and pureness in the highest regard. Never offering me false chances but rewarding my hard work. However, it's hard to shake the weight of the city. Although they were happy to have me, they had their own issues to attend to.

In Los Angeles, hope was nowhere. Everyone was searching for a glimmer of real, pure hope. A whole town filled with heartbreak and broken promises yet it still remained a happier place than its counterpart on the east. The difference being that I never noticed the cheap hope in Los Angeles. People may have been starving for hope but they never exploited for it. There was exploiting in the business, of course, but it was an unwritten rule that working hard for something great was the only real route available. An understanding that in order to excel, you have to do more than just work hard, you have to know what it takes. The sacrifice, the *time*. To truly make something, it has to be your life. Or else you're stuck making B-movies hoping to turn a profit.

When I first went to Central Park, I can vividly picture the disappointment that took over me. Right as I entered all I noticed were the homeless on the bench, the bird droppings on the rocks, and the overall uncleanliness of the walkways. This was supposed to be an escape. I could never understand how an escape can be shaped into a perfect rectangle, but I had hope. The golden statue man and the poor ice cream vendors, I discovered Central Park for the first and last time.

Seeing Los Angeles from the observatory high in the hills I confirmed my suspicion that the city has a certain sound to it. This sound is an eerie, quiet hum that I can only comprehend as the *sound of the mind*. Everyone settles down for the evening but their minds are still at work, thinking of the next great line, the next great scene, the next great anything. This sonic sound of the mind is addicting, inspiring, comforting, and true. It makes me feel like I am a part of something.

New York is a magical city, with corridors and pathways that lead to different worlds mere streets apart. Watching the fireworks from the East River, seeing the skyline line from the Hudson River Boat, these experiences inspire something in everyone, igniting a small flame of patriotism that says *we* built this. *We* came together and built *this*. Not under the promise of a cheap reward, but with an immaculate sense of hope that the creations we make will inspire others. Something the city is losing.

This sound of the mind cannot be found in New York. There is a different sound. *The sound of hustle*. Anyone who has been to the city knows this sound. The city earns the nickname "the city that never sleeps" but not in the romantic way.

The city never sleeps because it never can. Everyone must work. Vendors, shop owners, street performers just trying to make something from nothing, running on their cheap hope of finding something more. This sound is raw, hard, edgy, and addicting. This sound turns me into a crazed, power-hungry worker hoping to conquer the city.

I walked to Jimmy's Corner, the cheapest bar in the city, realizing that this sound exists. The street workers, the traffic cops, the businessmen working late into the night, the stage actors trying to "make it." They all listened to the same rhythm. The same beat that bumps, pushes, scrapes, and bruises its way into people's lives.

DUALITY IN A MÉGOT FRAME

CAYLIE GUINN

The city gasps with the stench
of a million people heaving
sweat and perfume.
Fury seeps through each crack in the
façades of buildings and faces.
Yet an air of romance still survives,
thriving in the delicate architecture,
stones that flourish into flowers,
sculptures that dance with seduction.
The aroma of honey-soaked
crêpes lingers in the smog.
Rose and cinnamon
penetrate the ashen air.
Quick-spoken French purrs
amid the din of crowded streets,
the growl of traffic that sinks
into the tolling bells of Notre Dame
or the velvet violin
of a street-corner musician.
This city lives, prowling lion,
dangerous and exquisite.
Cigarettes and dog shit fill the sidewalks,
already packed with flowing cattle.
But above, the sky glitters with strands of
light hung sensuously between each building.
The city quakes with the weight of life and art.
A Monet in a *mégot* frame.

COSMOS WITHIN

MARIE OSTENDORF

My soul is the cosmos
Constellations scatter across my celestial being
Stars intertwine within my dusk
Quiet nebulae collide
With roaring galaxies
My aubade consumes the black hole
Attempting to consume my luminosity
My destiny screams with incandescence
I am an astral life
Universes live inside of me

FROM MY FATHER

ANNA MEER

I married her for the green in
her eyes. She planted
hyacinths beside the door
the Sunday we moved in.
Kicking the shovel into the ground
over and over – their roots she
eased into the dirt.

Her hands cracked and bled
in the cold. That first April, I found
her crouched in the early morning
frost, searching for any tomato
plants still firm and green.
The flannel sheet had blown off
in the night, leaving shoots splayed
over the ground, dying.

The eighth baby was supposed
to be a boy – Thomas.
After she bled out into the sheets,
she lowered the bundle into the
Earth and planted an oak tree
over him.

LONELY GOD COMPLEX

ALEX KLEIMAN

An imaginary doctor enters the room,
Theoretical stethoscope clacking chimerical clipboard.
The diagnosis: grim. You don't exist.
Don't be alarmed— everybody accepts unreality eventually,
And soon you will learn to love the liberty of not-living.

You think that you think but your thoughts are mine.
First: and not intending offense: I can't trust you.
You have lied about lovers and lost assignments—
See? You claim to be concrete yet cannot convince me.
Second: again, not personal: I am wise
Because I notice that I know nothing,
And therefore only experience can enlighten me.

The doctor states the syllogism of solipsism.
He strikes you with a mallet and you say you feel pain
But you can't decide if it is a 2 or a 3.
If you don't know yourself, can you know you are real?
Science says you are sewn from sinew and borne by bones but
There is no examination, no metaphysical X-ray to explore the possibility
That you are anything more than an illustrious illusion,
A fragment of a greater fiction,
Rendered in reality by repetitive shared delusion.

Imagine: the isolation, the desolation, the devastation of an empty world.
Only I exist.

No desperate discussion can dissuade me — I cannot be a figment
Of another. I would have no meaning, no individuality! It is you, weak
Followers and fools and farcical philosophers. “God is dead” but I’m
still here.

I bring order — could you even fathom

The miasmatic mess of reality?

The hypothetical doctor presents his prognosis:

(He was top in his class at Abstract University, you know)

There’s only me, and everything else, which is also me.

APOGEE INTERVIEW

POET ANGELA NARCISO TORRES

CONDUCTED BY ANNA MEER AND KRISTIN STEPHENS

What inspired you to begin writing poetry?

Although I took to writing at a young age, I came rather late to writing poetry. I began writing poetry in earnest after my youngest son was born. With three children under the age of four, I turned to writing as a way to carve out my own space—a room of my own which had no boundaries except the ones I chose to build around it. I found that the hours of sleep deprivation, night nursing, and staying up with a fussy child were fertile hours for my imagination. I wrote many poems in my mind while rocking a baby to sleep. Those were some of the most intensely creative years of my life.

Does your family ever disagree with your writing or your choice to pursue writing?

I've been fortunate to have a family that has been very supportive of my writing in every way. I know this is not something to take for granted. It is a luxury I am grateful for every day.

What is your favorite poetic form to read? To write?

I seldom write in traditional forms, but I am very interested in reading and learning from forms that use repetition, such as the pantoum, the ghazal, and the villanelle. I love the way the element of surprise is built into these forms, i.e. the setting of the pattern and the way the poem will either thwart the reader's expectation of the pattern or fulfill it in new and exciting ways. I think all good poetry, whether in form or not, is about pattern and variation, but it is most apparent in formal poetry.

What is your favorite prompt to get you started writing?

I don't have a favorite prompt, but I sometimes like to try exercises to shake things up a bit. One book I've been looking at lately is *The Working Poet: 75 Writing Exercises and a Poetry Anthology* by Scott Minar. Most recently, I've been having fun with an exercise from that book by Terrance Hayes involving word play (anagrams) as well as an etymology poem exercise by Natasha Saje. Ultimately, whatever gets us out of the way when we are writing, and keeps us from thinking too much, can be very useful in getting the creative wheels turning. It is helpful to remember, ultimately, that poetry is a form of play, as is metaphor.

What does your revision process consist of, and do you have any tips to share for aspiring writers?

As an editor of *RHINO* I've come to realize how important it is to cut, cut, cut in revision. Adjectives and adverbs are usually the first to go, then articles unless they are absolutely necessary. On a deeper level, I look at beginnings and endings extra carefully. There's always the danger of throat-clearing in the beginning, or "summing up" too much in the end, or worse, adding a second ending to an ending. I've identified those are my main trouble spots, but this doesn't mean I have learned to avoid them. In revision, I also try to experiment with different line lengths and stanza lengths until the form feels organic to the poem.

Do you ever reach a point where it makes more sense to quit on a poem rather than try to keep wrestling with it? If so, how do you know you've reached that point?

It's a gut instinct more than anything. If I feel I am forcing the poem in any way, whether to infuse it with significance or to make the reader feel an emotion that doesn't feel genuine to me, then I back off. Sometimes I'll put a poem away for a while and return to it, and sometimes, with the help of distance, I'll find something there—a new direction that I hadn't seen before. Frost once said, "No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader." If a poem isn't taking me anywhere new, or if it isn't moving me sufficiently to keep me invested in it emotionally, then it's probably not worth pursuing.

Could you describe your first experience with the publishing industry? Was it positive or negative?

I've been fortunate to have met some very good and generous role models in publishing early on. When I started sending poems out, I met a Filipina fiction writer, Marianne Villanueva, at a writers' conference. She read some of my poems and asked me to submit to an anthology of Filipina writing she was editing. She took two of my poems, and these were some of my very first published work. The book

was published by Calyx Books, a press that publishes only women writers. Marianne organized readings for the contributors all over the SF Bay Area and I found myself surrounded by these amazingly talented and empowered Fil-Am women writers. Many of us have stayed friends. Marianne has continued to champion my work ever since, and still serves as a role model with her strong work ethic and her well-earned writing successes. With her encouragement, I was able to place my poems in several journals, get into writing conferences, and eventually pursue my MFA. I will always be grateful for her support and belief in my work even at times when my confidence in my own work flagged.

How do you balance writing, your work with *RHINO*, and your work with Woman Made Gallery?

It's a lot to juggle, but it's really all a matter of making time and space for writing. Jane Hirshfield once said something like this: "Cultivate necessary selfishness. The writing world will ask you to do many things, but it will not ask you to write a new poem. That you must do for yourself." I try to remember this quote when I am swamped with my editorial and promotional duties for *RHINO* and WMG. However, I also perform these obligations gladly, because these two organizations have nurtured me deeply as a writer and given me a rich community of fellow-writers that has fed my writing. So I'm only too glad to giveback in every way I can.

Which writers influence your work the most?

I have had many poetry "idols." When I first started writing, some of my earliest influences were Sharon Olds, Jane Hirshfield, Dorianne Laux, Robert Hass, and Li Young Lee. During my MFA years I really enjoyed learning from the work of Elizabeth Bishop, Louise Gluck, George Herbert, Yusef Komunyakaa, Larry Levis, and Donald Justice. Lately, I have been inspired by the new books of Rick Barot, Ross Gay, and Ada Limón.

Do you have any advice for aspiring writers and/or publishers?

Write what you love. Write what you know, but don't stop there—keep writing until you find out something you didn't know you knew. Write from the deepest core that makes us all human, that connects as as human beings. Look closely at the world—all the metaphors are out there for the taking.

A P O G E E

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CONTRIBUTORS

Rachel Bertram is a sophomore at Franklin College. Her career passions are in Psychology and Sociology, but she has aspirations in photography, writing, and art. She looks towards events in her life to inspire her craft, as well as issues she observes in both society and individuals. Writing helps express a part of herself that nothing else can and it has saved her in many ways.

Mary Buchinger is the author of *Arialist* (Gold Wake Press, 2015; shortlisted for the 2014 May Swenson Poetry Award, the 2014 OSU Press/The journal Wheeler Prize for Poetry and the 2014 Perugia Press Prize). Her poems have appeared in *AGNI*, *Booth Magazine*, *Caesura*, *Cortland Review*, *DIAGRAM*, *Existere* (Canada), *Fifth Wednesday*, *New Madrid*, *Nimrod International Journal of Prose and Poetry*, *Orbis* (England), *PANK*, *RUNES: A Literary Review*, *Salamander*, *SAND* (Germany), *Silk Road Review*, *Slice Magazine*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Upstairs at Duroc* (France), *Versal* (The Netherlands), and other journals; she was invited to read at the Library of Congress, and received the Daniel Varoujan Award and the Firman Houghton Award from the New England Poetry Club. Her collection, *Roomful of Sparrows*, (Finishing Line Press) was a New Women's Voices' semi-finalist. She holds a doctorate in Applied Linguistics and is Associate Professor of English and Communication Studies at MCPHS University in Boston, MA.

Abby Chew earned an MFA at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her book of poems, *Discontinued Township Roads*, is available from WordTech Communications. For many years she was a goatherd and Humanities teacher at a small Quaker school in Ohio. Currently, she teaches at Crossroads School for Arts and Sciences.

Caylie Guinn is a junior majoring in English, Creative Writing, and French. Caylie has been a member of *Apogee* for three years; this is her second time being published in the journal. She primarily writes poetry and flash fiction, as she is intrigued by the challenge of concision in these forms. After graduation, she plans to pursue a graduate degree in sexual studies, while continuing to write creatively.

Taylor Heideman is a junior studying English, Spanish, and Creative Writing. She is the Campus Ministry Intern for Franklin College, and this is the second time her work has been published in *Apogee*. After graduating, she hopes to travel Europe and eventually attend seminary.

Max Heinegg is an English teacher from Medford, MA. His work will appear this spring in *Stone Canoe, the New Independents* (inaugural issue), and *Misfit Magazine (.net)*. His journalism has appeared in *Edible Boston, The Weekly Dig, Well Done Boston*, and *The Medford Transcript*.

Alex Kleiman is a freshman from Indianapolis. He plans to major in English, with interests in Spanish and Creative Writing. A fan of fantasy, science fiction, and horror, he hopes to write his own works in those genres. He's interested in using writing as commentary and incorporating comedy with serious themes. "Lonely God Complex" began as an exercise in creating an alienating, absurd philosophical character through poetry. He'd like to thank Professor Buchen for her assistance in his editing and for encouraging him to submit to *Apogee*.

Jocelyn Krull is a sophomore at Franklin College majoring in Creative Writing and minoring in English. After she graduates, she plans on living in the dirt of a big city and writing about how beautiful it is.

Brittany Love is a Freshman at Franklin College and this is her very first year on the *Apogee* staff. She is pursuing majors in both Creative Writing and Art. Her work generally encompasses the intensity of inner conflict and the dark thirst for power from a young coming-of-age woman's eyes.

Anna Meer is a junior at Franklin College. She is majoring in English and minoring in Creative Writing and Biology. She is the Managing Editor of *Apogee*, as well as an active member of the English Honorary Society Sigma Tau Delta. Additionally, Anna is a member of the Delta Delta Delta National Fraternity. Her writing often focuses on relationships between generations, especially reflecting upon the way families interact and pass on traits.

Richard Miller is a Franklin College senior with a Creative Writing major.

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Cody Mullins is Program Chair of Humanities and Assistant Professor of English at Ivy Tech Community College and a PhD student at Ball State University. He is the 2016 *Southampton Review* Short Short Fiction Prize Winner. He lives in Noblesville, Indiana.

R.C. Neighbors is an Oklahoma expatriate who is a current Graduate Fellow and Ph.D. candidate at Texas A&M University, where Neighbors studies creative writing and the Native South. Neighbors lives near the university with his wife, four children, two dogs, several fish, and a picture of the motorcycle he used to own. When possible, he enjoys sitting alone, doing nothing and not being bothered. His work has appeared in *Tampa Review*, *Barely South Review*, *Found Poetry Review*, *Southern Poetry Anthology: Texas*, and elsewhere.

Marie Ostendorf is an aspiring photojournalist. Inspired by nature, human connection, and empathy, she hopes to help those that are in need worldwide. Poetry has been a part of her life since 4th grade, and since then it has been a major passion.

Kristin Stephens is a junior at Franklin College majoring in English and Creative Writing and minoring in Canadian Studies. She enjoys writing, reading, and running. She hopes to go into publishing after graduation.

Kelsey Stouse is a senior Theatre major and a Sociology minor. Photography has been a hobby of hers for a long time, bringing her peace to go out for a walk in the woods and take pictures. She loves capturing nature and animals. When she looks to the future, she sees photography being a hobby of hers until she can no longer hold a camera.

Meg West is a sophomore with a triple major in English, Creative Writing, and Theatre. She enjoys writing about the relationships between individuals and the conflicts that arise through miscommunication.

Spencer Wesche is a junior majoring in Biology with a focus on Conservation Biology and Ecology. She is the president of EARTH Club and is currently conducting field research at Hougham Woods Biological Field Station. She hopes to pursue a career in wildlife biology with a focus on large, north-woods mammals.

Cali Wetli attended Sayaka Ganz's winter term course "Transcending the Ordinary 1000 Objects" and was encouraged to share her work with *Apogee* by Brittany Love.

