

2015

Willamette University



2015

a Chrysalis publication



Willamette University

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JAMIE ERVIN

Prayer

He dug in the cemetery's farm
finding lemons instead of potatoes
gold instead of bones
and you, Clara,
instead.

Your skin, still breathed
ripe like lemons,
bled like lemons
sweetened in his hands
like lemonade

Clara,
he sang a song
of lament:
Marry me!
Marry me tomorrow
and tonight,
his fingers crumbled,
the tips like prunes

Clara, my wrists sour,
they burn until you marry me!

make me sweet, lay my seed
we will grow trees here!
fields of fruit,
warm from the Sun who loves it,

mouth full with burnt
tongue and lips that drip
acid, he begged
Clara
Clara
Clara!

Emma Jonas

A Minute

I follow streaks of rain down the car window, watch them disappear past the rubber edge. He said it would only be a minute, but my grandfather has been in the banker's office for the better part of an hour. My mother and I have exhausted our complaints and now we sit silent, oversteeped in impatience. Mom sends me out into the sticky Florida torrent to tell Poppa that it's time to go. The drops dot my glasses, cling to my skin like wet hair.

Poppa leans back in the air conditioned chair. In his raised eyebrows and round faded eyes, I see he has forgotten we are waiting for him in the Prius. The banker taps a metal pen on his glasstop desk. A few papers are scattered across the surface, and they are decorated with little green and pink arrows that read: SIGN HERE. Poppa holds a metal pen like the banker's. I consider asking what he is doing with his money this time. This is my granddaughter, Poppa says. Nice to meet you, I say. We're due at Prima Pasta at six. We need to leave soon, okay? Poppa raises his hands an inch, pouts at the banker, and says, Just another minute. I look at the two bald heads and wonder how I might steal the metal pens as the rain rattles on the glass walls. Okay, Poppa. I leave, teeth clenched in the humid mouth of Miami.

Mom has leaned the passenger seat all the way back. What did he say? she asks without looking. Just another minute, I say. Tepid water drips from my hair down my temples and pools at the neck of my shirt. I feel thick rain between my toes. My glasses are foggy, and there's nothing to see anyway.

Linnea Huomo

Excavation

I want to go on an excavation of your
body I want to
tender all the bones
out of you
and rebuild the skeleton
I have always loved.

I want to measure the
femurs without all the muscle
and skin and
everything that
separates us.

As a child I thought
I would be an archaeologist, I
would be covered in dirt constantly.
My dad took me to the park
every weekend just
so I could
dig.

I never found any bones
just more
earth dry and hardened
like clay.

I lied and told everyone
I found
a Tyrannosaurus Rex
but that the bones had been exported to
a far away museum and I could retire from
archaeology at the age of
nine.

Growing older, I stopped using
my hands for anything but the
clicking of the keyboard, I
tried to stop digging
but the earth doesn't ever
stop breathing and

people do.
I lied my way
through most
things but I could never
lie my way back to you.

Emily Palmgren

California Baptism

Tanned feet hurtling through the mountainous dark
Towards the radiating blue pool, we stripped
Shirts, pants, cheap earrings, strewn across the pineconed
Earth. Fingers through the chain link, we thrust
Ourselves over and penetrated the holy water.

Alex Wallace

A Nothingness of Sorts

I am Mrs. Hale.
I find a lawbreaker in
One of my own
A woman that I knew
But now has vanished
And I say nothing.

I am Claire.
I am like Mary Shelley's
Doctor of old
But I deal with plants
And not with people
And I want nothing.

I am Marlene.
I succeed in history and
In the workplace
I am the poster child
Of the modern woman
And I think nothing.

I am Petra.
I wait as my brothers
Destroy themselves
While trying to destroy others
They become monsters
And I am nothing.

The words escape me.
There is something within women
Refined over years
Defined after tears
We find our reality
Is gestures and smiles
Is muscles and looks

Is styles and alone time and hobbies and children.

The words fail me.
Words made not for me but for others
Sentences crafted not for me, but for my group
Ideas repeated for me and by me
Theories drafted not by me but about me
And when I pull words to react
My creation disappears into
Harsh words and casual eyerolls.

If Frankenstein had been a woman
Who created new life from death
Would she have done better than
The man who dug up graves?
We'd like to think she would
Because she would nurture and
Would never be harsh and cold
As men always are.

But in a roundabout way
We are told to be insentient drawings
While our colors are changed every year
To suit the trends that others create

Either we're stupid or we're goddesses
I'd like to think we're neither
I live, I breathe, I fail, I win
And I choose the colors I want
Against the same gray nothingness
That tells me I must look like this.

I am nothingness
And I am more.

Crystal LeFebvre

Speaking the Language of Fire

I once watched the birth of a stained glass dragon. It fell, a multicolored orb of pulsing glass, to a hot bed of coals with a soft sneeze of ash. In solitary incubation, the colors on the coals congealed while I watched on. Strung together by veins of silver and gold, thin wet wings unfurled from the quivering thing; a small crimson snout next, and a tail so blue it looked like a streak of sky cutting across the smoldering black rocks. I held my breath, and it breathed for me: a quiet hiss with a couple pops. That must be it, I thought, what a “tongue of flame” means. But, stretching, the newly born wyrm left the womb of the forge and crawled off over the flagstones before I even had a chance to ask.

Saran Walker

Braiding Ragnar's Hair

We struck with our swords!

My life is well-nigh o'er; sharp is the pang that the serpent gives.

Goinn the Snake nests deep in my heart...

-Krákumál

(Death Song of Ragnar Lodbrok)

Beside this winter fire, I forget
the cities he has burned, the throats he's slit
in battle. Saying nothing, now we sit
while I weave plaits across his head and wet
his face and shoulders. Near the fishing net,
his axes hang; I feel I am unfit
to look at them this moment. I submit
to brushing smooth his locks, but I've upset
the water basin. Now he stands and shouts
as I mop up the puddle. He is not
a river I can safely cross. He shakes
his head and takes his leave of me without
my finishing his braid. And then I thought,
his loose hair slipping... like a nest of snakes...

Connor McDonald

While the Sidewalk Superintendent Sees

A Square Cut in the Sidewalk and
standing
above
it

“Pretend.” She replied
“I’ll find you.”

while
down
below

The soft sounds of pure water’s sleep.

Evann Zuckerman

Googling Colorado

Something is wrong when my fingers sprout a life of their own and rush across my keyboard. I feel it in the pull from the bottom of my stomach, tugging on those strings that sprawl my nails and finger tips across the plastic letters. Once, the same fingers brushed my teeth so hard that my gums made a little yelp and I spat out metallic rusty rivers. Typed in: Your Name, Colorado. This happens once a month, sometimes the search box is Facebook, often the search spans multiple sites. This happens more than once a month. Today your father came up. He is a dentist in Arvada, Colorado. He is ugly, his picture and bio, a bio that mentions you; his lovely children. In third person, he states you all – you, his thick mustache, your volleyball captain sister and your wonderful mother with her plastic hair flip – love the outdoors, the mustache can ski and fish. I see you in the snow, gun up to your eye on a family hunting trip, killing a deer, its blood spattered on the icy ground. You hold the doe up by her head, her body falling limp in between your black boots, her gentle pink tongue poking through her teeth, her black eyes still. I imagine his vasculated hands, squeezed into glove casings, probing my hard teeth and brushing up against my tongue. His mustache peeks out from the top of his surgical face mask, the outline of dry lips showing through the thin, blue paper. When he breathes in, the masks touches his tongue; he won't stop talking. Keeps talking and talking. With every breath I see his mouth moistening the mask, the gray hairs of his hideous mustache scraping against the paper, whispering: Sorry if I tickle you. My teeth groan.

Abigail Lahnert

January 4 2014

All the photos
of people and places that no longer exist.
The glossy prints of the twin towers
that haunt the walls of pizzerias like ghosts.

Empty rooms —
the phone left on an unmade bed,
the photo of your lover
before she cut her hair short.

I quake, the sleeves of my jacket
like humming insects.
I feel how that feels —
blurred edges,
the erasure that is change.

Roads like coconut cream
and treacle tart —
I want to tread them all —
my feet banging around in my shoes.

Roads baked by the hands
of work-hardened women
with loose hair and strong cheeks.

It is not love that I am after
It is not the vinyl of dusky red diner seats
or books with thick paper printings —

I am after growth —
this, pencil graphite smudged under my eyes
this, a white fold out table littered with empty drinks
this, the spaces around hands, breathing that space in.

It is not love that I am after,

But an awareness.

The joy of the photograph's evidence,
that unquenchable thirst for "this has been"
is only ego and a holding on—
the photographs we choose to keep,
the ones we take out again and again
for no other reason than to admire
the things we remember to have been
are self portraits.
Even if we are not in them,
they are self portraits.

I am the photograph of the twin towers
haunting the pizzeria,
I no longer exist on my mother's dresser,
my lover's countertop,
my friend's computer screen--

I haunt, am haunted.
It is not love that I am after,
yet it is love that abounds.

Jamie Ervin

Their Garden

He would hide his “messes” in the forest
behind his childhood home.

By the garden, he would use the hose
to wash the blood and tufts of fur
from his hands; all winter dusting
fragments of bone into the mud.

And so, his mother wondered
What had fed the roses
so fat that year. Why
the daffodils bloomed so hungrily
and the sunflowers reached
desperately toward her womb.

The blackberries, hungry and bleeding,
craved salt from the cold.
In the dark, the moon,
weeping like nine months,
ripened in spots of bloody snow.

Until the Boar: wild. His thick hide
lost and tugging, slicing like peaches
on the secret forest’s thorn, tugged,
tugged, birthed! The earth’s
naked root; pink and fat.

Max H. Gurnard

The Edge of Our World

The first thing to know is that The Duke and I were both born at the wrong times. He was the son of a wealthy family. The wealth was said to have come from banking interests back east and the rail-men who carried it across the country to where they settled as far west as the rail empire took them. It was an empire that was dissolving, but one that still had its barons and duchesses who lived in the cities at the boarders and the crossroads. The Duke was born for the service of that kind of empire. In many ways a maverick and a romantic, he would have lead the charge further west by any means, and he had the charisma to make men follow him. It worked for me.

I, on the other hand, was a boatman's son: the oldest, the one who learned to pilot a skiff before riding with training wheels, and the one who would take over. We also had ties back, back to when the harbor was just a stop for boats going further into the sound and for trains to fuel and turn around. We used to load and unload dinghies and tugs around the bay. Now our family loaded and unloaded tourists around the bay, telling them the history of our town (and often both families). I loved the job, but it too was going out of style.

We didn't know each other, not really, until our scholarly paths crossed at St. Andrew the Apostle's Catholic Middle and High School. He introduced me to himself by calling out "that boy who captained his own boat in the harbor," and I said I knew him from the house he had at the top of Main Street – the house of the rail duke. He liked that description so much he decided to keep it. Mine as well. We rarely used names for each other. It became our pattern of conversation that "Hey, Captain," would be followed by a musing he had related to his recent foray into his mother's library. Did I suppose there was an Atlantis deep under the Mediterranean? Would I make the gamble of letting a witch read my fortune? Is

the world really an orb, or is it a very wide and thick ring that we are unaware of because no one has bothered to look under the snow covering either end?

Despite the insistence of Father Appleman (“Proof,” The Duke said of him, “that it is a bittersweet constant for all Catholic priests to have unique names they can wastefully never pass on”) that these questions were irrelevant to both our studies and any man’s sanity, The Duke asked me these questions because I was a practical and worldly young man whose opinions mattered. I liked the validation and offered an answer when I had one. If I did not I would say, “It’s one to ponder, isn’t it?” (A mannerism, like so many others, that I adopted from him.)

He and I would often leave school and head straight to my family’s dock and my skiff, the Annabelle. I was encouraged to practice whenever I could. He was encouraged to stay out with his friends as long as his homework got done. As we got older it became harder to sneak our discussions in-between lessons so we shifted them to our rides. He did more talking. That was fine. I captained.

His theories and musings would range. He could have an in-depth discussion on the traditions of the Romans and how close they related to our “more knowledgeable” thinking today. He might mull over whether there was credence to the idea that a bird could pass itself into an unborn egg and live forever. He could be very forward-thinking too, and more analytical. “I would bet,” he said once, “that if we made several interlocking and sealed parts and found the means to place them all one-against-the-other, we could just break the seals between them and have entire roads under the sea or on the moon. It has to be possible, right?”

“It’s one to ponder, isn’t it?”

Sometimes our conversations shifted more towards the realities we faced. Our plans for the future

were simple; I would stay here for my family and he would leave to test himself in one manner or another. It was always changing. On occasions when we kept close to shore and saw one or two girls from our school (who no doubt came to see The Captain and The Duke on one of their floats and catch one of our eyes, The Duke would say), I would wave and then broach the topic of them. He humored my notions, but when I would ask him, his reply (especially about the very pretty ones) would always be the same. "From this boat I see them as sirens, attempting to lull us to shore. It's the mermaids, the spirits even more free than myself, which interest me." Cold, perhaps, his opinions in these matters were not malicious. Not in the bitter way he would be if I asked if he would stay here and continue his family's work directly. He refused this idea.

It was clear to me even then that his focus would always be to the world beyond our simple town. His adventures would be beyond it as well.

One spring morning he came to my house; my father knew The Duke well enough to let him in before thinking of his family. It was the perfect day for a ride; the fog was pure white under the sun. He had on his early-spring coat, a gray and red thing that was perfect for him. I threw on a light sweater. I knew the tides were strong but likely favorable. It would be a challenge if nothing else.

We would have kept to shore – we should have kept to shore – if The Duke had been less contemplative that day. Something in his eyes should have told me his dreams of escape were even more fervent that day.

The fog had peeled off of the shore and well back to the gray-green blue.

"You know what this reminds me of?" He asked. I let him continue. "It reminds me of the old belief that the sea went on to the edge of the world. The belief that the world had an end. Not the apocalyptic kind, mind

you, but the place where our world ceased to be. It is somewhere out in that fog. What do you suppose it is like at the edge? Would we fall eternally into a void? Would we be aimless and stuck with those others who went to look? Is it the edge of the world only because that is where exploration has ceased? Does the world really end, or does it just go on without end?"

"It's one to ponder, isn't it?"

"Why ponder? Why don't we go and see the end of the world?"

"Because it is far and because we know that on the other side is China, or maybe Russia. The world is round."

"Somewhere in that fog, though, could be the place all lost souls are. Aren't you curious to cross the edges of what we know?"

I checked the fuel and the time. Neither was wasting.

"I'd like to see it," he continued, "to at least know that the sea is just the sea, and that is the end of things. It wouldn't be interesting, but we could say we saw what was at the edge of our world."

I felt like I could do worse than to humor him. When he got this metaphysical, he would pursue the idea until he came to his conclusion or another puzzle was set before him. I had neither, so we turned into the fog and away from shore. Off to see if the world had an end.

We lost the sun first, just gray above and dark below. He looked off into this void, enraptured. Tricks of the light filtering through the clouds twinkled all around us. He seemed to be tracking them. I tracked our compass and fuel. If we really were to reach the edge of things I wanted to know how to get back.

The ocean started to jostle us next. Briny undulations bothered neither of us, me by the engine and him leaning against the bow. Eventually the stirrings be-

came waves and we were lightly assaulted by sea-water. He opened his mouth to say something and one spiteful splash jumped in. He spat and laughed.

“It’s beginning to fall apart, isn’t it?”

“Do you want to turn around?” I knew his answer.

“It will take more than that.” He turned and continued laughing. “Do you hear that? We’re still coming to the end!”

The Duke’s optimism was our beacon as the sky grew darker and the sea rougher. Our boat began to lift and the spray was more consistent. I tested our boat’s ability to turn. The tide had us caught. The little tricks of light were now flashes. The Duke’s face grew sterner, defiant.

“This is the end?” He challenged creation. He stood now with his arms outstretched, his coat as frenetic as the sea. The sky grew darker. The fog swirled around us, a maelstrom of wraiths and with every boom of thunder we saw a great shadow sailing with us. The spray became rain that became hail that cannoned our hull. “If this is it we may as well turn now!”

I was about to agree with him when a monstrous wave seized up and grabbed me from my seat. I must have screamed because he turned almost instantly and grabbed ahold of my sweater. I was pushed to the side of the deck, unable to move or breathe. His fierceness was turned to me and he traded my sweater for his coat. Now in only a shirt he made sure I was tucked under the seat and set to turning our boat. It was difficult for him. He did not know much about piloting.

The next portion of the events on the sea I have always thought of as a fever dream. (An ironic name for the nightmares we have when freezing). I faded in and out but I could hear The Duke say, “It is my fault,” to a whitening cloud before us. The way it parted, it seemed a mouth moved within it. The wall of fog in our way

challenged him the way we had challenged it.

“He has to live on.”

“He has responsibilities I couldn’t imagine.”

“I would freeze in his place.”

“I would be happy to never see the edge of my world.”

“I would take a new edge, one much closer, as long as his end was farther away.”

I remember nothing more.

I woke up in the same room of the local hospital as he was in, the farthest either of us had been from our little town. He was still asleep in his bed. He looked much worse than I felt: cold and weak. His hair had gone white as a ghost. My parents fawned over me. They were relieved I was fine. They would berate me later.

When The Duke finally awoke, his parents were furious. Apparently he had piloted the skiff all the way back to my house, told the tale of how he made me go off-shore, and fell down. He had sustained me and himself in his coat until he could no longer take it. The storm was not our fault, our parents said, it was one of the worst unexpected squalls in recent memory. That did not excuse his reckless behavior, though. He was fool-hardy and arrogant and “a waste of his mind and heritage.” It continued, but our doctors made a partition of curtains to protect me from any stray condemnations. I got out of the hospital the next day. He was to be kept for more inspections.

When he was eventually allowed to return to school he came up and apologized to me by name. Between a persistent cough he admitted to being reckless and fool-hardy and some new words he learned from his parents after our misadventure. I knew every one of them was right. I knew we should have died out in that storm. I knew that by escaping his own end, he would never accept anything but his own limitations.

I told The Duke none of this.

We grew up in the town that bared so much of our history. We would still go for rides on the boat. I remained The Captain, and he, The Duke. But he never asked to go farther than we did. He graduated not with the highest honors, but enough to get him into a good school far from town. I just graduated. I knew that I was needed here with the business, and a degree could be gained by means that were practical to that need.

"I'm sure I'll be back," he told me. "You'll hold your own until then, I'm sure of that." He brushed the white hair from his brow. He coughed, and laughed. "You know this place won't change much without me here."

I do not think the Duke has changed that much either. He still dreams. He is still reckless. He just will never extend either to others. He reached the edge. His end.

Evann Zuckerman

Cat-Call, Wolf-Whistle, CAT-CALL, WOLF-WHISTLE

Today, I rolled around in God's big belly. The tossing tempest muffled the voices I heard rumble-roaring, my ear pressed against the wall of her celestial womb. Frustrated, everyone I encountered attempted to signal with their hands, their fingers and wrists contracting and writhing, eventually building to a flailing of arms, to which I could only cock my head. Walking home from school, men; in steel blue pickup trucks, in grease-stained tank tops, in small hard groups, in dingy liquor store glass, broke me – a tangerine between their tongues and the rough roofs of their mouths. Floating by on the cloudy balls of my feet I passed quickly, eyes to the heavens, gray and condescending, the caustic stench of Sudafed tugging the hem of my starched skirt. When the gray of day and the blue of night kissed at the horizon, I walked on. Out of the top floor of the new apartment building, someone left their projector pointing out the window. Carelessly they left a photo to fry, a fading woman posed on the sad moon's face. When she laughed, she sounded like my mother, and my old scrapes opened back up to bleed lightly, trickling on the glittering cement with a BANG BANG BANG.

Tori Youngbauer

Self Destruct Mode: Active

Collection

streaming from one eye into the other
where pools pour down cheeks, cower
I am fear, I grow smaller
I evaporate in breath, expelled through pipe vapor
I am steam, I am fading, nothing nothing farther
farther down and under
I am fire, flickering wick shorter
burning burning, but not brighter
I am smoking, dying ember
finally full ashes, slower
once twice, leave me yearning, devour
I am swallowing, pushing deeper
down, slowly, arms concave pieces, under
collapsing parts, I am shatter
breaking concealed dark matter
until I am no longer
 human.

Abigail Lahnert

December 24 2014

The skin of the beast
craved and fissured,
like the belly of a river
hooked and released
again and again
by crawdads and those that seek them.

How it lumbers through forests,
the trees like loose tar paper,
and scales rock faces
the texture of wrinkled hands or calloused feet.

We are all waiting for carols to be sung –
We all sit on mauved couches
and drink red, red wine
the color of bruises
painted on like eye makeup –

We all wear pink shoes
and walk on wide white stone streets
underneath a sky like pastel sea glass
and longing –

We beg the beast to notice these things
and sing our praises.
To notice these things
and touch our shoulders and knees softly,
with pride.

The beast made of guttural noise and hacked sinews
pieced together with rope or grout or mud.

The girl lit all the candles in the house
before the party began
and her fingers still smelled like smoke

when she blew them out
after the party was over.

The beast resents the way young men
heft and move furniture
and pines for women
with charcoal in their mouths
and smudges on their shirtsleeves.

Sons who steal their fathers' jackets
fathers who cut their sons' hair.

We have all done this,
we have all had this done to us.

The beast yawning when the sun is anywhere at all,
our pink shoes crimson stained
our white streets graying
and the red, red wine
humming like struck metal in our bellies.

The beast runs circles around itself--
we all watch, then mimic.
This in the hope that the beast will notice,
and remember for a moment that this is a game
and he
its keeper.

Kaitlen McPherson

Shit People Say

Honey bees,
don't bother me.
Because they pay
when they sting.

But those insects,
two legs they walk,
rarely pay,
when they talk

with tiny pricks
they stab the skin,
quick pull the stinger lest the venom get in.

Emma Jonas

Nightcap

Hardly into the night we go to the Blue Tavern where the lights are too yellow but the beer is cheap. Francine sucks down a fuzzy navel and tells me Nicholas gives great head. Great head, huh? I ask, tonguing the rim of my warm pint glass. You're sure lucky, Franky. The bartender leans east toward us, tries to make it look like an accident. His gut bulges over the counter. What? he says in my head. This is just how I wash glass.

Linnea Huomo

Peel

I woke up, peeling.
Peeling sunburnt skin off of my slanted, slightly too-big
nose.
I stumbled to the trash bin to throw the skin away,
decided it was too precious.
A piece of myself, separated!

I put it in my favorite oil-slick blue box.
I can't stop peeling now.
I peeled 45 oranges today, just to feel the sting of rind in
my eyes.
I rubbed the peels in my hair —

also precious. Those went in the box, too.
I woke up, peeling eggplant paint off the wall, fingers
bloody.
Even somnambulant pleas are peeled.
Last, I peeled all the bark off of my favorite willow tree,

The one he planted
with his back to me.

Evann Zuckerman

Beard Ornaments

What did you feel when I pressed up against you? We were in line for coffee and suddenly I wasn't breathing, like at night when my sister would snore so loud I'd have to plug her nose and she'd cough, choke and kick me and in the morning I'd have a toe sized bruise on my shin. Reaching for your hand, I realized we were in public and let it melt back into my side, the man ahead of us asking for an extra hot decaf latte and the barista rolling her eyes at the turn of her back. Instead, I pretended someone bumped me and tripped right on to you, your arm landing between my breasts rattling from a lack of oxygen. You looked down at me but you were not upset, though confused, and I thought right then, I could scream in his face, fill his beard up with my musical notes, braid in my exclamations like daisies, but my teeth snapped my tongue into darkness again. Fighting my eyelids to relax, you asked her for coffee, 2 coffees, and when she handed the white mug over it burnt my tongue, like chocolate acid....but I pretended to like it. Sitting on a hard couch, I wanted to ask your long, red beard if it liked sitting on your face all day. Did it ever wrap its fingers around your throat and squeeze when it was scared?

Gabriella Vogt

The New Safeway

she bought me a white rose from the new safeway
not to eat as the florist suggests
wait not the florist the poet!
she forgets safeway advertises their flowers:

POETRY IN BLOOM

i should have taken her to the GRAND OPENING
instead of him
she would have jumped for joy at that juice aisle

OH! what a juice aisle! indecent pornographic
that juice aisle! big shiny cans begging to be touched
she would have wanted to fuck right there

CLEAN UP IN THE JUICE AISLE

however i didn't want to fuck her then or ever
her ass looks great from a distance
i wanted to love her far away she left a white rose on my doorstep
with a postcard she bought while we were both in france
and never saw each other

STAY IN YOUR QUARTRE PLEASE

soon i will buy her a can of juice at the new safeway
something with BIG HIP LETTERS
and a lot of sugar.
i am nothing good for her
i will never own a vase to put her flowers in

Amy Snodgrass

The Pepsi Challenge

In a blind taste test in 1975, the Average American preferred the taste of Pepsi to Coke. When asked why, she could not be certain, but hypothesized that Pepsi tastes sweeter. The Average American likes sweet things, especially artificial sweetener, especially Pepsi. She likes the metallic cut of the carbonation, the way it soothes her sore throat, the way it goes down roughly. Last year, the Average American consumed 152 pounds of sugar. The Average American is trying to reduce her sugar intake, but she likes sweet things, and she doesn't think of apples as sweet.

The Average American is 36.6 years old. She went to college, doesn't have a degree, doesn't own her own home, but owns a car, a Bible, and more than one television. The Average American used to vote for American Idol. She watched it weekly, drinking Pepsi on the couch. The Average American is chronically dehydrated. She doesn't drink water much anymore. It doesn't taste like anything but her saliva. If she could, she would turn her saliva into Pepsi syrup, swallow most of it, spit some of it up, give some to strangers. The Average American has kissed 28 people and wants to kiss more.

The Average American does not like her body. One fourth of it is dieting, one sixth of it smokes, one third has credit card debt, half is divorced, one sixth doesn't have health insurance, one eighth has been raped, and all of her is so very average. She stands in front of the statistical mirror, inspecting her reflection for dividing lines across her stomach, her thighs, her neck. She cannot estimate what a percentage looks like. The Average American is 25% body fat. The Average American thinks she is overweight. She is trying to reduce her sugar intake. She drinks 45 gallons of Pepsi a year.

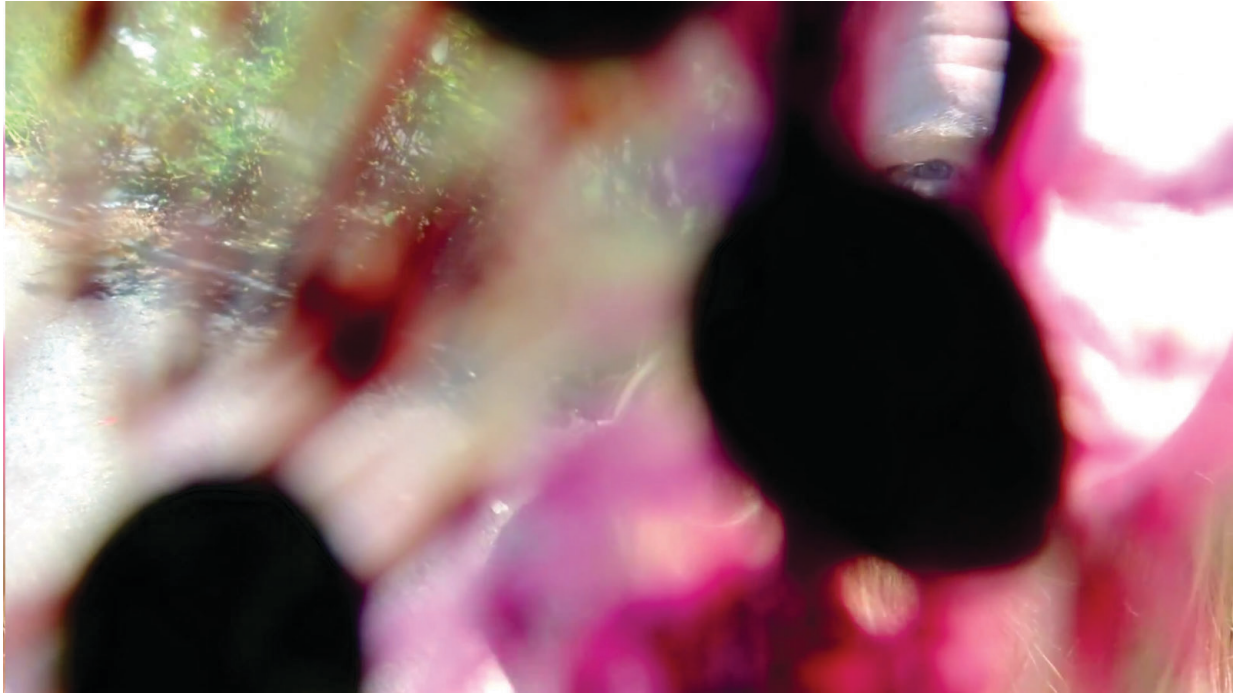
If the Average American unraveled her large intestines, they would stand at eye-level. She could wrap her small intestines around her waist six times. If she could hold her stomach, it would fit in the palm of her hand. She could pry her fingers into its opening and look inside. She could keep it in a mason jar, keep 2 liters of Pepsi in it, drink from it when she needed, but keep it – keep it on the other side of the room.



Downstairs to the Right

Hailey Arnold

Polaroid



Still from 'Lens Painting'

Katie Dobbs

Video Still



Still from 'Lens Painting'

Katie Dobbs

Video Still



Still from 'Dream Absurdity'

Rosemarie Cabalding

Video Still



Still from 'Dream Absurdity'

Rosemarie Cabalding

Video Still



Excerpts from "Smalltalk Series 2015"

Marissa Louie

Film Photography & New Media



Trypophobia

Kyley Nishimura

Masking Tape



Trypophobia

Kyley Nishimura

Masking Tape



Positano

Hailey Arnold

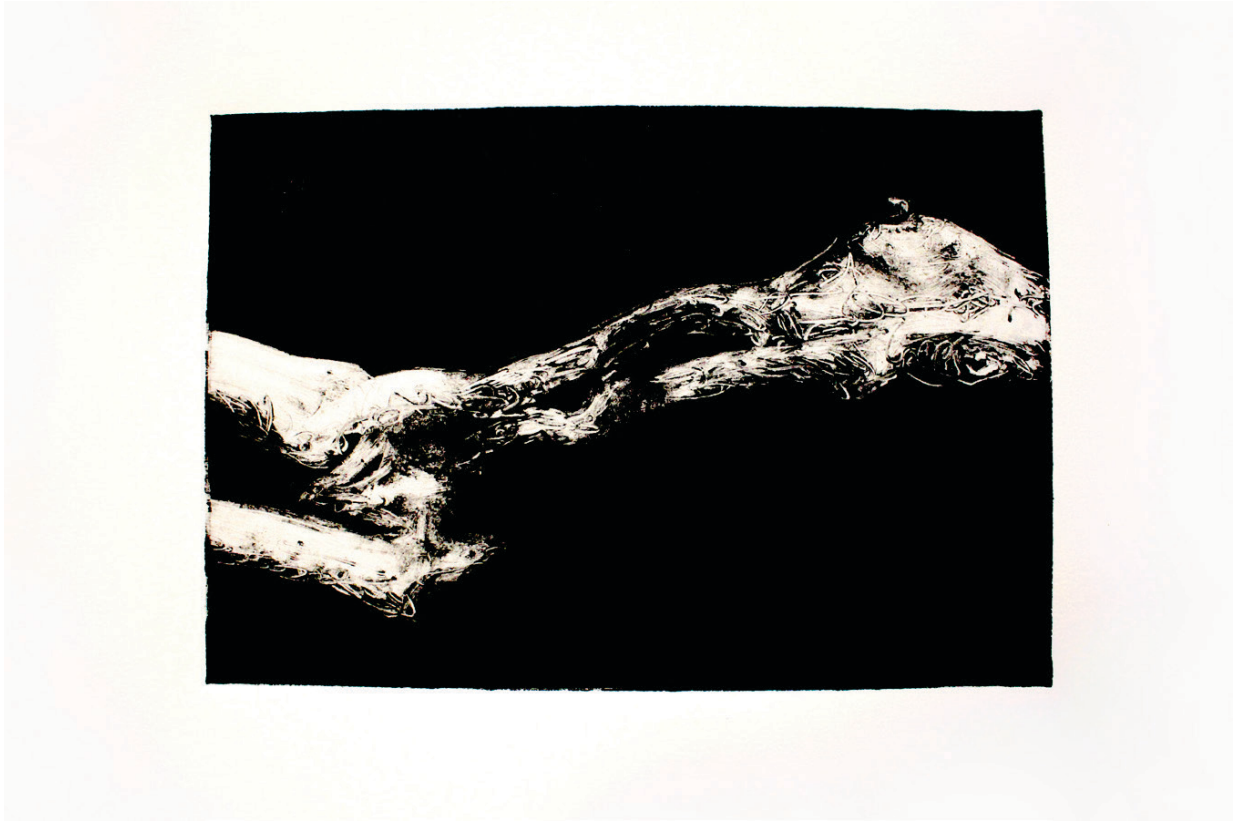
35mm Film



Garden Tools

Katlyn Murphy

Acrylic



Untitled

Brita Ness

Monoprint



Untitled

Brita Ness

Monoprint



GAME: There Are Exactly Four and a Half People in the Room Who Hate Your Guts, Try to Find Them All! {Hint: One of Them is Me!}

Marissa Louie

Watercolor & Ink



GAME: There Are Exactly Four and a Half People in the Room Who Hate Your Guts, Try to Find Them All! {Hint: One of Them is Me!}

Marissa Louie

Watercolor & Ink



Hades: Winter

Amy Snodgrass

Monoprint



Moraine Lake

Hailey Arnold

35mm Film



Flush

Brita Ness

Welded steel, wood, printed photographs,
and found object



Deerjeeling

Saran Walker

Digital Art



Banaman

Kyley Nishimura

Clay



Antigone in her Tomb

Amy Snodgrass

Monoprint



Masturbation

Kyley Nishimura

Clay

Lance Rossi

V

15 geese fly in a "V"
overhead, while I'm
here stuck in the parking lot

Linnea Huomo

Licorice

I always suspected my neighbor Lebo was sexually attracted to ducks. It was the way he kidnapped them, raised them in an empty port-a-potty, and referred to them as his lovers.

I stole away the darkest of the ducks,
the color of licorice, smaller than the rest.
Licorice lived in a habitat I built
from an educational guide about duck
satisfaction.

Licorice was never lonely, I built several wooden
ducks to keep her company.
She loved them enough to give them
breath and so they were alive, to her.

Laundry on a Sunday, I was barefoot and
singing Licorice her favorite song.
I felt a fluid swish beneath my feet, looked down to red on
black feathers. Licorice had been decapitated.

The funeral was
swift. Lebo was not invited but he came,
anyway. I wouldn't let him touch the body.
He still puts lilies on her grave.

Gabriella Vogt

Milton Hershey

My birth announcement was stamped with
the face of Milton Hershey,

born the same day, in 1857,
among dairy cows in Pennsylvania.

The milk frothing
in their udders
would inspire him to create Hershey's milk chocolate,

blemish of all candy stores.

A chocolate bar that tastes
like an orgasm you have to ask yourself
if you've had.

The last resort of my sugar cravings,
the ugliest whore
but the only one who would jump in my car.

Milton, like you I was born a sick child
to a family of Swiss sugar addicts.

Please, have mercy on your kind.
You know we loot our houses at night
for anything resembling delicious.

If you could not make your chocolate good
at least you could have made it
unbearable.

Lyra Kuhn

Ten of Pentacles

If you want your wishes granted
you must first wade into a river,
and collect the stones
born of your longing,

this heat that you cannot
stop feeling in your marionette
body: the electric wires run
through your bone scaffolding,

they pierce the marrow and
insinuate your lush flesh
cannot be satiated.

You must settle these stones
in twelve o'clock sunlight.

Then you must put them into
the pockets of your wool coat
and return to the river;

they will feel feverish until
you lie down and let the water
teach you to breathe
until you hear their small voices

tell of your Pyrrhic victory;
your heart was devoured long ago
when you decided to taste it
for yourself.

Emily Palmgren

8:00

That plastic green compact, parked on my shelf
Pregnant with four neat rows of tic-tacs, white and pink
Thumbing the casing, I ease a pill into myself.
Mouth dry, I flick on the silver sink
And scoop up, gulp cold sweet tap water
The toothpaste-spotted mirror echoing visage, I think
Of my mother... No, I will never be hotter
Than I am in this moment, fertile and young
A curved goddess, a good daughter
My cry of adulthood still forming, still unsung
We keep poppin' pills, me and my ladies
Every morning, dissolving on our tongue
Praying: No babies, no babies, no babies.

Crystal LeFebvre

Tormenta

We were driving through New Mexico, nothing but dust and a sunset in front of us. The car smelled like citrus we bought off the roadside and soft sweet smoke stuck in the sleeves of your coat. I took an orange from the bag of plastic mesh shifting like static in my hand. Breaking the skin with my nail, the sky snapped with a crack; thunder rumbled under the engine's purr. I rolled back the rind and unfurled storm clouds and wet asphalt spilling over orange dusty clay, rain that tried to wash us off the road. Hold on, you said around your cigarette, and pass me a slice. I dangled it just past your lips like a whisper. Laughing, you took it hands-free. I brushed a raindrop off your ear, flung your drowned drag out the window, and tasted ash in the orange juice.

Jamie Ervin

Communion

I imagine the disappointment of the beetle

who, still drunk from the summer sun,
stumbles into a glass of grape juice

which sits on the kitchen table,
masquerading itself as wine

Gabriella Vogt

Sunday Morning

Waiting for you to come lick my wounds
I watch strawberry juice run pink
into toast
suck on my rash
 both places.

I am the opposite of patient
a wrist rubbed raw.

Waiting for you I haunt the room,
color of nipples on high alert.
Color of unseen itches.
Color of the asshole my dog licks

 he is a metronome
 and sounds like rain.

Grace Cohen

Sappho Reading Mrs. Dalloway

Sappho sits in her favorite chair and reads Mrs. Dalloway. Sitting cross-legged, her right leg has fallen asleep, but she doesn't care. She strokes the pages and rereads the words. Yes, yes it was love. She imagines Clarissa and Sally lying in bed together, smoking cigars, talking of changing the world, not quite touching but aware of each other's bodies. She remembers sleepovers, sharing beds, and flannel pajamas with frogs on them. She imagines Sally kissing Clarissa in the garden, the burning mark left on Clarissa's mouth after it happened, and that sensation of peace and of love and of being completely alone in the world, before the spell breaking. She remembers a kiss with a girl in flannel pajamas with frogs on them, remembers whispers and curiosities before deciding to try just to try. Sappho touches her lips and thinks of the moment after the peck, that sensation of peace and of love and of being completely alone in the world, before awkward giggles and her beloved turning over whispering goodnight. She thinks of sleeping face to face rather than back to back, and is overwhelmed with a burning pain that becomes words, lyrics, poems. Her mind races. She is only able to grasp small bits and pieces of the poems being composed in her mind, she just a passive participant in the passion of creation. Sappho stretches, cracks her back, and rolls her shoulders. She walks to her computer and opens Microsoft Word. Her paper on Mrs. Dalloway is due in the morning and she hopes it won't be obvious to her professor that she's going to have to use Sparknotes. She quickly grabs a sharpie and scribbles a fragment of a poem on her desk and hopes the rest will not be lost before typing her name in the top left corner in perfect MLA format.

Crystal LeFebvre

Illusory Correlation

His is the sort of town where pick-up trucks without wheels rust away in cracked driveways and ghosts use old power plants as jungle gyms. He sits on a slope that used to be grassy and watches them, white-hot spectres arcing acrobatically through the air. There is a kindredness in things that will not leave. A half-empty sketchbook rests on his jeans, and charcoal stains his fingers under his nails. He wears matching smudges under his eyes. Sometimes he listens to the whispers from the plant until the sky turns pale and his shirt and skin through the holes grow wet with dew. Most nights he draws. Sometimes they tell him what to draw; sometimes they hold the charcoal and press his trembling hand.

Christian DeBok

Absinthe makes the heart grow fonder

Quietly, his looks tell the story.
I'm afraid when these boys leave,
but I'd rather be dead than become
just an echo of someone else.
Dusk fell as we waited, -
and I failed to help my despondent friends.

Everyone spends their summers
with beautiful twists of sky.
I didn't think it was possible
to accidentally throw together
a time of storms and drought.

Summer should be a little time, -
a promise of artistry and
cumulative splashes of color.
Something good exists under the
nagging sense of worthlessness
that southern winds bring.

Pitch-perfect and familiar,
his voice is complex counterpoint
in a labyrinth of coffee and whispers.
"We need new names," he says.

Other people will search for his ability
to make fearless, curious, hungry young men
cope with their grief and unreasonable hopes.

It is late September,
and I have come to realize
that if sorrow is deep regret
over someone loved,
then there is nothing but regret here.

On the seventh day after, I stopped at Exxon for gas.
There was a woman attendant –
the wife of a wicked god.
I thought of you, –
how my insignificance
was my saving grace.

Lyra Kuhn

Vincent, My Love

My favorite vampire boyfriend
Lives in Nevada behind a woodpile
Behind a stranger's house

Sometimes when he gets lonely
And howls at the horses,
Their eyes wide and incredulous

I take pity on him and send
To him in the mail –
A few clandestine baby teeth

Which I found in a dumpster
In an alleyway in Prague
Near a century ago

When the light was finch-yellow
And I first bled him to death.

Lance Rossi

*Things that I found in the yard of the house that has my
name on the lease.*

Dirt. Dry, bleached, starving dirt.

Weeds taller than me – feet taller.

Spiders.

Bone from birds and maybe a cat.

Leaves, dust, rocks, spoon,

bottles, memories of being hammered,
a hammer (seriously).

Garbage: bags, straws, more pieces of plates.

Mustard packet.

Maybe poisonous walnuts but Jack ate some so it's probably fine.

Shells.

The shells shed by memories of people I knew.

Realizing that some go no deeper than the topsoil.

A large vein of memories.

The first time I was here, talking to
an exchange student who pored over Morrissey.

Drunk discussions and vomit.

Sitting in sun in the couch in the kitchen.

Fire lit faces electric with listening.

Talking about things that I thought were cool.

Some of them

still are. Familiar strangers throughout.

Hannah Brown

The Borrower

After you took the chair to your table, I resented the loss. The chair's now absence resuscitated other lacks. Lack of matching furniture: lack of tables and chairs resembling each other; lack of coherence. Lack of good-humored memory: lack of fond recollections of anniversary date; love letter lack. Lack of dimples: lack of indents to store good-humored memories: lack of wanting dimples. Loose lip lack: lack of sufficient explanations; wedding ring lack.

Tori Youngbauer

You, Me, Universe

I.

I throw my hand
out into the void
to touch you.

You wished once to
jump through dimensions
just to kiss me.
Little did you know I

cut holes into the universe.
Rolling the fabric over,
gutting threads through the middle
and unraveling Earth.

Did you know I was afraid of you?
You howled in darkness and
weaved through my insides until they
shattered the sleep away.

I don't think you knew me,
and in the void I waited
until I woke up.

II.

Sweeping infinities under the rug,
I find no solace in the concept of time.

You are there and
I scatter out, listlessly following
the pathway of lonely planets,
I, alone, cyclical.

In the day I dream too much,
I tear up pieces of space.

You hold your breath,
I am there at the beginning
of the universe. You, wordsmith, are
here, motionlessly, fragile.

III.

Can you describe it?
The resounding noise of

universe undone?

You and I are illumination of the
most cosmic rarity and are

too ferocious to touch.

I would keep you to death.
Holding secret my salvation

if He, She, It exists.

My thoughts are smooth edges of
marble rockets, too heavy to fly but

my God, aren't they fucking beautiful?

Emma Jonas

Afterward

It was halfway through December and polyester cobwebs still clung soggily to the awning.

Inside she knitted, curled into the chair like the pit of a half-eaten peach. The sweater was lopsided, and too big anyway. The torso had to be seven, eight feet long by now. She watched the tips of the needles kiss and pull, kiss and pull, like a tiny globe spinning furiously. She spat breath short and quick, like the click-click of the needles' kiss.

Outside he dug, back bent like the crook of a hatchet. He'd burrowed further than he needed. The hole had to be seven, eight feet deep by now. He watched the shovel's blade pierce the earth, shrill and frigid, as if trying to uproot something living from the salt dirt. He growled low and gasped as he slung, shoved and pried, like the gulp of the gaping mouth of earth around him.

Abigail Lanhert

December 20 2014

I told my mother
that I was in love with a boy
from Venice
and she laughed at me.

I asked her then
had she not, too, loved an island man?
Overripe kiwis breaking
across his palms
making his hands sweet and sticky –
but I suppose she never saw him like that.

I have not seen my Venice boy with
the water wrapped around his ankles
rising
rising
warping the contours of his feet
below the surface.

I have not seen him
in the land that grows before your eyes
all fronds
curved like falcon feathers
or the fringe of your lover's younger sister.

Fronds wide like cheek space
or the circle of light
cast by orange streetlamps

Fronds green
more authentically than money
or envy
of the cover of a field guide.

I hear there they weave flowers

that drip with honeysuckle syrup
into chains
and you grow delirious when you wear them
whether you want to be
under the heavy velvet curtains or not.

The boy is not from Venice
nor the island that grows before your eyes —
and love is a tricky word
especially when
English begins to sound foreign
for no other reason
than my disconnect from the pulse of anything —
of language
of passion
of making and unmaking —

She laughed and I felt faraway —
my mother's hands
no longer open like lily pads.

He laughed and I felt faraway —
my lover's hands
climbing up my body like ivy
that grows brown and fragile in the wintertime.

It grows even when
I am not sleeping in the sunlight
or shadow of the mountains.
It grows even when
I pour all the water
into clear plastic cups
and put them in a line
on the marble countertop
to drink one after another —

That is not love;

drinking the water
that cleanses the hands of the beloved —
the belabored.

Overwrought affection
worked over so many times
both the craftsman and the craft
grow weary with it.
The authenticity of its beauty compromised.

My landlocked mother
with eyes like the sea —
her arms wrapped to the elbow with seaman's rope
so coarse and thick
like camel teeth and horse hair,
that she does not know how to tie it into knots.

I moved closer to the ocean
without thinking of it —
the first wave not the same as the second,
the first wave
speaking false for the whole sea —
we believe it anyway,
for we have seen it,
and what we see is truth.

The boy from Venice
has a gentle heart
and quiet hands.
I do not love him.

He does up all the buttons of my jacket
and it means nothing
he plays saltwater piano
and it means nothing —

What you want —

what I want —
muddled like pond water
the silt all kicked up at the bottom
by small fish and wide-bellied frogs.

The fish near-clear
and ghostlike,
haunting our wants
with hollowed out eyes
like saucers of milk.
The contradictions within me like milk.

And the frogs skip
from desire to desire
looking at each one quickly and understanding none.

Habit making space for surprise.
The space within the Grand Canyon
more miraculous than the canyon walls,

We talk our heads off
about tables and chairs and those who work at them,
but what about the places they didn't go?
The conversations unspoken and unheard?

He woke up laughing this morning,
my lover,
with his pink seashell ears
his ache like milk mixing into black tea.
I was not there,
but I felt closer.

The disconnect from the pulse
extending to my own lifebeat —
I don't ask about it.

The snow clings to the slats of the wooden porch,

all chipping red paint
and knocked over potted plants.
I once sat there when the sunshine on the lawn
became too much.

I once sat there and wrote a list of
all the rare birds in North America,
which is a short list.

My lover was on it,
and only I understand why.

Hannah Brown

For the Moon that Night

Mourning breath breathing heavy breaks
execution air. We grieve for July's moon
that guided his body over yours.
Memorandum burial; we gather to watch an eclipse
forced by human hand,
a public hanging in the local county seat.
He makes no confession. The drop falls quick.
The silvery crescent wanes
to black, and spectators rush to tear
souvenirs from the moonbeam corpse.
Lunar maria slides into pockets, but
even in death the luminescence glares
through its newfound fabric walls –
a visible whisper that he still runs free.

