

Chrysalis



CHRYSalIS

2013

Willamette
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Chrysalis

Willamette University
2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chrysalis

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CHRIS KETCHUM

Éver

Papá, what makes your eyes blue
and your hair gold like a coin?
Pick me up in one pale arm.
Hold me close to the sky,
where they don't wear shoes
either. But if they did,
they'd cover my toes like yours.
See Jesús? He's ten. Sometimes
he kicks the ball so hard
it flies over the tall fence.
Get it for us, Papá. You can
go out to the street, bring some
peach nectar with cinnamon
or syrup and tamarind, but please
remember the ball.

EMMA REAGAN

Smoke

I wanted to be bulimic
so I took up smoking
see, I couldn't do it
couldn't bring my finger far enough
back in my throat
I would
freeze
up
my ambition was
thwarted by lack of
digit extension
so I took up smoking
I would smoke until
my stomach, ripe with smoke
would grow
would purge
would expand and constrict
spitting out smoke
it was like a friend long distance
who said they couldn't stay
because the kids would be coming
home and
Steve was gone too
so I took up smoking
and let them leave

I wanted to be anorexic
so I took up smoking
see, I couldn't do it

I couldn't look at a peach
and feel
indifferent
imagining the permeability of
the soft membrane and how
easily it could
open
for me
so I took up smoking
menthol satisfied
I ate mint smoke for breakfast
feeling the impermeability
of the hard filter
and it kept my hands full
too full
for pregnant fruit
so I took up smoking
my mouth became stagnant
closing nothing left
nothing
was permeable
so I took up smoking
and I became all eyes

I wanted her to die
so I took up smoking
with an inhale I felt
the female particles escape
inhabit the air space
above my temporal lobe
two three fourfive
slowly the lining would
dissipate

so I took up smoking
and I purged
and was full
and from my lungs
spilled blood.

ASTRA LINCOLN

On gray mornings and takeoffs over the ocean

Like finishing the most harrowing book you've ever read the day before you'll forget how to read forever—I want to close the cover and shake the words out from under my skin; I want to never read if I can't read you. The book is over; it's been written, I said. Nothing's over if you've done it once, you said.

I held myself immensely open to the weight of all the worlds that there would never be time for. There are no pictures to brake through, no frames, no life gushing out in one fast flow as if from a wound, and there is no you to hold against the stream of all things: there are eight months of space and two tragic kids too proud to believe in abstractions, too stubborn to live for the future.

This is the best of all possible worlds, you told me. This is the end, you told me. This is sadder than the cabin in my dream last night that burnt down, and it was full to the brim with pine nuts.

Everything will be the same because we have changed, we have tried, we have cried when we came at the same time in the unmade bed in our neighbors' apartment we broke into after they moved out because their heat worked and we weren't paying the bills and it was December and we had no utilities left on.

This is where we left off.

TILL GWINN

[Savage coffee cup]

Savage coffee cup,
brimming with mad foam that drips between the lips of a
 caffeinated
satirist—
give to me a thoughtlet, a drip
of inspiration squeezed from the bosom of 3am.
The Manet behind the clock is watching me and
my eyes tick, waiting to
roll over in exhaustion on the
7th day.

SARAN WALKER

Pyotr Ilyich

Whenever I fret over
the insignificance of my work,
I am comforted by the thought
that once, a young Pyotr Ilyich
must have bent over his desk,
gazing out a frost-cracked window
at the St. Petersburg skyline,
and cursing his unrecognized genius.
He couldn't predict his own success,
bearing doubts and insecurities
like so many watch charms
on the chain across his waistcoat.
Always bracing for critical hands to tug him
back down to earth every time his ambition
flew him above the slush-coated streets,
he modestly insisted
that his *1812 Overture*
would be quickly forgotten.
But I've adopted it
as an anthem.

Lamenting the scanty splay of jobs
afforded by my English degree,
I remind myself that a 25-year-old Pyotr Ilyich
faced virtueless resignation
to either teaching or orchestra work
if failure as a composer
struck him from the sky
and back onto unforgivingly solid ground.

Infatuated with Rossini and Mozart
while the rest of Russia
clamped their hands over their ears
to block out the Western chords
slithering into their music like muddied rivers
he sadly watched himself slip from
the all-powerful grip of the Mighty Handful.
I wish he could tell me
how to love my ideas
when no one else does,
how to hold them dry above the waterline
even while I sink and sputter under waves of criticism.
I don't know how he did it.
Without the support of mother or motherland,
he marched across the sunlit cobblestones
of Theatre Square,
determined to see out
his precarious dream.

As I pour my heart into my writing,
I listen for the same fears and frustrations
in Pyotr Ilyich's compositions
but find myself staring into
an impenetrable mask.
I've heard music theorists
call his work impersonal
although I can't tell the difference.
Where I see a release,
he found an escape.
Swelling waltzes that bring to mind
Anastasias with their Prince Alexeis
whirling across glittering ballrooms
were likely written under consignment

in the dark quarters of a lonely bachelor
dreaming of a life he could never have.
Someplace far from the reality
of three grudging years spent
in civil service,
barely financing a music education.
Of furtive glances shared with nameless men
in charcoal-colored bar rooms,
a stranger's warm vodka-soaked breath
against Pyotr Ilyich's ear.
Of the regret looming in letters to his brother
that sent him barreling into a marriage
and out again in two months.
Of nomadic years spent crisscrossing
the continent, waiting to be halted by
icy exile in Siberia,
or cholera
and suddenly, the tribulations
of my liberal arts education
seem significantly less daunting.

“Less daunting” is still terrifying.
I tell myself,
if Pyotr Ilyich's first Piano Concerto
initially met rejection on all fronts
in spite of its brilliance,
then there is no hope for my success.
I lack either his talent
or the endurance that kept him
afloat from obscurity to worldwide renown.
In private audience with Tsar Alexander III
where clouds whisked past
the palace windows like birds

his hands must have quivered in his lap
as he wondered how the hell
he'd been invited to tea at the Grand Kremlin
when just years ago, it seemed,
he could barely afford bread.

I consider this while buying bread at the supermarket.
“It’s a start,” I tell myself.

REINALDO AYALA

One of Many

1) I walk into the Valley Of The Dead.
(Take a step)
The smell of deferred dreams makes my nostrils shrivel.
(I still walk)
My mother refused to support my journey.
(Father failed before me)
The thought of reaching cloud nine gives me the will.
(Thirst. I will succeed)
The halo of death casts its shadow above my head.
(The heat—¡CON GANAS!)
The horizon does have an end!
I'll SUPPORT you *Ama*!
I MADE it *Apa*!
I BEAT you *Muerte*!
Freedom!
 ¡*Libertad*!
 Hope!
 ¡*Ayuda*!
(Who's that?)
click,
 POW!
...
2) *Camino en el Valle De Muerte.*
3) "..."
4) "..."
Etc.

AMY SNODGRASS

Sender Undisclosed

My empty apartment is full of plants.
I grow peas in plastic cups
on refrigerator shelves.
In the medicine cabinet: mung beans.
Window sills of mint leaves and philodendron.

My floor is hidden under soil, sprouting
ferns and geraniums. No one visits,
so no one tells me to stop.

The left side of my bed—
where a man would sleep—
is overtaken by peace lilies.
Some nights, I think
their long, dark leaves
are fingers. Some mornings
I find dirt under my toenails,
across my stomach, between my teeth.

I water twice a day.
They rotate toward the light.
I think they fill the space with more oxygen
and I can't inhale it all.

Sometimes I court claustrophobia.
I stand in the post office line to be near bodies.
Memorize strangers' names, voices, and zip codes.
I write dirty letters to people I have not met:

“Francesca Woodman,
P.O. Box 97035:

I want to hunt you like a wild boar,
spin you in circles, pinch your skin,
wrap you in ribbons, cover you
with dust and wallpaper.

I want to hang you upside down
from my ceiling. I want to fold
you like a flower into the pages
of old dictionaries.

I am tired of breathing oxygen.
I want to grow you in my lungs.”

I don't leave a return address.

EMMA REAGAN

a name

the cave light only showed the warmth
of the hearth, him, christened upon the
sandstone palate
obsidian nipples twinning the stalactites
inches above
holding a mirror to stone
illuminating the tight body
Dionysus chuckled to himself

EMMA JONAS

Thought, Quickly Exited

Jacob lived in his childhood room in his parents' house. The room was green. The house was beige. Beige was a very popular color for suburban houses in that time; most of the houses on Jacob's block were also beige. Sometimes when tripping his drunken way home, Jacob found himself turning into the wrong pathway to the wrong door, but had yet to actually enter the wrong house. He was glad every time he caught himself, and he thanked God.

Jacob was a fan of God. God had given Jacob many things: a summery nuclear family childhood, a long-living dog, tolerant parents, a job at the hardware store. Jacob liked to thank God for all of the changes in his life's direction.

On this day, for instance, he did not have work at the hardware store like he usually did. The hardware store was called "Mike's Hardware Store." The owner of the hardware store was named Israel. No Mikes worked there. Jacob thanked God, not Israel, for his day off.

Instead of waking up at 7:30 to clock in at Mike's, Jacob slept in until 11:22 a.m. When he awoke and looked at the clock, he noted that 22 is 11 multiplied by two and thought that it was a very odd coincidence that he should wake up precisely at this mathematical hour. It wasn't odd, though, because Jacob may as well have woken up at any minute and deduced any sort of relationship between the numbers of hours and minutes on his digital clock—this one just happened to be quite obvious. Jacob smiled at God and sat up in his small childhood bed.

Jacob prepared himself for the day and went to the kitchen. He stepped onto his parents' porch, where his mother sat in a lawn chair, even though the lawn was not on the porch.

"Good morning," said his mother.

"Good morning, Mom," said Jacob.

Jacob's mother was reading a newspaper. The paper was called

Mountain Times, because Jacob's parents lived in Mountain Cross, California. Jacob could see the front page from where he stood. The headline, which took up about a quarter of the top half of the front page, read:

**MADSEN, REESE, AND CALLOWAY TO SHOOT
NEXT BIG HIT AT LAKE CAROLINE**

Lake Caroline was about a mile from Jacob's parents' house.

"Did you hear about that movie thing?" asked Jacob's mother.

"I've just seen it on the front page," said Jacob. "I wonder if they'll like our little town."

"They" were Ben Madsen, Michelle Reese, and Mindy Calloway, the three biggest celebrities Jacob had heard of. He wondered if he would see any limousines in his neighborhood.

"They're going to shoot a period piece," said Jacob's mother. She said this phrase, "period piece," with satisfaction, as if it tasted like almond roca, as if she had invented the period piece. She did not specify in which period the piece would be set.

"That'll be nice," said Jacob, looking out at the street. It was Saturday and there were few people around. The beige houses melted together after Jacob had stared at them for a long time.

That day Jacob did not think much about anything in particular. He had several projects he'd been working on, including the moped in the garage and his father's trellis in the back yard. He spent much of the day furthering his progress on these tasks. At one point he wondered what he would do when these and his other projects were finished, but the thought quickly exited his head as he drilled another piece of lattice to the trellis skeleton.

That night, Jacob's friend Marcus called him. Marcus asked Jacob if he wanted to bike down to Goody's. Goody's was really called "Goody Mama's Taverna." The owner's name was Jackie Leeds, but she really did go by Goody Mama. Goody Mama didn't know that "taverna" is actually the word for a small Greek restaurant, and neither did Jacob

or Marcus, or many of the other frequent patrons of Goody's. Goody Mama just thought "tavern" sounded nicer with an "a" on the end.

Jacob met Marcus, who was smoking a cigarette, in front of Goody's at about 9:00.

"What's up?" Marcus said.

Jacob was unsure whether this was a question or a greeting, so he guessed: "Hey."

Jacob had not seen Marcus for several months. Marcus had gone to Europe - Jacob wasn't sure where, exactly - to expand his horizons. That's what Marcus had told Jacob before he left, and he repeated that phrase now, sitting at the bar.

"It was amazing, man. I really expanded my horizons," said Marcus as he looked into his beer. He was looking so intently into that beer that Jacob imagined there was a tiny film playing in it, showing Marcus his horizons expanding in slow motion.

"What did you do?" Jacob said.

"All kinds of shit, man. It's like a different world over there," answered Marcus.

Without more specific information Jacob could not imagine exactly what kind of world it was over there. He had assumed it was pretty similar to the world over here, considering they were on the same planet and spoke similar languages.

"The women there are incredible. There are ten beautiful women there for each one here, I swear. And they're pretty wild," said Marcus, smiling with one eyebrow up. He nodded a secret code that Jacob did not understand.

Jacob finished his beer and waved at the bartender, who happened on this night to be Goody Mama herself.

"What can I getcha, sweets?" said Goody Mama, leaning over the counter and pushing her breasts together. Jacob looked at her forehead and asked for another beer.

"You got it, love. Anything for you, hon? A refill?" she asked Marcus, who had just finished his beer as well.

"No, how about some shots? To celebrate my return and the beau-

tiful world of Europe!” Marcus had one on the empty glass and the other hand in the air waving around. “Shots!” he yelled. “Join us!” he said to Goody Mama’s breasts. Smiling, she winked at Marcus and turned away.

Goody Mama returned with three shot glasses and a bottle of tequila. She poured out three shots, spilling on the counter carelessly. Jacob wondered how much alcohol was lost in a week due to careless spillages. A look of worry flashed over his face as he realized that it was probably a costly amount. “Good God,” he thought.

Marcus shoved a shot glass into his hand and Jacob instinctively raised it.

“Chin chin!” said Marcus. Jacob did not know what that meant, except that he should drink now. They all tossed back the tiny glasses.

AUBREY KENDALL

I Think All My Synapses Have Missed Connections

Picking up trash - w4m - 19

Always nice to see a guy who cares about litter. You're cute too;) I was wearing a jean jacket. If you remember say hello!

Been seein' you a lot - w4m - 19

Can't keep my eyes off you. Where is it you go at 7 on Thursdays?

I like Bran Flakes too!!! - w4m - 19

I've got a box 4 you and one for me in my room waiting!!!!!!

The mail center - w4m - 19

That letter was from me. Was the portrait of u in my blood too much? Can b in lipstick next time

You+Me+Bran Flakes=4ever? - w4m - 19

I can let it slide that you chose whole milk over soy milk, cuz you did

Real good on that test---found it in trash, A-!!!!

U work SO HARD

WE can CELEBRATE in my BED

Bathroom - w4m - 19

Install next 2 u now.....

JAMIE ERVIN

Grub.

Let me scrub the crust from my eyes,
teen lust as it dies, home for worms;
good God, home hurts.
And I didn't tell you a thing,
but you ran wild to sing,
naked and barefoot wails,
sent me your toes in the mail,
and how you knew my secrets,
I can never tell. But,
you knew me so well
when you had me.
Like fucking flying,
they say birth is like dying,
and when you expel me from your chest
I am a smoke ring.
I am dust. You must, trust,
we are all dust,
but this is electric living.
Good god, get out of me.
Hail Mary, goddess of
the hungry and sexless,
of gum spots on sidewalks and
bone and marrow and I.
I am slanted eyes,
and the feeling of running
the thumb's fleshy pad against your mouth,
sharp teeth.
I am animal instinct
and the rancid smell that claws

its way up, into, inside of you.
Putrid yellow like ebola eyes.
and Mexican mixed drinks.
Eat the worm,
it gets you drunk quickest.
Eyes, (do they have eyes?)
and brown mouths doused in alcohol,
segmentation, useless and edible.
The word copious comes to mind.
Eat a nest of them.
I triple dog dare you.

JACOB MEZA

Spoils on my Tongue

My sour, fermented tongue:
I prayed it'd flush with water.
My mother made me drink vinegar,
my father, his driest Gin,
but it seemed to be useless;
my tongue was a desired host.

Weeks passed, my words were
nothing but gargles with a taste
of grain. The aroma left my
company drunk; burns
fizzled on estuary walls. My
smoldering, acid tongue
reptilian.

I spat on a doctor's eyeglass.
It bubbled his skin, sculpting the
nasal cavity. He cried out,
near death. They hunted me.

I know my words;
these don't follow my 4/3
speech pattern,
for while I
sleep I hear slimy
whispers and seedlings
forging childhoods in my throat.

LAUREN VERMILION

Tears Create Rainbows

Tears create rainbows
In the corners of our eyes
So even when we cry
The beauty becomes faces dry again
As the lifeforce runs down our faces
The waterfall
Forces out the negativity
Hidden in the innocence of water
The cause of the pain
Emptied from the source
All things need the rain to survive
Us no different
Yet ours fall from eyelashes
Instead of clouds

SEAN DART

[I want to write a letter to my therapist that says]

I want to write a letter to my therapist that says
I saw you outside your office in the school parking lot
And the sun was hot, you put
Your hand up, you shook the ground up with your thick steps.
Did you really think your folder with your files stood a chance
against
That hot, hot sun beating down on your beard?
“Oh I barely recognized you,” said your mouth
Behind your moustache and
Beneath your sunglasses.
But that sun just kept beating down and how
Hot it was you could barely stand
So you clicked your keys and your car beeped and my hands
Were sweating.
Therapist, I want to get juice with you and I don’t care what it
means!
Do you remember how you listen so well I appreciate it so much,
let me
Tell you everything but not only tell you, I want your sweat
To glisten to
Tell me things too, is it hard to always listen?
I know you’re getting paid, but Karl Marx says
Having a job
Is alienating your head from your self.
Do you feel alienated?
Are you kidding me, you’re flawless. You
Listen and remove yourself, you
Have so many books on your shelf you could start a library and I
bet if you did you’d
Wear those thick rimmed glasses and oh my gosh how they’d frame

your
Cheekbones.

If there were a museum for cheekbones yours would be framed,
Therapist. I understand how you were in a rush, though, I'm not
mad.

But I wanted to tell you something, actually,
It's funny you'll like this, I write this in my journal you told me
that's healthy!

Therapist, last night I washed my hands after using the toilet and
saw in the mirror—

I looked down at my shorts which were soaked

In my semen,

Because I had used them to clean up

My bellybutton from last night. Is this appropriate,

Therapist? Because I thought it was funny and you told me

Loneliness is a symptom and coping mechanisms

Can be useful but must be healthy, so

Is wearing semen soaked shorts healthy because it made me laugh

At first but then made me very

Very sad, and I wanted to first ask

Do you think it's sad or is it important to laugh

At me? Because I bet your job is boring and I don't want to be that
patient

Where I do things and you say it's okay because I am exploring.

Therapist, I am exploring the world of semen shorts and I have to
say I hope

You don't think

Oh, he's calling again, he

Checked the urgent box again I

Am starting to not believe how urgent

Can it be, the kid just put on some stained shorts,

But, haven't we all?



EILEEN CHAVEZ

Video Still from "Orientaut"

Video Still



ANDREW LONG

Impressions of a Portrait

Monoprint



LAUREN COONEY

Women's Work

Monoprint



HAILEY ARNOLD

Kallan

B & W Gelatin Silver Print



TORI YOUNGBAUER

We Shall Not Sleep, Though Poppies Grow

Abstract Watercolor



KIANA DIAZ

[untitled]

Acrylic & Watercolor



STEPHEN YAMADA

Wayfarer

Digital Photography



ANDREW LONG

Entangle

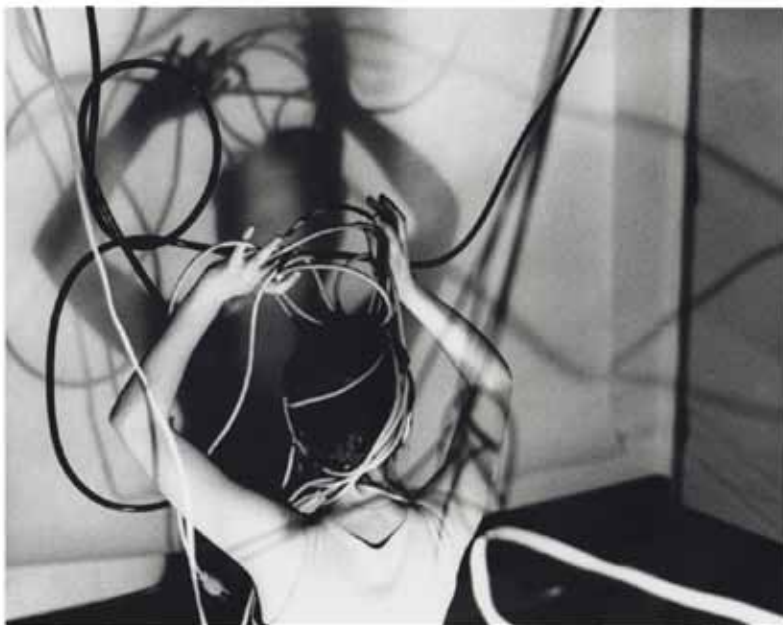
Woodblock Print



CATHI RICKETT

Self Portrait

India Ink on Notebook Paper



EILEEN CHAVEZ

Tangled

Photography



KIANA DIAZ

Distant Galaxies

Acrylic



ASTRA LINCOLN

*The border control office, as seen from the
backseat of a border patrol car en route to the
Canadian detention center*

Photography



AMY SNODGRASS & SARAN WALKER

Arches

Digital Photography



EMMA JONAS

Mama Mia!

Oil on Canvas Panel



ALYSSA KIRSTEIN

The After Lyre

Mixed Media



DALLAS FREDERICK

Pothead 1

Ceramic



EILEEN CHAVEZ
Sun Experiment
Photography



HAILEY ARNOLD

Dinah

B & W Gelatin Silver Print



BRITA NESS

Dingle Snicker

Watercolor & Pen



EMMA JONAS

Fun Fact

Oil & Acrylic on Fiberboard



BRITA NESS

[untitled]

Pastels



ANDREW LONG

Packaging, or 300 Ceramic Condoms

Ceramic



MICHAEL LUKAS

Flight

35mm B & W Photography



SARAN WALKER

Spaghetti

Acrylic



MICHAEL LUKAS

Bid Practice

35mm B & W Photography



JULIE DOSTER

Bubbles 2

Gouache & Pen(cil)



HANNAH ELDER

[untitled]

Photography



HAILEY ARNOLD

Pacific City

B & W Gelatin Silver Print



STEPHEN YAMADA

2

Digital Photography



DALLAS FREDERICK

Pothead 2

Ceramic



KIANA DIAZ

[untitled]

Acrylic & Watercolor



JULIE DOSTER

Bright Eyes 2

Gouache & Pen(cil)



MICHAEL LUKAS

Sunburst

Digital Photography



AMY SNODGRASS

Underwatering

Collage

LAURA MILLER

my, my, why

i watch you don a wig of copper
to distract the sober
from your bloodshot ego.

cross-dressed as an outpatient
you take everything for granted,
riding the highs on a cloud of smoky kisses
and the lows down deeper than
the silky cavities on your wrists.

on the weekends
you drop acid into your dwindling pool of comrades,
confused when it bubbles over
and evaporates.

CRYSTAL LEFEBVRE

Faerie Time

*“The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:
Lovers, to bed; ‘tis almost fairy time.”*

—A Midsummer Night’s Dream, 5.1.380-381

*Dong...dong...dong...dong...
dong...dong...dong...dong...
dong...dong...dong...dong...*

Hanging in the sky like the milky white
Eye of Poseidon’s titan son, the full
Moon enshrined the park in an ephemeral
Glow. It caught in the low fog rising off
The dew-glittered ground, winding through the trees
And billowing over the concrete walking
Path in silver waves. Hand-painted clouds winked
The silver dollar moon out of sight as
They rolled casually across the night
Sky, heavy and dark with a burden of rain.
The sapphire green grass shivered as the wind
Which bent the sails of the clouds dipped low to
Rake its fingers through their dampened blades.
Along its way, passing a lone figure
Sitting atop a park bench, the zephyr
Paused to read the words in the book
The woman held. Hungry for more, it flipped
The page and received in turn a nod of thanks.

*The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve,
She murmured at the last ringing of the bell,
Then, lifting her head, cried: Lovers, to bed!
‘Tis faerie time!*

KATIE JADE MCCOY

The Bruise

Sometime last night,
as the gentle stream of the plastic fan
crystallized the sweat on our bodies,
a bruise formed on my shoulder.
I may have knocked it against the bedpost or the wall,
or maybe it was your chin
that crushed the tiny vessels
as you rolled against me.
Now it blooms
like a splotch of paint that has dripped
off the artist's brush
and surprised him with its complementary effect
on the surrounding colors.

We are caught in the hazy stillness
of a day that dreamed its morning,
feet held high enough
to keep from setting it in motion.
Salt coats our skin
and we become sandpaper,
scraping each other down to our slippery insides.
You kiss my shoulder,
and the bruise hums its name
into winding veins
until it spills from my lips,
and my fingers leave crescent moons on your neck.
You smile and hand me the lighter.

The air is sticky;

it drips slowly down my spine
and pools in the gutters of my collarbone.
The bruise melts
and your mouth comes away
stained with its purple and blue,
yet the ache of it is still in me
and I have to wrap you around me to numb it.
We can taste God
in the smoke
passing between our tongues,
hot and strange,
as your hands lift layers of cotton from my skin.

ALLISON

I Want to Go Back to the Desert With You, Tristan

Soon.

RACHEL MENASHE

Extracting

Extracting
the shrapnel of your blunder from
my heart, with knitting needles,
I try to hide my unclean hands,
pricking myself on the syringes you hid in my pockets.
Your image double Dutching while I,
clutching the dusty vinyl,
wished that I had the record player that we loved
that you sold for something.
Something better?
Something black, like
how I imagine it might look if hell snowed,
pepper ash.
I can still hear you asking:
‘Why should I choose to see God better than this day?’
You fooled me, quoting Whitman.
I wish I had a hit man.
I ache, wishing I had understood the damage a little white dot
could do.
I could’ve crushed one up;
I could’ve sprinkled it on my strawberries like
powdered sugar.
Sugar, you deceived me.
I shiver, you doing the backstroke
in your own stomach acid.
Are hospitals completely white so they look like heaven?
So it wouldn’t be too scary when they carried you away?
While they tried to resuscitate you I did Bikram.

Tadasana—you convulsed on the white table.

Savasana—you seized.

Namaste—you didn't.

LAURA MILLER

Rush

the carpet is breathing. play telephone with
creaking floorboards:
imprints on your cheek
spell out mildewed Morse. inhale,
 inhale,
 inhale,
until tendrils splayed over your shoulders
hang
down
to the ceiling.
kittens cocoon in light fixtures,
dust collects on the soles of your shoes,
and sage-colored curtains puddle
against
crown
molding. watch as fireworks
spread from your lungs
to your eyes,
singeing lashes and
muttering curses
at the sky. remember that laying
face
down
is not the same
as standing three feet from the wind,
hoping that it will hold your hand and
smile
as you
scream.

KATIE JADE MCCOY

*To Elder David Frederick Morgan, Brazil
Porto Alegre South Mission*

You've made your holy vows
And more power to you
But I'm still in love with you

I have thought about writing
Stacks of half-written letters lay buried
Under the clutter of twice-written poems
Once they stop being about you
Maybe then

I wonder what you tell them
These strangers whose souls you are trying to save
Do you mention me
When smiling mothers ask
Through a dust cloud of crows'-feet and children
If there is someone special

When you get trapped in my head
I fuck someone
Because
It's impossible to think about you with someone else inside
The one part of me that doesn't know you
And the desire to see you fades
In the glare of what you would think of me
If you knew

Two years is a long time at this age
Not long enough for me
To become a woman
Your kind always marries young

And even if you were to choose differently
I would not be fit for your temple

Why does the altar always symbolize happily ever after
In those damn Disney movies we watched together
Just once I'd like to see Prince Charming fall
In love with the witch
Because he knows she can't help being wicked

I'm still in love with you
And more power to me
But you've made your holy vows

TILL GWINN

Tree Son

I dreamed up at the trees:
incomprehensible beasts that relinquish nothing!

I looked up for an answer:
“Why is *I* obviously with *You* but
You conveniently escape me?”
And a pine needle fell in my fucking eye!

REINALDO AYALA

Greetings

Jhelo, my name is

Juanlter.

¿May I take yo orrden?

Sorry, can you speak more clearly?

H-ilo, my name is

Juahlter.

¿How can I hielp you?

Excuse me; I can't comprehend what you are saying?

He-helo, my name is

Wualter.

How can I notify you?

It's a bit clearer, but can you reiterate?

Hello, my name is

Walter.

How can I inform you?

Sorry, can you speak less clearly?

Yo, my name iz

Jawan.

Can I taek y'all ohdah?

Weary

The captain takes the controls of her ship. It's been a long time since she flew Oberon herself. Actually, she realizes, she only did once. She always flew Raleigh. She still misses him. But Oberon is good to her, too. He hasn't failed her yet.

Her muscles spasm as she adjusts the throttle. Right. Matching slashes on her left arm and waist, courtesy of the pirates she knew in a different life. Back when she captained Raleigh.

From his seat by his charts and meters, her navigator points out the shifting winds. She changes course. Easier to fly with the wind. Faster. Better for the ship, too.

With both hands on the wheel—right actually holding the course, left just resting—she runs through the checklist in her head.

First Officer: broken collarbone, sprained ankle, possible concussion. Still limping around and giving orders. She's taken worse.

Pilot: knocked unconscious by a sword blow to his head. Surgeon says he'll likely make it, though he'd like to get him to a hospital.

Surgeon: unhurt. Thank God. Stressed out. As usual.

Navigator: broken leg that no one has had time to set. But still at his post, just sitting and not moving much.

Crew: in various states of disrepair, depending on how close they got to the fighting.

Soldiers: pretty beat up. There's a reason the surgeon is stressed.

Engineering: mostly fine. They're not fighters. Thank God. Need them at their posts.

Ship: banged up, but still flying. Not in fighting condition, but he'll carry them home.

Husband: dead six years. Children: never born. Why they're still on her list, the captain doesn't know.

Someone's missing.

Oh, yes. Captain: stabbed. Bleeding.

Need to bandage those wounds. Need to get the ship home. Need to put flowers on husband's grave. He's been dead six years. Need to keep crew safe. Need to... Need...

Just get the ship back to a friendly port. Everything will work itself out from there.

SARAN WALKER

English Majors in Love

While engaged with Frosts, Marlowes, and Chausers,
Still they find the time for recreation.
Digging hands into each other's trousers,
Searching for poetic inspiration.
Hand in hand they stroll, discussing fiction,
Synchronized as two trochaic iambs.
Rising action, climax in their friction,
Internal rhymes: the diction is enjambed.

They labored through their coursework but inside
They harbored fantasies not in their books.
For every quatrain they identified
They yearned for one another's ardent looks.
 Wrapped within this newfound sense of rapture,
 They felt things that words just couldn't capture.

LAUREN BALLINGER

Twice a Year Now

Safe travels, I creak as they pile
into the car; they're off, all six plus the cat.
I sigh as the silence returns.
They'll be back, I know. I shudder to myself.
After the harsh snow comes,
dusting my naked limbs, I'll awaken
midday to their shouts of delight at the flurries.

I remember back to my youth,
before they came. Peace
among my branches.
The gentle whisper of the creek
my core companion.
Too much, I guess—perhaps my solitude was showy.

One spring day they arrived;
measuring and tagging the trunks of my family. Falling
farewells of friends around me.
The brilliance of sunshine,
a new melancholy gift, raised me up
more alone than ever.

A season and they were back. This time more
frequently sawing and nailing,
it seemed my quiet was lost.
Then it arose, a foreign breed of horizontal trunks—
I sense their feelings;
Unfriendly, now my neighbors.
Paint and waterproofing seal is muting.

Fragments of my friends. Remnants masked.
And yet,
with these calloused cores come new voices:
naive new friends
picking up and treasuring my cones.
Little feet, pleasantly crunching my fallen needles.
Thankful and unaware of the silence, of me.

Now cloaked by snow I hear the cheerful children.
I'm alert and watching
Long-awaited.

JAMIE ERVIN

*I learned what love was the first time my father
hit me*

I stained white washcloths with red kisses
and shadows of lips stole its color.
I hugged it sorry
wishing rags never had to clean up our messes.

The first time my dad gave me color, I knew that he loved me.
The Purple Heart shaped my left eye
and mom said I earned it for bravery.
In weeks my face found colors you don't see in rainbows,
crayon boxes labeled the aftermath
"Screamin' Green,"
but papa colored like silence.

The night my face stopped screaming,
he looked at me again,
lines peaked at the corners of his words,
etched understanding that I knew:
"I love you".

Bedtime kisses didn't feel like promises.
Heavy now,
they lingered here.
Bleeding like apologies
and staining the slits surrounding my mouth.
They blossomed into Venus fly traps.

PATRICK ATACK

[Shoreditch streets are beckoning]

Shoreditch streets are beckoning.
Bars, like bayonets, drawing you in.
Drinks, the devil's tool, lighting a path.
The noises of the road, circling your head,
Kept in their own world by the glass you don't see.
Because your mind is on your own, constantly half-full, glass.

He sits in the corner with the woman,
The lampshade illuminating her scarlet cheeks,
As his eyes wander around the room.
Shadows dancing like kittens, across their faces.
Created by the taxis of those that can afford them,
As you shuffle towards the opening in the wall,
Underground.

The trains whistle. You hold her hand.
As I, behind you, hold the eyes of my love.
As they disappear behind the shutting doors of the carriage I realise,
The Circle line of life continues on.
But I live on the Hammersmith and Bloody Piccadilly.

ALEXANDER (SASHA) KLEMENTIEV

If I Were a Chicken Catcher

If I were a snake catcher I would get the biggest fox
who would run faster than any mongoose
and would chase the chickens and hens and roosters
and chicks, all around the farm
Through the Looking Glass and out the wardrobe to Narnia
where he would eventually find the missing seventh gnome
but regrettably wouldn't be able to tell Snow White
because she is currently out of town in a meeting somewhere
where I heard the topic of which witch is the biggest threat in
Wonderland this time of year is discussed
but I wouldn't know anything about it since I,
the president of the Intergalactic Space Station,
was busy clearing the Death Star of the gremlins
and thus had no time to even watch the last quarter
of the Space Jam game happening at the same time as Ichiro
felt the need to cheat on Tiger Wood's wife
who by the way isn't even that attractive if we think about it
I mean she would be on the cover of *Teen Vogue*
but that's about it because she has the legs of Cindy Campbell
who ok some would say is hot but I feel her self-confidence mirrors
Shannen Doherty and I can't really deal with that kind of
personality
flaw because I heard she like gets into fights like all the time which
I can't handle
and shouldn't be exposed to if I will be working in my office
where I undoubtedly might be hit on by my manager who would
grab my ass
and make passes until we might finally have sex on her office table
but that was years ago and I am much too old for things now.

SARAN WALKER

Quick Tongued

Sex is like writing
I prefer the efforts of
a cunning linguist

SEAN DART

Lifeguard (an excerpt)

I've worked four straight 11-hour days.

I sit at a pool and wear a size medium tank-top. It makes my nipples look big, which is to say, bigger than they actually are, and I lifeguard.

Though, even that's a lie. I'm not wearing the tank top. The one thing I'm supposed to do is wear the tank top. Sean, wear the tank top so they know that you're the lifeguard on duty. Sean, wear the tank top that makes your nipples look like sand-dollars. Sean. The first day, I wore a tank top and a whistle around my neck. Someone did a flip. I blew the whistle.

"Hey. Don't do flips."

Yesterday, I swept up a pile of broken glass. I thought about how funny it would be if I broke the glass just to sweep it up. That would be funny. I'm giving myself something to do. My boss probably wouldn't think that it is funny.

The tank top is too small. The woman who gave it to me pays me. The tank tops are kept in a box that is disorganized like her hair, folded and overlapped and white and ugly. There are only smalls and mediums. She said she gave away the larges and XLs. Why would she do that?

She's the closest thing to a boss that I have, and the first thing she told me was "you can do anything you want for this job. Just as long as you're not putting your mouth all over your girlfriend when someone is drowning."

I didn't say anything because I can't believe who would give away all the larges and extra larges.

"That is...if you have a girlfriend...do you have a girlfriend?"

I wonder if she's making a joke. Her name is Ginger. Her breath smells like a cookie.

I know that she gave me a tank top, size medium, because she

thinks big half-dollar nipples are nice to look at. My mom told me if I stare at the sun long enough, I'll start to see things, like maybe smaller sized nipples on my chest. Though, she never said that.

Ginger licks her lips and I get that hard feeling on my tongue. Her lips are red like spicy cinnamon candies on a gingerbread house and I get goose bumps.

~

I made a gingerbread house in December in the 3rd grade class I work in, and went to the bathroom because the smell of frosting made me nauseated.

I came back and one of the kids told me "Hey! I'm smart now because I have a trampoline."

I was text messaging at the time, but I think it's good to be useful, so I wrote down the quote on a post-it instead of my phone because I still had a flip-phone and said things in my courses at the university like "technology is ruining the world" and told myself I'd use the trampoline bit because being a writer is useful.

~

Today, my tank top is still too small and my nipples are almost as big as when I was 12 and my brother was 17 and he'd poke my tit with a pen and twist and I'd be all like, "dude, fuck, stop, that hurts, shit."

And he'd say "don't cuss," then twist harder.

Then, he'd take his shirt off, and he was skinnier than me, and twist the pen into his nipple even harder than he did mine and be completely unfazed.

~

Sugar is a simple carbohydrate, and simple carbohydrates can turn into nipple fluff or belly bumps. I wouldn't lick my fingers after touching graham cracker roofs if you paid me. Those fuckers pick their ass all day. "Sean! Put your hand up, I want to see if I can reach it!"

They will, without fail, run, jump, lunge and hit my elbow.

"Looks like you've gotta do a few more squats, kiddo!"

"What's a squat?"

My ass felt fat, and I ate a cookie.

~

Today, I wrote a Facebook Status Update that read: “Would it be funny if I pretended my account was hacked and made my status something like ‘I love poop’ but it was really just me? By the way, I’m at work right now.” And then I thought about the word “meta” and I could probably be useful and write something smart about meta, but I’m not sure I know what meta means fully.

Then Ginger called. The emergency phone next to the pool rang, and I sprinted to answer. The emergency phone is red like Ginger’s lips and only rings when there’s an emergency.

“This is the pool. Lifeguard speaking.”

“Well, what lifeguard?”

God damnit, Ginger. She was thinking of my nipples out here, toasting in the sun like slices of Canadian bacon bubbling in a frying pan of my burnt chest.

“This is Sean.”

“Oh, well, hey Sean.”

She wanted me to say her name. She wanted me to say her name while she thinks of my pancake nipples because she gave me a size medium tank top. I refused to play this game. I wouldn’t say, “well, hey Ginger,” or whatever she wanted me to say. Nope. She wasn’t getting to hear her name.

“So, about the T-shirts.”

“Yes...” I scratched my chest.

“We have larges and extra larges.”

I could have thrown the phone through the cement beneath me.

“You what?”

“There was an extra box that I forgot to show you. It has larges and extra larges.”

Had she had complaints? Were people saying “the lifeguard’s nipples are so big it makes me queasy.” Were people not swimming safely because of my tits?

“I’m heading home soon, Sean, so you should please come pick up your t-shirt as soon as you can, Sean.”

She used my name twice. She said it was my t-shirt. Like I should have known my nipples would be too big. My shoulders feel hot when I leave the shaded lifeguard stand and walk to Ginger.

JAMIE ERVIN

Walk of “Shame”

I’m not walking in shame because nothing I love is shameful. I’m a Slut.

I have a desire. I’m a Slut.

Bags of fat on my chest. I’m a slut.

The shirt I’m wearing slips down. I’m a Slut.

Revealing mountains, glazed and glistening , in photographs and I’m still the Slut.

Thirteen, the age of my curves. I’m a slut.

I explored your terrain as you excavated mine. I’m a Slut.

My tears tasted like your “yes, Yes, YESsss”... I’m a Slut.

I could have screamed, slapped, clawed. I’m a Slut.

But I’m not silent now, and I’m still your Slut.

“It was mutual.” I’m a Slut.

My garments don’t meet your metric standards, I’m a Slut.

You scream out of your pickup truck and I don’t even need to Fuck to feel Filthy. I’m a Slut.

I’m proud of who I am. I’m a Slut.

My girlfriend’s phallic and lives in the drawer next to my bed. I’m a Slut.

She put out but it wasn’t for you, so she’s Defiantly a Slut.

“The backseat? Oh my God. What a Slut.”

A competition. Self gain. A fix. A game.

You play monopoly. I play life. I’m a Slut.

My visions, dreams, shout yellow, red, electric blue colors and I’m the Voice your daughters wished they would have attained if it hadn’t been for those shows, Weight Loss, Sex Sells, You’re skinny in the dark, but you’re still a Slut.

Clothes, hair, legs, folds, creases and crevices, beneath my denim, my thighs protect prophetic, procreations.

Down to every molecule, remove makeup.
I was born.
So I'm a Slut.

CAITLIN GIBSON

Western Vanguard, 2002

Michael Dailey, in spite of physical challenges caused by the onset of multiple sclerosis in the early 1970s, continued to make lush, sensuous, and evocative landscapes throughout his lifetime.

The show is starting.
I put the used syringe and bottle onto the easel.
Sitting before the canvas, I brush on
honey swimming and green milking
my all too pale skin.

I tap on the light cheese and satin rose
from my boutonniere
worn twenty-five years ago.
Holding her hand a week after that
picture show, which had a line
about asking for the world
before taking the hand of a girl,
runs down in creamy blue
and drowns the sharpness of the needle.

So onto the canvas I swirl
the mixing of stars from that night
in purple and dark orange hues,
cutting a piece from that dead button
and pressing it into the wet yellow
as I sop up the stinging blue.

I miss her

and this show, nothing but color,
lets me see her.

I tear

a piece of brown paper
from the Rx bag;

I kiss it first and then spread
the wasted green
on its back.

ALLY MYERS

Terza Rima con Medusa

“Dance with me!” She grins and pulls my hand,
Swings me from her finger to the edge of the room.
Encircling me are the nineteen porcelain dolls that stand

In silent obedience, their dresses like frozen mushroom
Clouds along pretty white shelves. I don’t like to dance;
I do it for her, and she pushes me around my own tomb

As our arms swing about like quarreling snakes. I don’t dare glance
into her eyes, though I wonder if they’d mirror mine, just as blue,
sometimes gray, always watching me. Her stagnant trance

Puts the bite of dry citrus on the inside of my cheek. “Let me paint
you,”
We’re on her yellow bed, she holds eyeliner and rouge,
Tools to make me just like her. “You can be beautiful too.”

But I had loved the boy who came to her window. “I don’t want
to lose
you,” he said. All it took was one look, her eyes mocking mine—
She turned him to stone, another dumb doll to watch her moves.

AMY SNODGRASS

The Tomato Plant

Tomato roots navigate soil
gradually. Shoots coil up
toward air, cracking open
seeds. Even now scientists

wonder at this instinctive response,
this immediate desire for sky.
Hoping to uncover the mechanics
of hunger, they've sent seeds into space.

Plants grown in microgravity
germinate unevenly, roots stretching
from each side spontaneously,
without the concept of Earth

to guide or restrict. Stalks
can never open to flower, never form
and conceal seeds. Celestial plants are slender
and delicate: webs of green and brown.

Only here are stems bent
from heavy fruit, so that a woman
can kneel in her garden, picking the first
tomato of the season, biting

into whole flesh, her face flushed
from work, the heel of her left hand soiled,
outstretched beneath her to catch
the red juice and pulp that falls.

