

An abstract painting featuring a vibrant red background. The composition is dominated by thick, expressive black brushstrokes that form a dense network of branches and leaves. Interspersed among these dark forms are bright yellow and green strokes, suggesting the presence of flowers or foliage. The overall style is dynamic and energetic, with a strong sense of movement and contrast.

Winter 05

DENALI

Cover Art:



In the Mood

acrylic painting by

Tina M. Calhoun

Poet1.1_02_LC_r4

by

Cody Yarbrough

The poet writes in time as well as space.
The best work takes up more of each.
Each word has a place to teach,
Each line a rhyme and pace.
How much time does this verse take?
How much space do you think?
How much difference do words make?
Written nowhere, without ink.



DENALI Literary Arts Journal is a publication of Lane Community College. We publish thrice annually. Denali accepts original submissions from all residents of Lane County at any time.

Submissions and contact information may be sent to:

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Check out eDenali, our online web presence at <http://www.lanecc.edu/denali>

Or visit our offices: Bldg. 18, Rm. 213 on LCC's main campus.

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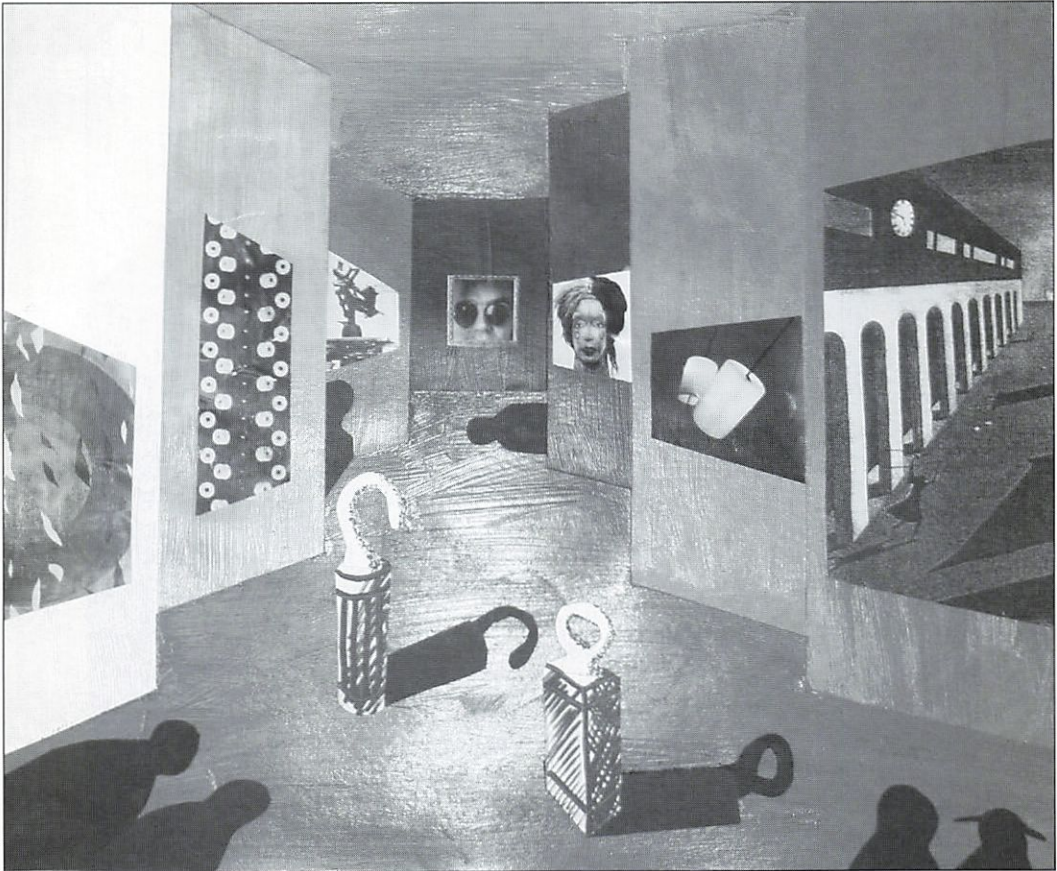
Before the Word is Spoken We Reach Each Other

Jarrett Arnold

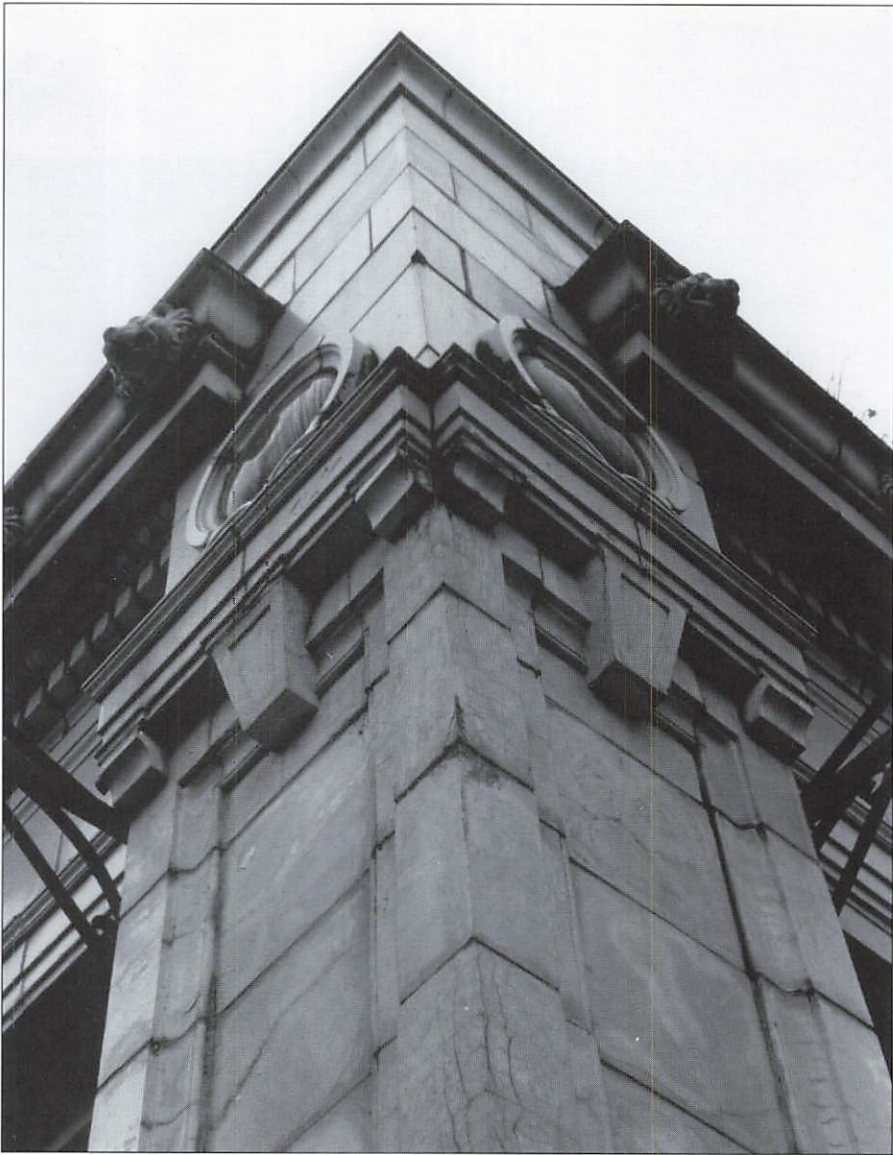
I saw a tree for the first time
today in your smile as we—soft—
touched his skin together.
We had hurried by a thousand times unmoved!
You were perched upon my elbow
your eyes big with life
and I realized you might like
a closer look.
From root to bud we ran his course
together one atom at a time.
Then from green trembling leaves
through his lean boughs into
his trunk where white and
brown draw chaotic scenes
and finally back to the roots
where he sucks earth unseen.
And for the first time in a score
and ten I stand upon real ground.
and taste life's illusion and hear wind's sound.
You look at me laughing four teeth, and
I see myself
beneath that tall old tree.
You turn back still shiny and
place your chubby little hand upon
the bark while your other rests quietly on my chest.
and I love.
When I hold you close, my heart can finally rest free.
We stand there all three
under the first tree
to ever speak to me.
and I understand.

Surreal Gallery

Tina M. Calhoun



McDonald Theatre *Josh Goldfarb*



Professional Reactor



Halo Jones

This city is all rock and no star
This city has forgotten its way
The primal slave to injustice that
We are
This city is in a state of shock
I watch the ball drop
I watch the time clock
I watch the news talk
About another bomb drop
I see the state of affairs
And I wish I didn't care
But still I find you there
Weeping in despair
This city worships a lonely God
And a guy named Ringo



Nomadic Plutonic Ironic

Signal tower unspoken hours
Days pass under sky lamps
The lines are drawn
The curtain is closed
I am in a relapse of my self-defeated
Ego
Like an eagle without wings
So are my thoughts without dreams



Mushrooms

Lander Beauchamp





Escape Artiste

Johann Stein

He is imbued with the ennui of the immortals. High atop the Avatar Plaza residential tower, he languishes melancholy in his lavish loft studio apartment. A considerable fortune has been invested in his prestigious abode. In order to simply apply for potential tenant status, one must essentially be of the American nobility, which he is; the culmination of wealth-laden coupling dating back to the days of the ancients, when lineage was traced to gods, and power was claimed as divine birthright by the advantaged classes. A man such as this suffers stylishly. Ever-so-slightly disillusioned with his former, proper society, we find him currently mired in an existential despondency which serves to enhance his lonely pretentiousness. The loft is a colony of solitary refinement amidst the treacherous, demanding and exhausting backdrop of the urbane high life.

The exterior ramparts that enshrine him are remarkably pure and stalwart marble armor of a quality suitable for vainest deities. Yet within, everything must be of blackest hue, in the visage a Gothic Lords of Hades. From the walls to the silken drapes to the wardrobe to the vintage matching coffee mugs and ashtrays, the loft is ninety-five percent midnight. The light fixtures emit blacklight simply for eclectic effect; no modicum of dampened

photons could liven up his preferred moribund environs. The windows admit only the natural sunlight which has undergone filtering of an overcast atmosphere. Exclusive and eccentric, he has procured every manner of eclectic décor, as diverse as the original Model-T Ford: "Any color, so long as it's black."

Strive as he might, some books on the shelves reluctantly have bindings of dark purples, blues and bloody reds, and the tinge of their recycled whitish paper conspicuously captures the scrupulous eye. A canvas is mounted a few feet from the couch, in a place one might find the traditional television set common among lower orders of society. It is this canvas that glares with an abrasive contrast in the dimness, its paleness an affront to the shadowy world of an artist suffocating from silent angst at the blankness of the stalled project before him.

He is caught in limbo, between his plush-leather couch and the exposed virgin nothingness craving inspirational marring upon its surface. For the moment, the canvas assumes the character of a persona non grata to be avoided with excruciating disdain by the fatigued genius. He rests horizontally, with his back upon the soft-hide cushioning, the left leg draped upon an arm of his furniture, right leg jutting toward the floor, left arm betwixt head

and the soft corner of the couch, right arm held wrist side up and straight out and away from the artist. With eyebrows furrowing beneath thick-framed and lightly shaded glasses, he ponders the relevance of a vacant mind. The lips pout occasionally and are stereotypically complimented by a thin, trim, sterilized surgical-grade razor-sharp goatee. He has the expressions of a nicotine fiend who has endured deprivation for a few hours too long. The fingers of his right hand uncurl ever so slightly as he reaches for the pack of non-filtered continental cigarettes resting upon his chest. Peering peevishly into this package, he discovers but one delicate dark brown stick of refined and fine pressed foreign tobacco resting next to a black plastic lighter. He removes these two instruments of nihilistic indulgence from their disposable casing with his left hand, and the right hand crushes the depleted shell of a luxurious vice and elegantly flicks it into an imitation obsidian garbage receptacle (complete with black trash bag liner) in the corner of his loft kitchenette. Over the duration of his waste expulsion exercise, he has raised the sole remaining cigarette to his mouth and plucked the trusty lighter from its rest in order to agitate a flame from a middle finger-triggered flint and butane flux. Lighting this cigarette, he inches backwards in his consciousness to pondering the uncluttered expanse of his inner being...

He has one drag, exhales, and immediately follows with a second drag,

his face quietly declaring the mind's attempt at the profound meaninglessness of it all. This introverted reprieve exists in a scant few moments, long enough for the artist to admire the carcinogenic vapors twirl unconcerned, not at all doing enough to obscure the many superlative material possessions of his astronomically overpriced loft studio apartment. Were one to have studied his smoking habits, they would expect the third inhalation to be partaken after exactly seven seconds elapsed time from the second exhalation. Obedient to routine, he has the cigarette poised near his lips, the nerves of his face visibly anticipating another drag, and yet he hesitates. A thought has found means to immolate itself upon his ever-exacerbating mind, and has consequentially disrupted his smoking ritual. The inspiration he so longs for and lives for is rapidly approaching critical mass.

It seizes him as thus:

He does indeed puff whimsical upon his continental, as he shifts his legs to the floor and motivates his torso to carry him into the locked, loaded, fully attentive and upright position. Arising as he inhales, he closes his eyes ecstatically. Moving silently, slowly and surreally, he begins taking half-strides in the direction of the taunting canvas. The eyes stay closed in these pivotal first steps, and though he lacks his peripheral vision, his intuition allows him to sweep the left hand holding his cigarette up to an ornate Ionic style protrusion

from one of the loft walls. This pedestal conveniently supports his favorite ashtray, upon which he brings to rest his burning batch of shredded, deadly vegetation. While the cigarette safely takes a smoking break, his eyes cinematically open like curtains at a premier musical with rave reviews. A restrained yet vigorous attention emanates from a centripetal focus of rising light in his occipital lobes, glowing and overtaking the silken fibers of his ego, his id, his everything.

Maintaining his slack-eyed gaze steadfast upon the characterless void, he takes the final half of his advance casually, his eyebrows crooked nonchalantly, as if he were secretly falling in love with something other than a reflection. The next step allows him to pluck a paintbrush steaming in a mason jar half full of hot-tar colored paint. This is done with his right hand and from a waist level tea cozy table, in a manner both delicate and carefree. His paintbrush trails behind him, held low and with the wrist facing upward, as if this were a rapier rather than cherished tool of artists, a weapon of elegance and refinement, of death with dignity. The left hand is held forward as if pantomiming holding a shield, this done in an effort to maintain balance and to appear all the more magnificent as he glances at a full length mirror in the corner nearest the unpainted canvas. Temporarily entranced at this pose, he registers it in his long-term memory so that he may practice and show it off to himself later. Continuing onward

in his trek to the canvas, he is but three feet away when he halts precariously, as if he's come upon a spring-loaded force field. The glowering whiteness before him is enough to make a man of his sensitivities retreat in repulsion and utter vexation, and he musters great personal resolve to dispel any last minute reluctances at carrying through with the project. Our artist is prepared to make his mark.

The right arm swings the brushing hand at an aggregate curvature, nearly at a forty-five degree angle. His brush doesn't touch the tapestry, but rather, it glides with hovering restraint over its surface and dashes upon it an oblique chaotic splatter of oil-thick paint droplets. This initial maneuver completed, the artist commands his hand to sweep in a backslash beneath the inversely colored star cluster and bequeath a moderately proportioned ribbon of black in an exponential curvature to compliment the first phase of his creative venture. This macaroni bent line extends from end to beginning of the splatter, connecting the whole mess together in an uncomplicated completeness. It is indicative of his perceptions, chaos and order intrinsically linking in an inky swath across an otherwise blank mold at odds with his intellect, his anguish, his miraculous visage of purity and self.

Or, at least, this is the affect his newly born creation has on his thoughts as his pupils dilate and his irises widen, permitting him to drink in the splendor

of a job well done. He backtracks staggeringly, all anxieties diffused, his existence vindicated and suddenly clairvoyant of his ultimate purpose in life. These thoughts carry him as he struts backwards, sheathing the brush unceremoniously into its mason jar, continuing to the general locale of his favorite ashtray, returning his sweet, lovely last cigarette to his grasp and his lips. Taking a long, satisfying drag, he stands by his couchly point of origin in his sojourn, admiring with an appropriate, respectful distance between him and his mighty statement freshly painted on the far side of the room. All he needs now is a signature and it'll be ready for the gallery.

Alas, the high cannot last, it has a half life only slightly longer than a meteor careening through the stratosphere, a glam rock star ending their career in glitter makeup infomercials, an alpha male wild stallion abducted in the night and broken down into a plow horse to till the futile fields of a Chernobyl peasant – all very sad, comrade. In much the same manner he entered his creative exuberance, it leaves him, a decrescendo descent toward the subliminal static he is most accustomed to. The esoteric hysteria is entirely exorcized, and life returns to flavorless apathy.

The artist feels broken, exposed, spent

and lonely, and is trying desperately to cope with this return to the non-creative mindset. Instead of thinking through this phase, an involuntary impulse demands he follow up the fatalistic ballet with disconsolate routine. The eyes direct the head, then the neck, then all else beneath the brain to move with deliberate focus to his elegant antique telephone at the left of his couch, the receiver long absent from its hook. Staring through the painting as if it were an uninteresting stranger on a boring day, he presses the two smaller fingers of his left hand on the hook and lifts the phone to his ears with his right hand. Lifting the fingers pressure and hearing the tone reset, he redirects the fingers to dial unemotionally a number hardwired to the core of his involuntary memory centers.

Precisely half way through the second ring, there is a slight click and a sinister masculine voice with an immaculate tilt and pattern of speech slightly impeded by filed down teeth answers:

“Speak unto me thine wishes.”

And the artist responds:

“Bring me heroin . . . please.”

“Major affirmative, your Exclusiveness. Thou shalt bear witness to thine desires within the hour.”

And the artist hangs up. ❁


Keep Out!

Victoria Stephens



Truly (from your little Scot)

Mick Gael



Restless tonight,
thinking of you.
A lack of words
and an abundance
of everything else.
And a cold mattress,
unsympathetic
and uncaring.
And weird 3:20 AM
music on the stereo,
and you on my mind,
and you in my head,
and regrets in my heart:
that I never loved you,
that I could never love you.
And why why why why why why why?
And pop psychobabble:
“Be yourself.
Your mind is your most valuable possession.”
I just want to be near you,
and would give up all this
right now
to be there,
but I most certainly am not.
Why won't I get up,
right now,
and run down Princeton Street,
screaming your name
at the top of my lungs,
a casual American
doing his best
to keep from collapsing
out of sheer mock-apathy
and passion denied its due?

Angela Jaster



Blue Nude



Dylan

Lara Coley





Baby/Face

Andrea Summers

The air in the foodcourt
is ordinary and embarrassing;
the baby with the chasm
in her face takes no notice,
lacking the vocabulary of contempt
and taken by neon and glass; enthralled
by straining bids at black-clad eccentricity,
the conveniences of modernity
laid for her like a table.

Despite the harelip she is charmed;
my heart leaps and
plunges to the floor (for her?)—
suspended in that cruel amber
ignorance: when the world—
kept up by appearances—is right,
and you appear all wrong and
don't yet know it.

Unassuming as she is to neglect revelry,
I dress her up in my grief as if
she were a doll, hollowbodied and senseless.
She is not my doll, nor
my beloved, nor bereaved, nor
my face to mourn in a mall.
She is saucer-beam eyes, fine-boned
trust, and wandersome tongue gumming
Cheerios produced by her mother
from a plastic sandwich bag.



Campus Shoe Store



Josh Goldfarb





High Coops

Light



Icy rain, perdition's dark tears from a conquered past, weeps into my trailer. The wind shrieks through in sobbing blasts, with taloned vengeance past my own dark reveries. It seeks retribution from industry's descendant heirs, those well versed in their forebear's rampage against life. The tarp is shorn from my roof, and I am cold. Colder yet is my resolve, for I also am in grief.

High Coops fly like javelins flung forth by Neolithic Gods, defiant wraiths who ride the raw wind upon screaming stallions through ghosts of forest lands raped of culture and of pride.

Rivers once run silver, teeming with salmon, now flow red, polluted with death, as corporate-politicians' hydrophobic jaws greedily ravish the land. Defiling all that they cannot engorge, they shear children, women and men from a once-sacred pact with Nature.

Sealing humanity's fate, a zombied nation accepts golden bonds, bloodied with the smells of cordite, crude oil, poppies and nuclear waste.

6%

Lara Coley

I am drunk when I am suddenly reminded of him by that Jo Dee Messina song where her blue-eyed lost lover comes back in the heat of July. Will's eyes are a vibrant blue, and it's July, so I relate in some sappy, hopeful way. Too little, too late, she tells him in the song. That's what I'll tell Will when he comes back, if he comes back. He went home to Sonoma for Memorial Day with his buddies and "to think about moving there." He'd promised he'd be back for my birthday, but today is my birthday, and he's not back. It had been a flimsy sounding promise, an afterthought to a friendly break-up.

I decide to celebrate the old-fashioned, single-girl's way and get drunk. I raise my glass, six drinks deep, and toast, "Screw him and his never-had-a-girlfriend-so-I'll-be-an-asshole-to-yours friends and the dumb high school bitches they're all probably fucking right now." I take the shot and climb atop the bar to dance with my friends. The bartender is a friend so tonight the bar is mine. I may dance where I please and listen to any music that I want. Unfortunately, this means Jo Dee is playing, and I am stuck with the thought of him.

I sit down at the bar and order a Guinness, partly because I know he'd like

that, but the boy next to me pays for it, ruining the sentiment. He's tall and built, with pretty blue eyes, so I guess he'll do. I introduce myself and soon we are kissing. Alcohol does this to girls who miss their ex-boyfriends. We replace them with temporary models. We don't want a new one, we want a stand-in until he comes back, because we think he will come back. He kisses well. Will was better, but he nibbles on my bottom lip, and I forget to be angry that he's not Will while he kisses me. My friends think he's harmless, sweet even, so they let him take me home.

When we get to his house, he brings me water, sets out comfortable clothes for me to sleep in, and goes to brush his teeth while I change. He comes back to the bedroom and snuggles in next to me. We kiss. He carefully traces the skin of my belly up, underneath the shirt, and follows this path with kisses. He then lightly places his lips on all the contours of my face until he finishes with my eyelids and whispers goodnight. He curls into me, his head on my shoulder, his arm and leg across me, and his hand gently placed on my chest. It's warm and his breath on my neck is soothing. I wait till he falls asleep and then I trace his outlines, his face, the muscles in his arms, each finger. I kiss him, nuzzle in as close as I can and fade off to contented, drunken sleep.

This becomes our routine. He never sees me naked and he doesn't try. He calls a lot, leaving messages like, "I miss you sweetie, long day here at work. I just wanted to hear your voice." He is so kind and tender that I don't know what to do with it. Will hadn't been like this. He'd never told me how much he cared, like this guy does every day. Will assumed I knew.

Honestly, these daily proclamations are a little stifling, but it's a problem I can deal with, this constant adoration. He fills my fridge with wine, my room with flowers, and my ears with compliments.

It's been a month, but this morning, things become complicated. There is a message from Will when I arrive home. He sounds lost and sad, and he says he misses me. I listen to it three times. I'm sure he means it. He misses me. I pick up the phone and call him. He sounds elated to hear my voice.

He tells me how much he's been thinking about me. I tell him he missed my birthday. He says he'll make it up to me. There's a cabin in Tahoe that his parents just bought. They want him to fix it up for them. He's going up there to live in it for the summer and renovate it and he wants me to come. It'll be just us, the way we used to talk about in our somedays. There is even the stone fireplace I always wanted. It sounds stupid, but that cabin—it's ours. We'd talked about it a hundred times. The two of us, old, sitting around the fireplace, still having something to talk about. I would write, and he would work, fixing and building things for the few neighbors

we'd have. I would grow vegetables, we would travel. We knew how it would be. It would be perfect. We'd even collected huge, oddly shaped stones wherever we went camping to build the fireplace.

We had wanted all the same things, until he'd decided he didn't want me. But he did, he just hadn't known it. He knew now.

I suddenly notice the J Crew boxers I'm wearing and I hate them. He'll know I'm wearing another man's underwear and change his mind. He will sense the betrayal.

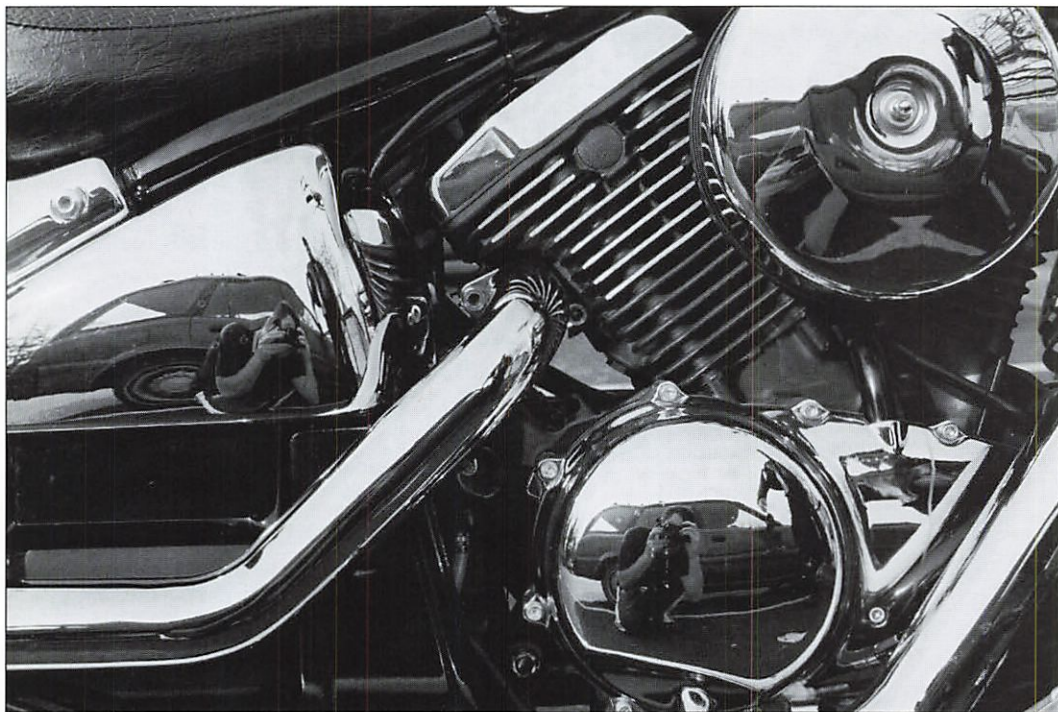
But he doesn't. Instead, he tells me he loves me. I've been waiting for so long to hear him say this, for "love" to explode upon me, showers of glittering confetti and warmth, fireworks, fairytales. But now, I've heard them from someone else, and they sound so much smaller. They are just meaningless little words, the letters trickling out his mouth, drool dripping from a dog's tongue. Two years we dated without love being thrown into the conversation, and he is telling me now, after three months M.I.A., now, he needs me around. The words sting. There is nothing behind them, no city beyond the gate. Where was he on my birthday? He has no reply.

The replacement model asks me if I still love Will as we lay in bed, naked. I say that I'm 94% sure that I don't. He says 6% is a lot. I look to the corner of my room, at the trunk that holds an assortment of stones.

"It's not enough." ❁

Reflect

Lander Beauchamp



I had written a poem
And realized afterwords that it was crap
Not worth twenty minutes
100 calories
pencil graphite
or scrap paper

but I had done it anyway
it was sad, but not anything at all like
the way George was sad to put down Lenny
in "Of Mice & Men"

more like the Sunday night after
a bad Saturday night
where your date ditched you
with the bill, of course
and so you go back to your apartment
and drink all the damn wine
and listen to Led Zeppelin
until you pass out
and when you wake up
the CD player is still spinning through the tracks
you step outside to smoke a cigarette
and end up walking down to the Keystone Café
still in nice date clothes
but now scuffed and bruised and
with sweat like Blue Moon Riesling & Bigfoot
to drink coffee alone
and eat a hangover breakfast
alone

and walk up to Skinner's Butte to look over
a glorious Sunday morning smiling down on Eugene
through windowpane cracks in the cloud cover

and somehow this little experience makes up
for the whole hell of yesterday eve
and your lamentations that night are brief
but enough to make you look forward to Monday
because at least it wasn't as bad for you as Saturday

that's when I wrote the poem that sucked
and this new one makes up for it

Some cool smooth wind for you now...

Johann Stein



Old Man Turtle's Monologue

Jarrett Arnold

You thought you attained enlightenment? (laughter) How many allegories must I put in this story before you understand the matter at hand? Notice this caterpillar. (smacks Will on the head)

Don't look at my finger pointing at the truth.

Look at the insect unrealized in its youth.

Oh you look sad—you really thought you had attained something didn't you?

There is nothing to attain; it's already here in your hand.

Try to grasp it, like digging in sand.

You turn to look at what is there,
and when you do, it turns to air.

Try to see what you look like with your eyes closed.

Try to see inside the refrigerator before the en-light-comes-on-ment.

Enlightenment

Ment en lighten

No such thing! Do not cry!

Stand with me in wonder as we breathe. Truth and beauty, love and god. What do they mean?

We believe because being belief we become.

Isn't that wonderful? The mind of the rising sun.

But we aren't ever there.

There is only the becoming. Wonderful allegory is better left misunderstood. There is no bad or good.

Notice the robin: He hops in the dewy spring grass. He sings. He sleeps in nested tree.

He eats bugs – after the rain, juicy plump wriggling worms.

Beetles and ants when dry summer returns. Is he worried about enlightenment?

Notice how the hawk dives upon his head and breaks his body and makes robin dead.

But Hawk is well fed. Does he question reality?

What a beautiful idiot this human brain. Enlight-en-Darkness-ment.

To search but never find.

DO not cry, continue the journey it's what you're here for fool.

Kiss the girl—there's not much time for you to find what truly satisfies. You won't find it it's not for you. You'll never be able to do what robins do.

Christopher Flaherty

Reconstructed



Man/Nature Division



Ben Chinburg





Train

Angela Jaster

This morning I lay awake, prone, in the immeasurable hours before dawn.
I am lost in the transparency of my window.
I am a deer in the headlight of this stampeding train of thought.
I am caught.
sigh . . . it's hopeless . . .

So I mentally shrug and track the life cycle of the angiosperm. My attempt to slow the rush. Or maybe just to use the time wisely . . . why not? Haploid cells and monocots dance merrily around crying, "This is no time to study!" They sway with wild plantlike delirium. Strange to see a two-stepping dandelion.

Blink. Blink.

A single diamond point of light pierced through canvas black enters room, announced by a flood of silence . . . (flowers exit stage left).

This reminds me . . .

And I'm off comparing the dot hovering before my third eye to the spark that sometimes appears on my livingroom wall.
It's indefinable. A mini mystery which I will never investigate. Because what if I did?
And I got up from my chair, walked across hardwood to kneel down and see and it was really a fallen sequin off my daughter's fairy queen costume . . .
I'd much rather it remain a stray portal into the infinite stretches of the universe...right there on my living room wall.

Shift arm.

I am slightly chilly here.
I am slightly chilly in the predawn under cotton, fleece and wool, surrounded by our children and I am wondering if you are slightly chilly too.
I am pondering here.
I am wandering through the tributary passages of thought and time.
Searching for the magic button that will signal curtain call for these attention greedy cerebral antics. The one that will surely stop this entourage of image and word . . . it's somewhere around here, I know . . .



Train Con't

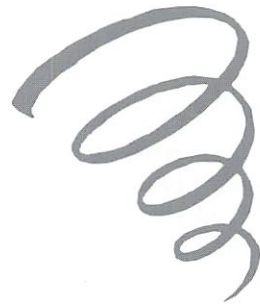
And somewhere, too, lurking beneath it all lies fear. Quietly waiting for me to stumble blindly onto one of her many trip-wires.

Foolish fear, I whisper to myself gleefully. This morning my consciousness is nimble footed and carries a huge maglight. My awareness is burly and outfitted with steel-toed boots. I laugh in fear's general direction. For now.

Tramping proudly along, I remind everyone that sleep is actually a good thing. I mention casually the delirium I will certainly find myself in tomorrow if we get no rest. But thought is caught now in it's creative loop and sleep is somewhere in the middle plugging its ears.

Ok. Compromise. Methodically imprint the rhythm of this train into my neural networks. Over and over, until they become a pattern to follow.

Get some rest, I admonish myself gently, the words will be here in the morning. . . . And they are. ❁



~~~~~ **Contrasts in Nature**

*Tina M. Calhoun*



Untitled *Susie Morrill*



# Between New Mexico and Home

~~~~~ *Heather Feather*

Bus time
Is surreal time
All landscapes falling
In to each other
I am hardened
Beefed up with road dust
Forgiving my own weaknesses
This becomes me
Amazing sunrises and sunsets aside
My body now aches and everything comes
together
Fitting that at least the physical part
Of my reality
Is now in accord with my heart



Consumed

Dialing numbers
Randomly finding
American Androids
Robotically filling
Their time and space continuum
With consumption related activities
National demographics
Prove the patriotic
Obsession with
Being entertained
Nobody can seem to
Own their own
Entertainment process
Day in
Day out
They suckle at the teat
Of black boxes
Flashing big brother images
Between insipid mind numbing
Life stealing (or is it living)?
Programming



Zombie

C. Jordan Terwilliger

I'm a fucking zombie, is all.

Wake up, do . . . something. This lasts a good seventeen, eighteen hours. Lie down. Remain lying down as long as possible. When this is no longer the case, get out of bed. Wander. Sit. Stare at the computer. Hope it does something. Think about working on a story. Realize there is absolutely no mental energy available for something that complex. Stare at the computer some more. Decide that if I'm awake, I may as well be doing something. Grab the mouse. Put the pointer to the Start button, then programs, then accessories. Realize that this is giving up. Put the pointer to the Games folder, then one. It doesn't matter which. I'm a fucking zombie, is all.

Tell myself, Just one more. Then I'll be good. Then I'll be tired enough to fall asleep. Then when I wake ageing, this will all be just a silly dream. No more sleepless nights. Smoke if I've got 'em. Maybe attempt to read a novel. If I'm fortunate, Literature. Not that that happens so much anymore. I'm a fucking zombie is all.

Lie down again. Let the frustration rumbling around in my head manifest itself as hot bolts of freedom, of energy, blazing from my eyes. Settle in for a headache. Stare blankly at the back of my

eyelids, then the ceiling, then my eyelids again. Settle on the ceiling. Eyes start to get sore, a mediocre, but consistent, . . . something. Reach down, under the covers, over the fabric of my ratty, hole-covered boxer shorts. Half-heartedly pull my penis out from between the flaps of my fly. Close my eyes again, picturing the penis in my hand. My right hand. This is less effort than looking. Experience a lingering desire to cry. Regret ever having taken the time to bother to name the fucker. More trouble than it's worth. Attempt to find an emotion secure enough to moor my thoughts to. Settle on the image of an acquaintance, probably in a variety of poses. No giving head. Not me to her, not her to me. Too . . . played out. Too over-hyped. Not enough me to go around. A brainless pose in a slideshow flick-flick-flick-flick, until I get the drift and my hips surge forward and the backs of my eyes hurt more, that dull, nameless thud. I shout in subvocalizations, Oh, God, oh yes, until my heart is beating and the only thing that's changed is now my dick's a little red and quivery to the touch and there's semen stretched oozy-thin on my boxers. Do this at least once. Maybe twice. Maybe three times, maybe five if it's a really bad day. Halfway to that and I can't feel it anymore. My dick just

stings for four excruciating minutes, then a sensory flood for a second and a half, then it's over. Roll over and stare at the wall for an hour, maybe longer. Consider contemplating how close to nothing I am, but instead contemplate nothing. Sleep? Maybe not for hours. Maybe not at all. I'm a fucking zombie, is all.

Wake up, throw the robe-thing and maybe a T-shirt on, over my by now slightly semen-crust-ed drawers. Hope again that nobody will notice the fierce three-day-old-but-not-rotten-and-actually-kind-of-sweet salmon smell. Maybe like cream cheese with salmon—I don't know. Walk to the bathroom. Stare at the mirror. See nothing. Have half of an epiphany about nihilism. Never finish it; I'll have the same half tomorrow. Briefly realize that, if I were to ever have a hangover, it would look like a good day. Mutter fuck under my breath. Sit down on the toilet. Shit out a nice, smooth shit. Feel good for a second. Or two. Feel helpless as the good feeling goes away. Open the shower, throw my washcloth on the floor, turn on the water. Curse the day. Curse the fact that it's noon. Squint at nothing. Throw off my robe, then cover it with my towel. On the counter. Glance sidelong at nothing. Perk up ears at nothing. Step into the shower. Become excessively dissatisfied with the water temperature. Adjust. Adjust. Rub

soap on the washcloth. Rub the washcloth on me. Hit everything fast and without thought. Have to make up for lost time somewhere. Make sure to wash carefully around the penis. Can't have that hot jizz smell all over everything. I'm a fucking zombie, is all.

Waddle out to the trailer. Put on new underwear. Throw on a new shirt. Squeeze into the too-short and too-small pants. One of the two pair. Doesn't matter. They both look the same, both black, both with the same rip that goes from just behind the low point of my balls to just before my anus. Black pants, still dirty from yesterday. And the day before. And the day before. Get socks, maybe dirty, but probably clean. Not like it matters any more. Briefly mourn the ten-year-old fungus on my feet. Put on the socks, one foot at a time. Violently. But not so much as the shirt. And not so much as the shoes. Find shoes. Note frustrating stain on the inside of the left one. Roll eyes without moving them. Tug shoes on without untying or retying. Feel new for half a second. Get the urge to puke. And not in the way I like. No, out of pure dissatisfaction. I'm a zombie, is all.

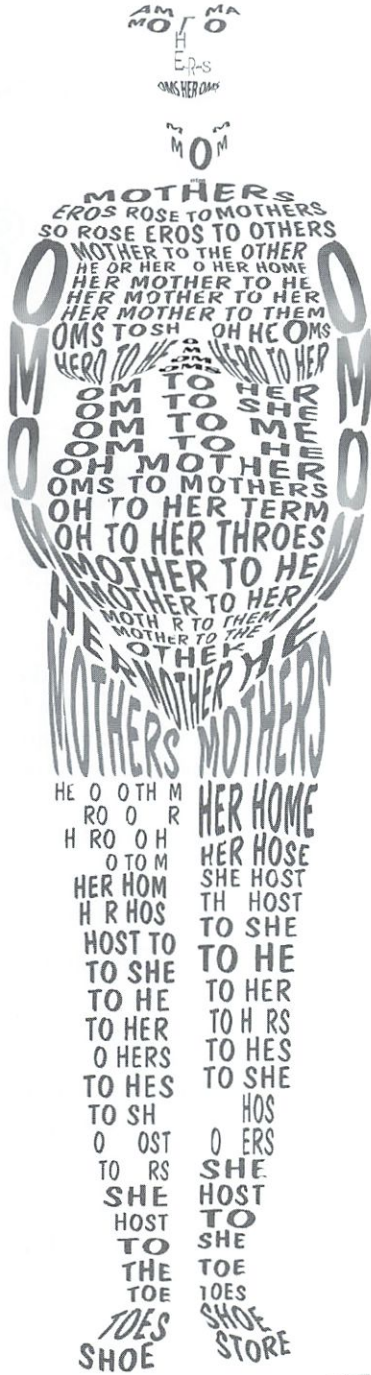
Do something for seventeen, eighteen hours. Not that it matters. The trappings are all the same.

I'm a zombie, is all. ☘

Downtown Reflection

Josh Goldfarb





Mothers

Will Schive



Cracks

Lara Coley

you slept on the floor
and held the wall around you

even in your sleep
I cannot get close

but I understand
because we are not the people
who let people stand close enough
to see the cracks in the paint



Untitled

Samantha Scharf

i wish i could cross
my fallopian tubes
in the same
superstitious-wish-on-a-star-hold-my-
breath
sort of way i cross my
fingers

no baby no baby no baby

damn this
synthetically induced
afternoon after
where the nurses don't comprehend
a seventeen-year-old woman's
capacity
to make love
and
not
get fucked

Reflections

Elizabeth Potter



Lust Story

Samantha Scharf

“Do you want to go outside?”

The tiny room was thick with smoke. Artists, musicians, poets, and lovers were bathed in sultry hues of red and burgundy by colored bulbs in floor level lamps. Conversation was like salsa dancing. Partners dipped and twirled in complex realms of metaphysics and innuendo. I was lusciously sedated. An embrace of the distinctive velvety intoxication inspired by merlot, marijuana, Elliot Smith, Ricardo, and the universe itself wrapped around my lady limbs and torso like black satin.

I wore my youth like a black orchid in my hair. It was a decorative novelty; exotic, and fragile.

“No. I mean, yes.” I told him, nearly biting his ear, “I want some air. And some stars. And you, but slow.”

The grass was cool and damp under my bare feet planted hip-width apart. He stood behind me, his hands heavy and warm cupping the curve of my hips while mine reached back to clasp nape of his neck. Fingers immersed in the greasy nest of black indigenous hair, smoldering, wilting, and dying on the front lawn with the moon as my witness, I wrote a symphony of gimme.





Daisies Charcoal

Elizabeth Potter



The Wall

Victoria Stephens



Divided



Miles Briand

Dripping wet and oh so slick
Call in sick and sip on this
Stop this fix before it faults
Savor the sentiment and the salt
The guilty black box
Records of our loss
Conflicts within forever
Slipping in unison
Shocks to the cerebellum
Shifting at the waist
My burnout
The fly hits the light bulb
Sizzle sound signals
The flies pang against the ground
We're all lost
In the paper mache paradigm
This model on its side
Tipping landscapes
Shifting in the morass
Bubbling into the eternal
This inflamed red patch
Insipid and subdermal
So solemn in the turmoil



Sharp Pain in the Right

I am the royal state
Nesting near enlightenment
Steeping in the stew
I follow suit
Laying down two deaf ears
And the king of hearts
In the cornerstone of awakening
I simply stare with the stoned-eye glare
I'm a blank slate so I keep myself
Maybe just this once
Far too fragile for anything
And my sickle is fickle
And my wheat always
Molds at the chaff
I wish you well I say
And my wrists flip to the sides
Revealing rockets
Nerve gas at the tip

Untitled



Lander Beauchamp





Winter 2005

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