

THE FIORETTI



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**MARIAN UNIVERSITY
INDIANAPOLIS**

THE FIORETTI:

SPRING 2016

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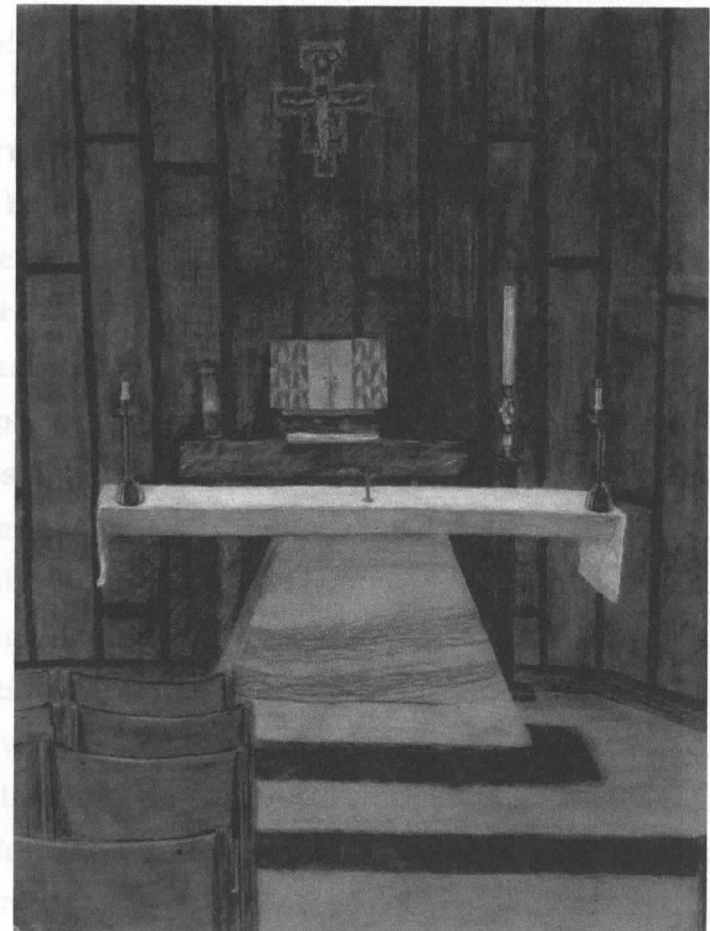
Marian University - Indianapolis

Senior Editors:

Claire Crane & Sergio Valdes

Dedication

To Sister Stella Gampfer, O.S.F., who inspires generations of students to experience literature with compassion, appreciation, and awe.



Artwork by: Claire Thompson

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ix
Editor's Note	xi
Editorial Staff and Contributing Artists.....	xiii
Carnival – Natalie Donnelly	3
Ashes – Gabriella N. Graves	5
Waltzing Out of Time – Taylor Trepanier.....	7
My Pal Prometheus – Allen Lasher	9
Sorry For Asking – Gabrielle Fales	11
An Empty Driveway – Hannah Sobhie	13
The Meaning of Life – Jill Crane	15
Out to Sea – Jill Crane	17
Excerpts From the Healer's Bible – Lori Arend.....	19
Paper Crane – Lori Arend	21
Fleshing the Skeleton – Abigail Henderson.....	23
The New Year's Revival – Hannah Sobhie	25
Finishing Touches – Claire Crane.....	27
Stumped – Taylor Trepanier	31
Bats in the Attic – Lydia Godsil	33
Elevator Music – Gabriella Fales	37
Falling Bird – Lydia Godsil	39
Before the Bottle – Carolyn Swartz	41
Metropolitan Moldau – Hannah Sobhie	43
An Ode to Freshman Year – Jill Crane.....	45
Trust Is Like Thin Air – Lauren Jonathan.....	47

Longingly Loved – Marah Leonfils	49
Produce Aisle Pantoum – Claire Crane	51
Off-White – Julius Austin.....	53
A Humble Proposal – Gwendeleine Matthews.....	55

Acknowledgements

The editorial staff would like to express our deep appreciation for the efforts of our faculty advisor, Dr. Gay Lynn Crossley. Without her kind assistance, sage advice, good humor, and judicious criticism, this issue of *The Fioretti* would not have come into being.

“Stars in your crown...”

Editor's Note

As a graduating senior, it has been a blessing to collaborate with the next generation of Marian University English majors in preparing this issue of *The Fioretti*. It reminds me of one of my first visits to Marian, when a copy of *The Fioretti* caught my eye. Lingered in the English department, unsure of whether or not I could take it, Dr. Norton appeared and invited my family and me into his office for a conversation about college. Four years later, things seem to have come full circle! So much has changed at Marian during my time here, but the incredible academic and creative community that I am so thankful to have been a part of remains strong. I can see it in the bright minds gathered around the conference table in the basement of Clare Hall, debating over which submissions to include for this issue. I can feel it in the thought-provoking and inspiring pieces which students sent to us. Whether you are a contributor, a student, an alum, a faculty member, a family member, a friend, or even a prospective student picking this up on a campus tour, I hope that you are also inspired.

Claire Crane
Senior Editor

Editorial Staff and Contributing Artists

Senior Editors: Claire Crane & Sergio Valdes

Assistant Editors: Lori Arend & Hannah Sobhie

Editorial Staff:

Katherine Timmermann

Indigo Faison

Cass Lawson

Brandilyn Worrell

Julius Austin

Katy Mohr

Belinda Struchen

Jessica Wilder

Contributing Artists:

Zachary Bender

Claire Thompson

Emily Meyer

Andrea Nguyen

Laura Herron

Helen Flynn

Claire Crane

Alan Guillen

Quinton Horne

Indigo Faison

Jill Crane

Front Cover Art by: Emily Meyer

Back Cover art by: Indigo Faison



Artwork by: Emily Meyer

Carnival – Natalie Donnelly

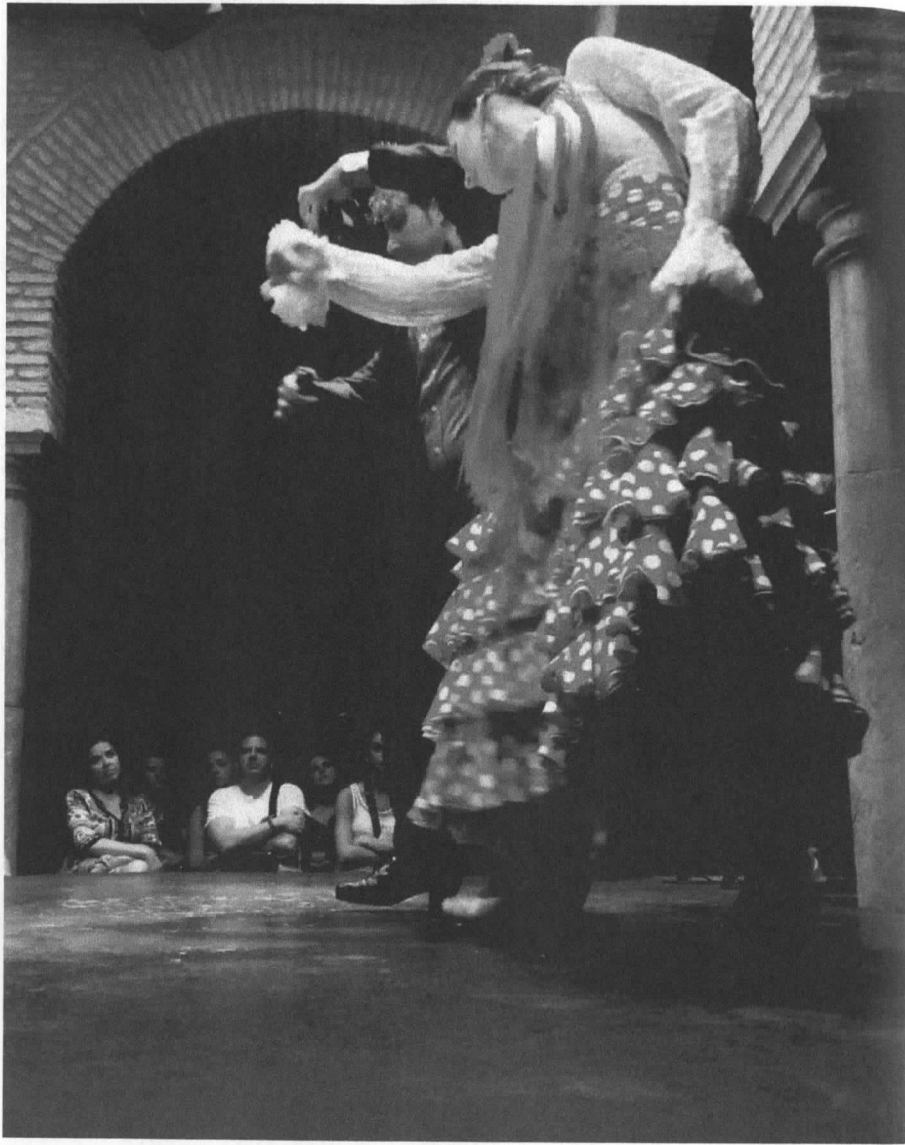
It's the carnival of living art
 Close your eyes and you miss it
 This gift, this connection;
 This moment that never comes back
 This, now, is everything.
 The sights, the sounds, the life
 The one privy only to you
 The one separate from mine and his;
 The one you received
 On the day your mother screamed
 Which was a gift as well,
 But lies not in the today.
 This day that owns greatness;
 Holds ballads and movement,
 Carries strength and redemption,
 And speaks of a promise that will happen
 Only once.
 Embrace the music coated in crystals
 With mismatched décor;
 That begs you to admire the chaos,
 The orchestra playing inside and out
 Your body fighting, and building, and breathing
 A private circus, trying to understand,
 Trying to make sense
 Of the cosmos it belongs to:
 The laughter, the wits, the rules,
 The progression we call metamorphosis
 Unable to be understood,
 As masterpieces never really should
 In the grandeur of our dreams
 We get one golden ticket to this great carnival.



Artwork by: Zachary Bender

Ashes – Gabriella N. Graves

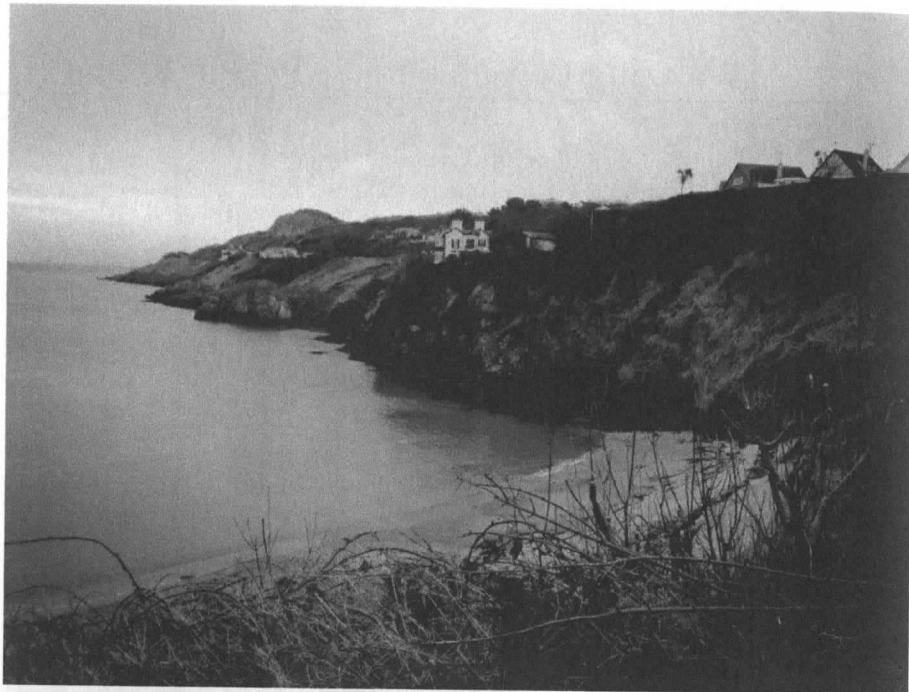
She is the most beautiful when she smokes.
 This vulnerability,
 A glimpse inside her soul.
 Each inhale,
 A sin.
 Each exhale,
 A revelation.
 Blue eyes clouded
 By wispy smoke that always lingers.
 Sharp mind clouded
 By the addiction that never wavers.
 Every drag,
 A piece of the life she will never get back.
 Every ash,
 A piece of the person she will never be.
 And in the end,
 She will be,
 A pile of ashes.



Artwork by: Andrea Nguyen

Waltzing Out of Time – Taylor Trepanier

I skip to the beat within my mind
 one, two, three
 one, two, three
 keeping time the music around my feet
 one, two, three
 one, two, three
 with this my heart finds wings
 with this my soul feels free
 from the pressures of those things surrounding me
 as I hear the gears grinding and the gnashing of teeth
 one, two, three
 one, two, three
 is that a clock ticking or my heart beat?
 I'm running out of time, but for now I am free
 I, twirling, invite you to dance with me
 Please, before I must leave
 one, two, three
 one, two, three
 It's a waltz, a small daydream
 an itty-bitty hope, but from it wells a spring
 an alluring sound, where love is found
 my heart skips a beat
 one, three, four
 one, three, four
 my feet stumble and I fall to the floor
 I hear the lock snap closed and so does the door.



Artwork by: Helen Flynn

My Pal Prometheus – Allen Lasher

I
 return
 to amber solace
 where birdshot can't
 tear my suit coat.
 Glass
 decorates my left shoulder, orange stars
 burning in the deepest crimson
 sky.
 The great pin oaks give me shelter,
 and champagne anoints my battered crown.
 I swap stories
 with my footstool fire, whose smoke
 weeps
 through boughs overhead. My smile winces
 as I remember
 that old chalk-pusher with a chicken-and-gravy gut,
 teaching a room of seventh-grade boys about ancient Greeks.
 The brush
 adds longevity to my runt of a flame,
 and thank Prometheus, one scoundrel from another.
 Nearby yips
 of coyotes draw a sigh,
 for they hear blood hounds before I would. I never thought much
 of God or angels,
 but pretty girls
 and raw knuckles know me well. The past never sleeps for long,
 and neither
 does an old man with back pain and a teenage daughter.
 One minute was
 lavender and pale breasts,
 and another was the tragedy of an unchoked barrel.
 Whatever punishment
 I received
 in that cold
 cabin on Old Black,
 she took on most of her father's wrath. Rage emptied what I wished to fill. The
 birds which pecked my abdomen made certain I wouldn't last the night.
 So if there was ever a drunken moment when my pal Prometheus was to
 find any comfort with a poor white bastard boy,
 this was it.



Artwork by: Alan Guillen

Sorry For Asking – Gabrielle Fales

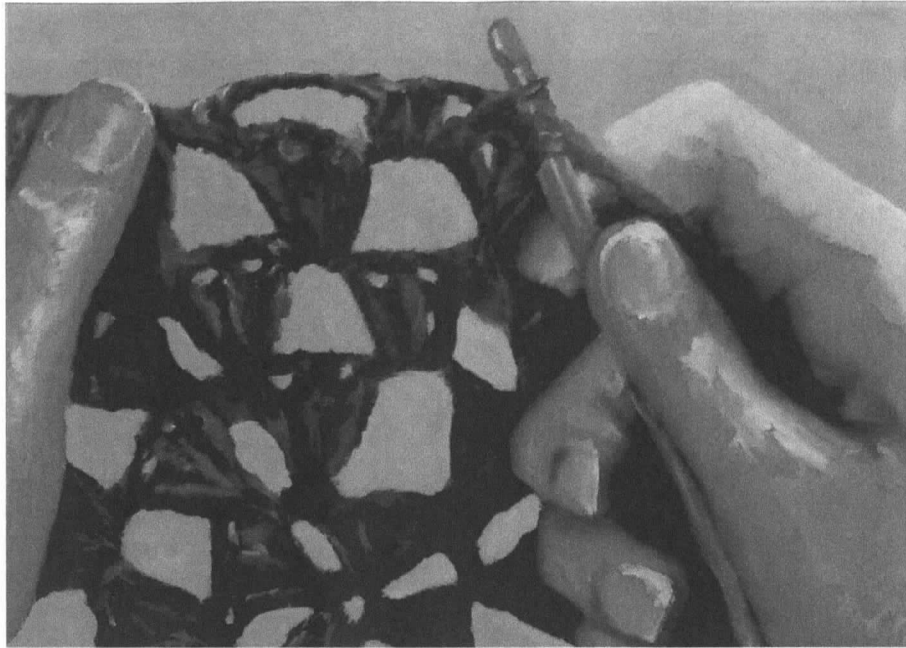
Walking into a jungle of caffeine
 crazed coffee-addicts,
 she asks me to buy her a drink-
 she asks me to buy her a drink and she
 looks at the things for sale in the coffee shop
 and she tells me about her morning
 and that she hates winter but loves the fall
 and that she'd like
 just the cheapest thing on the menu.
 \$1.75 for a cup of joe, nice and black.
 Buy me a drink, she asked, and I said
 no just because I could-
 I said no because I could and
 because I didn't have the money,
 -because it's always about the money.
 I said no, but felt guilty.
 But most people
 wouldn't have asked in the first place.
 Because who asks someone to buy them things?
 Besides children asking their mothers
 to buy their favorite food at the grocery store
 and girlfriends asking for their boyfriends
 to make them their fiancées with a ring.
 And curious little minds asking
 why? why? why?
 only to be told to be quiet.
 Maybe we do all ask for things,
 but we're so used to hearing no that
 I forgot I could say yes.



Artwork by: Emily Meyer

An Empty Driveway – Hannah Sobhie

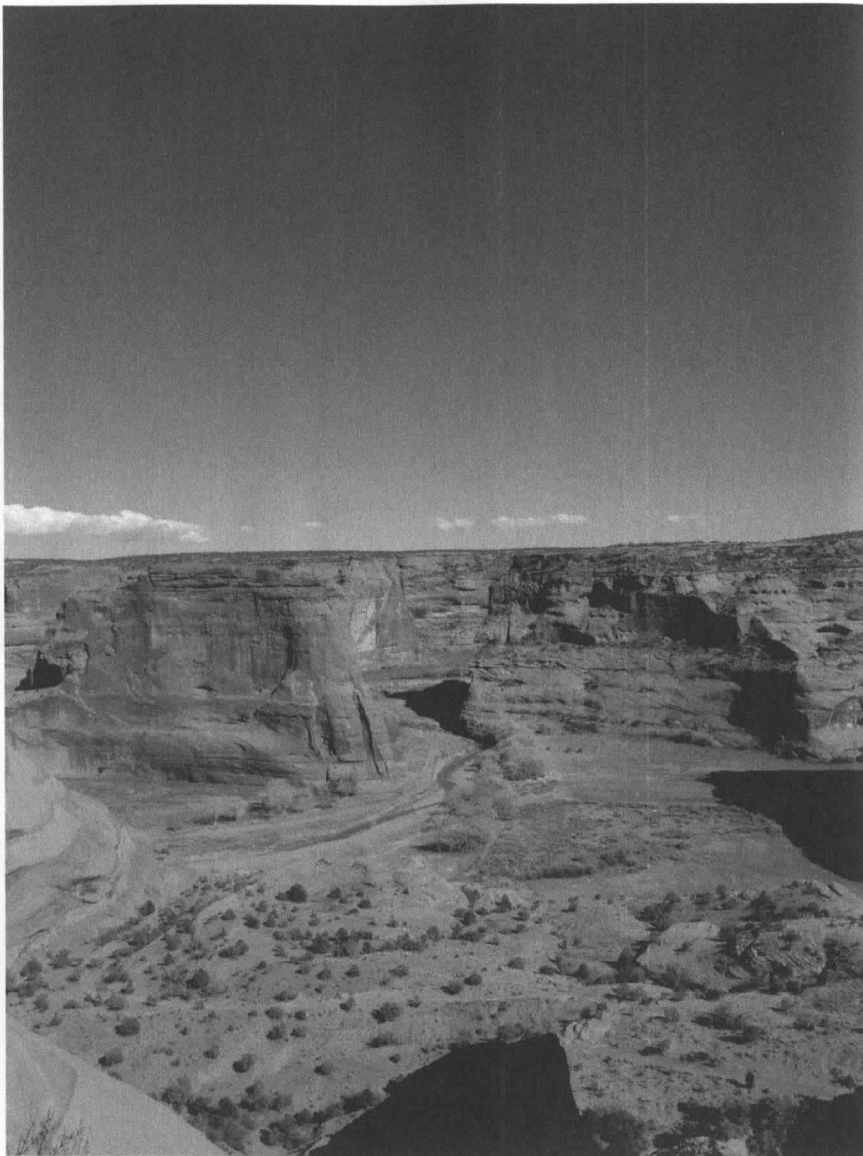
There used to be a man who lived across the street from me. Sitting in a faded green lawn chair at the end of his driveway, watching the world flow past him, his arthritic fingers forever held a freshly lit cigarette. His wrinkled face looked like an aerial view of the Grand Canyon. Driving past him, he always smiled and gave me a noble nod of the head and a ceremonial wave – the cousin of a navy salute. I never spoke a word to him. He reminded me of my grandfather. When I lost him, catching sight of that lordly fellow, an angel in disguise, I felt somehow as though my grandfather hadn't really left me. Last week, driving past his small brick house, his chair was gone, the driveway filled with bags, and the sidewalk filled with cars. Yesterday, it was perfect weather – he would never miss a chance to bask in the sun. Today I watched a younger woman lock the front door and place a "For Sale" sign in the front yard. I miss my grandfather.



Artwork by: Jill Crane

The Meaning of Life – Jill Crane

the meaning of
life
seems less
likely to be found
in the printed text
but in the margins
in the slanted
scribbled
scrawled and scratched
and shared among friends



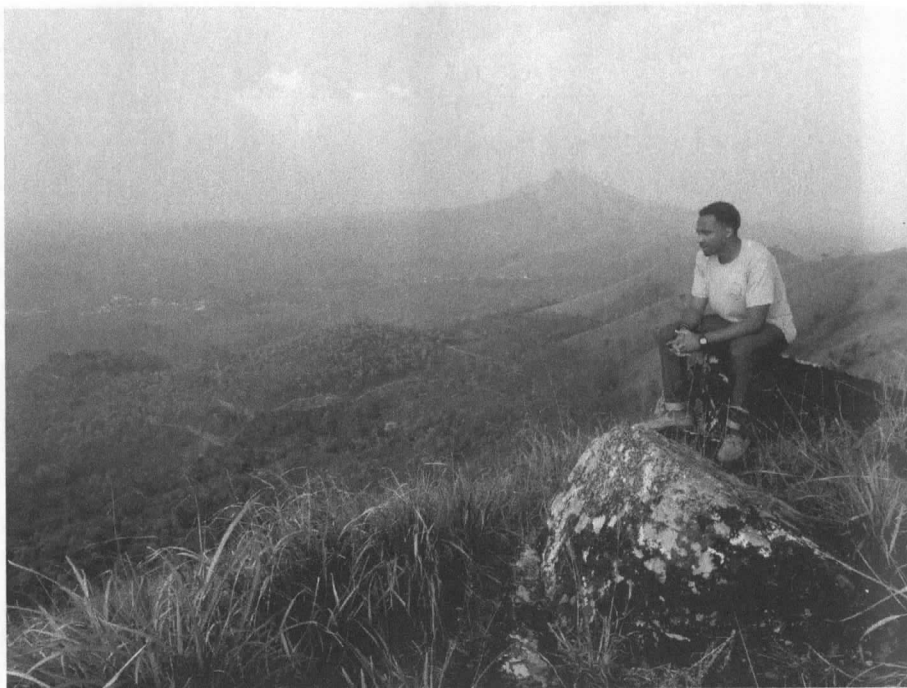
Artwork by: Claire Thompson

Out to Sea – Jill Crane

When I feel myself being
sucked out to sea
and like there's
nothing left of me

When seashells scrape
at my thin-skinned soles
and I wish I was like the bivalves
disappearing, digging holes

When the tide goes out
and the starfish wait for water
my footprints last a little longer
without nature's great ink-blotter



Artwork by: Quinton Horne

Excerpts From the Healer's Bible – Lori Arend

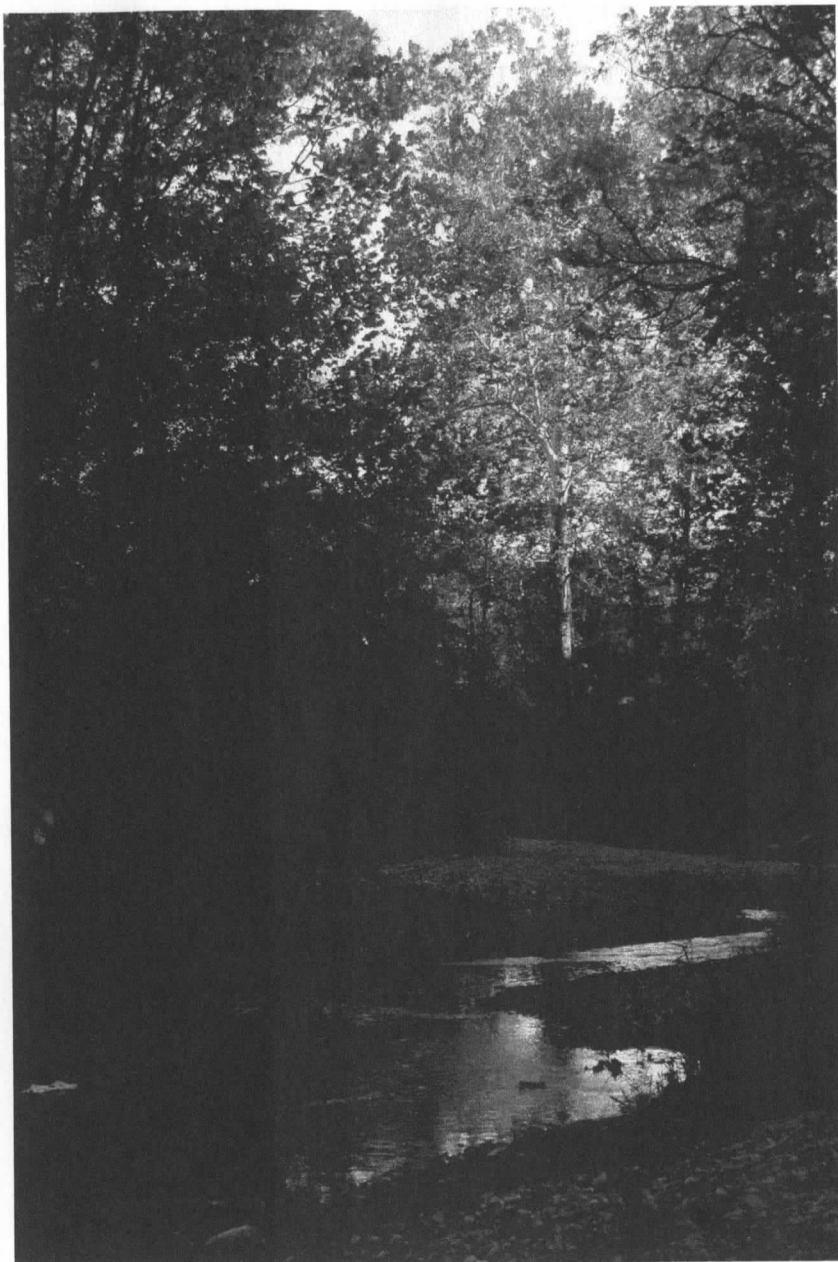
When attempting to raise the dead,
attach yourself to no particular outcome.
Sometimes, they remain inert,
lying at your feet like dry sticks.

...

In the case of severe hemorrhaging,
be prepared to pinch the vessel
between your own two fingers.
This is called compassion.

...

When the soul is gone out of the body,
but it breathes and the eyes are still open,
sometimes one must stop life.
It is the greatest burden we carry.



Artwork by: Emily Meyer

Paper Crane – Lori Arend

On the day when my fingernails
popped their hinges,
my thick blood sprayed a fine mist.

My fingers scrabbled for purchase
on the cliff's smooth face.

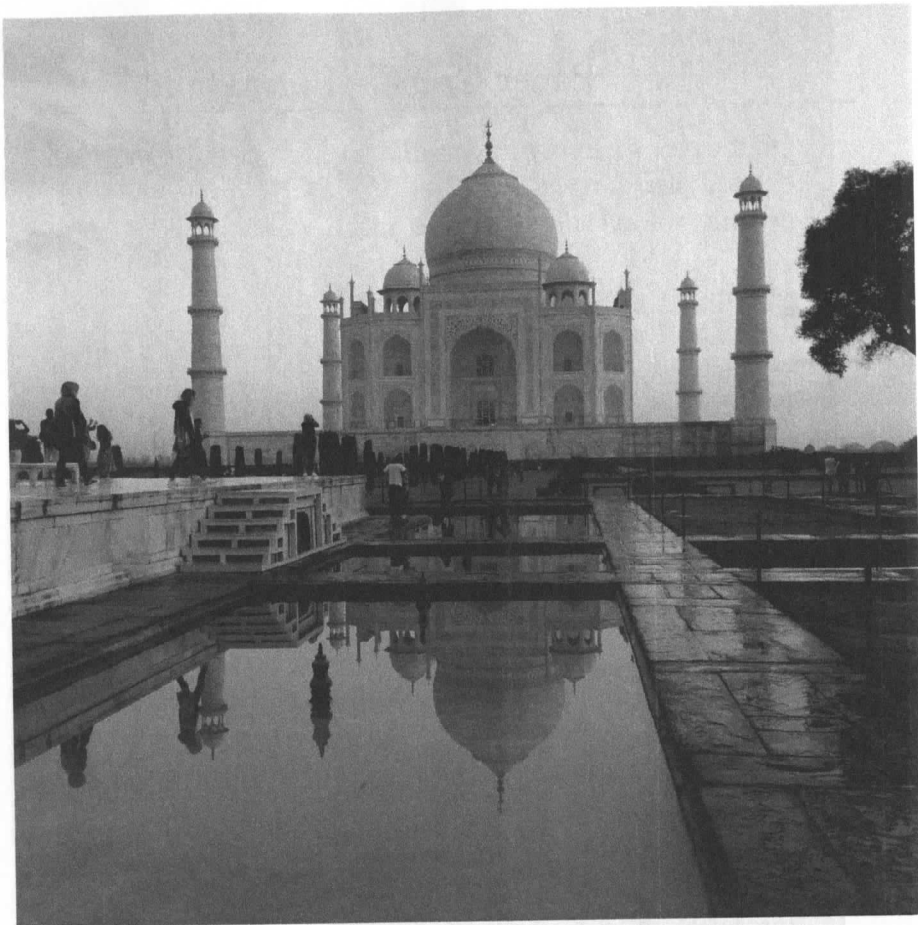
The little ragged half-moons shot away from my hands.
They left me stinging and gore-bedecked.

The world recoiled –
still within sight, but out of reach.

Fingerprints are nothing like treads.
They provide no friction.
Only the torn tips
skidding through rocks,
heating up,
slipping down,
sparks of pain, the last connection.

I promise not to miss my nails,
not to bandage the lacerated fingers.

I will spread my hands flat
and slide,
touching only smoothness.
Until, like a paper crane,
I fold tightly and nestle at the bottom.



Artwork by: Quinton Horne

Fleshing the Skeleton – Abigail Henderson

The facets of yourself won't always bend light in your favor.
 Unlike a pristine Russian glass bead, we're a little jagged.
 Somewhere there had to be substantial pressure,
 my foot or yours underneath Jewell's and her horseshoe.
 We are both coal or clay
 being transmogrified into the new thing,
 whether it be dry or dull, malleable or fucking brilliant
 there's a change in the wind
 and the dragonfly shutters
 eating 100 times its weight everyday
 -mostly in mosquitoes.
 A bothersome entity: like food, is food.
 Like mosquitoes; suck.
 And so does having six beads on one side
 and three on the other.
 The light that we carry may seem to clash
 and try to outshine what we've already collected,
 but light + light just = a bigger light.
 A blinding collaboration
 and a beautiful one.
 While the other horses stopped to graze,
 Jewell would use this time to get ahead.
 Further than the pack, she made it.
 A good-looking piece of wheat
 was enough to slow them down
 and Jewell chose opportunity.
 A man with no hair guided me up a mountain
 and one with three long braids coaxed me down.
 "You gonna run down, girl?"
 Yes, he had three braids and a mouth like the ocean-
 not an ocean. The whole thing.
 He was capable of pulling you under with borrowed words.
 The stories that I heard and
 the family that chose me to be them.
 "Nai-ish" is what I say to you

for your shared, orated experiences
and the belonging that we both, now, experience.
My birth certificate reads: Two Ears.
For we all have two ears and one mouth for a reason.
Now I have two sisters
one brother
two mothers
and one father.
The shitty weak coffee was the only weakness
and I know that I was meant for here.
Well, my circle begins and ends with you.
"Until next time, huh?"
The light and all valuable things becomes our flesh
and have you ever seen a beautiful skeleton?

The New Year's Revival – Hannah Sobhie

In memory of Fakhri Tavakoli. Khalie Doset Daram (I love you)

Once upon a Sunday –
upon the birth of Spring –
I walked within a garden
rising from the dead.
In the midst of resurrection
Winter's dying breath
could not have been more frigid.
Yet still!
Forks of grass awakened from their beds.
Out of doors and out of place,
I shivered where I stood.
Still possessed by Winter's chill –
Still imprisoned in the Grey –
But then!
Through the dark, unsettled clouds,
a light sliced through the sky
and bathed my face in the sun's
most soothing ray –
and my soul began to thaw.



Artwork by: Laura Herron

Finishing Touches – Claire Crane

Pennsylvania, 1914

Did my great-great-grandmother
greet her husband in Russian and
brush coal dust from his cheeks
when he surfaced from the mine?

Canning, Summer's End

Gooseberries prickle you from beyond
the grave, their spines sticking you
through the cheesecloth while their
maroon juices drip from your knuckles.

Stained Glass, 2012

Glass grinders splutter gritty water
over your hands as you cut your
fingertips on the glass shape you push
into the chilly, whirring wheel.

Fireflies, Childhood

Along the calloused pads of my palms
I feel tiny firefly limbs of the hovering
harbinger of a sweltering summer
between my sweat-sticky hands.

Pennsylvania, 1914

Did she make him wash his hands
before pulling a chair out to sit, and
did he embrace her anyway, leaving
smudges on her apron and ears?

Canning, Summer's End

Peeling tomato skins from their flesh
fresh from the pot of boiling water
is a test of endurance, perseverance,
pain, and downright foolhardiness.

Stained Glass, 2012

Crinkles and crackles, glass chips
protesting the pressure you exert on
the plate of color above them, the
cutter screeching along sharpie seam.

Fireflies, Childhood

Canary yellow smudges disappear,
but you can trace them gray in
the dusky air like clouds before
a threat of lightning and thunder.

Pennsylvania, 1914

Did my great-great-grandfather
kiss her twice for the child she was
carrying, unaware that their home
would soon be smoke and cinders?

Canning, Summer's End

Do not take a breath above bubbling
pickling liquid, the pale cucumbers
will take the pungency much better
than your scorched, smarting sinuses.

Stained Glass, 2012

The adhesive on copper wrapping
plucks your palms and fingerprints
as you adjust it around the colorful
curves of glass arranged on the table.

Fireflies, Childhood

Chests warm from the effort of
swimming, we ran our feet dry on
the grass and chased lightning bugs,
embers fallen from the just-set sun.

Pennsylvania, 1914

Did his black sleeves catch hot tears
as he gathered his children to his chest,
promising to return to the orphanage
again, a widower without means?

Canning, Summer's End

Bulblets from walking onions, oh
how they are sneaky little deceivers -
they will have you cringing against
the kitchen cupboards, eyes clenched.

Stained Glass, 2012

Silvery beads of solder skitter
over the plywood as you pull the
searing iron from this rippled pool
of glass, which pops and weeps oil.

Fireflies, Childhood

Sparklers wink through the dusk
across the driveway still warm from
the summer sun, and fireflies blink
back from the woods, watching.

Pennsylvania, 1914

Did their eight year old daughter,
my great-grandmother, hide her face
from stained glass light and shuffle
her feet when she met her stepmother?

Canning, Summer's End

Triumphant cries come at the heels
of a subtle sound, a small pop from
one of the lukewarm mason jars
announcing a garden spiced and saved.

Stained Glass, 2012

Weeks of bandaged fingertips and

bumping heads over scores of flat
shards flush to the table, and then
sunlight floods them and finishes it all.

Fireflies, Childhood

I used to catch crickets behind the
primary school, but something has
changed, and now fireflies are the only
insect I let close enough to touch.

Pennsylvania, 1914

Did my great-grandmother remember
her mother's kisses or her father's tears,
or did they fade, final touches in a story
that grows and goes on and on and on?

Stumped – Taylor Trepanier

Pretty birdie on a wire
give me something to inspire
for my fears are closing in
that I've run out of crafty spins
have my fingers lost their touch?
Are my dreams a bit too much?
Has my creativity turned to dust,
or do I still have that drive, that I must?
Bright red sunsets and flashing streams
come and fill my dreams
Pretty birdie on a wire
give me something that sets my fire



Artwork by: Claire Crane

Bats in the Attic – Lydia Godsil

There are bats in the attic of my Paradise. They smuggled their way into my father's childhood home on a snowy, bleak Valentine's Day some twenty-odd years ago. Empty beds welcomed their decaying bodies, and the tattered sheets became littered with their guano. They forced the tiger lilies – dug up by my grandmother, Rose, from the churchyard and replanted in her own garden – into an early, withered death. Their squealing young were nestled between the funeral arrangements; vines were intertwined like dying lovers' hands. My grandfather, Maury, could not bring himself to throw the plants away, and when I first met him I assumed the leaves and flowerless stems had always been a part of the front room. That was where Rose used to play her violin; I suppose putting the pots there simply made sense to a man who had wanted to die when she did.

My mother never went up into the attic. She even protested when we children expressed interest. The one time she did ascend the steps a bat flew into her hair and beat her with its leathery wings. It chased her down the staircase, my infant brother clutched tightly to her breast. No mother has been up there since Rose last kissed her children goodnight, as I understand it.

The bats rooted further into their perches when Rose's sister died. I recall standing in the original family room and seeing Rose's sister's things trundled into cardboard moving boxes and being sold off. I refused to want anything, yet my mother pressed a few teacups into my hand. I was tempted to drop them and hear them shatter, to scream and wail because I didn't want a dead woman's things that had been purchased at what seemed like an auction. It felt sacrilegious.

It still felt like Paradise to me. The trains would pull cars across the town, sides covered with graffiti as if it were war paint. The brick roads rumbled more assuredly under a car tire than smooth, city asphalt. Time slowed there. The world would fall to ruin outside the city limits, and all might still seem peaceful. Nothing could prevent me from cozying up with a dictionary and allowing myself to be

lulled into security by Maury's voice and stories. He had shown me, once, where he kept the old greeting cards Rose had won in a game of rummy. Only now, he had said, was he able to begin giving them away. My mother received an outdated Christmas card that year on her birthday.

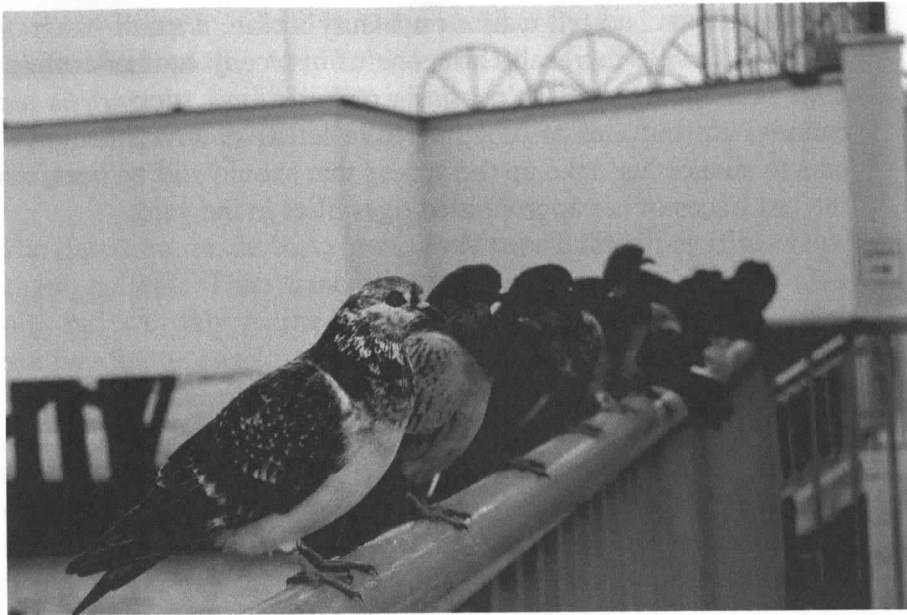
The bats soon made their home in Maury's throat, as if to claim his tongue as well. Their cancerous existence grew to the size of a softball, and we only learned of it when he mentioned that it had become painful to swallow. I think he wanted to suffer, to turn as green as her pancreas had made her because that was as close as he was going to get to her while still on earth. When they cut it out, he lost as many pounds as he had years etched into his bones. His belt was crusted and creased toward the end, only now visible because it was clinched farther down the pegs. He continued to wear overalls, a pencil and plastic fork tucked safely into a front breast pocket.

I finally saw a bat, once; its fuzzy, black lump of a body was lying motionless on the roof of the garage, kitty-corner from the kitchen window. Maury said he had killed it with a tennis racket. He had simply held it up until the blind thing's echolocation missed the gaps in the netting.

One year, I did not have to see the bats to notice their handiwork. Everyone had gone for the holiday besides me, my minimum wage job not allowing for the two days off to travel to my Paradise. My sister kept me updated, sending videos of cooking chaos, my family saying grace around the table, and my hermit of a grandfather telling his tall tales. They had obviously been taken surreptitiously, everything out of focus and one completely dark from it being captured from the crook of her elbow. I could almost hear the bats' screeches as I loosed body-wrenching cries in my car on the way home from a friend's family meal.

They must have found a way to cripple more than Maury's mouth. I wonder what it means when your father comes into the room and your heart doesn't skip a beat when he says – in that somber and paternal way of his, tears slightly choking his voice – that he has

news: the bats had left a film on Maury's skin, a small patch on the tibia. And while he recalls how one of his many brothers offered his own skin for the graft – psoriasis makes things tricky, you see – I cannot help but feel as though I have let Rose down. I allowed the bats to silence her, take up the spaces that should still be hers, remove the last traces of her appropriated tiger lilies in the yard.



Artwork by: Laura Herron

Elevator Music – Gabriella Fales

The elevator stopped and the doors opened:
"Adult Psychiatry Care Unit."
I took an uncertain step as the monotonous
elevator music ushered me out.

The air was thick with my nervous discomfort
and the smell of stagnant air;
a cocktail of rubbing alcohol and must.

A man walked by in a daze,
with a plain papery hospital gown
hanging from his slim shoulders.
His throat was necklaced in
slashes of red and black-
the marks of injury and repair.

He hummed absentmindedly, the
same tune of the elevator music.

Everything was sterile and plain;
grey walls, fluorescent lights,
tasteless meals processed then packaged.

There was a plexiglass box
locked around the only TV in the room-
boxed in, closed off from the world,
with no hope of escaping,
humming quietly to itself.



Artwork by: Claire Thompson

Falling Bird – Lydia Godsil

They say we were birds once, but we have forgotten how to fly.
I remembered,
sitting at the end of the faux-cushioned bench,
unshaven legs dangling,
feet finally not touching the ground,
suspended and wearing the tennis shoes that made me feel
attractive.

It was chilly, the air whipping my thin hair out of the tie that
bound it.
My sister's white t-shirt from her service work,
my mother's running shorts
with the three goldenrod stripes down the sides.
My heart – the only article I wear that is mine –
is still.
Content after the jittery beating.

Falling is cold,
the odd pull of gravity
yanking tears from my eyes.
I wasn't actually crying.
I laugh on roller coasters; I suppose this sensation is something similar.
I can see the edge of the world
like the aerial views in photography collections,
the city planning papers.
Those are pretty adult things to think about.

I want to forget about all the rules of
falling,
follow my own as I get as close to
flying as I will ever be.
If I feel eighty feet tall, it is because I am hundreds of feet taller.
It's because, though my heart was still a moment ago,
I feel a little white bird settling there.
I will never be content again.



Artwork by: Alan Guillen

Before the Bottle – Carolyn Swartz

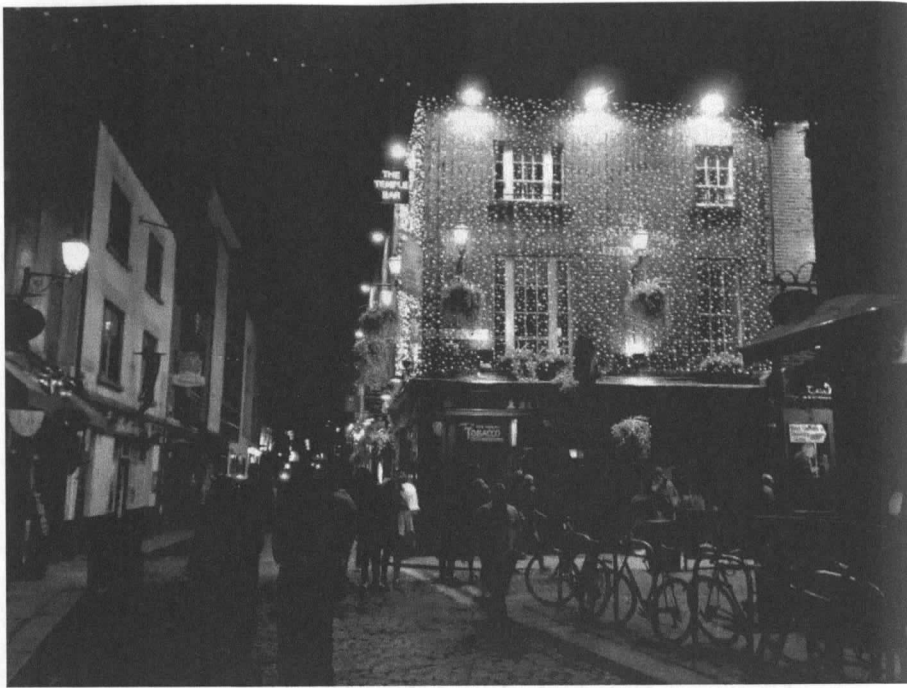
“Get some clothes,” she was hysterical,
 “Enough for a few weeks,” she sobbed.
 “We aren’t staying here another second,
 He’s not worth a goodbye.”

Crying deeply, I held your leg,
 Barking loudly, I begged to stay.
 The more volume in my scream,
 The more cursing left your mouth.

Throwing in her towel,
 My mother marched out the door.
 The sound of her engine faded away.
 Out of sight, but not out of mind.

Grab your friends, Jack and Daniel,
 Long nights staring at the television.
 Drops of liquor in your blood stream,
 Depressed anger within your mind.

No more father-daughter trips to the batting cage;
 Swinging at balls turned to swinging at me
 The pain you force upon my body
 You bury beneath the bottle.



Artwork by: Helen Flynn

Metropolitan Moldau – Hannah Sobhie

Every day, long before the morning migration
when the smog of this city's lungs is but ankle level,
he's already at his usual spot:
beneath a skyscraper – beside a coffee joint.
And it's when the taxis start passing
that he knows it's time.

That is when, after the imaginary flick of
a conductor's baton,
a violin or a cracked guitar
opens its chest
and sings.
He gives them voices they never knew they could have,
and it all comes from his calloused fingers.

The Romantic hotdog vendor says his face is the spitting image of
Edgar Allen Poe's – except his smile.
But just the same, the crowd picks up
and moves to the tap of his foot,
and by the time the pedestrians are swallowed by buildings,
he is singing,
for music isn't music without a story.
Today he sings a song he heard the violin whisper to him:
"Augustus and the City of Marble."

He's not religious
but he prays to Saint Cecelia,
the patron saint of music –
and he swears that she can hear him.
Every day he looks for her in the blur of human legs forever rushing
past him.
Sometimes he feels like a ghost,
annoying the living with his songs.
This city is his necropolis.

He plays till his fingers bleed.
He plays for fellow sinners
and sings to Saint Cecelia and the pigeons while
the taxies usher in the commute of the setting sun:
“They say that beauty is only skin deep, but my kingdom’s made of
marble - -
and so am I.”

An Ode to Freshman Year – Jill Crane

Here’s to new friendships
And awkward dinners and lunches.
Here’s to pizza bites at 3 AM
And rolling with the punches.
Here’s to lanyards around necks
And sleeping through alarms.
Here’s to you, freshmen—
To college beginnings
And to freshman year’s charms.



Artwork by: Alan Guillen

Trust Is Like Thin Air – Lauren Jonathan

Don't say "if you could only see me now..."
because I always want to see you...

Don't say "if you could only feel this pain..."
because with every drop of blood, the stitches of my heart break
free...

Don't say "if only someone in the world really knew me.. really loved
me..."
because I feel as if I've known you my whole life... nothing can hurt
you anymore...

If you opened your eyes to the world, then you could see,
all this pain and hurt you've caused me through your own pain and
sorrow
you hold your head down so low
you hair spilling into your eyes
and pull your sleeves down

I'm the only one who sees
the real you you can be.
take my hand
I'll show you a world
where you can be at peace
and there will be one set of footprints in the sand
this is when I will carry you
I will never leave you to confuse
take my hand and I'll show you the way through this dark



Artwork by: Indigo Faison

Longingly Loved – Marah Leonfil

After Sir Moon himself
bids farewell, briefly appearing
for an act delivered almost
every night, He rests,
blanketed behind the vast
silhouette of Mme. Cloud

Thereby allowing
Darkness and Silence
to dance a dance of jubilee
on the deadeast of nights.

Contorted bodies intertwine,
shifting into perfect place,
a lock to its only key.

And each night,
Celeste crashes upon immense figures
of her Mother, Father
adorning them incandescently.

And during this time of night,
when the dead seem as alive
as those encased in slumber,
I find myself surfacing

Lulled conscious
by thoughts of you

Am I consumed by you enough
to dream passionate dreams
of warm embraces under
star-kissed skies,

Our personal light show

reflecting on
your arm, my elbow
your leg, my neck,

Positioned in a cool embrace,
linked by the depth
of our ebony upon
ebony skin?
No, dreams can never suffice.

Therefore, I'm
Lulled conscious
by thoughts of you

Choosing instead never to lie down,
but to run— blindly,
cloaked only by
Darkness and Silence,
guided by the smallest radiating light.
Thanks be to Celeste!

Running,
past Sir Moon
soundly sleeping besides
His Madame,
grasping a little piece of
her silhouette,
I fall into perfect place,
just as you are surfacing,

Lulled conscious
by thoughts of me

Produce Aisle Pantoum – Claire Crane

Who plundered the humid tropics and raided noisy bazaars
to pack this linoleum-tiled grocery store with such splendor?
And in the middle of cornstalk-stubble, soggy Indiana winter!
This machine-misted produce has travelled more than me!

Beneath unlovely, buzzing fluorescent lights such splendor:
coconuts, pomegranates, papaya, mangoes, star fruit, plantains,
multi-syllabled and mysterious, all more travelled than me.
I lob delicate peaches unceremoniously into a thin plastic bag.

Coconuts, pomegranates, papaya, mangoes, star fruit, plantains,
my eyes linger over you, tongue longing to taste, wondering...
Oranges, bananas, lemons, familiarity goes into my plastic bag—
but even these do not take root in Indiana's clumpy clay earth.

Are they like corn to the tropics, I find myself wondering,
beneath lovely sun, dripping with dew in monsoon seasons,
their heavy sugar perfume lingering over damp, fragrant earth?
And what of this fresh corn in cornstalk-stubble, soggy winter?



Artwork by: Laura Herron

Off-White – Julius Austin

A box. That's all there is, no beginning, no end, only a box. I don't remember falling asleep or waking up here, all I know is, I am in a box. That's it! The box is off-white, eggshell I think. There are four walls, a ceiling and a floor, as one would think for a box. All that off-white, no variation. All I see is that color, eggshell. It took me almost a whole day, moving slowly through that color, to discover that there was even a wall.

I was scared to move, but I was more scared not to, so slowly I crept forward. Finding my footing, this ground seemed firm and hard. Then slowly pushing my foot forward, keeping it against the ground as I went. Scared if I lost contact I might not find the floor again in the endless field of white. Eventually I made a step, then another, and another. Soon I'd made four and I felt something when I tried to slide my foot forward - a wall! Reaching out I found I could touch it, just as flat, just as hard, and just like everything else here, that same unending white!

That first day I found the wall, my first wall. I learned all I could about it. It feels just the same as the floor, and I can just touch the ceiling on my toes. After that I found the rest. I found where my first wall turned. The corners met, making up the other three walls of my box-- that was when I learned that I was in a cube. I learned all about each wall, but none as much as the first wall, that one, the first thing I found in this off-white box. Now I always sleep looking at that first wall, just to not get lost in this one-colored box.

It takes me six and a half paces to move from corner to corner. I learned this after the first week, and now know my cube down to a science. I can't see the cube's corners, they blend perfectly into one another despite the right angle. I don't know how the light stays the same despite me moving, but I can't get it to change. I spent another week looking for anything to change, yet nothing did. I don't even know if I sleep any more, if time passes here, all I can see is that color; all I can feel is this box.

I think I dreamed today for the first time since I came here, not much, but it got darker for a second. Just that second, that's all I got, but there was something new. I saw more in that second than I have

in the weeks I have been here. For once I can say I saw something other than the box. I spent the day thinking about it - something simple - but it was there. I know saw darkness. I can't lose that, just as I can't lose my box.

It's been so long now. All there is, all I know, is this off-white. I can still just remember the darkness. Every few days I walk the box, six and a half steps. I turn, six and a half steps. I turn, six and a half steps. I turn, six and a half steps. I do this again and again, four times around is enough for today. I move to the center, and I sit looking at the off-white of my first wall. Always that off-white. Always the first wall.

I'm at it again, I've gone around three times. I am on my last lap. I don't know why I make laps, but I feel I should. I stop at the wall, the first wall I know more than all the rest.

There! Right there, it's different, it's still white but it's not the same. There is another color, how could I not have seen this in the wall? I thought I knew everything about the first wall. There it is - a spot darker white than the rest of the box. It's different! I sit down in front of the spot, staring at it, taking it all in., The spot is a square. It's off from the box, it is its own little box.

A box.

A Humble Proposal – Gwendeleine Matthews

If you were to walk through a grade school tomorrow, you would undoubtedly see familiar signs of learning from your childhood: first and second graders completing worksheets to help them memorize addition or multiplication facts, teachers instructing their young pupils in history and culture, and children struggling through daily reading and grammar assignments to achieve the literacy that is such a traditional component of education. Surely every literate person can remember the grueling, tedious process of learning to read, and tragically, many parents and educators simply do not realize the futility of their efforts to retain the skill in children today. Not only is reading education a waste of time and effort for both teachers and students, but continuing to include reading in grade school curricula is also harmful for students and the society they will one day make up.

Reading, by its very nature, is a solitary activity, and children who spend valuable class time sitting alone reading are wasting their opportunity to practice social skills. Socialization is much more relevant to the children's futures as active members of society than any dusty, old-fashioned book. The most important role of education is to pass culture and societal values on to the next generation. Schools' very existence is in the effort of "organizing and rewarding group conformity among children" (Price, et al), which is the essence of socialization, not curriculum. Learning to read only detracts from the students' socialization experience, thereby rendering them sadly unconformed and unfit for adult interactions.

Keeping reading skills in grade school curricula is becoming an unwieldy and unnecessary burden for the teachers, who could easily focus on training the new generations of this country to function in the global economy if reading were to be removed from their curricula. Class time could be spent on far more important matters than such trivialities as phonics, spelling, and grammar, and the students would be more focused if their minds were less cluttered with antiquated ideas.

Eliminating reading in the classroom would also improve the self-esteem of children who have reading disorders such as dyslexia, which is a major stumbling block for many grade school students who are learning to read. In the US, approximately 20 out of 100 children suffer from a reading disorder, and 15-20% of Americans have some form of dyslexia ("Understanding"). In addition, the value of reading has decreased drastically with the prevalence of technology in modern society. The futile struggles of millions of children with dyslexia could easily and productively be ended by simply instructing students in touch-screen usage, internet safety, and adaptability to new advances in user interfaces, instead of teaching the English language.

Teaching reading is also expensive; federal funding currently supporting English education could be easily redirected to the economy, where it is certainly needed. Not even considering countless billions of State and local fundings of reading curriculum, over 13 billion federal dollars are spent supporting reading education ("10 Facts"). This vast amount of funding could go toward a much more worthwhile cause for the students than reading, like cultural phenomena in the cinema, technological integration with gaming programs, and valuable socialization time, all of which are less expensive than the millions of books that schools buy each year. The government could certainly use this cutback in education funding for boosting the economy or decreasing spending.

A final advantage to abandoning reading education lies at the heart of the Republican system itself. Governmental proceedings today are drawn out beyond the realm of efficiency because of needless argument and disagreement in the political process, which is a product of the reality that too many people are involved in government. If the illiterate public of the future could entrust its interests to the few experts best qualified to lead the country, the Republic would be a truly ideal government, running smoothly and effectively under the care of its educated leaders who have concern for the people foremost in mind. The best way to achieve this ideal future is to stop teaching literacy now, so that America can adjust to this system of trust and reliance.

For teachers, parents, and students alike, ending reading as a part of grade school education would solve numerous problems and

undoubtedly promise a brighter, safer future. Not teaching reading will overall help students achieve more advanced social and technological skills, as well as generally alleviating a burden from overworked, underpaid teachers, increasing students' general self-esteem, solving funding problems, and penetrating to the heart of American government and life. If ignorance is bliss, then an illiterate America will surely be a much happier one.

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