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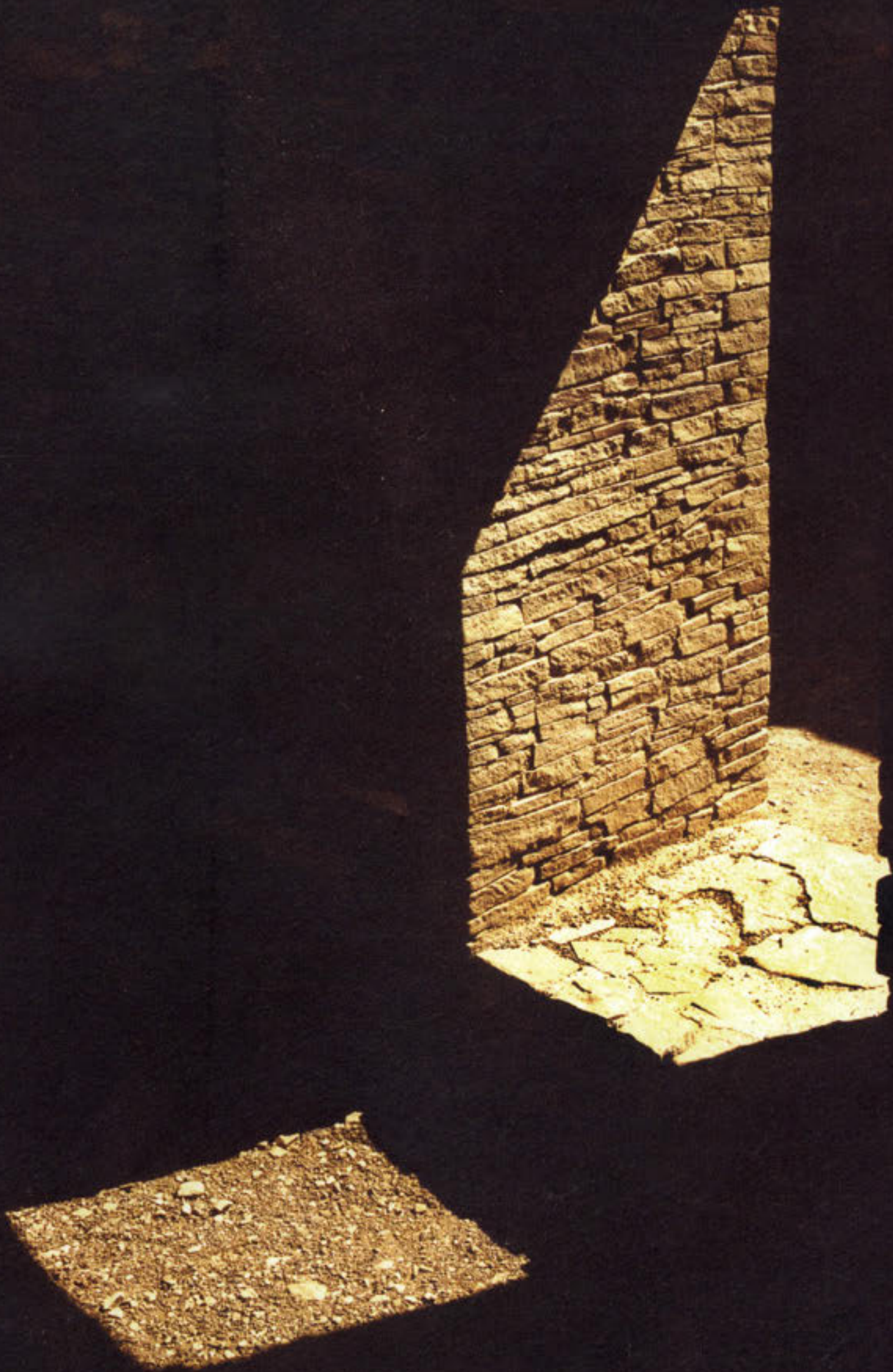
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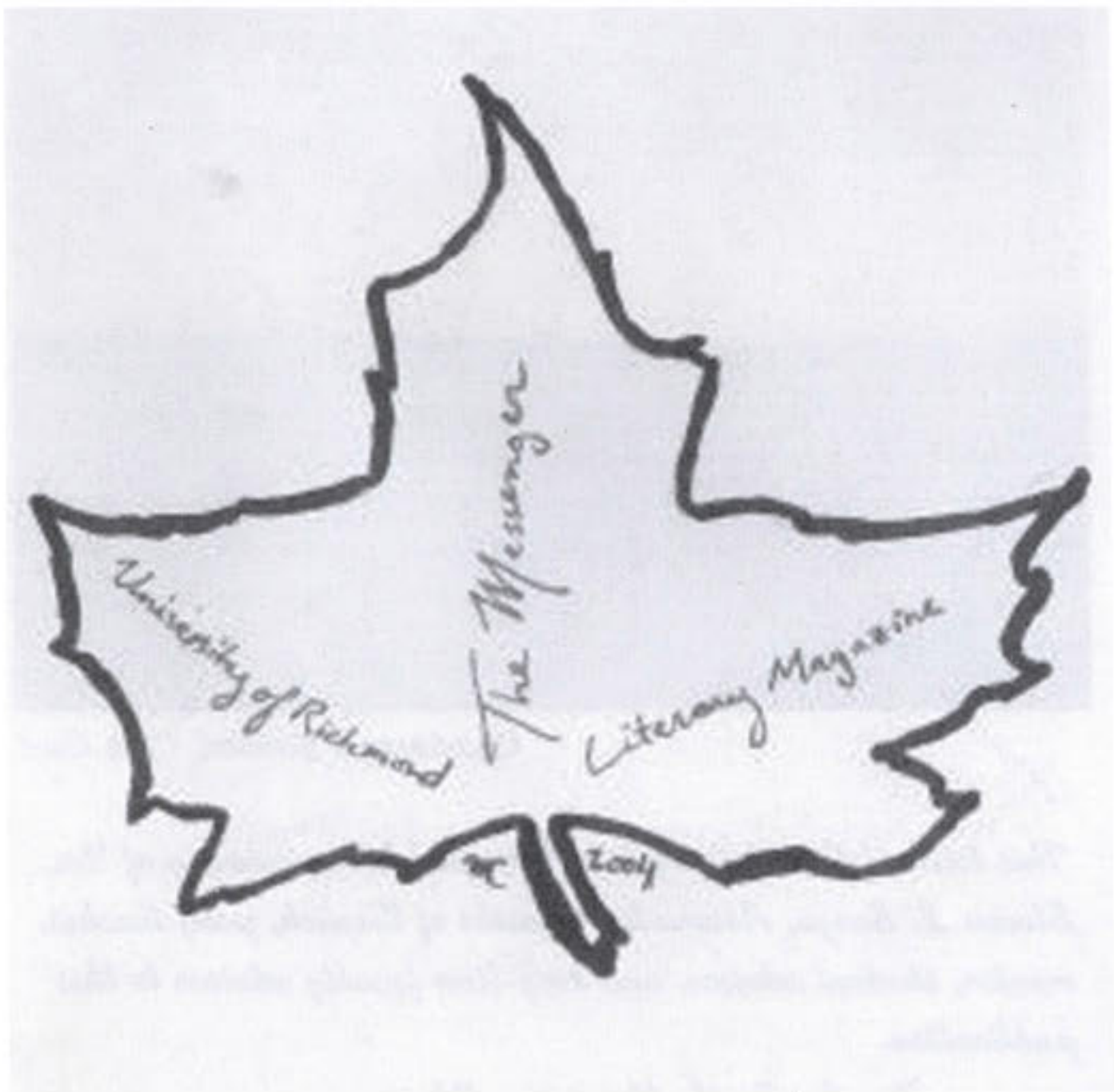
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Charleston Sunset, *Chris Creel*

This issue of the Messenger is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Steven L. Barza, Associate Professor of English, poet, teacher, mentor, student advisor, and long-time faculty advisor to this publication.

*-Dr. Joe Essid, Messenger Advisor
and the Messenger staff*

Oak

a hundred rings

run their eternal courses in me

silent and towering

so much seen

so little to say

Jared Campbell

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20

Sanatorium

This bedroom is acquiring a peculiar geology
Shoe boxes mass on top of bags
Clothing solidifies into small mountains
Weeks of complacency allow objects
to take on stonely qualities
Inert, they become heavier -
well-founded on my fatigue.

When the illness renders me bed bound
Domesticity is the first virtue to go
Kindness and Consideration,
second and third
Piety is of the least concern,
And love is a laughable state.

The folks moving about down below are
as much as icebergs
Their humanity has ceased to translate
Speaking another language,
They are shards of bedrock-
inanimate but painful nonetheless.

I cannot be spurred to move
I have no impulse, no joy, no basic color to my thought
These topographical roommates are not comrades
But sour commiserators in a mutual prison
If I remain still awhile, I may escape the feeling
that Illness is being.
Then I too shall be petrified and feel no regret.

Haven Herrin



Holy Chimayo, Shauna Havercamp

Self-sacrifice for progeneration,

Fly on the wall

a bloodshot eye in the rearview mirror
searches for souls like Louis Braille.
silent eyes cry an invisible tear
for Closter phobic kids trying to sail
past the bonds of tightly knit friendships
through perceptual deconstruction of the present
and all that escapism represents
in yet another identical session
of dramatic and distracted reflections.
the rosary dances like a metronome
in harmony with the tune of indirection
while we search for a place to call home.
comfort comes in tantalizing hints:
placating smiles amid condescending glances;
damned social games make no sense
like dogmatic moral stances.
mumble, glower, and caress empty egos,
feign happiness to elude the moment
while the impression subversively overthrows
resistance to the transient but potent
memories of a linear lifetime.
coincidences connect like constellations,
committing an anthropomorphic crime.
celestial bodies don't send salutations,
nor do they grant competence
to the ailing minds of generation excess
tripping clumsily through existence
like Timothy Leary possessed
with pedagogical dereliction.
snow consumes the frozen lake
providing satisfactory friction
to allow anyone a break

staring medusa in the eye
forces static facial expressions
of which only money or blood can buy.
another perspective for the collection;
like shackles dragging behind objectivity
or merely an emotional imperfection
flailing amid ambiguity.
ever seen a bubble in a bubble in a bubble?
they're similar to negative exponents
but interject as verbal rubble
lacking cognitive components,
and fractions are inversely proportionate
to quantifiable narcissism
it seems rather unfortunate
that people deem it optimism.
the immortal water glass debate
of half full or half empty
depends on who poured and who drank
a and b are the seeds for c and d,
even the future has a history
worth saving or exacerbating
in detrimental psycho-social misery
which merits salient effacing
to dispel extraneous heart palpitations
and squandered attention
to those immune to meditations
or proactive intervention.

Matthew Harrison

236

“Nigiri and Maki”

Ones and zeros
March across a green plain,
Melt in my mouth.

“Thai”

An hour of life
Consumed shuffling dead trees creates one dead lincoln.

I receive a reflected smile from the waitress.
In the promise of two dead lincolns,
She returns bearing a boiling sea in which three dead prawns swim
Lazily
I sip at the spicy broth
Greedy thankful for the life
I take from these aquatic unfortunates
(inhaling life out of them sip by sip,
or exhaling life into them by the very appropriation?)

“Mind”

working its sprouts through the cracks of my skull like the
gentle growth that destroys
city sidewalks
sprouts divorce into branches, branches, branches and branches,
roses bloom, thorns proliferate, will any doves *dare* to nest
in me?

Jared Campbell



Determination, *Mai-Anh Tran*



Helen Wills

hips and

Gracious hips and
 this is what is
 am into become
 us into now
 And the gentle scrape of
 nails on skin.
 Skin is what we are after,
 and hair, and youth.
 Cheek to cheek as warm
 breath makes new
 sounds crossing ears.
 This would be me forever.
 I do not remember this from
 futures past entirely now
 We are in you.
 Languid with before's heat,
 i and you
 warm summer blankets
 against December.

John Dunn

Carnal Knowledge

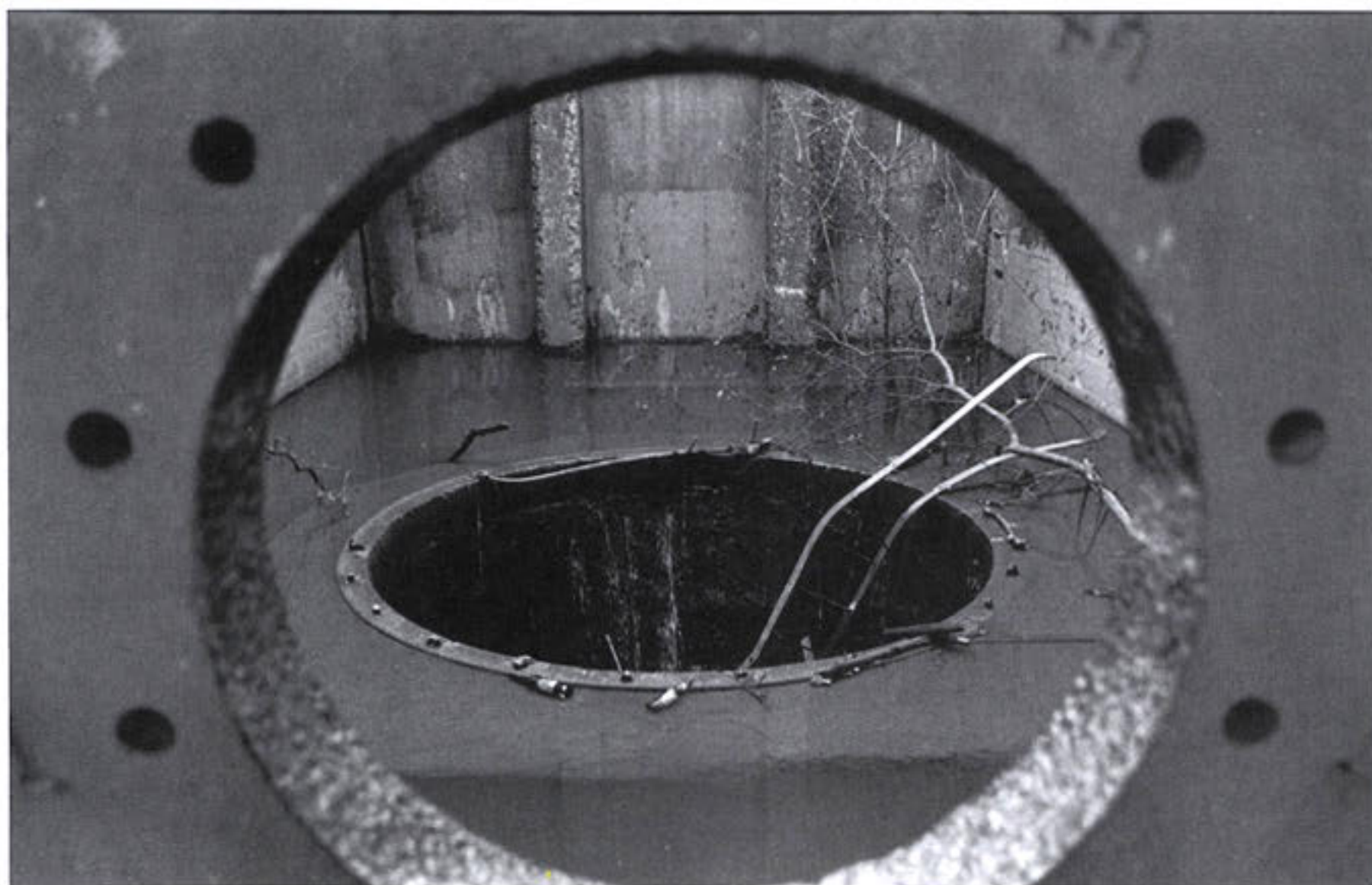
Pt. 1:

I know you,
Sheepish specter of sordid yesteryears.
You tantalize me
Awkwardly
With indignant lust.
Your taste lingers on my tongue
Like cheap espresso. I once ravished
You with the polite discretion of a
Connoisseur.
Premature bliss, analogous to heartache,
Forsaking notions of morality with
Existential primal inclinations.
You loved being on top;
Straddling me with childish elation
And fierce sexual dependency.
You clawed my body just to make my muscles burn in exasperation,
While leaving fiery reminders of your
Mislabelled affection to slowly seep down upon
Sweat-soaked sheets,
Just to leave memories under
Your fingernails, like you couldn't
Understand the streams of
Liquefied soul drenching my cheeks,
Or when I left myself inside of you
To pump out hate and frustration
And general psychological malaise.
Or was that hope in the disorienting guise of interdependency
Welling up inside of me only to splash
Out of you and into the nocturnal cesspool.

Pt. 2:

I knew you
Until I forgot that I cared,
Until I buried you deep into the farthest reaches of my unconscious,
Like
I used to bury my love for you
In you.
You dissipated peacefully like the final
Gusts of a tropical storm,
And abated with clumsy resignation
When approaching
the insurmountable molehill known as my ego.
The guru at the pinnacle waves farewell yet again,
Even as you try to resurrect yourself
Like a false Mary Magdalene
Lick my id like a tootsie pop
All you want,
Your salivary glands can't whet my whistle;
It merely provokes the knowing laughter
Of wounded prey
Mocking the overt snare the second time around.
Dreams and the linear conceptualization of time
Don't coincide with your moment and mine
My apologies,
But not really.

Matthew Harrison



History devouring the past - the image says it all right?, *Justin Obbagy*

A Danger in Natural Attractions

Surrendering to the whims
Of the mischievous breeze luring you
Over the too-tall cliff poisoned with a warning sign

Thawing like snow
As it drips through the greedy fingers
Of a towering oak rooted in quicksand crevices

Emerging from haze
To rage the dead valley brush
Of a desert hillside strangled by its own jagged hips

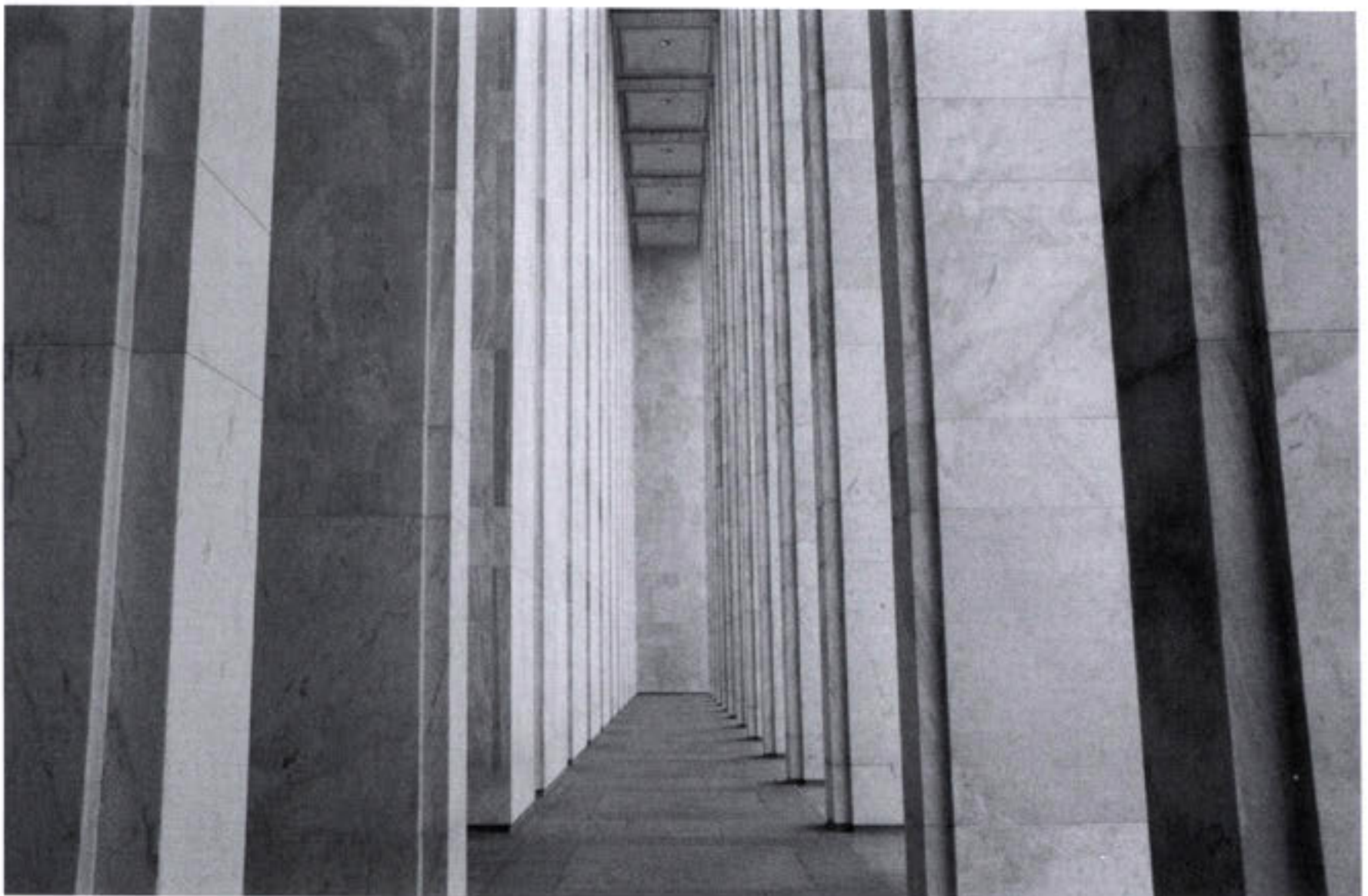
You fall
But I follow by necessity

Godfrey Plata

Fracture

Your face cracked
not in smile
but as ice
like the other afternoon.
Stones thrown
and the fragile sheet
splintered and
crazily mazed
mazily crazed
and I wondered
which frigid slab
would sink first,
the freckle
near your temple
or your simple inconsideration

Kate Seferian



Columns, *Andrew Wasuwongse*

The Curse on My Team is Far Superior to the Curse on Your Team

Martin Schreiber-Stainthorp

Listen closely Red Sox fans, because you're about to be pissed off by a Cubs supporter. I'll just go right out and say it: the curse on my team is far superior to the curse on your team. Being a Chicago Cubs faithful is like trying to get drunk off mouthwash. You know that there is some alcohol in there, and hey you gotta do what you gotta do, so you keep chugging that Listerine hoping that the joys of drunkenness will eventually come and compensate for the enormous pain you currently feel in your mouth. Then you wake up licking wet tile below the toilet bowl.

We all know the feeling, but only Cubs fans have experienced it annually for the past 95 years. Hoping for a Cubs World Series is akin to Sloppy Joe hoping to become intoxicated off just one case of Beast. It's a valiant, but ultimately futile effort.

Despite the long losing legacy, us Cubbie fans were finally feeling a little buzzed on a Tuesday night in October. It seemed as though all that pain was finally coming to an end. Chicago led a team of Jewish retirees from Florida by a 3-0 score, and were five outs from the World Series. But suddenly, faster than I could say Barukh atah Adonai, Elohaynu, melekh ha-olam asher keed'shanu b'meetzvotav v'tzeevanu l'had'lik neir shel Chanukkah, it was all over. The Cubs gave up eight runs in an inning that had Satan and Steve Bartman's fingerprints written all over it.

After another loss the next day, the Cubs were done, while those so-called "Marlins" moved on to face a universally-hated team from New York in the Fall Classic. Enjoy that series. And by enjoy, I mean enjoy not watching. Because you won't. Nobody will. Except for Drew Mayo.

I was upset at first. But a small part of me felt some relief, reassured that this was not the year the streak would end. When something defines you, you become attached to it. The Cubs and losing are as inseparable as meat and cheese when pulling a prank on an Orthodox Jew. Repeated failure creates a tragic comedy, a romantic parable about hopes and dreams and the inherent inequities in life. Someone has to be the loser. Someone has to be the underdog. And when one team embraces this role so thoroughly and completely, as the Cubs have done, you love them all the more for it. The Cubs are like the kid in the school play who buys into that "there are no small roles, only small actors" crap, and plays his non-speaking "tree" role with so much gusto. They make losing into an art form.

When the Cubs finally win, it will mark the ending to a remarkable story of perseverance and courage. But what comes after it? The Cubs and everything they have stood for over the past years will be rendered obsolete. They will become just another above-average franchise, an Atlanta Braves or a San Francisco Giants, classy teams with tradition but without a

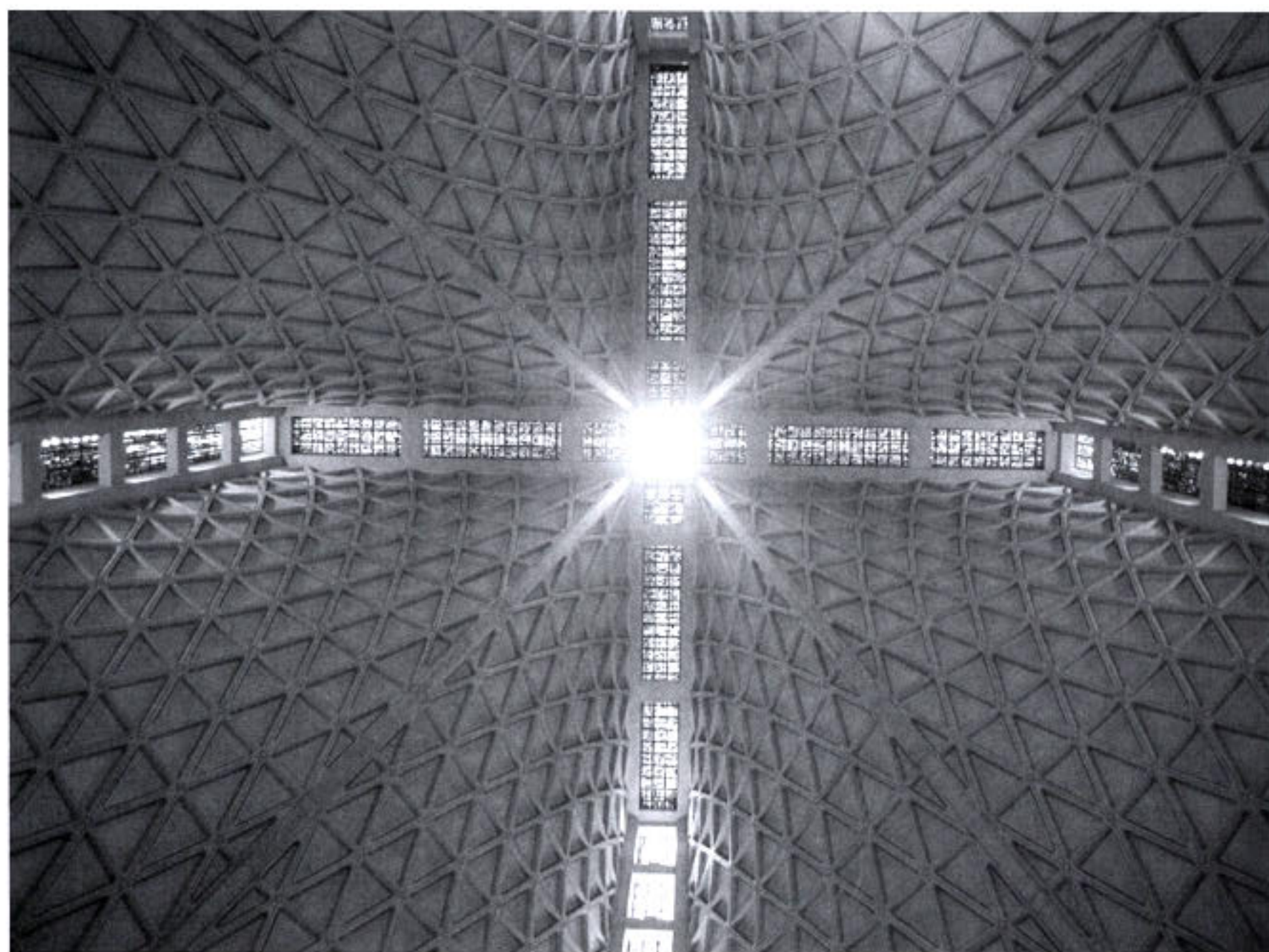
common story or theme to unite their followers and create a common bond. Statistically speaking and all curses aside, the Cubs have to win eventually. You would think. But the longer it takes, the better the story becomes.

If Rudy had walked onto the Notre Dame football team and started by the third game, it would have made a nice story. But struggling through junior college and two years on the Fighting Irish practice squad, only to come on for one play against the Georgia Institute of Technology Yellow Jackets? That is goose bumps material. Repeated, unrelenting failure culminating in victory is a rare treat usually reserved for Hollywood plot-lines, so when it occurs in real life we need to take full advantage of it.

Now I have no real reason to discredit Boston and all the pain and suffering their fan base has been through. I'll relent: our curse is really not superior, and you probably have even more to whine about than I do. But Red Sox fans seem to renounce what they are. Like Adam Sandler in "Billy Madison", they have "loser denial", bitter about the past 85 years and convinced that they should have been, and will be, winners once again. Both teams wallow in their respective curses and streaks, no doubt, but Boston fans seem more ready and willing to throw off the shackles of defeat. Cub fans have more of a dual nature to their love of the team, hoping for victory while also rejoicing in the "lovable losers" aura that surrounds it all.

Some may call this shallow, superficial, and selfish, at least jealous White Sox fans do, but it actually approaches a deeper understanding of love and desire. Winning satisfies an immediate need for gratification. The Yankees are like a hot girl that always puts out. But losing is more like a loving relationship, in that you will put up with years and years of failure just so that, maybe, one day, you will have success; a success that will feel so much sweeter for all that was endured. It's like sitting through "Crossroads" just to get a glimpse of Britney Spears in her underwear. Let's be honest guys, we all saw that movie. And it wasn't just because we're big Dan Akroyd fans.

So bring on more losses, curses, and beer, because on the North Side of Chicago losing isn't everything, it's the only thing.



Hyperbolic Paraboloid, *Brad Pinkos*

Classical Black Woman

You see: black and white notes on a staff with
Changing time and keys, fancied by unfamiliar Latin words.

I see: A challenge that you should dare to play.
You wish you had my trills and 32nd note slurs that can
Only be fingered by the calloused hands of a black violinist.

You hear: an abstraction of boggling rhythm
With high screeching pitches that has lost its direction.

I hear: an innate groove of sound that is
Written in code to fool you, leading to freedom.
Don't you wish your hips switched to 3rd position like mine?
Or your fortissimo transcended to improbable highs?
I am the musical masterpiece that tortured Mozart in his dreams.

You feel: the weight of my pages and pages of music,
And intimidated, fastidiously scan its measures
Your eyes unfocused, allowing it to conform into Blackness.

I feel: an emotional pilgrimage through Congo Square,
Syncopated railroad paths, and fields saturated with spiritual harmony.
You can't help but to covet my tone and grandiose finale,
I am Beauty, the concerto ringing in your ear that
Has you tapping your foot and swinging your head

To underestimate my complexity would be foolish.
Read my notes and learn my unpredictable style, for
It is inevitable; I shall be the contemporary genre of the world.
But now, these dusted clumps on the edges just add
To my character and conceal the Movement that I withhold.

Trenise Robinson

Though do not ask me what they say

Vicious Cycle

A growing sore,
This injury of the unacceptant.
An inability to want
And to know,

and want

Just the same.

A repeated indecision
Indecision
Indecision
Makes its incision
Upon my recently-left-unguarded heart
And while attempting its salve with
Thoughts of future intents,
Remains acidic to the core.

I wish,
Simply,
To call you my own.
But you have sworn an oath to your past
Exchanging vows with an ideal
Which is e're more fatalistic than the fears which tie you to its bed

And clinging to its weathered whims of
Soon-forgotten, ill-begotten trysts
You'll too fester there...
All too quickly you'll return,
Making love to that ideal which does love,
But cannot love in return.

You
You shall rot in past embraces
And ghastly faces
Once warmed and pressed
To you
Now withering within
The depleting frame-rate
Of one's recollection.

And WHY?
To romanticize life
To death?
Clinging only wears one
to the quick of regret.

And I stand here,
Near,
Dear to your quixotic
Views on life and love
Only yet to cling to the ideal of you.
Fastidious as this may be.

Ami Cainam

The Worst In Me

I...

am...

tired...

(of the tears that you drip, dribble, drop
off of your face and down into my skull
tormenting my hypothalamus
sending a cold chill running through my everything
the tears that tumble my sense of me into rubble...
too weak to tell you no)

I...

am sick...

(of the shame that you sting, stick, stab
me with on a warm summer night
making the world a place of pain
shredding through my lower intestine like a shotgun
the shame that leaves me gaping at my wound...
reaching for your arms)

I am run down...

(with the regrets that wriggle, wiggle, wind
through the walls of my consciousness
ripping down my self-confidence
cracking open the shell of my self-worth
the regrets that leave me like humpty dumpty...
begging you for glue)



Carmen Hermo

I'm finished...

(with forgiveness that I have found, focused, flung
at you from the depths of my soul
forcing rage down until I find it
seeping through the pores in my skin
the forgiveness that keeps me thinking...
maybe it isn't you)

Dan Gibson

As if you've done so many times before

A Reason to Live Forever...

Mikey, upon reaching the age of ten, quietly realized that he had never been one million years old nor known anyone who had. He didn't think it would be such a bad gig and so set his mind to it. One million years later, Mikey was lounging comfortably on his mauve colored couch (which was then again in vogue), and reflecting on his millenia of life experiences, when he discovered he had done just about everything a man could do except be pope. Sadly, he could not recall what, during that first one hundred-thousandth of his lifetime had led him to desire to be so old. He believed he simply liked the idea of eight hundred billion people calling him great, great, great, great Grandpa Mikey.

John Dunn



Quiscent, *Chris Creel*

In Meditation: So Enters the Weight of My People

Eyes shut, jaw slackened, and shoulders loose.
 With each focused breath rising to the tips
 of my twisted braids, and falling to the ends of
 my two-tone toes, I expel the toxic gases
 of the world that kink the flow of my confidence
 And corrode the lining of my strength.
 Exterior obstructed sounds leave me isolated and
 Intrigued by the spiced scent irradiating from my being.

It is in this elevated consciousness of self that I am
 Vulnerable to an influx of babbling earthy colors.
 Browns, reds, yellows, greens, and oranges.
 Their sharp, quick, repetitive bursts fire like gunshots,
 Filling my mind to its throbbing capacity.
 I am blinded by chains of crystalline bling
 Distorting my circadian rhythm, like cataracts.
 Sneakily a distant beat fades in, soon dominating the confusion,
 Distinguishing itself to be S.O.S tapped on prison bars.

Overwhelmed, I gasp to regain my selfish breathing,
 Only to be titillated by a powder that burns my nostrils,
 Spreads through my core, and sets my sensations into a spiral
 That ends in pure Blackness. A final lasting image
 After an ugly, abusive, awakening intervention.
 Trying to escape the musky after taste on my full lips
 Again I breath deep to cleanse of its residue,
 And soon my sense of self is redeemed
 But the Blackness and its message has left is mark.

Trenise Robinson

Popcorn

There is a kernel lodged deep in my mind,
buried under years of grading policies and shoeshine
that may as well be caffeinated.
If only I could turn off anticipation of the alarm clock
set to explode in a dream at pre-dawn.

Something tells me I didn't always chew
my nails. I am
always out of time
but it's a nasty habit.

this kernel this kernel this kernel
 nestled in a memory between the palm of
my five-year old fist and a makeshift machete
lopping the life out of hairy old dandelions
spreading their white seed into the breeze
to fertilize yards down the street.

or another memory like it
 long ago.

The kernel wants at least probation.
It wants to be retrieved.
 Or is this some mother-fucking urge
hiding behind memories with pig-tails Sigmund?

The sound of the steadily beating drum,
 beat by the hands of the primitive man
 resonates within.

one thousand father down the tree
two thousand ten thousand
whatever – exactness clouds the picture.

I must shake the hand of the primitive man
to distract him from his drum – I need good sleep.

I need to dive into the ocean of memory
to retrieve this pearl that reminds me of me,
tossed like a cigarette butt out of the window
at a fork in the road so long ago.

calling now with ancient rhythm
to burst into thought and then into action
of turning against the current of time
and forcing a way back
to the wilderness.

Should I answer?

Well
the rest of my brain is a bowl of popcorn
strongly urging against it,
so I don't think I really can.

Matthew Homan



Haven Herrin



Hydrogen Bomb

yipyipyipyipyipyipyip
tailtailtailtailtailtail
spending so much energy
to reach his own end

Jared Campbell



Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands, *Chris Creel*

Hydrogen Bomb

yipyipyipyipyipyipyip
tailtailtailtailtailtail
spending so much energy
to reach his own end

Jared Campbell



Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands, *Chris Creel*

Sojourn

Kate Seferian

I love Scott.

I had been staring at this announcement on the seatback in front of me for the past 96 minutes. The “o” was slightly bigger than it should have been in relationship to its fellow letters, and to my OCD-infested mind it was torture.

Jenna was also “here” in 1996, apparently.

Attempting to chill my mind over the whole “o” fiasco, I turned my gaze to the couple sitting across the narrow aisle from me. The woman, or to be completely accurate, *Girl Thrust Into Womanhood Prematurely*, appeared to be discomfited at the idea of remaining on the bus for another 6 hours. Her pregnant belly was an enormous bubble squeezed into a cramped space, and I feared it would burst and splatter placenta in all directions.

I had never liked pregnant women.

However, the mental image of a bus filled with afterbirth intrigued me, and I couldn't help but stare. The man poked his blushing bride and she shifted her body to face me and all of my rudeness. And I proceeded to open my mouth. Lo! what disasters may occur!

“Are you ready to be a mother?”

From where came this effrontery?

“I mean, how old are you? Can you raise a child?”

Fully expecting my decapitated head to be rolling around on the floor (hopefully before the baby explosion....any minute now....) I managed to force my lips closed and choked back any remaining comments. Alas, my larynx performed its own version of the Heimlich.

“Is he the father? I hope you two can make it through this together.”

Too stunned to react, the girl slowly retreated back and turned her doe eyes away.

Ten minutes later I was still trying to wrestle that darn foot out of my

mouth when the girl managed to squirm and shimmy her way up into a teetering standing position. Panting from exertion, she gathered all of her remaining strength and slapped the alleged father of her cherub.

“Rosemary, what....?” he spluttered.

She then summed up some last cells of adrenaline, and while raising her other hand turned in my direction. I instantly recoiled, knowing all too well that I deserved a good tear-worthy slap, but I guess (thankfully) that ambidexterity was something she lacked because I ended up receiving what almost felt like a love tap. Her attempt at violence bordered on amusing, but I kept silent and watched Rosemary shove her way up the aisle and collapse into a seat.

The two old women sitting in front of me swiveled around and stuck out their chicken necks. They proceeded to peck at my manners.

“What a faux pas, dearie,” chided one.

“Where’s your heart?” the other chimed.

Cluck, cluck, cluck.

Searching for something to shoo them away, my hand groped around in my army bag and grabbed a bottle of blue nail polish. I dabbed the shimmering blue liquid onto my nails and splayed my fingers, admiring my handiwork. The old chickens scowled.

“Here, sniff this. It will make you feel better,” I advised, pushing the bottle under their noses. Disgusted, they turned around and continued to complain in hushed clucks.

Our father-to-be chose this moment to make an awkward dash up to his beloved. Once again she began to swell up (not from maternal bliss, I assure you) and tried to escape his pleading orbs and suppliant position on bent knees. Rosemary heaved herself up and across the aisle, her billowing stomach (burst! burst!) leading the way. Her behemoth figure knocked her beau backwards, but he remained impervious to her not-so-subtle, and quite abusive, come to think of it, gestures. Hell hath no fury like a woman’s scorn.

Suddenly the bus stopped, tossing everyone forward and Romeo on top of his rotund Juliet.

The doors squawked open.
Thunder cracked.

One of the old chickens fainted.

Rosemary slapped her man.

And gothic girl (a reincarnation of Edgar Allen Poe? Maybe.) clambered into view, possessions discombobulated and juggled wildly to maintain a balance. Robert Frost would have been proud. A fetal juggernaut blocked the otherwise clear path down the center of the bus, though, and this greatly impeded Poe's progress. After a few moments of struggle and impressive squeezing, the girl managed to stow her belongings in the proper place. Bechained and bestudded, she sauntered down the aisle, combat boots thudding. Quite happy sitting alone, I averted my eyes and turned up the volume on my headphones in an attempt to force my mind into the nirvana engendered by the British beats of The Clash. If only Joe Strummer hadn't died.

"Did you know Joe Strummer died of heart complications on Christmas Eve?"

Mistakenly believing that I was the social type, Poe plopped down next to me. She eyed the CD case like a child focused on a sparkling object.

"It was Christmas Eve Eve," I mumbled, shrinking back into the corner of my seat, a make-shift hermit shell.

"Well, we all have to die sometime," she prattled on.

The trumpets have sounded. Let the destruction begin.

"We are already walking slabs of death," I responded.

"Come again?"

"Our skin, honey bunch. Cells push up from the stratum basale and as they approach the superficial layer, the epidermis, they flatten and die. You know, keratinocytes and such."

An appropriate (but untrue) answer concerning her quizzical expression would have been an affirmative regarding any intake of crack on my part.

“OK, that’s kind of morbid,” she choked out, obviously disturbed at the idea of being covered with millions of corpses, so to speak. The two old chickens in front of us cast pretty overt glances in my direction and murmured to each other. (Sweet nothings, perhaps?) Pick a little, talk a little. Cheep, cheep, cheep.

My raven friend had put up with enough and flapped a few seats back. Reluctant to admit defeat, and not to be outdone by my blue nail polish, she whipped out some black lipstick and slathered a coat over her lips. (Pruning some ruffled feathers, I suppose?)

The bus picked that same exact moment to come to a halt, once again forcing all of the passengers forward and slamming us into the seat-backs. My cheek squished against the fuzzy ridges of corduroy, and out of the corner of my eye I caught a satisfying glimpse of black lipstick smearing a cheek. She looked like an inebriated football player. Hah.



Michael Opalenski

Pregnant girl darted out the doors and waddled with surprising quickness to the bathroom inside the Quik-Mart. I watched the others file off on quests for Milky Ways and Nutter-Butters and then settled back and closed my eyes. I pondered.

The picture. (My real mother.)

She was supposedly my real mother, my biological mom. Real. What does that mean, anyway? She didn't raise me, hug me, punish me, laugh with me, sing to me.

Biological.

I guess that word made all the difference. Because now she wants me to be her real, biological daughter. The dilemma didn't end there. I could barely live with myself; I didn't even know myself. How could I deal with Bio-Mom if I was suffering my own identity crisis? I didn't have a clue. Where will I end up? How will I know when I get there? Travel heals all. This was my journey, my life.

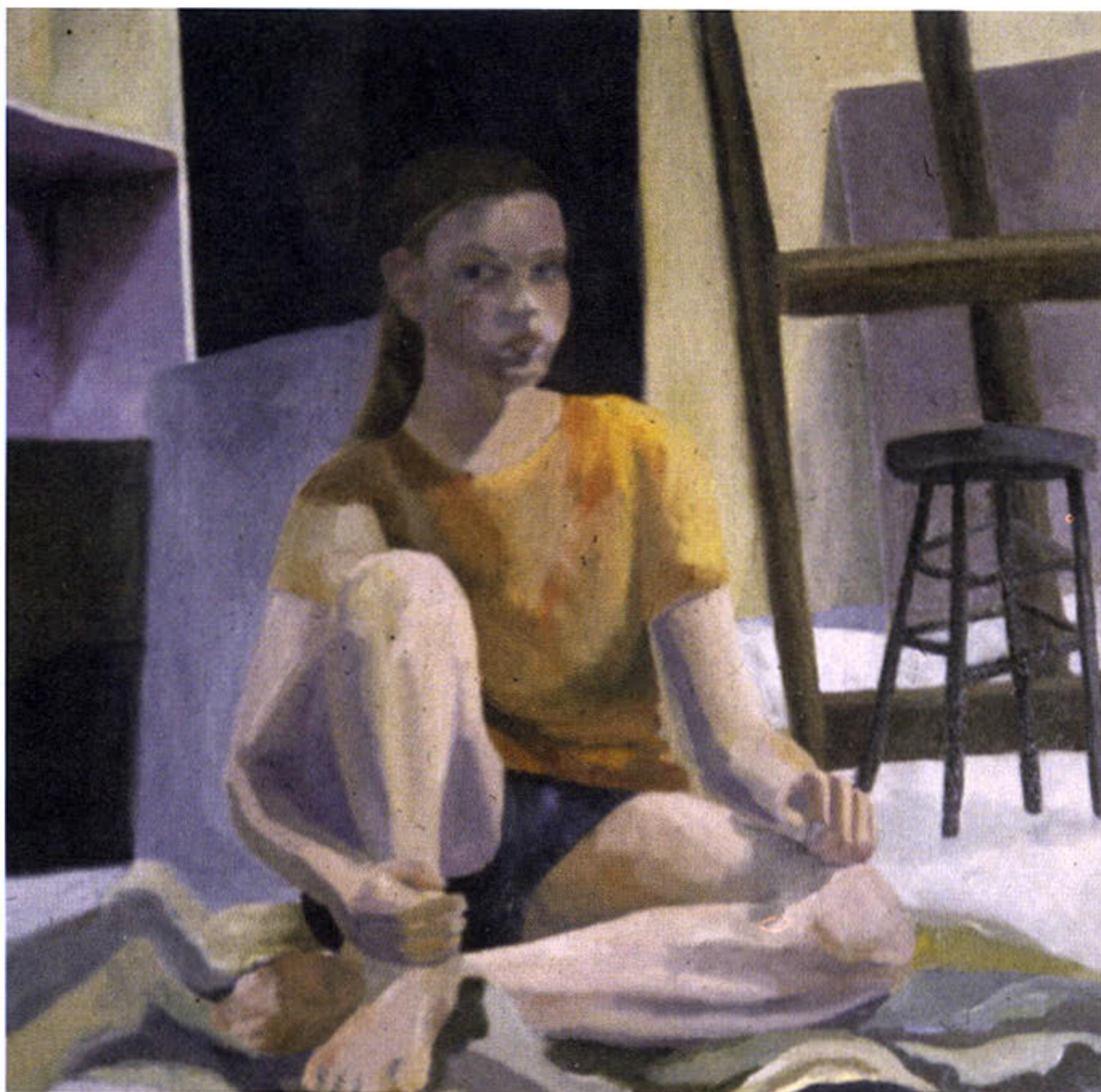
The bus chugged to a start. "Wait!" I yelled to the bus driver. Do I get off? Do I call home? Where is home? I looked at the faces watching me.

"Those girls. And the father. They aren't here," I said.

Outside, gothic girl, Rosemary, and her partner came running to the bus. Poe was equipped with a handful of Wet-Naps. (Lipstick's a killer to get out.)

Well, I had done my good deed for the day, and as a reward I snuggled into nap position. The bus pulled away from the Quik-Mart and droned on down the highway.

Here we go.



Haven Herrin

But how big is omniscience anyway?

Defying Gravity - The Environmental Tango

Beyond the glass
The trees dynamic
Enthusiastic
Wave their arms about
Emphatically gesturing
This way and that,
Knowing what they say
Is Truth.

Step outside, look at them now.
Feel the rain, the wind.
It is not the trees at all
But what surrounds
Pushing, pulling

(The trees do not know that what they seem to believe...
is just the work of the forces upon them.)

And when the wind's song changes,
Soon will their dance.

And so it is with the world.
Or at least, so it seems...

Corinne Harner

Skipping

Walking on water is pedestrian,
I skip merrily,
Leaving not a trail, but three sets of imperialist circles,
Subduing and subsuming all in their path until satiated with conquest
they return formlessly to their source
I soar over my newborn child until, slapping the surface, I beget
another I am caught!
And am pulled in
Down and down
Until I rest peacefully on the floor

Jared Campbell

Metamorphoses

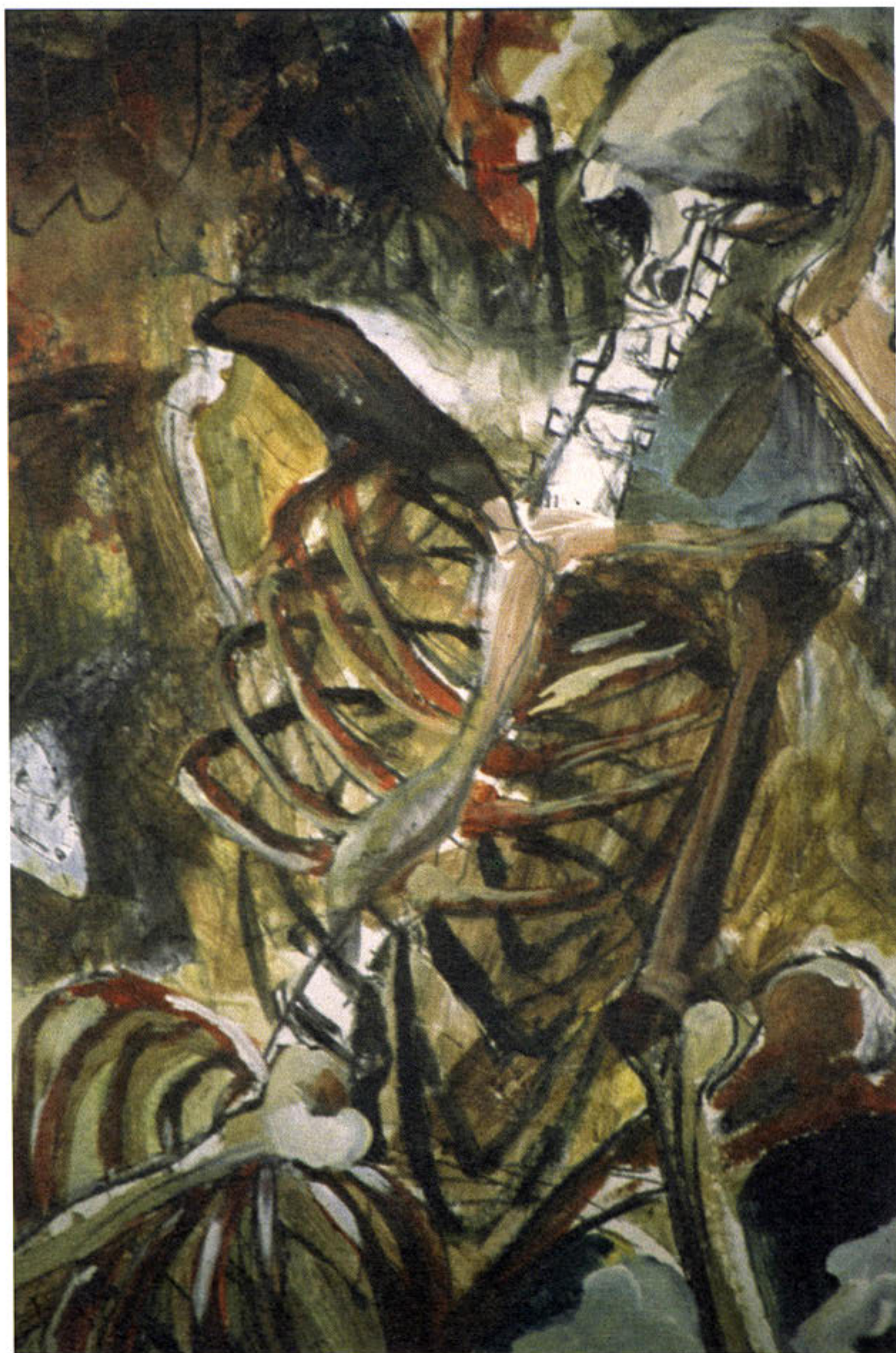
xiv

Alive with possibility, Pygmalion's statue burst forth:
"My love," says he, "you live."
"I live," says she, "to love."
I do not know if you have ever lain with a sculpture;
Pygmalion had not. Nor did he entirely trust her body:
"Do you have a liver?" he asked.
"Does it matter?" she said.
It mattered, in the end. He had given her a mouth,
But little else—so when he served
The aged Falernian wine, she collapsed
As the fluid soaked her empty innards.
She did not spontaneously combust, though
This fiction would make the truth more interesting.
Rather, her tears at short life were fiery.
With all the alcohol and the wooden frames,
The artist's workshop was no more.
A pity he had not sculpted a phoenix.

xvi

So Apollo tired of chasing stars and sibyls, and lusted for something novel:
Enter Daphne, who runs for a thousand miles without stopping—she is empowered
By anachronistic endurance drinks; she hops over the Parthenon, over Olympus,
Over Parnassus, swims the Adriatic, eventually finds the Yangtze and zips up
Past aging farmers, over Everest, reaching, at last, where she began;
Apollo, who has been waiting, catches her just as she falls, saying, "Thanks
To my corporate sponsors; this race would have been impossible without them."
But the god finds her supple and faint, open to his advances; she does not realize
She has been chasing herself. Enraged at her stupidity, a passing, grandmotherly divinity
Decides to screw with fate: let the god keep his pants on, and let the girl be a tree.
Thence Daphne, whose sweat-beaded skin was reflecting the Sun, grew;
Her feet became root and her nose the sky. She stands, brooding over Apollo's
Awkward position, like a half-virgin, half-plant, beautiful mess.

Sam Keyes



Haven Herrin

Do you really think you can drown?

“Leaving Lincoln Avenue”

Melissa Minetola

Luke Gabrielli let the red Oldsmobile grumble to a stop. He glanced out the windshield, at the row of duplex houses stretching along Lincoln Avenue. His family’s was the one with the cracked gray vinyl siding and cardboard turkeys Scotch-taped to the front windows. Beside Luke, his fiancée smoothed honey-scented lip balm – Luke’s least favorite flavor – over her lips. With her Prada pantsuit and gold-and-diamonds necklace (a thousands-of-dollars college graduation gift from her father), Courtney Braxton clashed with the impoverished, ethnic Southeastern Pennsylvania neighborhood in which Luke had grown up.

Luke jerked the key out of the ignition. Raising a perfectly shaped eyebrow, Courtney inquired, without looking at him, “Is something wrong, sweetheart?”

Heaving a sigh, Luke replied, “You know how things are between my family and me.” He stared out the windshield. “I just hate coming back here and having to deal with them.”

Courtney stowed the lip balm in her black leather handbag. “I know.” She opened her palm to Luke, and he reached over and took her hand. “But today is Thanksgiving, and we both can be thankful that by tonight, we’ll be back home. In just....” Courtney peeked at Luke’s Timex wristwatch. “In just seven hours, we’ll be back home.”

Luke squeezed her hand. Home used to be here, he thought, pushing open the car door. Used to be this house, on this street. In twenty-three years, Lincoln Avenue had not changed. Courtney came up next to Luke on the sidewalk and grasped his arm. Her long blonde hair – they had been dating for two years and engaged for one, and Luke still did not know whether or not Courtney colored it – blew across his nylon parka. Since he left Lincoln Avenue, Luke had changed.

“Let’s go,” Courtney encouraged, tugging Luke toward the Gabriellis’ house.

“Since when are you excited to see my family?”

Courtney’s high heels clicked up the front steps of the house. “I actually need to use the bathroom,” she confessed.

Luke laughed. Courtney grinned and rapped her fingers against the front door. Luke leaned against the side of the house. Across the street, he saw Mrs. Contadino stooped over a broom, her terse gray curls blowing in the wind as she swept the stone path leading to her house. The Contadinos’ Thanksgiving would be a happy one, Luke speculated. Unlike his own.

“Remind me,” Luke told Courtney, “to stop by the Contadinos’ on the way home.”

“The whose?”

“The Contadinos’ – they live across the street,” explained Luke. “They were like a second family to me.” As Luke described the Contadinos to Courtney, he could not help thinking of one Contadino in particular.

Michelina Contadino had been the love of Luke's life. Probably she still was, acknowledged Luke. He wondered if she too would be home for Thanksgiving. Of course she would be, reasoned Luke. Michelina had not left.

At that moment, the front door was opened by an older version of Luke. The man smiled, causing the wrinkles in his face to crease deeper. "How are you, son?" greeted Aldo Gabrielli, extending to Luke a hand shaky with rheumatism.

Luke clasped the hand in his own. Then, on second thought, he put an arm around his father in a loose embrace. "I'm doing well, Pop. How about you? How are things going?"

"Oh...they're going." Aldo laughed a rough laugh, the consequence of over fifty years of smoking cheap cigarettes. He turned his attention to Courtney, who had been smiling a synthetic smile for the past minute. "Courtney...good to see you again."

"Good to see you again too!" chirped Courtney.

The wind was picking up again, so the three of them entered the house. "Do you remember where the bathroom is?" Luke asked Courtney.

"I'm surprised you remember where the bathroom is." The gruff voice came from the living room. Within seconds, Filomena Gabrielli materialized in the vestibule.

Luke sighed. "Hi, Ma...."

"We haven't seen you since Easter, for God's sake, and you live not even an hour away," Filomena persisted. "What's going on, Luke? Are you so much better than us now that you only drop by for the holidays?"

"Filomena, please...." Aldo looked apologetically from Luke to Courtney.

Luke, though, had smelled the sangria on his mother's breath the moment she opened her mouth to speak. Ignoring Filomena, Luke directed Courtney, "The bathroom is up the stairs, second door to your right."

"I'll be right back," Courtney promised Aldo and Filomena. Neither of them answered her, and she disappeared upstairs.

Luke leveled an even gaze at his mother. "How have you been, Ma?"

"You don't have to ask if you don't care, and I know you don't care."

When Luke was growing up, a black-and-white photograph of his parents sat in a china frame on top of the television set in the living room. The photograph depicted Aldo and Filomena, youthful and smiling, optimistic about their future together and very much in love. Everything Luke wanted out of life he saw in that photograph. He had not seen it in years though. Perhaps Filomena had moved it somewhere less perceptible, less painful. The years had not been easy on his parents, and through them, Luke had learned that true love does not assure happiness.

"I do care about you, Ma."

Filomena tugged on the gold crucifix that hung from her neck. "You never visit, you never call...."

"I'm so busy with work, Ma, and with planning the wedding...."

"Planning the wedding!" spat Filomena. "Her father is planning everything! He won't call us about anything either! What do people think of us? We don't deserve to be a part of anything anymore?"

"Jesus Christ, Ma...." Luke glared at his mother. "Do we have to fight every time we see each other? Really? Is that what you really want?"

"Luke, don't raise your voice at your mother," Aldo reproved. Disgustedly, dismissively, Filomena waved her hands at them both.

His mother had started drinking once Luke began kindergarten. Luke had tried to forget that year, but the memories loitered like leeches on his mind. Aldo, the sole provider for the family, had been laid off from his job at the regional sanitation company, forcing Filomena, who always had been a full-time wife, mother, and homemaker, to find a job. While Aldo spent his days looking for odd jobs and trying to secure a steady job, Filomena worked as a clerk at a local liquor store. The stress of working, worrying, and caring for her family led Filomena to become dependent upon the goods she sold.

At the same time, Luke's older sister, Reggie, dropped out of high school to marry Rob Querciagrossa, a high school dropout as well, living in a decrepit tenement on nearby Bari Street and struggling to keep as a job as a security guard at the county courthouse (Rob's violent temper often led to verbal and physical fights with his co-workers).

Even at the age of five, Luke discerned the tension in his family. The tension increased when Rob eventually did lose his job and his apartment, resulting in his, Reggie's, and their newborn son's moving in with the Gabriellis. Then the Gabriellis discovered that Rob abused not only his co-workers but also his wife.

Courtney returned to the vestibule. "Have you all been catching up?" she inquired.

"To some extent," Aldo told her. Diplomacy was his father's most distinguishing characteristic, Luke thought. Forbearance came in a close second. Since he left Lincoln Avenue, Luke had done everything but forbear.

Filomena faced Courtney. "So...how is planning the wedding going?"

"Well, Dad just booked the new atrium of the Aldie Mansion for the reception...."

"Aldie Mansion?" inquired Filomena.

"Oh, it's a beautiful old Tudor mansion," Courtney gushed. "It's about an hour's drive from Philadelphia...."

"Wasn't there any hall in Philadelphia you could have used?" provoked Filomena. "Or are none of the Philadelphia halls good enough?"

"Ma," interjected Luke, gazing at his mother, "when Courtney and I looked at Aldie Mansion, we fell in love with it, right away. We knew we wanted to have the reception there and only there."

"Well," rejoined Filomena, "I'm glad you fell in love with something, Luke." Meaningfully, she shook her head at him and withdrew to the living room.

Luke flushed. She was referring to Michelina. He glanced at Courtney. Her azure eyes sparkling, Courtney was relating to Aldo details of the fountains and terraces that ornamented the rolling lawns of the Aldie Mansion.

"Our pictures will come out beautifully," Courtney confided in Aldo.

Aldo nodded. "It sounds as though you and Luke have found the perfect place." He cleared his throat. "Reggie is in the kitchen," he informed them. "Maybe you can go say hello...."

"Sounds good," agreed Luke.

"And your mother and I will be right in," added Aldo, moving toward the living room.

Shaking his head – his mannerisms mirrored those of his mother, although he never would admit it – Luke strode to the kitchen, Courtney in tow.

Reggie Gabrielli (she had retained her maiden name after the unavoidable divorce) stood barefoot on the linoleum floor. She was mashing potatoes in a ceramic bowl, but she stopped when she saw her younger brother and his fiancée. "Well," said Reggie, setting the hand whisk on the Formica-covered countertop. "Happy Thanksgiving." A red velour jumper swelled from her shoulders, and Luke could tell that she had gained weight since he saw her last, at Easter.

"You too." Brother and sister stood awkwardly across from each other.

"How are you doing, Reggie?" asked Courtney.

"Good – good." Reggie shrugged.

"And how is Bobby?" continued Courtney.

"Oh...." Reggie reached for the hand whisk. "He's doing okay." She began mashing potatoes again. "He started the eleventh grade this year. It's been rough, but he's going to be fine. Not going to drop out."

"What's going on?" Luke worried about his seventeen-year old nephew. Last week, when he called to confirm Thanksgiving dinner, Aldo had conveyed to Luke that Bobby had received a three-day suspension for punching one of his classmates during the lunch period.

"Oh, you know – high school." Reggie rolled her eyes, as if that explained everything.

Courtney set her handbag on the counter. "Is Bobby around? I'd love to see him."

"He and some of his friends went to the park to play basketball, but he'll be back in time for dinner," Reggie replied.

"We're eating at two o'clock, right?" Luke wanted to make sure.

"As always," verified Reggie.

Luke glanced at his wristwatch. One fifteen. "Is there anything I can help out with?"

"Or me?" chimed in Courtney.

Reggie jerked her head toward the oven. "The turkey will be ready in about five minutes; I could use some help with that."

From the living room trickled the angry voices of Aldo and Filomena. "Would you put that glass down for one minute and listen to me...."

"I've been listening to you for...going on forty years now...and it doesn't do any good...."

Luke nudged Courtney's arm. "Help my sister, will you? I'll be right back."

Courtney frowned at him. "Where are you going?"

"I'll be right back," promised Luke, loud enough for Reggie to hear. Disregarding Courtney's perplexed – and slightly irritated – gaze, Luke slipped out the back door.

He needed time to think, to clear his head. Luke walked through the alley behind the row of duplexes. He emerged on Bari Street and then turned left onto Lincoln Avenue. The neighborhood was the same. Same smells of garlic and gasoline. Same sounds of boys' yelling obscenities in the park – Bobby Querciagrossa probably among them.

"Luke Gabrielli...is that you?"

Luke turned. A young woman with shoulder-length brown hair was smiling at him from across Lincoln Avenue. Luke squinted, and slowly a smile tugged at the corners of his own lips. "Hey – what do you know – how the hell are you?"

Michelina Contadino laughed and hurried across the street, her arms outstretched. Luke engulfed her in his arms for a big hug. "I haven't seen you in ages!" exclaimed Michelina, embracing him. "Where have you been?"

"Well...." Luke shrugged sheepishly. He liked having her so close to him once again. "You must have heard – I got a job in Philadelphia. I live there now...."

"I did hear," confirmed Michelina. She stepped back, out of his arms, assessing him with her sharp eyes. They always had reminded Luke of cappuccino, the good kind that his mother's parents would send from Italy. "Still, Luke...Philadelphia is less than an hour away...."

"You're starting to sound like my mother," warned Luke, and they both laughed. "To be honest...I like Philadelphia. I like my life there."

"Life here wasn't as good, huh?" Michelina rubbed her hands together. Luke observed that she wore no engagement ring or wedding band. His heart throbbed.

"I didn't mean that."

"It's okay, Luke." Michelina nodded. "I understand. If I could leave, I would...."

"You don't need to leave," Luke argued. "You have a good family."

"I know...but...you know, Luke...." Michelina ran her fingers through her hair. "I'm happy here. But there's a lot I haven't experienced yet, a lot I don't know."

"What are you talking about? You're the smartest person I know."

"I'm not the one who got the full ride at Princeton...."

"Just because I could play basketball."

"Speaking of which – your nephew is pretty good. Very good in

fact.”

“Really?” Luke was interested. “That’s great. Maybe Bobby and I can play some ball today.”

“Are you only here for today?”

Luke looked at her. “Yes...well, today is Thanksgiving.”

Michelina shrugged. “Right, right....”

Luke and Michelina had grown up across the street from each other. Their mothers had been best friends and would take them to the park together, out for a movie matinee and ice cream together.... Not until middle school though did Luke begin dating Michelina. It seemed perfect, and everything was so easy. Until Filomena’s drinking escalated to full-blown alcoholism, and Reggie divorced Rob.... And then Luke decided to leave Lincoln Avenue. Get out. In the end, not even Michelina, the first – maybe only – person Luke ever truly loved, could persuade him to stay. Luke questioned love. He was surrounded by people – Aldo and Filomena, Reggie and Rob – who had been in love, madly in love. And love did not seem to work out, from Luke’s experience. So he chose basketball, Princeton – eventually Courtney – a new life – and left the old one, with Michelina, behind. Basketball, Princeton, and Courtney – they were easy. Not hard, like love. Like Michelina.

“Why don’t you stop by the house, before you leave?” Michelina invited. “We have so much food, so many desserts....” Her eyes shone with hopefulness.

Luke stuffed his hands into the pockets of his khaki pants. The Contadinos’ house always had been warm, inviting, like Michelina herself. Their first kiss had been on the couch in the living room, in fact.... “I’d love to,” began Luke, “but...I don’t know. I....” What would he do, bring Courtney along? What would that introduction be like? He never should have asked Courtney to remind him to stop by the Contadinos’.

“Come on,” encouraged Michelina. “My mother made a chocolate mousse cake, an orange ciambella – all your favorites.”

“Well....” Before Luke could finish his sentence, a whirl of blonde hair appeared on Lincoln Avenue, moving close to Luke and Michelina.

“Courtney...hi.”

“Hi Luke.” Courtney glanced from him to Michelina.

“Courtney...this is – remember the Contadinos? The house across the street, from before?” Courtney stared blankly at Luke. “Anyway...this is Michelina Contadino...an old friend.”

Courtney stuck her hand out. “Hi Michelina, I’m Courtney Braxton, Luke’s fiancée.”

A mist clouded Michelina’s face. “Oh...it’s nice to meet you.” Michelina glanced at Luke. “Wow, I had no idea....”

“I’ve been so busy lately....”

“Oh...I understand.” Luke could tell, though, from the hurt in Michelina’s eyes that she did not understand.

“Luke, dinner is ready.” Courtney tugged on the sleeve of Luke’s

parka.

Luke nodded at Courtney. "Okay." He turned to Michelina, who was waiting patiently, as always, for him. "Maybe – maybe Courtney and I will stop by later." He glanced at Courtney, who shrugged.

Michelina smiled. "No maybes about it, Luke," she warned him. "You've been so busy for the past five years. We have a lot of catching up to do."

"I bet you do," agreed Courtney, glancing at Luke.

"Before you leave, stop by the house – both of you," encouraged Michelina. She smiled at Courtney. "My mother made all of Luke's favorite desserts – his old favorites. You would love them too, I'm sure."

"I love anything chocolate," divulged Courtney. She grinned from Michelina to Luke. "It's my one guilty pleasure."

The three of them laughed. "We probably should get to dinner," Luke said. He looked at Michelina. "We'll see you later, though. Around six?"

"Six is great." Michelina waved good-bye and disappeared across the street.

Luke and Courtney began walking back to the Gabriellis' house. "An old friend, huh?" prodded Courtney, knowingly.

Luke glanced at Courtney, who smiled and shrugged. "I have a couple old friends back home in New Jersey too, Luke."

They both laughed. Luke reached for Courtney's hand and squeezed it. She squeezed back.

When they returned to the house, Reggie called from the kitchen, "We were starting to worry about you, Luke!"

"I just went for a walk."

Courtney had set the kitchen table with Filomena's prized porcelain dinnerware from Crate and Barrel. The white plates glistened in the glow from the tiffany lamp, hanging overhead. In the center of the table, the turkey too seemed to gleam in the light. "Everything looks great," remarked Aldo. He sat at the head of the table. Filomena, directly across from him at the other end of the table, nodded listlessly.

"Would you like some water, Ma?" offered Luke.

Filomena turned her head toward her son. "I would," she said softly.

Luke opened up a cupboard. "Next one," Reggie assisted. In the next cupboard, Luke found a glass. He joined Reggie at the sink, where she was washing her hands.

"On my walk, I bumped into Michelina." Luke held the glass under the faucet.

Reggie grabbed a hand towel and rubbed her hands dry. "We're going Black Friday shopping tomorrow, Michelina and I."

Luke turned off the faucet. "When did you and Michelina become friends?"

"When you left." Reggie shrugged.

The glass trembling in his hand, Luke returned to the table. "Here

you go, Ma.” He slid into the seat to the right of his mother. Next to Luke, Courtney reached under the table and kneaded his thigh.

“Hey everybody.” The unmistakable voice of Bobby Querciagrossa boomed throughout the house, as he bounced through the back door. Sporting a black sweat suit that flaunted his striking street-sculpted body, Bobby beamed at his mother, grandparents, uncle, and aunt-to-be. “Happy Thanksgiving – how are you all doing?” He slapped Luke on the back.

“What’s up?” Luke grinned and lightly slapped Bobby back. At seventeen, Luke had been cool too, just like Bobby.

“Not a lot, man. Hey Courtney.” Bobby settled into the seat across from Luke.

“Hi Bobby.”

“You’re here just in the nick of time,” Aldo told Bobby.

Thanksgiving dinner turned out to be pleasant, to Luke’s surprise. While Courtney and Reggie chatted about the wedding, Bobby and Luke talked sports. Aldo would add a comment here and there, but he seemed content to sit back, eat, and watch his family. Filomena, evidently nursing a hangover, sipped water from the glass Luke had brought her and remained quiet throughout most of the dinner. Only towards the end, when Reggie asked if anyone wanted coffee, did Filomena blurt out, “We forgot to say grace!”

After dinner, Courtney disappeared again to the bathroom – Luke vaguely wondered if she still was struggling with bulimia – he thought she was doing better – while Reggie and Filomena began washing the dishes. Aldo, Luke, and Bobby regrouped in the living room.

“Green Bay is playing Detroit – want to watch?” Bobby grabbed the remote control, while Aldo relaxed in the rubberwood-framed glider rocker.

Luke glanced at his watch. It was nearing six o’clock. “Sure...for a minute.” He sank onto the pastel couch. Bobby sat on the floor, his back against the couch.

“So, I hear you’re a basketball star, huh?”

Bobby shrugged. “I like to play. Not in school though. Just with the guys in the park.”

“Why not in school?” wondered Luke.

Bobby aimed the remote control at the TV, and it flicked on. “I was on the team freshman year,” he told Luke. “I don’t know if Mom told you or not.”

“Oh...I think she did....” Luke could not remember the last time he and Reggie had a more than a five-minute chat.

“Yeah, well, I just hated all the practices, not to mention the coach always telling me what to do.” Bobby found the Green Bay-Detroit game. “Here we go.”

“In the end, all the practices are worth it.”

“Worth what?”

Luke glanced at his father, but Aldo had begun to snore softly. Bobby was gazing intently at Luke. “Well,” began Luke, “take me, for exam-

ple. I hated all those high school practices too. And my coach wasn't the easiest person to get along with. But I got good at basketball, and it was my ticket to...college. A better life for myself."

"I don't want to go to college anyway." Bobby turned his attention to the football game. "Even if I did go, it would be for all the wrong reasons."

"What wrong reasons?"

Bobby rolled his shoulders. "Parties. Girls." He smirked at Luke. "I'd want to meet someone like Courtney. I wouldn't be worrying about class or any college stuff like that."

Luke paused. "What do you think of Courtney?"

"She's hot," Bobby answered immediately. "Really hot. And nice too. Good choice, man."

Good choice. At Princeton, Luke and Courtney had met at a party, after Princeton's basketball team crushed Harvard's. Courtney had been pretty, perky – the perfect person with whom Luke could celebrate. Their relationship commenced on pure physical attraction. Gradually, though, Luke and Courtney began to appreciate each other's personalities. They complemented each other well: Luke with his pragmatic and reflective demeanor and Courtney, full of fun and laughter, who secretly sought the time and affection she never received from her father.

"I don't know, Bobby," began Luke, but Bobby was glued to the game.

At six o'clock, Luke and Courtney said their good-byes to the Gabriellis. After Aldo closed the front door, Courtney said, "That wasn't so bad, was it?"

"Not so bad," agreed Luke. He put his arm around her shoulder. "Do you still want to stop by the Contadinos'?"

"Sure, if you want to...."

Michelina opened the front door of her house with a smile, a plate of chocolate mousse cake, and three paper plates. "My parents went to visit my aunt and her family, but they told me to tell you hello," Michelina greeted Luke. She led Luke and Courtney to the living room. The three sat on the couch. They ate cake and chatted.

"I'm so glad you came." Michelina smiled at Luke.

"I was glad to – both Courtney and I were glad to," he corrected himself.

After a silence, Courtney asked Michelina where the bathroom was.

"Upstairs," Michelina directed. Luke watched Courtney hurry up the stairs. Shit.

"So...." Michelina paused. "I've missed you, Luke."

Luke nodded. "I've missed you too, Michelina. I really, really have."

"You just left."

"I didn't just leave – we had talked about it...."

"You had made your decision to leave, without asking me what I thought." Michelina's voice trembled. "You just stopped talking to

me...stopped calling, stopped coming by when you came home for breaks, if you came home....”

Luke closed his eyes. His body ached. “I made some mistakes,” he whispered. “I did, and I know it.” He looked at Michelina.

“Are you happy with the way everything turned out, Luke?”

Luke ran his fingers through his hair. “I don’t know,” he replied. “I got everything I thought I wanted. I should be happy. But...I have regrets, for sure. My biggest regret is....”

At that moment, Courtney reappeared in the living room. She smiled from Luke to Michelina. “What have I missed?”

Quietly, Michelina rose and began cleaning up the paper plates.

On the drive back home to Philadelphia, Luke glanced toward the passenger seat. Courtney was filing her fingernails. “Hey. Courtney.”

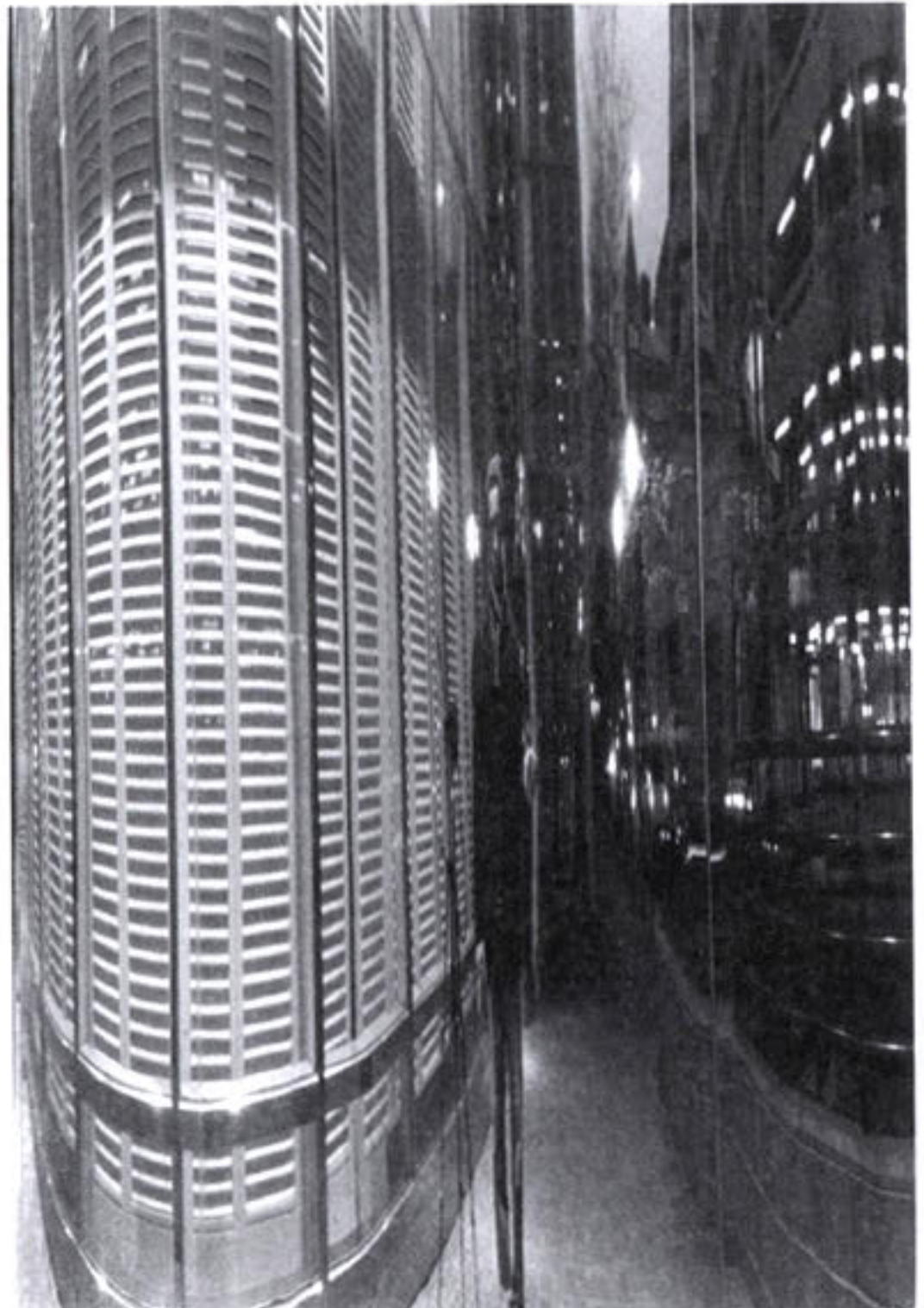
“Yes, sweetheart?”

“Is everything okay?”

Courtney looked at him. “What do you mean?” She reached over and lightly kissed his lips. “Everything is great. Perfect. Things could not be better.”

Luke drummed his fingers against the steering wheel. “Okay...if you say so.”

Courtney looked at him a moment more before returning to her fingernails.



Self Portrait, Michael Opalenski

There shall be wars and rumors of wars
But where sounds the trumpet
That separates battle from myth?
Need I enlist
 to defend the faith?
 to defend the faith from defenders of the faith?
 from the mutiny of regiments who march
 one beat behind the drummer like some
 harsh, flat tenor holding the final note
 of a mass just too long?
but I have no rhythm
and I see no armies gathering.
so the years pass
as I plow my fields,
you plow yours,
but the pruning shears rust alone.

Jared Campbell



Michael Opalenski

Singer at the Arcade

The passers-by didn't know whether to stop or not
 and those who stopped thought at first –
 this man belongs in a circus –
 this man with a woman's voice.
 But as he sang his operatic tones
 the people became more comfortable –
 some lit cigarettes, some leant against the walls of stone
 as his voice touched tenderly those walls of the arcade
 and pressed off gently as a swimmer in a somersault turn
 spreading through the air like blood through water
 feeling every corner, tasting every ear of the standing strollers
 who let their minds be taken from their lives,
 taken by the hand to the air under the arch
 to bask in the golden warmth of his voice
 transcending age-old boundaries, coming from his heart –
 they could see it in his face,
 in his bohemian robes colored like rainbows.
 His rhapsody focused a domain
 in which beauty always blooms
 as hermaphroditic tulips
 filling wall-less rooms,

until the end, when he had finished
 and they had blinked their eyes
 they didn't know if they should clap
 and bellow bravo cries,
 or allow the walls to resonate
 with the aftertaste of oneness.

Some clapped, therefore, regrettingly
 and dropped a euro near his feet
 while the others bowed and slipped away
 knowing only not yet to speak.

Matthew Homan

perhaps death

perhaps then death is a tattered old professor, with a caramel
patched coat and a hat which fit once only at the store,
teaching indolent schoolboys merely concerned with
the names and dates of things

death's careless like a shelf of dusty books, the center part
just so leaning, corners kissing sides

death's principled like a bow pulled across cello strings
like so reminding you that you've never loved so much
as just then and (boy) how-you-wish you did

death is the only other person that remembers it was you
who stuck gum in your sister's hair you both have the
grandest time laughing because it was funny at
the time and wasn't your hair

death is probably the hugest thing you've ever heard of
that knows your name

death asks you if you have the time, by which he really means
lets go riding bicycles and asking pretty girls to dance, because death
remembers the last time he danced he turned about till dizzy (which
was only one half the turning and the other the girl) but you don't recall
the last time you danced and aren't sure you remember how

death is a song barely recalled, but for the refrain at uncommon
intervals, finally summoned at night though sleep would now be better

death is people waiting for a bus all bundled about in over-
coats when the choked firing of a starting suddenly car makes them
jump like so many damn fine horses out of the gate

death's silent like a dime-movie which doesn't, though you wish it did,
exist anymore and you would go every day twice just to hear
the piano which sounds like tin falling alloveritself and is
about the best thing you've ever heard

death is beautifully the most unaffected woman you ever met at
university and though it seems there were never times you didn't see
her you know there were but you can't remember when and
who would want to anyway?

death is the one single thing anyone could ever agree on but didn't

John Dunn



Timeless, *Andrew Wasuwongse*

October

The places of firefly catchings are no longer walkable in the dark. I will have to return to them by day because time has changed us both. Sitting walls covered with weeds, a ramshackle tree-house of skin exploration a victim of bending nails and the weather. The stream seems higher, closer to shore, paths less sure, but the tree still bridges it as it always did. Even the stones look smaller perhaps carved by rain and current, or my memory. The fireflies taunt me tonight - "come and see what else has changed as you forgot...or because."

"The moon lights these steps just enough and trees are still for climbing."

John Dunn



Sortir A La Llum, Mai-Anh Tran

What makes you think that 'now' is an end?

Aspire au Ciel, Mai-Anh Tran



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Editor's Note:

This year the submissions to The Messenger continued to raise the established standard of outstanding work by students. Like last year, we received almost two hundred submissions and each committee toiled to choose the best representations of student talent.

If you leaf through the magazine you will notice that for the first time we have printed some of our photographs in color. This year we were particularly impressed with the quality and number of art/photography submissions we received. In order to properly highlight the quality of these works, many of which utilize a powerful array of colors, we decided to reproduce them in color in the magazine.

Also this year we were happy to have the ability to create the CD again, which is included in the first 2,000 copies of the magazine. This was made possible with the aid of the music department, the Technology Learning Center and the Music Lab. Special Thanks to Jake Monaco, Tom Gregorio and Dr. Gene Anderson.

And so it starts,
 A single interdivision.
 Self-sacrifice for progeneration,
 Seeking for that blind light,
 Knowing every dawn comes after a night--
 And sunset is just forgetting.
 While destiny's illusion laughs
 A crescendo of falling cries
 Shades away the buds of wisdom.
 Black is not a color
 Until it's been awakened,
 White can never see itself;
 The light hurts my eyes
 But I daren't turn away.
 Will you watch the stars with me?
 They are brightest when you look;
 Though do not ask me what they say
 When they speak, it is for you. Can you hear
 it?
 Can you see it? It's waiting
 For you, if you can reach it,
 As if you've done so many times before
 Lost and found in the memory of a dream.
 Let's play a game,
 Catch as catch can
 Fighting against with the soil--
 The sky can't run forever!

Celestine hides from the celestials;
 Your bindings are not real--
 Reach out and find something,
 Enlightenment perhaps will do;
 Only life is not relative.
 Learning is growing is knowing,
 But how big is omniscience anyway?
 Moving slowly seeds a dance,
 And passion in pieces is
 Shattered intensity is power still.
 Do you really think you can drown?
 Those branches are ever-higher, ever-wider,
 But you are not yet the master;
 Your leaves do not see enough--not yet.
 Time can be such a bore,
 And maybe now I can be tired.
 Laughing is a miracle in rays,
 Tears are the translation of clouds,
 Yet souls are stored in the heart
 So in the end you are still here--aren't you?
 Desperation begets strength but neither may die;
 Stand firm in the grains and spread your arms wide
 There is someone out there and it is you.
 And YES--
 Cry havoc! For here the blossom's burst
 And all creation faces your eyes.
 What makes you think that 'now' is an end?

Mai-Anh Tran

Prize Winners:

Margaret Haley Carpenter Prize for Poetry: "perhaps death", *John Dunn*
 "Metamorphosis xvi", *Sam Keyes*

Margaret Owen Finck Prize for Fiction: "Sojourn", *Kate Seferian*

Spectral Reflections, *Chris Creel (back cover)*

