

# RAINY DAY



Dear Readers,

This is it. It is the end. As my final semester draws to a close I find myself stubbornly refusing to believe that this is my *last letter*. I have dug my heels in and decided to ignore the fact that by the time this issue sees print, I will be a Cornell graduate.

But regardless of my misguided and childish attempt to avoid the inevitable, I shall continue this address with my head held high. I have spent previous letters adoring our writers, demystifying the role of editor-in-chief and paying homage to the literature demi-gods. I was flipping through some older copies of our magazine last week when it dawned on me that there is one group of contributors whose praises have thus far gone unsung—the staff. I have mentioned them in passing before, but this time I am officially dedicating the first page of this publication to them. Becca, Miklos, Anne, Samantha, Sarah and Amrita—you guys (for lack of a better phrase) rock the house.

We had a small staff this semester, but I can promise you that the magazine has not suffered, since this is perhaps the most passionate, dedicated and intelligent group of people I have yet encountered on this campus. I have watched them grow from an apprehensive group of strangers into an unstoppable literature think-tank, a journey that seems to be mirrored by our writers in this issue. If you'll notice, this semester we have twenty-eight pieces written by only twelve authors, many of who have seen publication in past issues as well.

For those of you who don't know, our decision process is done blindly. I am the only one who knows who wrote what, and I only reveal the authors to the staff once the final publication decisions have been made. This semester we received a total of 94 submissions from a diverse set of authors representing several universities, and what these final selections tell me is that while the staff was fine-tuning their editorial skills, our writers were simultaneously growing. Together, the writers and the staff have made this issue incredible.

So while my personal lamentations continue, and I dig my nails in to a university that adulthood is trying desperately to rip away from me, I can rest easier knowing that *Rainy Day* will be left in the hands of a powerful group of people who have already demonstrated their ability to recognize, capture, and foster writing talent. Thank you, oh wonderful staff, this semester the credit belongs to you.

Your Editor,

Kate Pascucci

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an independent student publication

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# SCHEHERAZADE

Amrita Mishra

tonight is the one thousand  
 (and second) night, where I too  
 am Scheherazade and the tales have  
 run too thin, when the sagging  
 rose petals falls too thick  
 on your skin, when language lathering  
 my lower lip droops too low. tonight I will be a peach  
 from Paradise to be cleaved:

continents pulled  
 away from one another's embrace,  
 Pangaea coming undone again.

tonight  
 I will feel the blooming sores of mothers  
 these walls whisper to me of, I too  
 will feel your flesh skewered on bones-  
 thick kebab chunks sluggish across mine,  
 a waxy sound of apricots honeydrunk:

they too must drown. tonight  
 I will learn to count by the heave of your belly,  
 by feeble seas you churn above  
 me, by stars I invent on a ceiling plastered  
 with moonsheen. you will learn to count

by the number of swollen words unsaid I bite  
 my lip over, by little red beads on a handkerchief,  
 white, starched, folded, expectant for

rubied pomegranate seeds. Take my skin,  
 your map, my eyes your still water clouded  
 with *ruks*, my hair a velvet skyswarm, but my jewels  
 you will never draw. I too will die

by the sword, I too

will watch poetry abandon my gurgling veins,  
I too will gurgle silence.

## PROMISES

---

Morgan Michel-Schottman

Our tobacco smoke pledge in the forest  
 You doubted me, did not want me then.  
 I returned to the city to grow,  
 The city of my sister  
 Dressed and undressed.  
 You stayed in the forest with your dog  
 Faithful to the river and the rocks,  
 Treading the trail where so long ago  
 We'd seen the deaths of two good men.  
 And loneliness, longing and the past  
 Can be lost in the blue sky  
 Above the hotel where you lived  
 Stone old from some long ago  
 Where we met thrice  
 Before our pledge  
 My promise to return again  
 Again to the stone castle in the plains by the forest  
 Again to the river near the spot of their deaths  
 Again to the journey I began from your home  
 Promising to return  
 In the tobacco smoke.  
 Birds we released over the river  
 Stones where we first let them go  
 I promised you then the rest of it,  
 When I let go my mouthful of smoke.

## PENDULUM

---

Today I watched a man dance among pendulums  
I thought that he was going to  
Avoid the swinging strings and weights  
But instead he gasped and blew at them,  
Slid and sparked at their touch  
Walked around, moaned, crouched and lifted them with his hands  
Releasing them to swing

It confirmed what I already knew.  
That art begets art.  
Yet at the same time, I watched his handling of the strings  
The collision of the weights and the entanglement of thread  
Knowing the ways that I prefer to move  
The intentionality of my living  
The pattern of my movements among wires, or thrumming strings

My way determined  
By knowledge of your entanglements, our future collisions  
So that I dance without grace, with an inelegant choice  
Of sound and wires, not attempting  
But fulfilling my path, just realizing at the turns of his torso  
Selecting impact with the predictable metal  
The internal strength I haven't yet begun to plumb



## NARRATION

---

Today I washed  
 the blood out of  
 the purple handkerchief  
 (with white flowers  
 and geometric designs  
 around the holes).  
 It was old and used  
 but not by me,  
 by the man from Ireland  
 who told me I was asking  
 the same questions  
 over and over.  
 So I pressed the purple to my face  
 to stop it from asking  
 where Keith was.  
 What this man's name was.  
 Where we were going.  
 Pulled away the red and  
 pressed the purple to my face.

I also called  
 the police station  
 to ask them what had happened to my bike.  
 When I recited the case number,  
 on the little card  
 they'd left politely in my pocket  
 before exiting the ER,  
 he asked,  
 "You don't remember?"  
 and I lied, "No"  
 Because I do recall  
 the warm morning air  
 pleasant enough that I wore a new shirt  
 (White, and pants with holes in the knees).  
 The gentle curve of the road  
 that the side of my tire leaned into perfectly  
 and the music that was playing on my iPod  
 (Florence and the Machine)

which I thought was gone  
until they finished stitching  
and I looked down and saw the headphones  
still sticking out of my collar.  
(Also the barrette in my hair  
They brought in every shattered piece  
from the scene).  
Everything up until  
the moment at the curb.

When I could see the clock  
it was upside-down  
so I had to start counting backwards.  
When I could read the clock  
it said  
Scott, Teresa, Dr. Murphy,  
Keith and Kathy.  
Kathy was gray.  
A gray hat, gray hair  
a gray day and a gray morning  
gravelly path where I pulled myself  
out of the road  
onto the sidewalk  
so she said “oh god oh my god”  
and I asked  
“What’s your name?”

That’s how I know  
all of them  
the bystander, the firefighter,  
the nurse, the RN,  
the Dr., (and the whatever  
Is almost a Dr.  
but didn’t go to medical school  
and is getting a second divorce)  
The only one  
I don’t know  
is of the man who  
gave me the handkerchief  
doubtfully,  
out of his back pocket,

telling me it was used,  
and that he was from Ireland,  
just to get me to  
stop touching my opened face  
with my bare hands.

The irony  
of the moment I accepted death  
behind my father  
leaving the peaks of the Cascades  
screaming so hard  
into the valleys  
below, and green  
where people live and  
the sun sets sooner  
as the wind swallowed my voice.  
and there is  
no divine scene  
between the rushing on  
curve of the curb  
the exhilarating turn  
of the wheels  
the first rising,  
the exchanging of names,  
and feeling my bones breathe.

## NAKED PROTESTORS

---

Shane Dunau

This boy, my sister's new boyfriend, was in the military. He was visiting our home in upstate New York. He was driving here in his SUV. He and my sister had met at a club in Boston where he was stationed and she was getting 'C's at Tufts. He had noticed her blonde hair and black dress from across the room. She noticed him noticing and played with her hair more than usual. He took her home and they fucked under an American flag before my sister noticed the uniform hanging in the closet or he bothered to tell her. She told my mother she was in love with him and then she mentioned that he was a Navy Seal. She talked about how she loved the way his buzz cut felt in between her fingers and the way his ass looked in his white pants. I pretended to care, but instead wondered if my hair would ever catch the attention of a stranger from across the room.

My parents met in art school. He was a playwright and she was an actress. When Vietnam happened, he picked a good number, and they both protested for all their friends who did not pick good numbers. He wrote a play about why the war was so bad and she starred in it. In one scene, my mother peeled off her clothing until she was completely naked, apparently blocking the paths of tanks, and saving a village. I think he wrote the scene because he wanted to see her naked.

My parents had not met the boyfriend before, but had already argued loudly with my sister. Now this same boyfriend had come to stay

"Maybe we'll go for a canoe trip on the river," my sister said to my father. He was chopping tofu and tossing salad.

"I'm sure he loves the outdoors," said my father. I pitied my dad. He tried feebly to stay positive in the face of my sister's enthusiasm. I had seen this happen before.

I'd never met anyone in the military before. My mother's father was in the air force, but he was kicked out when he was accused of forcing a black man to spend too much time in the sun. The black man sent before and after shots of the skin color that resulted from working under my grandfather and my grandfather was kicked out of the military forever.

The boyfriend has a beautiful smile. He smiled when my mother opened the door. He compliments my parents about the smells exuding from the kitchen. He pretends he thinks that they are cooking meat.

"I've heard so many great things about all of you," said the boyfriend. I did not believe him. My sister would not have said many great things about her family to the boyfriend. My family pretended to believe his lies about the things that my sister said. When we sat down at the table for dinner the boyfriend rested his hand on the

small of my sister's back. His hands seemed large and soft and I wished that I could touch them for a brief moment. We began to eat and I heard my sister's laugh. Not the high, airy, flirty laugh I had heard across the cafeteria in high school. I heard her low, wheezy, guttural laugh—the laugh that she reserved for only my father's tickle attacks or my imitations of SNL characters. We looked up to see her laughing her laugh at his reaction to the tofu. Her eyes were crinkled and her yellow hair dropped behind her. We understood that no naked protestors could stop this.

## ORNICHA

---

A burn running the length of my arm perfectly matched the gaping mouth of our oven. *Majka* covered the burn that smelled of potato crisps with a green paste of comfrey plant. Comfrey harvested under the cover of moonlight molds the pink wrinkled skin back into the pearly white. *Majka* had slipped from underneath the heavy slumbering arm of *Otac*, walking barefoot, quietly grasping, tearing, and pulling the delicate comfrey plant. Chewing the plant that smells of licorice and musk, she spit the iridescent mash into a cup and tiptoed into my bedroom. “*Dijete, dijete* let me see your hurt *dijete*.”

I could not show her my hurt. I had no way of knowing where the blues of the black and blues goes once the bruises started to fade, nor did I keep a cup full of salty tears next to my bedside. Instead, I stretched out my arm, the puckered skin black against the white of the moonlight. This was my hurt tonight. *Otac* had seen me leaving the confines of the rusted red Camaro, the pink-faced boy’s thighs still grateful beneath his blue jeans. I told the boy he must bring me home before the ornicha was ready to be borne from the oven. The hot sticky nut bread would rise and the crust would turn a golden brown, and my hands and mouth must be ready to bear the sweet, slender bread.

*Otac* pushes my arm against the blistering insides of the oven. My fingers unclasp the tray of ornicha, the sweet bread falling to the floor silently. I scream, as I always do, and he lets go, the nutty smell overwhelmed with my own potato-crisp scent.

The moonlight falls through *majka*’s nightgown, and through the filmy cotton I see her bare breasts. “There, there my *dijete*, my baby.” She spreads the comfrey paste over my outstretched arm. “Your *otac* does not think, he just feels *dijete*. You know this.” I know this.

While the wound is still pink and new I begin to make the sweet bread again. *Majka* places the bowl of walnuts in front of me. I crack the hard shell, crunching and twisting the kernel. I pound the mallet, smashing the wood-like armor, tasting the fruit of the nut. My fingers pry back the skin of hull, the outside falling away to reveal the gnarled meat. I throw the meat of the nut in the bowl, feeling the moisture coat my face and fall inside the bowl. I gently stir in the sugar and fold the sweet nutty entrails within layers of leavened bread.

I walk to the comfrey patch and take what is left of the velvety leaves. When *Otac* fell on his lawn mower, *Majka* crunched and spit the comfrey into a cup and onto his leg, the slice of curly-haired skin healing in two weeks. I pick and chew until nothing is left of the comfrey patch, spreading the paste until the thick mound covers the length of my wound.

The ground begins to quiver. The soil bed splits in two. The plot divides down the center. The earth faults in front of me. The earthworms are pulled in half. The roots tear apart. The grass begins to fall away into the formed crevice in the comfrey bed.

I am being pushed farther and father away from the opposite side of the garden. Looking behind me at the house with the little kitchen, with the little oven, with the soft sweet logs baking inside. I leap, swiftly jumping to the opposite side of the bed, trailing only the scent of walnuts and sugar behind me.

## IMPORTANT POINTS

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William Anderson

It  
has  
been  
asserted  
by  
certain  
scholars  
and  
even  
sometimes  
written  
in  
the  
margins  
by  
copy  
editors  
that  
there  
is  
no  
metalanguage.



## PHILISTINES IN THE UNIVERSITY

---

I am one of these because I don't mind at all coming to class drunk in fact I've done it several times and contributed nicely to the discussion. In the impending repetition of spring however I have little ambition to elaborate the depth of my follies and have taken to showing up sober. This immaculate act has drawn the highest praise from the philosophers here who pride themselves on clear thinking, and who demand every word reveals its content immediately. In the light of this impulse to always conduct a strip search they have also changed the name to Borenell because they do not understand that excitement lies in concealment, and that nakedness is the most sophisticated attire in its timelessness and simplicity.

Around the round table what lies underneath I am always betrayed by a blush constructing sentences as a girl takes off her summer's dress.

## MOUNTAINEERING

---

Miklos Zoltan

Mr. and Mrs. Harvey McGinnis had, it seemed, few problems with their marriage. They had an only child, a six year-old boy named Evan, whose ratio of unhappiness to happiness seemed just about right. Mr. McGinnis worked at Kaufman Industrial Supply Service, Inc., in the Accounting Department, and his wife held a part-time position with the Salt Lake City Congregational Church. Since they had married when he was twenty-five and she was twenty-four, he had gained an average of three pounds a year; she, one and a half. She noticed both hers and her husband's gains, but they seemed normal.

They had met in college. He was a twenty-two year old virgin who thought about little else than the sex he didn't have; she, twenty-one, had just ended the fourth in a string of one and a half to three-year relationships that dated back to middle school (the fanfare surrounding the finale of each had decreased at a steady rate). She wore sweaters, not-too-tight but not-too-loose jeans, and had worn thong underwear once or twice. Now, fifteen years later, her sweaters had been traded in for more matronly sweaters in a different but no-more-or-less cheerful set of colors. She felt a mix of humorosity and shame when she remembered the thongs. In a recent e-mail survey, she rated her general satisfaction with life as a four out of five and didn't think that the question needed more than three seconds to answer, if that. More like one and a half.

Mr. Harvey McGinnis, by contrast, had rediscovered at forty the dissatisfaction with his own inexperience that had so dominated his college years. His friend Chuck had gotten laid consistently while he spent the night alone in the next room with a sock; now, his coworker Jeremy had taken to amateur mountaineering and filled Mr. McGinnis's days with reminders of what he did not have: fun, namely, but also "zest for life," a "sense of adventure," a "connection with Mother Nature/the Great Outdoors," a "need to explore," and, most importantly, a "reclamation of youth." Mr. McGinnis failed to remember a youth to reclaim, but this did curiously little to lighten the weight of Jeremy's intrusions on his cubicle. Jeremy, aged forty-one years, had a girlfriend. Together they extolled the virtues of REI but laughingly said, "I don't know, me? No, no..." when the word *outdoorsy* was applied.

Harvey, who had decided that if an e-mail survey were to ask him to rank his happiness with life using the numbers one through five, he couldn't reasonably put more than a three—a two, if he was really being honest, maybe a little lower, though not a full point—had not begun to feel resentful toward his wife and child yet, but was aware he was supposed to, which upped the number of weekly McGinnis arguments from one and a half—a number Mr. and Mrs. McGinnis agreed was "pretty much not

unusual”—to three, prompting Mrs. McGinnis to say at dinner, after Evan had abandoned his seat, “Harvey, I really have noticed that your temper has become shorter lately. I talked to Carol from work, and she said that it was abnormal.”

“I would like to go mountaineering,” Mr. McGinnis said, aware that his gut, full of warm beef stroganoff and pushing determinedly on his two-stained light blue dress shirt, did not want to go mountaineering.

“Mountaineering? Who ever thought of such a thing?”

“Jeremy goes mountaineering regularly.”

“What *is* mountaineering, even?” she asked, flustered.

“Climbing mountains.”

“Whatever *for*?”

To Mrs. McGinnis, mountaineering was a foreign cure to a foreign problem. It was what people did so that she—and the rest of the earth’s normal people—could read about it in newspapers in attractive feature articles or be entertained in 30-second commercial clips. But for Mr. McGinnis it was the abstract cure to a problem he could never quite identify, and instead of making it rejectable, it rendered it tantalizing.

“To enjoy the natural beauty of the earth. Utah, you know, is beautiful.”

“Yes, well, it sounds dangerous. Are you not content?”

I am two-out-of-five content, Mr. McGinnis thought, and for this I should be mad at the most mundane things: the dinner table, the bitterness of my after-dinner coffee, my lack of an alcohol problem, my previous contentedness.

“Mmm-hmmm,” he said.

“Well, which is it?” asked Mrs. McGinnis, with what Mr. McGinnis would describe as a distracted sense of urgency.

“I am,” he said, and brought the plates into the kitchen.

Mrs. McGinnis still could not tell whether or not her husband was content, and at work she asked Carol if her husband seemed to demonstrate discontent.

“What?” said Carol, looking up from her computer screen. “Aaahhhh, ummmm, I’m not really sure what you mean....discontented? Like unhappy? No, Joe’s not unhappy.”

And neither was Mr. McGinnis, reasoned Mrs. McGinnis. It was obvious that he loved Evan, obvious that he liked a warm bed, liked not being divorced, liked the restaurant in downtown Salt Lake City that they had chosen for once-or-twice-every-three-months dates because of its combination of out-of-the-wayness and underlying noise, which excited them, and obvious that he was not going to run away or commit suicide or buy a sports car. But over the spring and into summer, the word *mountaineering* continued to appear, and their fight-amount statistic held steady at three per week. Mr. McGinnis, meanwhile, had tried in vain to develop a drinking problem to complain to Jeremy about, but he found himself exaggerating the amount of drinks he had had alone in his den the previous night, and reasoned that this signified failure.

“Six glasses of whisky, bro?” said Jeremy, whose hair length and casual dress had recently begun to threaten company policy, something Mr. McGinnis wanted desperately to do. “That’s harsh.”

This pronouncement having made his day, then, after an hour or so of contemplation, soured it, Mr. McGinnis went home and once again mentioned mountaineering. He had accurately explained to Jeremy that he *just had* to go mountaineering, he knew he *just had to*, but *the Mrs.* didn’t seem to want to. He did not quite want his first ascent to be with an expert—the shame potential there was unbelievable—yet, as Jeremy said, “a mountaineer never strives alone.”

Upon its mention, Mrs. McGinnis’s hands flew up. “You know what?” she said, not lovingly or unlovingly, “If this is so important to you, then let’s go *mountaineering*. This weekend. I’ll go.”

“Right, great, yes!” said Mr. McGinnis, suddenly faced with the prospect mountaineering. “I’ll, um, talk to Jeremy about where, and, um, we can go. This weekend.”

The following night, Mr. McGinnis asked his wife her shoe size. The night after that, he went to the Salt Lake City REI outlet and purchased hiking boots, poles, and two water storing pouches attached to tubes that Heath, his REI sales associate, had assured him were necessary.

The day of hiking dawned dry and hot. Evan was under the watchful eye of Mr. McGinnis’s sister-in-law. They had chosen Lilith Peak, just thirty minutes from Salt Lake City, a peak that Jeremy had described as “not too hard, like a bunny slope if you want to compare it to skiing. Do you ski?”

Mr. McGinnis had, um, nodded.

So, with little knowledge of the difficulty but with the dread that it would end up being high, he drove to Lilith Peak. In the passenger seat, Mrs. McGinnis offered an occasional “you know, this might not be so bad” or “I bet I’ll be able to make it home in time to make the chicken” or “if I can’t handle it, you know, I’ll just wait for you to go up to the top and come back down,” but they mostly drove in silence.

However, after one hour of hiking, she was invigorated. Mr. McGinnis, bathed in the stench of his regret, lagged behind, thinking warmly of beef stroganoff. He was, by his estimation, one and a half minutes behind his wife, but he could see her ahead on the trail.

After two hours, she had reached the resting point before the last ascent, trickier than the rest. She waited for three minutes before he arrived.

“Harvey, you look ill,” she said. “Are you sure you don’t want to turn around?”

Harvey *was* ill. Ill would be perfect the perfect description of Harvey, who nevertheless thought more of Jeremy’s determination and coolness than his own discontented back, stomach, heart, legs, arms, lungs, and neck.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” he huffed, garbling saliva. Then, a sound: “Hrech.”

But Mrs. McGinnis was not, it turned out, being ridiculous. She had come to enjoy the air of *a June dawn in the Utah mountains, full of zesty dew and an invigorating stillness*—the paradox, she hoped, would lend her thoughts credibility, and *zesty* just fit so well with how she imagined herself, here, now—but upon seeing her husband’s degraded state, what might be called regret had invaded what she had thought of for an hour as her *inner tranquility*. But she had discovered this tranquility by listening, against her better judgment, to her husband, and she saw no reason to stop now.

Toward his wife, Mr. McGinnis felt a mixture of gratitude and rage. When she was twenty feet away from the summit, which promised “astounding, refreshing views of the Rockies,” he was fifty; when she was ten, he was forty five. As he watched her hoist herself over the final waist-high ledge, he, forty feet away, became conscious that his testicles made a splashing sound in his own sweat every time he took a step.

“Hrech,” he said, to no one in particular.

Mrs. McGinnis, having made it safely over the ledge, had a minute at least to enjoy the Rockies alone. Panting slightly, she stood in one place and rotated, absorbing her own invigoration into her inner tranquility, though when she smiled, she didn’t think about it.

Hands on hips, she shouted, “Harvey! You were right! This is beautiful!”

“Hrech,” said Harvey, though he would have liked to say *I told you so*. The reality was, both husband and wife could have said *I told you so* at that point. Jeremy, unfortunately, could not.

Mr. McGinnis, picking his gut up and placing it on the ledge where his wife stood, caught his breath.

“Hi, Cheryl,” he managed.

But Cheryl McGinnis was lost in her own rotation, a dumb smile on her face as she continued to spin and soak in the newness of natural beauty, the satisfaction of an unknown *sense of adventure* within her. Hrech-ing and shaking his head, he got one leg up and over the ledge with ease. But when he tried to get the other leg up and over, rolling onto the ledge as he had seen his wife do, he failed. He landed back on his ankle and tried again.

Success eluded him again, but more flamboyantly: as he realized he was going to, yet again, be unable to roll onto the ledge, in a flash of youthful defiance he tried to use one last surge of abdominal strength to propel his body onto the ledge. He wanted to see the view. Falling, he realized he needed to buy an extra second of time to allow his leg to swing back into place, so he tried to grab onto something on the unfortunately smooth ledge with his hand. Unsuccessful, he fell back onto the ground, and by the time he had steadied himself, on his back, looking up at the sunshine, he became aware that his leg was broken. He was surprised—looking back at the ledge, he surmised that it could be no more than three feet high. But it was certainly more than one and a half.

He was miserable and embarrassed. “Cheryl,” he groaned, “I’m sorry. Can

you come down here?”

She did not respond. “Cheryl?” Again, no response.

“Cheryl!”

“*Cheryl!*”

“CHER-yl!”

“CHERYL!”

On the fifth mention of her name, Mrs. McGinnis finally heard her husband. She became worried. She had been grinning deafly at the Rocky Mountains. Harvey should be with her by now; besides, he sounded distressed. As she traced the source of his call, she began to worry that there might be something wrong and, really, that they should never have come after all.

# THE MANY SUICIDES OF VIRGINIA TEMPLETON

There is a river the first time. Virginia Templeton, sixteen-year-old heroine of the quiet, has tucked herself inside the burlap sack sitting on the ledge just above the water. A chain, complete with a near-medieval padlock at the very top, wraps around the sack. The padlock's skeleton key shines on the ground beside the sack, inaccessible to the victim.

The sack moves closer to the edge and falls into the water. She is on her way to death; the story should end.

But this is the story of Virginia Templeton, who, with knife in hand, slices through the sack from the inside and swims into the freedom of water no longer lethal. The day is bright; as Virginia's head, arms, torso, and legs rise to the surface, the water above seems to grow brighter still. Her head pops out of the water and into the open air, alive, alive.

She told me this story calmly, with her hands on her lap, from the couch across from the chair in my office. I was gripped. I could not explain then why I clutched the arms of my chair as the narration progressed nor why, after she finished, I imagined her lying naked on the ledge where she began, pale and dripping. She had not told me what she wore or didn't wear; she had stopped speaking when her head broke the surface.

"Why, Ms. Templeton, were you in the burlap sack in the first place?" I asked after a few seconds of silence.

"Well, if you *must* know," she said, looking at her hands, "I put myself there. But I can't see why that's important."

I learned then not to pry: to ask her about her method was to challenge her memory, too much to take for my little patient.

She covers the inside of her Ford Bronco's windows with newspaper and threads a hose through one of them, then attaches the other end of the hose to the exhaust. She starts the car, closes her eyes, exhales and relaxes, ready to die.

"I realized that my little brother would get the car, though," she told me. "Or someone else. People would fight over the car I killed myself in. How *awful* is that? I don't want the car I killed myself in to be driven again. It's so obscene. Isn't it just *vile*? Doesn't it disgust you?"

I felt like a dog hungering for affection. And that you: was it for me or the world?

"What happened after?" I asked.

"I was so lucky," she said. "I had secured the doors so I couldn't unlock them, but—there happened to be a hammer in the car. I don't know from what. I tore down the paper. I smashed the window. I crawled outside. I coughed. But I made it, even though my arms are scratched up."

She showed me her palms, forearms, elbows, and past, toward her torso. Her milk-white skin was covered with scratches halfway turned into scars.

"Tell me more, Virginia," I said.

"Oh, I've tried to kill myself many times," she said. "But each time, I think of something, something that just couldn't happen without me. So I save myself; so I'm still here."

"Your parents are worried about you. Frankly, I am too."

"Worry? Why worry? I can handle myself."

I could not argue that with such a girl. I laid my head back and smiled.

After she had gone, the spot where she had sat remained warm, and the couch retained her imprint. Slowly, I ran my hands back and forth over the fabric.

She drives a thousand miles an hour toward the suspension bridge between our town and the city. No one will fight over this car; she's going to drive it off of the bridge.

A cop pulls out behind her. "Shit!" she screams at the windshield. Her car's got some power, though. The cruiser still has some catching up to do.

The bridge nears. She's wearing a green shirt—the same shirt she'll wear later when she tells the story of this day—that stretches tightly over her young body. She says "Shit!" again. She says it like a woman would.

Once high enough to ensure death, Virginia Templeton cuts the wheel hard, smashing into the railing between the bridge and the empty air above the water. The Bronco won't make it, though; the railing won't give. After a few encounters, she is shaken and the car is moving too slowly for her to have any hope of death at all. She floors the gas again, hoping to accelerate; the car jerks under the insane power of Virginia Templeton's right foot.

But it appears that she will not die today. One last attempt at breaking through the railing confirms this, and a line of patrol cars prevents further passage. She is forced to slow and then stop; she doesn't want to kill anyone but herself. It is as if her bones have become elastic. She sags in the driver's seat, still alive.

The day after she told me that story, I took a drive to the suspension bridge. It has a sidewalk that's usually empty, but occasionally a homeless man will stumble across it. I've never been across on foot. I'm scared of heights.

On that day, though, it felt important to go. I parked behind some tall bushes on the side of the road. From my spot, I could see the bridge.

In middle school, I asked a girl to go to a dance with me. She said yes origi-



nally, but later in the day her friend handed me a note. My date hadn't heard me right; she could not, in fact, be my date.

On the bridge I felt young and heartbroken again. I looked at the swirling gray sea below. It looked like suicide water; indeed, every few years, someone from the city would jump. I looked back to my car. It couldn't be seen from the bridge.

The wind ripped through my ears; below, the sea grew small white caps. Thoughts of Virginia hammered at the walls of my brain. I could stop them no longer; my resolve shattered, I walked back to my car. I needed to watch her.

I sat for hours in my car before she left her house. By then it was late in the evening. She wore a tight silver dress. She got into a relatively battered SUV—the other cars in the driveway, a Lexus sedan and a BMW, were much newer, it appeared—and drove off.

One of her headlights was out, and she sped the whole way into the city. She parked in a garage near the restaurant district. I had to clutch myself in order to avoid opening the door or rolling down the window so I could yell to her, “STOP! What is it you think you are doing? You will get taken advantage of in that dress. Some man with rough hands will come and grab you and split you apart!”

I grabbed myself so hard it hurt, but I managed to refrain from alerting her of my presence; besides, she was safe under my watch.

I parked across the street; luckily, she sat next to a large window. Going into the restaurant would have made me nervous. She was with a boy who wore a dark jacket and dark pants and his hair over his eyes. She looked uncomfortable, and I wondered what on earth she could be doing with someone so obviously beneath her. She ordered a few drinks, and he did too. Hers came with umbrellas. She laughed as she took the liquid in her mouth and swallowed; I was transfixed. I had never studied someone like this.

Mr. and Mrs. Templeton find their daughter in their backyard with a noose around her neck, standing on a chair, ready to kick it out from beneath her. She wears a silver dress made for hours later than this one.

Her mother screams and runs toward her; her father stands still for a moment before he doubles over and dry heaves thirty feet from his daughter's body.

“That's the reason why I'm here,” she said. “That's the one they found out about.”

I wanted to ask how her parents weren't told about what happened on the bridge. But that would be prying.

“I could have done it,” she continued. “Right then. Kicked out the chair and”—she cracked her knuckles—“*snap* goes my neck. But I thought about everyone. My boyfriend Sam, and then my parents, who were *right there*, after all, right there in front of me. And I just couldn't do it. I scared my parents so they made me talk to

you.”

“Why did you do it?” I asked. “What were you feeling?”

“I wasn’t *feeling* anything,” she said. “I was just bored.”

“Bored is a feeling.”

“No it’s not.”

I changed the topic; I asked about Sam.

“Oh, he’s a cool guy,” she said. “Really badass. But sometimes he’s sweet, too, so it’s nice then. And he’s pretty hot.”

“Have you two had sexual intercourse?”

“Why does that matter?” she asked. “You make it sound like it happens in a doctor’s office or something.”

“A lot of times, a young girl can be confused when she first begins a sexual relationship.”

“I’m not confused. I don’t think I love him or anything—I’m not stupid.”

“Very well, Virginia.”

I suddenly had to go to the bathroom. My nose felt stuffed with thistle. I could have taken a hammer to the walls in the hallway.

When I arrived at the bathroom door, it looked different than usual, like an extension of some other barrier, placed there by some cruel meta-architect. It took me longer than usual to open the door, longer than usual to unzip my pants, and when my urine was finally released it was more painful than usual. Some splashed on the seat of the toilet—when I was young, my mother always scolded me for that—but I didn’t wipe it off.

I didn’t wash my hands either. When I came back to Virginia I told her she had to leave, that I suddenly felt ill.

“But I still have half an hour left!”

“Your parents will, of course, be reimbursed.”

Her eyes went dull as she searched for the right thing to say.

“I just threw up,” I explained.

“You know,” she said, “I’ve come to like our meetings.”

She smiled and looked up at me. It took all I had to remain silent. Soon she turned for the door.

Before she left, she turned and looked back at me. “I noticed you outside of the restaurant,” she said.

From across the room, I found her eyes. “I don’t know what you mean.”

She giggled and walked out.

That night I watched as Virginia Templeton did her homework at the desk next to an upstairs window. An hour after midnight, Sam snuck over. I believe they had sex, though that is difficult to verify. He left thirty-two minutes later.

She wants to be found naked and bloody. But wristcutting—that takes too

long. So she's got her daddy's gun.

It's small and sleek. It doesn't look like it's even made to be fired—more like a prop than an instrument of death, even self-inflicted.

She sits, legs together, reaching for the gun in her lap, her thighs lean and perfect. Her hands tremble as they descend towards the gun, but her face shows no signs of worry. It looks like a six-year-old's, with lips ready to let candy or a finger through, not a gun. When her hands make contact with the gun, she inhales sharply, immediately, and her eyes grow wide. She shudders, losing and regaining her posture, and begins breathing heavily. Death stands before her, its abdomen level with her eyes.

She thought about putting the bullet through her temple, but that would have tarnished her face. She opens her mouth. The barrel slides between her lips. Her mouth is such a lovely home for an object so vile.

Her lips lock tightly, firmly, around the gun. Her eyes remain open as her finger climbs up the handle of the gun and curls around its trigger. Her muscles shake; everything in her body tries to remain stiff and in place.

This scene holds for a moment, time's movement muffled like the sound of a scream underwater.

Then she pulls it.

Click.

No bullet. She shudders again, slumping and dropping the gun, a moan stowed away in her hurried exhale.

By the time she finished this story, my milkshake had almost completely melted. This was not a session; I had found her in town that evening, and we decided to go for ice cream. We sat in a corner booth. She laughed more frequently than in my office. It was unnerving.

"Thank you for taking me out for ice cream," she said.

"Nonsense, Virginia. It was nice to see you. I'm glad you could sit with me for awhile."

"I like talking to you, you know," she said.

"Do you tell anyone else your stories?"

"God, no."

"Really?"

"Well, a few people, I guess. But only the ones that really matter."

"Sam?"

"No he'd get freaked out," she said. "He's sort of far away from that stuff. I mean, he's cool and all, but he's just a boy."

"He seems like one," I said, but through my teeth. "But you're just a girl."

"Are you angry?" she asked.

"Angry?"

"Are you?"

"Why would I be? I just listen."

Oh, come on." A smile darted to her lips, then retreated as quickly as it had come. "You don't just listen to me."

I hurried: "What?"

"You know." She sipped her milkshake. "I don't really mind, you know. I understand. I might even like it."

"I don't know what *it* is."

"You didn't just bump into me tonight. You meant to be near me. You mean to be near me—you watch me sometimes."

"Virginia, you should leave."

"What? It's fine. I don't care about age."

"Virginia, I don't know what you mean and—"

She stopped me with another smile. I was losing years—losing power. I felt disgusted. I wanted no more of my milkshake.

"You like me. You have a *thing* for me."

I had to assert myself. I had to make her little again.

"Admit it."

"Virginia," I said.

"Yes?"

"Unfortunately, I have to cancel our appointments."

"What does *that* mean?"

"We will not see each other any longer."

"No."

"Yes. Goodbye."

"How can you do this to me?" she asked. "I—I need help. That's your job. That's why you know me."

I ignored her weeping. I had no time for the emotions of little girls, no space in my heart to allow for what brings out my need to care, to cherish. Virginia Templeton had to be removed from me.

"I am sorry to terminate our relationship," I said.

"You can't—" She continued to cry.

"Goodbye. I'll be in contact with your parents."

I got up and left. She remained seated, a little girl in a corner booth.

She wrote a note and left it under her therapist's door. *Tomorrow on the bridge at noon, it reads, You are my knife. You are my hammer. My policemen. My father. My empty chamber...my man.*

It is after noon. She thought she would see a familiar face by now. She doesn't notice the car parked behind the bushes on the side of the road past where the bridge begins. She is alone on the railing.

---

I waited in my car, watching while the Coast Guard fished the body of a sixteen-year-old girl from the gray depths below the bridge. At least I had been honest—we had not seen each other again—though I was not foolish enough to confuse honesty with virtue.

I wondered about self-analysis; I identified myself with various sicknesses. I felt guilty. I knew, though I would try to forget, why I hated Virginia Templeton.

## TOWNIES

---

The boys know that behind the farmer's house there is a large, wild yard with a tall pile of cut firewood. He sells it to the people in the town who have fireplaces and woodstoves. Some of the boys' parents have bought firewood from the farmer before.

The boys march stealthily down the wooded corridors of suburbia to the farmland, twigs breaking under their boots. They feel braver whenever they touch something—a tree or the ground. These boys are nervous, they are shaking. These are bored boys.

There is dry marijuana on their tongues and a still-burning cough in their throats. Their parents have taught them to expect something out of the future, but tonight what the boys follow is only the boy in front. He follows, too, though he does not know what. Another smell, gasoline, overwhelms the stink of fear and weed. Rusted cans knock against each boy's knees, and the cold gasoline that has splashed up from inside rests on the boys' hands and makes them tremble with cold. After a while, it hurts to grip the cans.

Their path cuts close to roads. Each headlight is a policeman's, each taillight the mean, bored glare of their fathers. They know little, though, about what's behind those taillights, about what's really in each car that has passed.

Later, they will not remember how old they were tonight, or how many of them walked towards the farmer's land. They will not know why they have chosen this farmer.

Not many of them will grow up and leave the town. Not many of them will forget.

Closer now, they can smell the land on the edge of town, green long before boots sank into its flesh. It neither looks nor smells the same as it does in the sunlight. The moon is almost halfway to full. The night is bright enough so that after a few minutes, when they all stop, they can see each other. One sees another's face, pale and hollow, waiting to be flushed.

They do not think of their girls, laughing together in warmly lit rooms in the upstairs of houses. They think their mothers are numb and stupid. The boys hate their mothers. They think that their fathers do too, and about this they are right.

The bored farmer sits in his house getting older.

The half moon lights up his back yard. In the center the massive pile of wood lies like a mound of dead bodies in a history book.

The gasoline lands on the bodies, for a moment glimmering then sinking into the wood. Through its pores, the wood soaks up the liquid that will set it alight. The boys look with fear at the logs they douse, knowing what will happen, knowing what they will do, knowing that it is too late to stop because they are there and still

bored. They are urgent because they are scared to stop and think.

The boys tiptoe around the pile and wonder how many people are thinking of them. On the Mulberry Lanes and Blackberry Courts around their houses they have walked with their own innocence enough to hate it, to be disgusted by it. They have destroyed enough to need to destroy more, but not enough to stop. They can look at their homes and thrash and twist against their quiet streets, but their own bonds can only be broken by fire. To be a boy is to know what is right and to hate it and to validate it.

Tonight, a boy punches a smaller boy. The smaller boy's nose is broken and bleeds, and he is angry and hopes he will remember how angry he is. A match is lit. Orange flame spreads.

At first there is no sound, just a quiet orange glow atop the logs. The tongues of flame are slow. The boys stand stiff, unable and uncomfortable. They know they have to leave before the flames grow too much. One, who had been the leader, closes his eyes and sees the mound completely alight, the rapid, terrible wind of fire rushing forever upwards into the indistinguishable sky. In his stomach, he yearns to see it. He wants to stay. But for now, the ring of flame creeps near the base of the pile like some sick, sad, evil beast. The boys can smell it.

They must run away. Walking would be impossible.

They run, but as the fire spreads they slow and turn around. They have continued away from the town, out through trees into the farmland, away from suspicion. They find a stone wall away from the road, sit, and watch the sky grow brighter, then brighter still with the changing light of the police and firemen, who have seen this before. The boys pass a joint and laugh nervously. They all want to leave but feel rooted and mute. They try not to think of the farmer. They can't quite imagine how he feels.

## **SALMON**

---

are inspirational  
but stupid and  
delicious



## GOING

---

### Helmut Hackett

I asked the wind  
to be kind  
when I'm gone  
but it only howled

at the thought  
of my going.  
Look, I said, it's only  
for a time

and you'll have those  
songs to  
keep you company  
while I'm away.

So the wind took a  
                    deep heave  
lifting up its  
dead leaven overcoat.

will it be long, the wind  
                    asked unwillingly  
unwinding. Oh no, I said,  
it won't be long,  
not long at all.

## THE PROOF

---

I have seen my generation  
bested  
by the fluted golden lens  
of a beer pitcher.

And I have commiserated with the  
wasted youth: stumbling  
from bar to bar  
in not-so fantastic trips  
tipsy-lit on stubbed toes.

And I was the one who sent you  
that sodden text  
message misspelling *my utopia*,  
“myopia”.

And god knows I have ogled that gaggle  
of gagging gals and guys all gone  
glassy, googly-eye-goggled,  
erecting a pious vomitorium  
from the sink to the floortiles.

And, yes, it was me who held that would-be  
mother’s hair back and would tried to have held  
a would-be father back  
were it not for a certain limpness  
already doing the trick.

Because *I am*. I am one with these livers on high:  
I, too, am in search of somewhere to sit  
my dizzied eyes, to lay my bleary head,  
to rest my drowsy hands, to cede to the night,  
to night. To us two tucked in tight.

## SMUT

---

in her gentles  
yawning welcomely  
the gooey quiet

clumsypulse ovations  
*oob-fuh—shb—mhmm,*  
the palpitatingling tulip pulp succumbs

ah full vacuum effluorescence  
tooslipping—gulp—vulgarsecrets  
by honeycomb butterfingers

s(he) in oozy site ambergris  
creamsywrapt osculating  
as we southerly oscintillating go

something oh so smotherdly both  
no oh someotherwordly god oh  
so homogeneously distilled her and his still utter pure lying will you ill well youll till i  
ll t ill i tii i tl i

cantinyoucontinuumcontin  
yumyoumyuomyoumuuyo  
gushingushhingg us hhhiiing  
uhuhshushsuhhsuhsuuhhsing

over and over  
we lovers becoming  
re-over once more

till what came over us is  
over and over is  
overcome.

## LOOK UP

---

You're dreaming  
idly  
at the sky  
expansive and cerulean  
when a sudden blemish yanks  
you  
jerks that idle reverie  
from your grip  
and you're impelled  
swinging your turret to the  
fore  
at the offending fleck and  
*fire.*

But you're too late—this  
only results in more clouds  
and not the milkyvestal vaulting ones  
that predominated before  
but these ugly splotches  
that scar your retina  
and smell of naphthalene:  
candles wicked with eyelashes and  
armpit hair.

So go ahead and blink your eyes,  
clear your throat,  
and go back to whatever it was  
you can't ever quite remember.

## Two-Step

---

Sometimes when dancing  
 I think on the corpses  
 buried a few short blocks away,  
 a few feet below ground,  
 in Mount Olivet Cemetery—  
 fixed on their backs—  
 and about what each would give  
 to shake it down,  
 to bust a raucous groove  
 outside the grave  
 on those animate bodies  
 I, more often than not, am  
 too timid to engage.

On such Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights  
 I hate myself  
 for not dancing with  
 more vigorous mortality.  
 for not taking up chances,  
 for passing romances.

On such end-of-the-week nights,  
 I think, I'll swing and I'll swig  
 until I forget just how much spirit  
 is left  
 at the bottom of my glass.

Oh yes, I think,  
 I'll wing and I'll wiggle until  
 the clarion of death  
 (unlikely life of the party)  
 singles me out  
 among the ground and grinding remains  
 of the dancefloor.  
 Her bony finger beckoning.

## [HE KEEPS REACHING]

Joanna Chen

He keeps reaching reaching for me even when I protest  
that it's time to sleep the attention's still sweet and I'm afraid of losing  
him so my no is never really final until we both pass out but the rest  
is only intermittent because his hands god still reach and he says  
over and over again he just wants to make me feel good.

I tell him that I don't know shit but he insists I know  
my own holy body an anchoress in these walls where people come to see me  
in my closedness what do I know I want to tell him  
read a goddamn Wikipedia article incognito or not but don't expect  
me to puppet this excavation.

Maybe he has or maybe it's in him but those hands I push away  
his probing fishing phalanges drawn to the raw of me  
I don't want to be reeled to the surface gasping to succumb gasping  
painful pleasure hooked by the anesthesia of his murmur in my ear  
I'm vacillating in and out of sleep wondering what does this mean

hoping that my Niagran thoughts don't spill don't spread don't stain  
but I can feel them already pulsing below his hands  
his heartbeat ricocheting in his ribcage  
I wish it was Morse code I could learn.

## UNTITLED

---

Travis Lau

As an interloper,  
 I peruse diaries of grief  
 and find this tongue of mine  
 wrung into knots like my innards  
 twisting, pulling, dancing  
 at the ineffable recollection  
 of being born out of  
 long-dead stars.

## MOT JUSTE FOR TWO

Justin Alexander Kinnear

Bordeaux breath and purple stained lips  
trade sentence for sentence as we uncouple  
each other's essence. A slate vinyl spirals

at 33 rpm, playing—*Life in a Glasshouse*. Wailing  
trumpet, piano playing and sung words fade. Los Angeles  
alive past the white door and the brass gargoyle mascarón

knocker that scares away visitors. Alive inside. Anabel's  
eyes like rings of gold as I mine for the mot juste  
(mot juste for two). Buenos Aires surely misses you,

but don't leave, stay with me. Darkened kitchen, always  
the kitchen. Second glass pours spills and stains tiles like drops  
of blood. Her laughs wipe away my mistake. The cappuccino

hands of a bleeding heart touch mine. Conversation  
slips into words unsaid, enough for heart beats to interrupt  
the creeping silence and the converging bliss of a first kiss.



## HALF-FULL

---

The gold curtains hang  
plainly in the dark and keep  
out the winter moonlight crowding  
the empty small hour streets. Water  
glass waits bedside—half-full. Leaving  
another ring on the nightstand  
next to an open book, cover  
up. Anabel sleeps. Her right  
hand rests on my rising, diving  
chest. Her hair smells of lavender  
and honeysuckle. Her breath in sync  
with faint ticks of a wall clock, before  
a distant whistle of a ghost train  
reminds me to wake up  
in three hours to have hot  
coffee with the morning chill  
and the orange dawn.

## BLUEGRASS UNCUT

---

Scarlet words recede long enough for clasped  
hands and loose legs to lead us below the grinning  
moon past yellow streetlights and labyrinthine  
parking signs to a crowded Pasadena bar  
where we float together in bluegrass uncut,  
drunk off the moment and Levitation Ale. Hands  
on hips that dip and buck to the music. Heels  
landing on gyred knots of a pinewood floor  
stained with spilled beer and lost shots in between our flight  
of leather wingtips and faux leather flats. Sweat slides down your neck  
like slow sex. Makeshift dance floor is empty, save us,  
but we're dancing enough for everyone. Elbows  
sharpened to cut a rug. Feral smiles fill  
faces and the spaces in between like a bouquet  
of plucked catgut strings.  
And if this feeling wears thin we can unravel  
the crimson thread from hands tangled  
in our daedal cat's cradle.

## A DEFECATOR'S MUSINGS

---

Fazal Abbas

Patterns on the covered wall  
Like countless criss-crossed country roads  
Parching in the summer heat;

On the wooden windowsill  
Like the work of an aimless abstract painter  
Unwilling or unable to parallel his lines;

Lining the inside of the bowl  
Like creeping trails of dark, dreary moisture  
Coloring the side of a concrete bridge.

**ALEX TREBEK'S LETTER TO JEREMY VERBA,  
CEO OF eHARMONY**

---

Natalie Morales

I'm a hermaphroditic squid and I need someone to love me.

I'm soft and feel like creamy jelly;  
There's a pair of scissor-like teeth in my belly;  
and I need someone like me to love me.

I have two eyes in my front;  
I have both squid penis and squid cunt;  
and I need someone like me to love me.

I pulsate when I'm sad or happy;  
I like long walks across the bottom of the sea;  
and I want someone like me to love me.

# **BLACKWALKS**

Kevin Mosby

Afore I ran to this town  
 An underbelly was sickness  
 And was death. The children  
 Wheezing for they mother  
 Whose away crying for her  
 Shotdown son. Knowing is  
 For they men just pumping  
 For they women babymaking  
 All she ever knows. One dies  
 She got another. But not, no,  
 Never the same. For her  
 It is a black nebula bursting  
 In lower body when she glimpse  
 That blackness. So she goes  
 Take a walk on silver  
 Asphalt newly minted from  
 Yesterday's rain.

But now  
 Underbelly a disease of the  
 Mind. Only. Pills and they  
 Soft chairs at doctors homes  
 Remedy it. No where anyone  
 Dead didn't want to die. So  
 Somebody flopping that chill  
 Water with they shoes say  
 I gon worry myself with  
 Little things bout money and  
 Which word to put on paper next.  
 So they clog up them streets at  
 Two in the morning with they  
 Thoughts so they women from  
 Grumpier trashier towns cannot  
 Walk them after watching her  
 Last son go deep down in some  
 Blackness that smells of dirt.

## IN A SORT OF LATENINETIES LAMENT

---

i would recognize the use of  
landlines and the tubbies and their  
polysynchronous mumbles of  
words and plastic sporks for the  
kernel's mashedpotatoes delivered  
by young blondies in skorts to the  
mouths of their pinksnubbed cherubims  
who go to the Catholic School and  
like the god-talk  
    favorite part of the day, mom and  
    math and grammar are dirty,

but i too am the seed of channel  
flippings with newstalk about school  
shootings and gang bangings and meth  
shooters and compact discs and plastic  
bags that mean nothing, but everything  
from then is dead and  
    what's a generation  
    to do when preceded  
    by the generation  
    that doesn't care  
    and feeds its children  
    crap on cardboard,  
and i am the cardboardcrapeater who  
kissed a girl with a mouthful of mashers  
on a bench at Queen of All Saints and  
she touched it when i did not know what  
it was other than a watermaker, yellow  
summer wetnwild to me and

now she is a beerdrinker jettubber with  
buzz the boyfriend and her sockets worn from  
overuse and chlorine infiltration and mother  
the skortwearer snorts coke as she jimmies  
the handle of a 1998 honda civic bought brand  
new from an old husband,

but laments are dirty dirty things and boring  
 and a bit formulaic for our tastes and make us  
 remember - very uncool, the post-individualist  
 mashmouthers decided. and i feel a bit rushed and am running out of room.

## LOW AND RUSTIC LIFE

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You grew up in the dirt in the Louisville mud  
with tree sap waking you to the schoolhouse where  
little pink girls sat aside you so to marry  
you, as you was the one going to rise yourself  
up from the manure of your birth right.

You always thought your wits would get you far  
away from us in this dirt, this dirt that ripened  
you. This dirt that gave you thickness you chose  
to shed. You wiped it from your face to, so you said,  
unsully a sullied head, head of your mother, your father.

Your purple words got you to the university where  
they teach you how ignoble was your present ignorance  
and you recant your days of mudding around with  
brothers and sisters on the outside, when better they  
could have been spent with thick worded paper volumes.

One day you quit your churchgoing and said your time-  
you said it like you owned this time—your time was better  
spent in your studies away from your family, away from  
your Maker. You left not soon after, to cut in to  
that deeper level away from the surface of things, you said.

It is our hope that your rhyming and philosophizing  
gives you some great pleasure which mother and I could not  
attend to during your upbringing in this rural dirt. We hear  
they where you have taken residence say unkind words of such  
a lowly life as we begot you in, and for this, we are sorry.



## WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY

your brother backs out of the  
driveway and shatters Spot,

your woman asks you to pick up  
orange juice and some cigarettes  
and the morning-after,

Uncle Roger gives your mom  
a hefty clap on the ass,

you answer the door in your  
boxers and find twelve pretty  
Mormon girls with pamphlets.

at each, you quiver and walk away.

But at tonight's reading you will  
read it, shutter and stare, and  
leave, half-hoping they're as  
confused as you are —

## Featured Writers

### **Helmut Hackett**

Helmut Hackett is life which wills to live, and exists in the midst of life which wills to live. His style is at once ubiquitous, transcendental and intergalactic. He'll die someday. Until then he acknowledges that the world is a beautiful place to be born into; and it goes cycling on. His first name is Robert and he thanks those eyes that yes.

### **Kevin Mosby**

Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Kevin Mosby is an undergraduate at UCLA majoring in American literature. In addition to creative writing, his academic interests include film and literary theory. Kevin is currently undertaking a research project on the treatment of masculinity in contemporary Southern poetry. Kevin says his tendency to write about gritty subjects stems from his early interest in writers like William Faulkner and Raymond Carver. After he graduates Kevin would like to earn an M.F.A. and teach literature and writing at the university level.

### **Miklos Zoltan**

I am very honored to be a featured author in this issue. I hope you find my stories entertaining.

# Contributor Notes

**Fazal Abbas** is a first-year law student who enjoys reminiscing about better days.

**Justin Alexander Kinnear** is a *serious* writer of fiction and poetry currently attending the University of California, Los Angeles pursuing a degree in English with a concentration in creative writing. He completes wet drafts of poems in hot bowls of homemade alphabet soup.

**William Warner Anderson III** is a narcissist by fate, William was born from himself in the most literal sense. Considering the determinate implications of names, he is doomed to repeat not only his father's life exactly but also his father's father's life. He is hoping that his life will be the end of an endlessly recursive cycle.

**Joanna Chen** an English and Sociology major, likes to spend her free time making friendship bracelets and getting to know people. She feels ambivalent about the Oxford comma. She once cried in excitement at the sight of baklava. Parataxis is her new excuse to share disparate thoughts.

**Shane Dunau** was born on a farm in upstate New York and is a communication major with a focus in diversity and inequality studies. She is inspired by her Serbian heritage, modernism, and delicious food.

**Travis Lau** is a graduating senior pursuing an English Major and Classical Civilization Minor at UCLA. Travis will be attending the University of Pennsylvania this September to pursue a PhD in English with specific focus on the 18th and 19th century and on issues of embodiment in conjunction with feminist/queer theory. Travis enjoys writing on the side, which inspired a poetry blog that he updates daily, and traveling.

**Morgan Michel-Schottman** was born and raised in Seattle, Washington. The most important thing she ever learned was how to swim.

**Amrita Mishra** is ticklish.

**Natalie Morales** is a senior English major at UCLA. Her work has been published in *Conceit Magazine*, Mt. San Antonio College's *Left Coast Review* and *MoSaic*, and online journals *the beatnik* and *InSomnis Veritas*.

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Submission Guidelines:

We only accept e-mail submissions. Send all submissions to [rainyday@cornell.edu](mailto:rainyday@cornell.edu). You must include the submission as an attachment, preferably a “.doc” file. Please make sure all the formatting is correct. The subject in the email must be “RAINY DAY SUBMISSION.” Also include within the document your name and contact information. We accept multiple submissions, as well as submissions from colleges and universities throughout the U.S. Send all inquiries about joining the staff to [rainyday@cornell.edu](mailto:rainyday@cornell.edu). Further informatino, as well as back issues, can be found at our website: [www.rso.cornell.edu/rainyday/](http://www.rso.cornell.edu/rainyday/).

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