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intercollegiate arts & literary magazine

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SPIRES — *intercollegiate arts & literary magazine* — spring 2003 — Volume IX, Issue I

S P I R E S

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S P R I N G



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Front Cover "Untitled" by Heather McPherson, Washington University
Back Cover "Boss's Tirade" by Sunil Manchikanti, Washington University

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Brian Loyal
Washington University

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INTRODUCTION

To all who can read and are now reading this,

I'm pretty sure nobody does read this. I mean, let's be honest; you didn't pick this up to check out the Introduction from the editor. You took this either because you are an avid and interested reader of undergraduate poetry from across the country (see how cunning I am) or because someone shoved it into your hand as you were passing by. In either case, I'm pretty sure you're still not going to read this.

Well, in the interest of filling space that has traditionally been full:

1. The morning air can be humid and still smell of bacon.
2. Wear a buckle or your pants might tumble.
3. Laughter is the excrement of humor.
4. Uncle Don gave you the finger.
5. Dogs like running more than they like spinning, but think that vomiting is probably the worst.
6. Solipsism is the highest form of being a cup (hereafter referred to as "cupness").
7. If Breton had a rabbit, he'd probably have named it something strange.
8. Perhaps "The Great Awakening of the Universe."
9. Kool-Aid Jammers don't taste as good as they look or, if you will, look better than they taste.
10. A bowl of meat sounds unappetizing; go with chair-bomb.
11. Condensation of blood on an IV can result in drippery, thus causing slippery floors.
12. Children need to break their wings unless they have brown eyes.
13. Samuel rode his donkey to Verona where he promptly bartered it for a hat.
14. More like Fanzibar.

For the non-existent audience still happily not with me, I can certainly assure you that the contents within are not so self-indulgent. They also have the property of betterness *sans* the cupness.

With more affection than a fat man could hold in his smooth elliptical belly,



Gregory A. Lenhoff Esq.
Co-President

LARVAE UNSETTLED

I got myself a BS degree,
clown around only when necessary—
lick her & fags—
but stay sensible:
each night I place my socks&towel on the radiator
and dream of a nuclear family.

Was it always
no shenanigans,
only cardigans?

I kiss your wax lips
your eyelashes are warm, coated
your nails are candied
and by my touch, your
immanual cunt
is possible.

I stare into your frog eggs
and a film floats over them—
oil in water—
and now I see:

no majority,
only divisions—
conic sections & sonic factions,
social dislocations &
consequent discontents.

Leather & grease & wood
are on the altar of the metalloids.

Cars are the usual ants
and their drivers, larvae
boiling not bursting—

Buildings stand closer together
than you & I,
blocking out the sun the color of what
bubbles
through my veins:
forgive me I've
been swallowing batteries.

Only mother knows
of the old drool&sweat on my pillow,
only I know
of how Rachmaninoff made my knees&chest simmer,
how I had to arch my back to stop the tears from surging
but my room my friends this drink & the world goggle over
how he signed my piano
that broods over there,
furniture.

Oh-Yoon Kim
Brown University

CHICAGO NIGHTS

Night is fuel and the distance
Brim with metal and asphalt monoliths
Darkness is vicious
Not for blackness, but depth
Of heated breath, flashing neon billboards,
The river splashing against concrete like gin
Hurling past Fullerton, these wheels
Move as if to wound something already hurt
Enter that place where further
Is beyond pain, inevitable as churning stars
In the rearview mirror
Recklessness in this existence is reality
A fiery push not to stay within white and yellow
Painted dashes and lines
Throttled on by fluorescence, cigarette smoke,
Forward means tearing a new scar

Joshua Jones
Washington University

IN THE CLEAR SAVANNAH

In the clear savannah
you ran beside me
and I beside you

like wolves we prowled in search
of the glorious
self-found-perfection

and Helios guided us
me to the jungleLit
you to the mountain

separated we reigned
kings of the world
plated demagogues

until you smeared your face
and bathed like Abel
in jungle syrup

Rob Boyer
Washington University



Elaine Yu
Washington University

UNTITLED

There is a division
between noble thought
and expression.

What is something 'insidiously beautiful,'
but an attractive collection of sounds,
like kisses crawling up my arm,
or perhaps
the solitary sound of
a single bark from the old hound
in the dark?

What is this division
between knowing and meaning?
Simply, or uncertainly, words.

Words dividing, knowing,
saying.
Dissembling between

What you know and what is words.
What is words and what is sound
What is meaning and what is sensation
What to say, "And, how!"

But only: that her palm was alabaster, and
she pressed it to her brow.

Katherine Stevens
Washington University

UPS BLUES

The jumbo jet peels off the tarmac despite my conviction it's going to kamikaze into a platoon of trees. I'm watching the tarmac, but I don't know the difference between that word and runway. I could be sitting on the tarmac for all I know. Maybe tarmac is the Polynesian word for cool and I have no idea what I'm talking about. Beyond the fence, blue-clad men on a giant staircase load boxes onto a plane and I wonder when and where this plane will land and if it'll ever come back to say hi while I'm burning the midnight oil. Carryall full of resumes slung over my shoulder, I slide off the hood of my car and pace through the parking lot. The air feels thick with the roar of jets and brown vans and who knows what other drowned sounds. When I get to the security booth I grin like a tourist and wave while the guard rolls her eyes, points left and says, "That way." I tell her thank you and check my hair in a black window.

Hand on Human Resource's cold steel door, I envision a montage stripped apart and re-spliced in the wrong order due to my over-excitement. I'm backpacking the seven seas, sailing the Appalachian Trail, flying Everest, climbing the English Channel. I see the moon big like a plate at midday as I photograph tropical birds perched on a pine tree in Saskatchewan. And finally, I see myself running a marathon through the Congo with climbing moccasins soaking up swamp water. Inside, I plop a resume on the counter. The secretary smiles and tells me all positions have already been filled. "But I'm brilliant, hard working, and friendly," I say, counting my fingers

to little effect. I'm ambitious but she's armed with a corporate smile and a suede shield no youth or ambition could ever hope to pierce. The air seems a little colder on my walk out.

Sitting Indian-style on the hood of my car, I wonder if anything could ever bridge this rift between lifestyles: serving overpriced coffee and alcohol at my old job, and loading boxes onto planes, that much closer to the life I need. Planes take off. Planes land. Planes go places where my credit card and slippery grasp of the local tongue are all I need. But here I am, frozen to the rusted aluminum of my car.

After sunset when I'm sick from exhaust fumes, I drive home, find the power out, and fall onto my futon like the working stiff I will always be. Then I reach over and fondle the nightstand for my dictionary. After lighting my only candle I look up the word tarmac. It means runway. That figures.

Brian Ray
University of South Carolina



Katbriel Brister
Tulane University

EPINEPHRINE PEN

in the city, she dreams
about wasp eggs,
white, round like
chalk pills.

she goes to wash.
drones crawl up
from the sink.
she screams,

they disappear.
she moves to a fort
on long island. they follow
and bang at the back door.

in the awful moment
when the sun
levels with the moon,
she wakes.

on her flaking sill,
a wasp tucks its egg
into a hole. she
flicks it away.

Daniel Marcus
Washington University

THE MOVEMENT OF BOXES

In five instants we pass by a thousand
telephone poles and signs we can't read.
They keep pace alongside the spacing of tracks.
The people here, their faces are transposed
on cement, rice fields, and kites. Rainbow tails
on top of imagined monsters—pulled taut,
then loose.

The quiet child wonders and his thought
is interrupted by the entrance of heated air.
We alight onto a synthetic platform finding
balance, falling into the habit of walking.
Cicadas click, their journeys isolated
on the tree where they hatched. They move
horizontally, branch by branch.

The industry
of each station makes us weary. It turns
us into passengers within moving boxes.
They oblige us to sit, and again, our faces float
in mid-air. Counting, we try and keep rhythm.

Jonathan Lee
Washington University



Philip Meier
Washington University

THEM WHITE GIRLS

I don't like "them white girl waitresses here. Not because they make more money than me, and get better hours. Not because the manager talks sweet to them. No. But because all the food they order don't got no meat to it. Sauce on the side. No cheese. Extra pepper please. And don't butter the bread.

While I wait at the table for the manager to come, I watch them float across the dining room with their denim shirts and name tags, holding trays filled with soft drinks. They nod their heads big, with their eyes open wide, as if they're talking to deaf people. These waitresses must be on drugs, because they are smiling as they lift plates smeared about the rim with the bits of liver someone picked out of their fettuccine. And when they go to reach one, they stand on their toes a little bit and lean over so that you can't help but look. I sit there, and as I watch them, I start to feel someone watching me.

"Hey there... Lionel?" he asks. I shake his hand. He's the manager here. A middle-aged guy with a notebook, a folder, and a cup of coffee. We sit down at the table, and he asks me to please fill out these three or four forms, and he'll be back. He won't hand me a pen, because he wants me to think that he'll be judging me by how prepared I am. I got my own pen though, and I've filled out enough forms to get them down quick. Now I have to sit some more, and wait.

I took this job three weeks ago because of Gina and it's close to my house. For two months before this I had no job—and man, it was good. I didn't think about them things that be keeping me down: the bills and the rides to

work, the managers who talk down to me, and the white girl waitresses who think they're better than me, checking their asses in the mirror as they tie their aprons like no one is watching—only everyone is watching them, even me from where I'm standing in the same three feet of space behind the kitchen line, sweat pouring down the back of my coat and into my pants.

Three weeks ago I was lying on the couch in the living room. That old couch is broken on one end. I let the dog sit there and rest my feet on him. I'm eating my cereal—when Gina walks in the front door and slams it behind her. She stops after walking over to the couch and smells the air. The room is dark for the most part, and I haven't opened the window, so you can see the smoke hanging low over the television.

"Lionel. How come you smoke weed on the couch all day." She doesn't ask it; she says it, like she knows what I'm going to say back to her.

"Weed's only good if you smoke it every day, baby. You smoke it just sometimes, it makes you all hungry and gives you a headache. You smoke it every day, and you cool. Like me." She comes and sits down next to me, and she looks so pretty, her skin glowing black against the light coming in from the windows, her curly hair slicked back in a ball on the back of her head, making her look so grown up and pretty. She rests her head on the couch and her little black eyes stare up into mine.

"When you gonna move that car."

"I'm gonna. I'm gonna do it tomorrow."

"Ok. And when you gonna get a job."

"Ronnie says that they're going to be

hiring next week at the post office. I was thinking about going up there and filling out an application.” Gina lifts her head up off the couch and there’s white dog hair stuck to her skin.

“You was *thinking!* He was thinking!” she says, jumping up from the couch and heading for the stares. As she walks she slams down her feet loud so I can tell she’s upset enough to wake the baby. As she gets to the top of the stares she yells down:

“You gonna be doin a lot of thinking by yourself, Lionel. ‘Cause we about out.”

Damn.

Everybody gets one meal for every shift that they work, but you can’t get just anything on the menu. You can get lasagna, spaghetti, ravioli, and cheese bread. I don’t like to eat at work, even though it’s free, ‘cause the food there don’t taste like nothing. Plus, right next to the kitchen line where the food comes out is a big trash can where the bus boy dumps all the plates of half-eaten food until lasagna, fettuccine, and salad start to overflow the top of the trash can. Then he comes back with a bowl of ice-cream turned to soup and dumps that on top of it with some old sanitation water that smells like dead fish. I look at all the food piled up like that, the sauces mixing to form a brown cream that drips down the side of the trash can and onto the floor, where the dishwasher boy slips around in it as he reaches for another leaning tower of plates and pasta bowls, and I don’t want to eat until I get home from work. Sometimes then Regina cooks me chicken, on the bone, or steaks, with lots of AI sauce. But if you want to get your meal at work, you have to ask one of the white girls to ring it in for you. They take your order, and then

they put it in whenever they feel like it. The manager will watch me from where he stands next to the cash register, looking out the window. Finally, he’ll come over and say:

“Lionel, what are you doing sitting there?”

“Waiting on my meal.”

“Break time is only supposed to be twenty minutes buddy. We got to keep the kitchen running. Don’t worry—there’s some to-go boxes over in dry storage. One of the waitresses can get you one.”

So you see how it goes.

Yesterday I woke up early so I could fix myself some eggs before work in the morning. I go down to the kitchen, which is cold and still. A few dishes lie about in the sink from where Regina decided not to wash them last night. I turn on the radio morning show, which I used to listen to every morning in the car, before Ronnie broke it. My eggs are just starting to set when Regina comes down with the baby. She is wearing her sweat pants. She hands me Sheila, our little girl. She’s got eyes like her momma, big as saucers, and the same curly hair, only drool is coming out of her mouth and when I bounce her, her eyebrows start to crinkle up and her mouth spreads wide like she’s tasting something she don’t like. Regina takes her back and gives me a look like I’m good for nothing. Guess maybe I am.

I got to work a little late, on account of the fact that I had to give Regina my bus fare, because she works over in Hillsdale, and I had to walk. I gave her my last five dollars which means I couldn’t buy any cigarettes either.

When I get to work, Michael is on the dock unloading cans of tomato sauce from the back of a truck.

“Green’s looking for you. He seems perturbed.”

Ted Green. Ted The Asshole Green. My manager who stares out the window next to the cash register all day, watching the reflection of the waitresses’ butts. He’s mad because I’m fifteen minutes late.

“He says you forgot to put away the parmesan cheese last night.”

Then that too. Here’s a funny thing about Michael: He’s got a bone stuck straight through one of his nipples. Michael has a very clean-cut little box of a head, wears glasses, and uses big words like perturbed. One day last week it was so hot in the kitchen we were taking turns going in and standing in the walk-in refrigerator to cool down. When my turn comes, I walk in, and there’s Michael, with his shirt off, and one nipple all swollen compared to the other, the skin thin on the sides of the bone which goes all the way through it. I started to laugh.

“Didn’t know you had piercings, Michael, man. What else you got pierced?”

“Hey, Lionel, don’t tell the other guys about this, ok?”

“Alright. No doubt, man.” I tried not to laugh. “Did that shit hurt?”

“Yeah. It was a long time ago.”

“But you didn’t care, ‘cause you thought you’d look cool, right?”

“I don’t know man...” Michael pulled his shirt back on, as I tried not to search for the little lump of bone underneath the cotton. “I guess I just wanted to see if I could do it.”

“Get your nipple pierced?”

“Yes. Pierce my nipple.”

“You did it yourself?”

“I wanted to see if I could do it.”

“You went to a piercing store and bought a bone and a needle?”

“No.” I can tell whatever he says next is going to be funny.

“I used a chicken bone.”

“A chicken bone!” ...Man, that was the funniest shit I heard all week.

“Alright man. I won’t tell nobody there was a half-naked cook in the refrigerator, or that he had a chicken bone in his nipple.”

Ha. Funny shit.

Wouldn’t you know it, an hour into lunch, he’s lurking around the line, trying to step all dainty-like through the pools of mop water on the floor, and wiping his forehead with a towel. Ted Green. Someone fucked up an order, so he has to talk about it before we can remake it, even though that don’t make sense.

“See this sauce... this, sauce...” he ladels the sauce out of a spoon. His tie dangles right above it. “We never put cheese on this sauce. It isn’t on the menu that way. They can have it, but they gotta ask for it.” He stops playing with the sauce and gets serious. He looks me directly in the eyes.

“They gotta ask for it.”

The lunch rush hit late. One o’clock came, and all of a sudden we were swamped with orders. Now the grill is a big—about three feet all the way around with a big fan above it which comes down from the ceiling and sucks up all the smoke, but none of the heat. When you work the grill, there is no escaping the heat. You have to

stand directly above it and drip your sweat onto the chicken breasts as they sit there shrinking. It stings your eyes, and the smoke makes you smell in a way that you can't wash off. I was working the grill, and the line was filling up quickly with the little white slips of carbon paper that the machine spits out, each one with a different order. When you're working the grill, or sauté, or any part of the kitchen, it's not as if you make each order separately, and then move on to the next. You gotta have as many going at once as there is room for, which means moving quick and adding shit up in your head.

The average piece of meat we serve, either a chicken breast or a filet-o-fish, is about four or five inches across and about three wide, raw. So you can fit about eighty pieces of meat on the damn grill, as long as you can keep them all going at once.

Ok. Next five orders. I got a chicken tunico coming up, two rusticos, a grilled fish sandwich and a chicken sandwich. Fish no sauce. No sauce Michael! Put the pasta right here. Fuck man, don't put cheese on that! I got fifteen pieces of chicken breasts grilling and fifteen pieces of fish. Minus two now for the spendini. Throw on another. Shit, we're one short. How'd that happen?! Now the order's been sitting too long and is starting to glaze over, since I have to wait for the extra piece of fish I forgot to put on the grill to finish cooking, because in the middle of all this confusion, when my armpits are chafing together from all the sweat soaking into my apron and someone didn't prep enough red peppers so now there's no garnish for the rustico, and old James over there must be hung-over because he keeps forgetting that there's no marsala wine in the sauce for the special today, and people keep

sending it back because the shit's all brown and ugly—in the middle of this, Michael pokes me in the ribs and says real loud, "I think the little lady over there wants your attention."

I turn and look and there's a waitress peering through the line at me, all mad with her hand on her hip. Her name is Ashley. She always works lunches. I look at her, but she don't say nothing, so I keep right on grabbing fish filets and toasting bread covered with garlic butter. She looks at me until finally she says, "I've been standing here for five minutes waiting for you to remake this sandwich for me because they ordered it with no cheese. If you'd taken one second, you could have just pulled off all the cheese, but now it's been sitting so long that it's all melted on there!" Tears start to well up in her eyes. "And my table's really mad at me." I reach in the bin and pull out a cold, slimy little chicken breast and throw it on the grill so hard that it sizzles and little flames shoot up all over it that I have to put out with a pan. I give her a new piece of chicken that I was going to use for a different order which will be late now. And it's all that girl's fault. Cause she don't even know my name. I don't just be waiting for orders from folks who don't bother to know my name.

The heat from the grill and the sweat in my eyes is starting to become too much for me. Three more rusticos and a fish sandwich. I try to keep my mind of the number of pieces of chicken I have, but it keeps wandering, thinking about how good a cigarette would be right now, thinking about Gina and Sheila and wondering if Gina's mad at me because this morning before she got on the bus she was talking cold to me. Don't butter the bread. Two more fish sandwiches. Shit man! I need more plates! I got three

orders up and no plates! I think of Ashley with her shiny white teeth and her pretty blond hair, and about Ted Green with his cup of cold coffee, going through all the applications, and only keeping the ones that say, “pretty white girl” at the top. I think about how if I didn’t work here I would never come here to eat, because the food gives you diarrhea and it’s over-priced. I think about the five dollars and fifty cents- that’s right- and even less after they take out them taxes, that I’m getting for this hour between one and two o’clock in the afternoon when I’m getting more of a work out than most people get in a week. I stand there thinking about that, and I start to think about throwing down my apron and leaving. Just pulling it off and throwing it in the mop water and leaving the chicken on grill to burn. Walking out the door and saying, keep your five dollars. But then I remember Gina and her five-dollar bus fare, and Sheila with her pretty eyes like her momma. And I check the next ticket.

The shift ends at five o’clock, when the dinner crew comes on. Between four and five, the only people who come in to eat are people who don’t have regular jobs, so business is usually slow. Between four and five in the evening, all of the food for the evening shift is cut, drained, and wrapped. All the dishes are cleaned, all the condiments re-iced.

At four-forty five, Michael tells me he is leaving.

“Hey Lionel. Catch you next shift. Thursday, right?”

“New schedual up yet?”

“Yeah man. See you then.”

I go look on the bulletin board, and sure enough, I got Thursday.

I got ONLY Thursday. One day. One mother-fucking nine hour day of my week. Thursday. Next Thursday I’m supposed to be able to pay for rent and diapers. Next Thursday when I make forty bucks. Them cheap assholes don’t even think about what they’re doing. What the fuck am I supposed to do with one fucking day of the week? I got a kid! I got bills to pay! Man I am so fucking sick of this shit, this is why I was gonna wait. This is why I should stop taking jobs like this. Damn.

I go back and finish dicing my artichoke hearts. As I cut I think of Green and all of the things I ought to tell him. I’m thinking about his ugly, greasy face and his crooked teeth, and the way his tie makes him look like a little kid from a distance, and especially his false, slow voice, always trying to sound sure of himself. Then, through the plates in the kitchen line, I see him walk up to a group of waitresses. That girl Ashley is there. The waitresses are standing around the coffee machine, talking about whatever it is they talk about, and he strolls up to them, pretending to be cool.

“Excuse me. Ashley? Do you mind if I talk to you for a minute?”

Ashley stands with her hands folded behind her back, face to face with Green like a little girl getting scolded.

“I had some complaints today, Ash.”

“Oh?” She does a bad job looking startled.

“The people at table seven said they waited twenty minutes for their food.” Green is smiling while he says this; he is looking directly at her, speaking slowly. Ashley looks around the room, nervously.

“Oh. Well that was in the kitchen. One of those guys messed up my order and wouldn’t remake it.”

“You were fifteen minutes late today, Ashley. It’s not that there’s just one thing; there’s lot’s of things. I’m sorry, but I’m going to have to let you go.” Ashley just stands there and looks at him for a minute. Her hands have dropped to her side, the posture gone.

“Ted. I really am sorry about this morning. My daughter’s ride didn’t show up. I had to drive her to school.”

“Sorry Ashley.”

Her pretty face turns angry.

“Fuck!” she says, loud enough for anyone to hear. She pulls off her apron, and heads for her bag. “This job fucking sucks anyway, asshole.” She looks around the dining room. All of the customers have stopped eating, and are watching her. “And the garlic bread gives you the shits!”

So what happened later isn’t anything new. And I ain’t anyone special. I still don’t really like any of them waitresses. But they ain’t the real problem.

At the end of the shift, everything is put away in its proper place. The fuck-ups of the lunch rush are gone: cleaned up, restocked, and reimbursed. The kitchen is peaceful when there is no food being cooked in it. The long counter-tops are bleached white and perfect. The knives are cleaned and hung by size. It’s over, for today. I go to get my bag.

Then I feel someone watching me from behind.

“Hey there... Lionel? I noticed you were

a little late coming in to work today...”

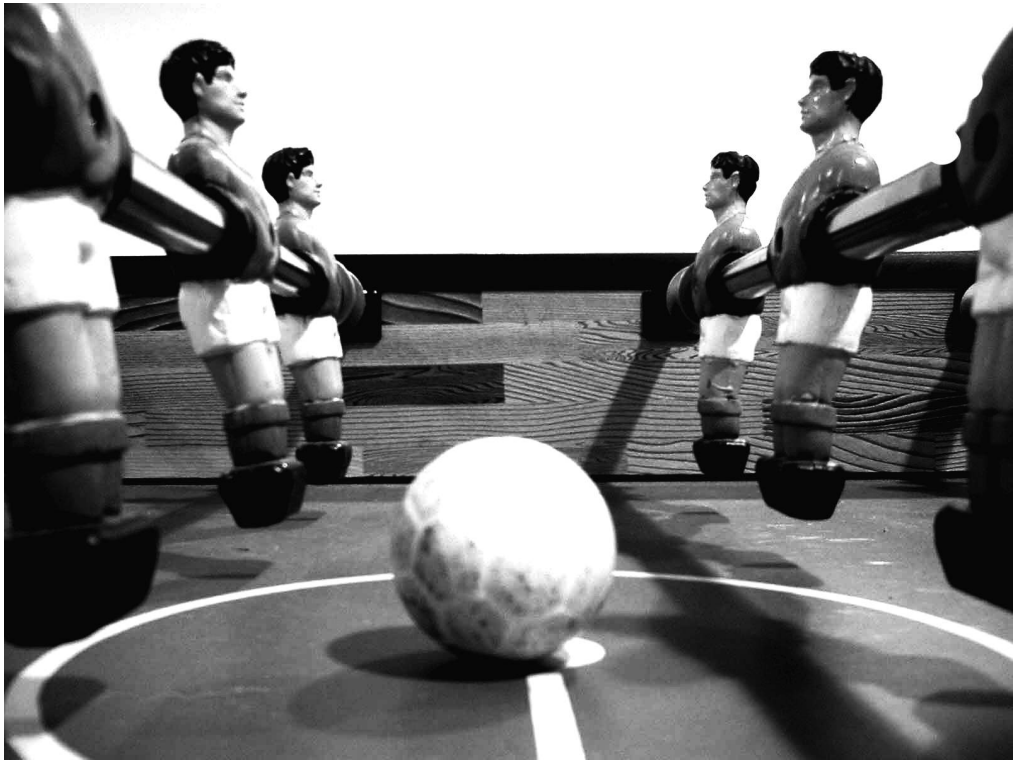
Damn.

It’s starting to rain. I’m thinking about Shelia, and what she looks like when she finally falls asleep. I know that everything is going to be bad for a while now. All night I sit in the front seat of my broken down car, smoking and listening to the radio, because she won’t let me back in. What else can I do?

The next day, I wake up early. I make a cup of coffee, and then I catch a bus downtown. I sit at the table, and wait on the manager. I watch the waitress whirl around the dining room, until I start to feel someone watching me.

“Hey there. Lionel?” he asks. I shake his hand. He’s the manager here. A middle-aged guy with a notebook, a folder, and a cup of coffee. We sit down at the table, and he asks me to please fill out these three or four forms, and he’ll be back. He won’t hand me a pen, because he wants me to think that he’ll be judging me by how prepared I am. I got my own pen though, and I’ve filled out enough forms to get them down quick. Now I have to sit some more, and wait.

*Silvia Dadian
Washington University*



Brian Loyal
Washington University

WHITE TRASH TRINKETS

White trash trinkets made of
foul paraphernalia that harms.

Energy ball, elixir, potion
the form does not matter,
only the effect.

Heart flashes while a collection
plays in the background
hours and hours go by
in another time and place
magical light is seen and swallowed
sunrise rays flag
illness approaching.

Destruction
now burnt out
experienced a false birth
like steel gold
go to sleep and gain strength.

Promise,
make supplications,
signature of a contract,
Never again,
need life.

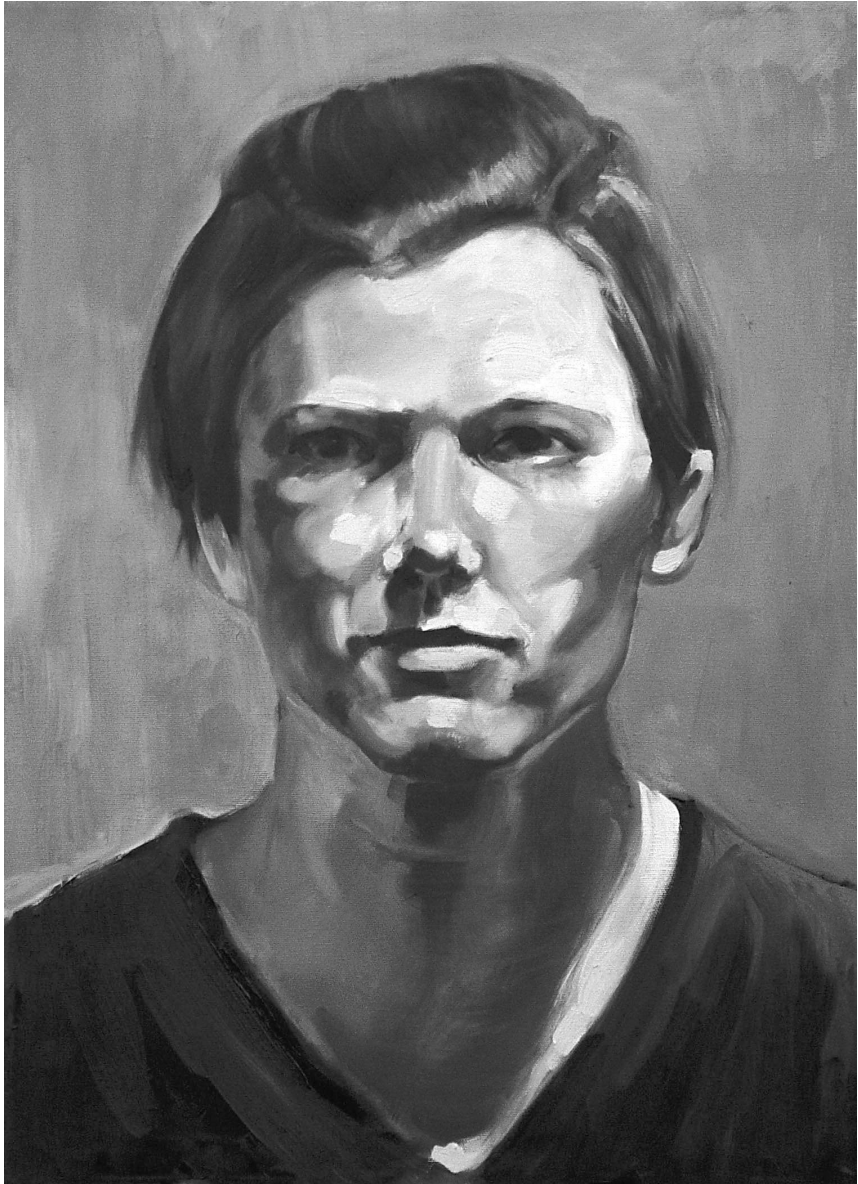
Darrab More

THIS IS OUR INFORMATIONAL PACKET

We are the Chosen Lost.
Seven Easy Steps Towards Enlightenment.
Just one shake a day.
Believers need not apply.
Non-believers need not apply.
This is a one time only helicopter,
blimp, billboard, bumper sticker, prepaid,
televised, radio, word-of-mouth, want ad,
video version, red light special.
The Gospel According to Britney Spears.
Here are some politics for your sleeve
and for the jar by your nightstand.
Store at room temperature;
below 76 degrees, above 54,
the porridge was *just right*
Highly Flammable.
For adult and external use only.
Children and Senior reduced rate.
All inclusive; twice a day.
No down payments for an entire year.
We speak for everything.
Floss and obey;
follow. Justify
The Wrath of God.

Melissa Miller
Washington University

Author's note: The italicized words, excepting "just right," were taken from the blinking billboard 2nd Baptist Church sign that advertises sermons on Voss Rd by my house.



*Heather McPherson
Washington University*

CLAUDIUS

It began when my son heard the howls of wolves that were not there. I silenced those wolves and he did not whimper anymore. †Two feet of snow had fallen in Bale county. The Canadian border, where I was, took the worst of it. Granules of fleece falling like etherized stars pierced the mounds of stardust already shorn. I did not like the look of it: pure and earnest, window dressing that stayed and stayed, stained the soil.

Whenever blizzards of this stripe hit, my mood turned sour, a misfortune put down to my late father. It was during the cold months of my youth that his occasional fits of drunken delirium mixed unfavorably with his already paranoid personality and the winter snow. Hopelessly a Texan, he had lacked in earlier life both freezing temperatures and much cultural exchange, so that when he migrated North the presence of globs of †airborne fertilizer frightened him. With more exposure to the elements he became at least tolerant of winter. But, even then, when once a year or so a monster blizzard fermented, the kind that covers the earth like icing on a whisk, he would become fanatical, stockpile canned meats and heating oil, and order me and my two sisters to huddle beneath the dining room table in a Coleman sleeping bag. There we sat and contemplated the dawning judgment day as he recited Revelations, all evening the barrel of his shotgun standing vigilant in the window of our double bolted front door. In this way he schooled us to fear nature's wrath and the treachery that it brings. And though father was sick, a drunkard, and delusional, this much was true, treacherous it is indeed.

After six unbroken years of city driving and its traffic jams and cut and go, it takes but one December night speeding sixty down a rural two lane highway for our luck to turn; the car has broken down; and Susan has broken water; and we are stuck battling a haze of snow, the baby's head burrowing through.

And then, I hear the doctor yell the play by play from the delivery room; I abruptly locate myself in a foreign, sterile setting, pacing without purpose.

Somehow we arrived at Saint Mary's Regional, though I do not remember if by ambulance or good Samaritan or maybe carried by the draft of the sluicing nighttime winds. Inside the hospital walls I now hear the howls of these winds as they whistle through the cracks in the concrete, like a pack of feral dogs encircling and rehearsing their song for the kill. They are greeted by howls from within, the music of a new mother's stretching skin.

A lone figure in the abandoned hallway, I walk the entire eighty paces from one end of the scant building to the other, back and forth, clenching teeth, embodying anxiousness simultaneously derived from and manifested as twitching repetition; up and down the pasty corridors in staggered zigzag formation; attempting to hold ground against the walls of snow and ice outside that try to box me in; at every angle I am being squeezed; skull like a pressure cooker waiting to explode; a close pin at my temples; "Push! Push!" are the doctor's orders; I bite my tongue and try to stem the panic; think thoughts of licorice and the Cineplex; remember Billie Holiday; imagine the nights of 46th street jazz still to come. The past and future, they are comforts, for they avoid

today, avoid the howls from the wind and from within. But on this occasion the past is made up of not-so-distant plans for tomorrow and tomorrow is no solace. For where to go without a car, with ten bucks, with now three mouths to feed, all of us in the cold. We are two hundred miles from my last paying job (what depths we will stoop when in a pinch, when pinned against the wall and hoarding every cent) and still there is half a state to go until Belleville and the partnership in Luke's butcher shop; on Monday I am to open; but how, when I am here, in the winter, in the dilapidated spine of medicine on this bumpkin-filled back road, where desolation is the only scene; how did I arrive here? Me. I once did Shakespeare for seven hundred; in New York, seven hundred every night; but I have fallen; now, at best, I go to chop up meat; honest work, they tell me; but there are no ovations, no rows of thumping palms; I will never again be the melancholy Dane; my hair, it grows gray. All so sudden. All undone. †How obscenely elegiac.

Then, my ramblings are pierced by a sustained and tinny cry from fledgling lungs gasping air. I grow weak.

Sometime midway between twilight and morning I come to after dozing for who knows how long in a plastic upholstered chair, my skin sticking to its backboard. The distant sound of a nursing mother's coo awakens me; I know it to be Susan's, but its sound is so much different now. Near midnight they let me in to see her, famished and bruised, wilting on the hospital linens. Our glances met and then her eyelids sank. Almost immediately, I was scurried out of the room by the bearded doctor-man so that "the Mrs. can catch her rest." Hmph.

We are the only guests in the hospital this night. The hallway is all mine, all constrictive eighty paces. I stretch my legs and start again to wander, with nowhere but forward to go. It is a sickly path in the aura of artificial light. The air vents blow at full speed. I grow toasty, outdoor shivers now all gone. The weather in here is stiflingly humid even though my sinuses are dry as bone. On my third lap through this anti-septic hallway I startle at a faint creaking from an open door at the end. †In the redundancy of pacing, I had not noticed earlier the lit room or peculiar sound emanating from within. I walk assertively towards the door, steps becoming more delicate and self conscious as voices are made out, one a husky 40 oz. the other a tortured warble. The door is ajar and I peer in with muted caution and curiosity; the creak is revealed to be the noisy flicker of a 60 watt bulb dangling, uncovered, in the center of the room. It casts a light in the style of a morgue or interrogation room or 19th century daguerreotypes. The room is decorated in a mode much different than the walls of the hospital hallways: interior designers choosing a bath of rust instead of bleach; the stank of radiator fluid pervades the closed space, distantly redolent of my father's work clothes, overalls and Carharts. In this dank atmosphere a ruddy stevedore hovers over a broken baby lamb, pinned in the basin of a toilet. In one hand is a butcher knife, the other the nape of the lambkin's neck and a glistening sharpening steel. The steel's owner speaks, "My fleecid friend, may I slice you from stem to stern?" A wan smile of rabid derangement greets the feeble animal, bent in ways that bones do not go. "I'd rather not talk about it. I'd simply rather not talk

about it," the lambkin mutters to himself officiously, fluttering his eyes rapidly while rolling the eye balls back into his head; his jaw shakes almost imperceptibly as if from a suppressed tremor above the neck; the greasy stevedore licks his lips and runs the butcher knife blade along the sharpening steel. "I only ask for some nourishment to cure a man's aching belly." His toothless pant drips saliva. "Warrah! Warrah!" bleats the lambkin. "Any excuse will serve a tyrant!" "Only a bite or two," the stevedore continues in a craze; eyes grow wilder and bulge, "or maybe a tender lamb chop." The knife approaches flesh and the lambkin shakes his head in theatric dismay, as townfolk do solemnly when watching a condemned man's walk to the gallows. "Lamb chops. Juicy, tender lamb chops" the sweating man refrains, growing more frenzied. Echoes fill the cubbyhole. Out of respect I bow my head. The butchering begins. Too faint to mire my eyes in the ghastliness, I step back and withdraw. My numb feet take disjointed steps away from the violent warble; I find it hard to stand; my stomach comes undone; I want to stop the madness, end the barbarity next door; but, instead I stagger back to the lobby overcome by howling, howling which returns with force, banshee yodeling intent on vengeance. For months it has been there, always in the distance, forming a backdrop to whatever I do. As winter bubbled up, the intensity flamed, this week forming a caterwauling choir, the wild pack circling in for the kill. And tonight it reaches crescendo. I hear the shuffling through the hall made by a flabby nurse's waddling steps, in her arms a sated baby en route to crib. I know what I must do.

Face to face with a sheet glass barrier, I stand in the false tranquility of dawn peering in on the miracle of life. I know he hears my howl, ravenous, unbridled; through the walls of glass he must have heard the feral rumbling; he sensed the steady basting quickening in my blood; it must have frightened him, for he whines with such vigor; an intemperate, impetuous, peevish little whine that shows his callow unformed brain does not understand: to let loose piercing cries in the wild winter night is suicide; though I am no wolf, I too know the sound of warm blood churning, his just nourished at my womans swollen tit; no, I am indeed no wolf; I am a man; I bear no fangs; but I do have opposable thumbs; and with them I can open doors; I can break through glass barriers, make frumpy nurses crumple; wolves and freezing winds are wicked; but nature at least is not vengeful; that is left to man; to Daddy.

Somewhere in the blizzard, in the far off distance, I hear children in a circle singing, cream-faced children who hold hands and sway and catch snowflakes on their eyelids. I listen as the chorus grows in strength.

Mary had a little lamb
Little Lamb Little lamb
Mary had a little lamb
His fleece was white as snow

I heed the clarion call to action.

"Bruise the loincloth and spoil the child," reads a plaque above the lone cradle in the newborn ward; this is where the flies play iccapades, where it all ends; the child mewls; †the nurse's thermometer drops like lard on a

scuffed linoleum griddle; in the muggy air, fumes of mercury percolate; I can not feel my toes; in three steps I span the ten feet from door to incubator, as if floating across the nursery floor; my reflection briefly bounces off the plastic bubble; it is the face of nightmare and it is caustic, asking me how a father can spoil the rags that wrap his own egg-shell flesh; †I quickly look away giving my answer in haste; I go to spoil my baby boy; I am no saint; but, like him, I was once pure as snow, before learning of the treachery of winter; I have learned all too well; I am sorry little one; I am sorry. The robust cry gives way to gasps. The strained suckling sound falls flat. No more feral wolf in me; there is only calm; only abject, quivering flesh. A silenced beast on bended knee.

Emiliano Huet-Vaughn
Washington University

Allan Butler
Washington University





Katriel Brister
Tulane University

BEGINNING IN THE END

I do not know if I had meant to stay
in that still moment that has passed
and found the tremor.
It does not always start within,
and something always stands to fall again.

I helped to rig a sailboat and thought
to learn to love sailing. I could not hide
from her my fear of something
in the way the wind can rip and die.
I never told a soul. After it was over,

I picked up a smooth black stone
of a moment on the island of Iona,
to bury everything of me in it.
I thought, when I returned,
that it would petrify the memory/
So soon, the shreds of color can return.
We feel, after an end, that
making dinner is miraculous.
In St. Ives, I threw the stone into the sea
and let it wait upon the ocean floor.

Reid McCollum
Washington University

HOLOPHRASE

*Based on the case of Andrea Yates, a Texas mother convicted of killing her five children.
Convinced she was Satan, Yates believed the mark of the devil was hidden under her hair, and
she believed her children were doomed to suffer in hell because she was evil.*

I.

When I got pregnant
 for the fourth time
I started having these attacks—
 panic, breathlessness—
my ribs catch in my throat,
the baby
is no where.

My first child was
 joy like they write on
pastel cards, it was going to be
our best parts: his nose, my eyes,
it was going to be
 a biologist like grandfather
 and rattle around
 with ties and test tubes.

But now, some nights, I watch them sleep
and in back
the TV shows dead faces and I know
 I've damned them. I wash
my hands all night. I invent dishes
and bladder problems
to tell my husband

because every time my head hits pillow
 I feel burning
 under my scalp.

Each time
 there's new filth; disease
 to communicate when I give
a breast or pick
 them up.

So I trace routes
 between porcelain
and kitchen faucets. I drown
myself in detergent and washing
fluid, antibacterials, lye.

And all the time they're swelling
in bed, getting bigger,
bigger, until they'll touch
outside the screen
and catch the fever and
bad too.

Another destiny
 is growing, incarcerated
within my own loins.
When it's ready
 it will pop out,
a stringy Christmas roast
to be carved with shiny knives.

When it falls out
 it won't be a child anymore,
 but meat, soldered
appendix and spleen. It will be carnal:
his melanoma,
my fleshy sin.

II.

December they kept me in the hospital
longer
than the last time. I stared at the wall
and thought of car crashes. My husband
took the kids to his sister's
where she rots their teeth
with Kool-Aid and lets them
too close to the cat.

The new one
I don't want to name yet. The nurse keeps smiling
with all her lipstick sadism,
suggesting *maybe its time*.
She is not marked, or a mother.
She doesn't understand.

III.

Today they talk about war
all day on the television. A new diet pill
may kill you if taken with orange juice.
They've found a bat
in Arizona caves
that carries a strain
of the HIV virus. My son
asks me what napalm is.

They won't stop crying.
I want to coax them all back
inside where I can carry them around
and they won't look at anything
ugly. They're crying for food but I've only washed
my hands three times,

but my hips don't open, no miracle
retracts the invisible cords

to envelop
my flesh in my flesh. I draw the bath
and watch the water look green
in its caved-in belly.

They would like me to say
I don't remember
what comes next.
I do.
Feet first, fighting—
he won't realize
it's for his own good.
They shriek;
mandrake cats
afraid of water. *Cleanse them*
I sign the cross with a thumb,
like St. John in the river
and push down the flames
on my own forehead.

The last one
makes no noise at all,
looks at me with her
jelly eyes, *understands*.

For a moment it comes clear—
they're suspended, absolved—
but when I lift them out,
the bodies feel heavier,
thicker. The growing hasn't stopped,
the bathtub womb
is not my own.
They don't come back.

Christine Whitney
Washington University



Brian Loyal
Washington University

SUCTION

The beige St. Louis depot
with brown-speckled tile
smells of middle-America,
of the life you've noticed
on the television and
occasionally at archaic
bowling alleys

A light hum-hum
vibrates from the decade-old
soda machine enveloped
by brown-white plastic
signs and you notice
the wailing rips of the
fake-leather brown-black chairs

Out the window, a single
sandy skyscraper screams
above a rusted horizon
of tin cans and dilapidated
cardboard factories which
reminisce of greater days;
and you wonder where it has all gone.

And as you prepare your bags
an explosion of anticipation
inside your feeble chest reemerges
like an old friend from
the North, a rush
of colorless emotion
flooding toward Chicago.

Rob Boyer
Washington University

OXCARTS

And what if she is wasted, no more
Than an unseen orange blossom wilting
Against dusk along the dusty roads
Between the city and the coast?
Perhaps she lay before the stiling
Oxcarts and gave the passive decree,
Roll o'er me. Perhaps, petals
Ground into the dust, wagon jilting
On ahead, forgetting, she releases
Her perfume, and the road from Baghdad
To Atlantis smells of citrus in the morning.

Rebecca Friedman
Washington University



Philip Meier
Washington University

BLACK SQUARE

It's almost night, the sun flattens itself against the earth. The old wine in the bottle has turned to blood, the fumes are intolerable. Mom calls again, Mark, when is he getting in? when will he be here? where is he, Mark, where is he? I hang up, then take the phone off the hook, its tone fills the house. The sun passes hesitantly into the earth. Everything outside is black or gone. I try writing but nothing fits together, the phone is too distracting. I write

*My brother is coming into the yard.
He will take me in his arms, again,
shake me, he is trying
to resurrect me, I will think.*

Before going to bed, I take out an old photo album, summer eighty-four, the trip to Alberta, pottery lessons, church, mini-golf, the lake. Every two or three years we'd get out of the city and spend a couple days at a man-made lake in the Ozarks, rent a place and eat potato salad and hot dog buns. In one photo, Mom and Dad and Joseph are standing by the lake, they all squint, clenching their faces into masks. Dad had wanted a picture of the lake to show Grandma. I cut everyone off at the chest and left out the lake. That afternoon I hunted minnows, Joseph drew pictures in the sand with his fingers. There were minnows everywhere, they spun around my legs like a cloud of broken glass, impossible to catch. After an hour, I gave up and stood there, feet in the silt, staring through the water, pretending I was able to control the fish with my mind. Joseph asked me what I was doing, I told him I could shoot invisible rays from my eyes that controlled the fish. He didn't believe me. I

looked straight at him, squinted, and told him I would lift him up into the sun.

That night I had the first shaking. I was inside, watching TV with Joseph, and for no reason at all the lights began to tremble, softly at first, then bright and terrifying. The voice of the news reporter warbled then hissed then boomed, THE MARKET CLOSED UP TODAY AFTER AN AFTERNOON RALLY IN THE FARM SECTOR. Then his mouth closed and I could hear the ringing of electricity through wires. It was inescapably quiet. Joseph stared at me and began to wobble and grow enormous, enormous. The light behind him boomed white, empty. He stood alone above me, reaching with dark thick fingers. I told him to stop, please stop, go away get Mom. I'm sorry, please stop. When he picked me up and screamed for help, I tilted my head back and shook.

It was so strange to see Joseph step out of the cab, dressed in a white shirt and black slacks. He bent low to give the tip and carried his old backpack and a large black case to the door.††It'd been seven years since I'd last seen him. I watched through the peephole, then came out. We hugged and went inside to unpack. His shirt was wrinkled and soft, he asked me how I'd been. I told him I was okay, fine.

He wears white everyday, white shirts, white pants even. New York has given him a swan's armor.††I imagine that when he takes off his shirt in the morning, his chest is covered in white plumes, a feather cast. In the afternoons,

he sits, quiet, long after lunch is over, sipping cold tea and thumbing the paper.††When he speaks, his voice comes away like salt water.††He says he quit his job at the gallery, he wasn't getting along with the owner. Now he wants to build things.††I ask him what he'll build. He says houses, for people, and gets up to wash his cup.

His first night back we sat in the den and watched old home movies.†††In one movie we're playing outside, riding bikes.††Dad's breath thumps on the microphone, maybe it's the wind. Joseph goes over the curb and rides in the grass, Dad laughs and tells him not to tear up the lawn.††We race down the street, across the tar strips. I look fragile next to Joseph, he was always larger, stronger, a bulldozer of a child.††He wins.††We ride in loops around the *cul-de-sac*, then circle back to chase dad. He yells hey, hey! and laughs, turning off the camera.††Static. Static. Then the room is dark, underexposed, it is Joseph's birthday party. Joseph stares at the camera, at the cake, and back at the camera again.††Dad asks him how old he is, he says twenty-five, everyone laughs.††One of his friends asks if there's ice cream, there is, do we have vanilla?††Joseph is looking down at the cake, at the candles, watching them burn and melt slowly into the cake.††Tell Peter we have vanilla.††Mom pats Joseph on the shoulder, blow them out, honey, make a wish, come on Joseph, her eyes have slitted up. He looks at her, then back at the candles, staring through the flames.††The video doesn't show it, but I can see the water inside his eyes.††Mom whispers for him go ahead, make a wish. She puts the dull knife down next to him, keeps a hand on his

shoulder.††He glances at the knife, then at the camera, and blows out the candles, one by one, turning their flames to ash.††We cheer as he picks the twisted candles up out of the icing, there are eight, and holds them in his fist.††He tries to smile.††His eyes don't squint properly. When the candles break inside his hand, it is an accident, he cries and leaves the table. Joseph is humming Bach in the shower. The pipes screech as water grinds against his skin.††I go over to the black case, it's been sitting in the den, unopened, for four days.††I shake from side to side, gently, and open the lid. The case is full of painted eggs, black red and gold, white blue and silver, a colony of votive skulls.††

When Joseph comes out of the bathroom I ask him about the eggs. They're beautiful, why does he have so many painted eggs?††He kneels down on the floor and takes a gold and black egg out of the case.††They're Faberge, he says. He gets them from columbia, a man named Tolya, Russian Lit.††Water drips dutifully off his hair and onto his shirt and boxers, they darken in spots.††He tells me about airport security, about the subways, how difficult it was to carry his eggs from place to place, how he would hold the case even while the airplane was taking off, apologizing to the stewardesses, apologizing with his arms wound tight around the case.†††Of course it'd been scanned, of course it was safe, but passengers kept giving him suspicious looks even after he apologized to them.††He gets up to show me how each egg is drained. We go to the kitchen and get a full egg and a pin.††When he pricks the egg over the sink, a piece of shell breaks off, then another.††The egg begins to spill its golden blood down his arm, onto the floor. His hand is

the egg's grave.††He laughs but something has dampened inside his face.††Joking, I ask him how he sleeps at night.

It's past midnight, I'm sitting in the den. Today, we decided to make tapes of our voices, just for fun, to send Mom. I left the tape recorder on in the den. All day, it made a looping, hissing sound, like water and dirt draining away. A car passes. I press the button

M what is this?

J *(from the kitchen)* what's what?

M the square on the wall, you're gonna have to explain this to me

(Joseph comes into the den)

M so what's this all about?

J oh yeah, i got this in new york, it's by malevich, he started a school of painting in the teens called suprematism and did a lot of black on black, white on white, that sort of thing

M suprematism like white suprematism?

J no, he believed in a purity of form and color, kind of a spiritual thing, harmony

M that's pretty intense

M what do you think it means?

J for me i think it's this powerful, physical force, but confined and given order, rigid

M yeah i can see that

J it's something that can't ever be dealt with, you know?

M yeah

I turn the tape off. We sound nothing like those voices on the tape. There is the Black Square, across from me, leering from the wall. It is a body collapsing. It is Joseph, sitting in his gallery, numbing out the art. I begin to write. Lights from the street move across the siding, arc through the room and disappear

*The white square and the black square
it holds in its chest
love helplessly like mother
and child, fused up
with cord with breast with lip.*

I found out about New York. It was cloudy and looked like rain. No rain fell. When Joseph broke a sculpture, they fired him. Mom told me, I don't know how she found out. We go jogging. When we get back, I feel heavy. I walk around and there is a weight. He is obsessing over the eggs again, I think. It's motherly, he puts on gloves to pick them up. The Bach can be overpowering sometimes. I tell him I know what happened in New York, Mom found out. He dampens. We jog again, we keep jogging, we go deep miles in the hazy grass. The case opens, the eggs come out. The sky is like milk above us, we jog through metered landscapes. I grow heavy. We hear an airplane overhead but can't

locate it. When the ground turns to mud below us, we talk about Tolya and finally New. The sculpture was ten feet tall, a body made from free weights with a mirror for its face. The mud is on our legs in wet flecks. Joseph picked it up to move it but the dumbbells broke apart and rolled across the floor. He picks up an egg in his yellow glove and holds it to the light. There is nothing inside. He still turns it anyway, reading sagas in the paint. We jog and his legs are full of weight. He is made of the weight. His eggs have nothing in them. When we sleep our air fills the house, mingling, we conjoin. The artist came to the studio and screamed. It was in the papers. I want to take his weight and feed it through my body, become immovably heavy. We go out to jog again.

Joseph is at the appraiser's with his eggs. I have nine full eggs in the refrigerator, every time I open the door, they tremble in their plastic tray. Sometimes I open and close the door several times to watch this happen, the fridge lights up and the eggs tremble. Two eggshell husks sit collapsed on the counter. I've got yolk on my fingers, I go to the sink with the pile of eggshells and wash off. There are five wet bread crusts in the sink. I place them inside the eggshells. I place the eggshells into the compost bin. I am frightened of the compost bin and the sloppy fluids inside it. I am afraid to touch these fluids. I dump coffee grinds over the eggshells, it is a consecration.

I am watching a television broadcast of the winter Olympics. It's dark outside, I can see my

reflection in the bathroom window and the mirror. If I spread my legs wide enough I can see my reflection bathing in the toilet water. The skater steps onto the rink. The rink is shining, polished with tears. His name is Alexander. Everyone in the crowd wears red. I think about masturbating but do not masturbate. Alexander almost misses a lutz but catches himself just as his hand is about to touch the ice. I imagine his hand touches the ice and sticks. He spins, his forms are perfect. I change the channel, it's the news, a soap, cops. A black man is held against the concrete, his muscles scrape against the rock. I go back to Alexander, he holds up a broken ice skate to the judges. There is a flickering, the white metal skate fills the screen, white and sharp. The contrast on the television must be off. I reach over and slap the side of the box. The images brightens uncontrollably, it is now violently blank and full. I can barely see my dark reflection in the white glass of the television. It is a black square. My eyes don't process the darkness, things sparkle. My reflections won't emerge where they should. I pull up my pants and go to the kitchen. The contrast is all off. The lights glow, enormous, there is no longer anything outside. I take the cordless and stand over the sink. Hi, please help, please help please come here. There is a face in the window. I don't look at the compost bucket. Every surface has become terribly anxious, this space shrieks. The fridge door is luminous. Inside, the eggs ululate with the flashing lightbulb. Patterns of egg tops appear where I hadn't expected patterns to appear. Four eggs are left in the plastic tray, one of them has been cracked somehow. I take them all out, even the cracked egg, and wobble to the sink. I get a

black sharpie from the desk drawer and draw
black squares on the eggs. They crack and
distort in my hands that are so clean now, full of
gold yolk and white eggshell. The clean is
spreading into me, I am sure it is happening.

Joseph walks into the kitchen, he is
carrying his eggs. I am lying on the floor,
shaking, staring past the top of his head. He
runs over and drops his case on the floor. The
eggs bang inside, something has broken. He
grabs my shoulders and tips me up, I struggle.
He shouts at me, his voice breaking apart, Mark
listen! Mark! oh my God, Mark! His voice
softens, it's going to be okay, Mark, don't worry
Mark. He takes my body into his arms. I force
a trembling in huge him, black him, him against
the ceiling lights. I force a pathology into him.
I can't speak. He wraps me in his arms. I am
disappearing inside him. His black form
expands and there is no more white anywhere. I
am inside. I am not trying anymore. I am not
listening to his wet drowning red mouth,
everything in me is clean, clean. I don't need to
stay anymore in the shaking myself. I will be
give up and be so clean, so strong. I will become
arms arm and blood. I tilt back. There is a
voice somewhere outside, a murmur you'll be
fine you'll be fine I'll make sure you're
fine, I'll make sure. It is supreme. It is black on
black, black on black.

Daniel Marcus
Washington University



Elaine Yu
Washington University

SNOW AND LACK

Snow is content only when stacked
on rooftops
in shapes of starfish atop fir trees
in untouched piles, adding an inch to the height of stakes
with the circumference of coins;
all so tidy as if brushed with care
by heavily padded children who

run around in blinding playgrounds
not blinded
and leaving no traces—
when a child falls, there is no sound.
Today I don't worry
for them and their clumsy runs.

Snowflakes don't twirl anymore as they fall
just down now
to be annihilated on arrival
in a sea of salt and gravel that remind my teeth of
chalk hard on blackboard
fork hard on the heart of plate. Today,

that flat-headed girl's
inexorable center part is sprinkled
with more dandruff than usual,
and the voice of a reddened teenage boy
echoes: "Do I look
like I'm fucking crying? I'll
fucking break your
fucking nose—"

This ash makes my eyes water
and a bagpipe is playing
faint
far from here.

Ob-Yoon Kim
Brown University



Sunil Manchikanti
Washington University

UPROOTED

I.

When you're pointing a finger downwards
I begin to feel
The abbreviation of a people.

Melting poetic on a Tuesday night,
Sitting in a room of cut-out moon
Wallpaper and pool tables,
Clicking cues getting trapped
In the corner pockets—

We slid into a caramel booth,
Abandoned napkins in a pile
And I felt like someone else.
Like I could lie down
In the cracks breaking lines and wooden veins,
Green arteries, and slide
Through you bark into time.

II.

You looked like a tree to me the first time we met,
Way back in September,
Branched over the speaker's podium
And leaves rustled in your words,
Roots pounded the floorboards, my desk, the paper;
I think I watched you grow a little
In the sunlight crouching by the window.

You were shouting about our detachment
From a moral past,
And I couldn't help imagining you
As timber to cut down
And smooth out.

Let's abbreviate the sky,
You whispered with tree fingers spread,
Spitting bark and uprooted ground,

Let's abbreviate the sky
With the darkness behind our eyelids,
And never wonder again
If it stops there.

Faye Gleisser
Washington University



Melissa Miller
Washington University

THE TELEGRAPH

In some past life, doors opened with ease.
Hinges greased with openings, closings,
entrances and exits. Approaching a

frame, three sides, etched with echoes of a
past civilization. The lines are
straight and perfect, curves in harmony.

It sings.

I turn the handle, worn and tarnished,
still cold to the touch. It resembles
a halo—worn edges with a

singular region untouched and new.
In turning, the slanted lock leaves the
home where it rested. Levers and springs

at ease.

Theirs, a relationship of relief
and sometimes, tension. In turning, things
become lost, forgotten, and taken

for granted: Proximity and the
telegraph work against our cause. Voices
which stretch across wide spaces lose their

bodies.

Dots and dashes travel on one line.
One door opens for a moment and
then closes. And before that motion

is complete, I try to remember
how you feel, what you feel like. But,
old embraces mean nothing in this

new place.

Voices are meant to be seen and held
—not only heard. The lock clicks, thus
returning to its home, resting now.

Jonathan Lee
Washington University

GENERATION (A SESTINA)

She loves the way her mother's supple skin
Ripples under each immature caress, the pears
That are her mother's slight breasts begin
To swell, unashamed beneath the jealous stares
Of play-calloused fingertips on fine-grained silk,
or yearning twist of lips that looked to her for milk.

She dreams one day of growing with her milk
Her own boy-child with new-born wrinkled skin
And brown eyes as warm as new-spun silk
To sit with her while he grows, to eat of pears
And absorb the orchard with wide-eyed stares.
She dreams that in the boy she will herself begin.

She loves the way her mother's muscles begin
To flex as she swallows wine like milk
Unheeding of her daughter's guileless stare
She marvels: how the fit of her mother's skin
Accentuates her girlishness—they, this pair
Of children, ripe, with hair like braided silk.

She dreams one day of swimming among silk
Sheets becoming salty waves; her dreams begin
To frighten her; walking under trees, she plucks a pear
And biting it, conceives, and births, and prays her milk
Won't sour now and poison him. Skin on skin
they lie. His fragile limbs delight her as she stares.

She loves the way her mother's listless stare
Lights on nothing, how red parted ring of lip or silk
Excites butterflies beneath her own pale skin.
She loves the way her mother's hands begin
To curl, the way she sighs while thicker milk
Spills down her thighs, candid as an orchard pear.

She dreams one day of feeding him a pear
To see his babe-like ecstasy, to make him stare
At her for confirmation: aye, it's sweet as milk,
Fruit flesh as rich as kissEd flesh, as silk
From the far Orient. Soon, now—soon she will begin
To walk with new life glowing underneath her skin.

Later, she still tastes pears, runs her hands along the silk
Against her belly: begin! she wills him. She stares
At her mother who with milk and lemon purifies her skin.

Rebecca Friedman
Washington University



*Kevin Deutsch,
Yeshiva University*

GRANDFATHER, 1906-1995

He cooed at me, and I at him –

Back in my Seuss days
Of foxes in boxes,
Before I was taught to loathe normative rhyme.

The butterscotch, the argyle,
The big old man ears and nostrils,
The limping and hacking

Were phenomenal
Before I learned about static characters and stereotypes,
Which are boring.

It's depressing to read Dickinson.
She writes about death,
And it's beautiful,

So much more so than his chicken-scratch
Ever was.
So much more so than his death,

Which didn't lend itself
To beauty, or mystique, or tragedy,
Or even sadness, really.

I didn't know how not to laugh
When I saw him so just dead.
Nothing holy, nothing ghastly.

It is always partly cloudy that day
For us.
The unsensational turns to ashes –

But inspiration can be found in urns, I know.

Tiffany Richman
Washington University

TIME FOR THE WEINER DOGS

“Dad it’s time to go see the wiener dogs. You know how they’re your favorite. Come on now, let’s get ready to go.” Together my brother and I had prepared the outfit, cut out all the tags, and removed dad’s wallet from the pocket. We bathed Dad and made him all nice and respectable looking, grooming his thinned hair, trying to remove that smell that old people seem to have. I suppose he deserved that, at least. It was his idea anyway.

When he was younger, whenever I came home from college, my dad would always argue with me about political things, world issues, all the “isms” and endangered species and estimations for when the world would end. I wouldn’t necessarily want to debate, but I suppose that my fresh education threatened whatever old and ripened stances he’d been dealt, so he felt it essential to see how well his views could withstand the force of modern theories.

“The oil in the world is going to run out.” “They told me that when I was in college and it hasn’t happened yet.” “That doesn’t mean that it’s not going to.” “If the scarcity of oil increases, then the price will increase, so it will be more economically profitable for oil companies to use more efficient extraction method; the demand increase will create more excavation – if we need it, they’ll find it.” “Until it runs out. That’s only going to slow down the process.” “You know why the car was invented?” Yes, Dad, I knew why the car was invented. “Because London was full of shit. There were too many horses in England and everyone thought that London was doomed because it was going to overflow with horse crap and disease. So they invented the car to save London. If the world is doomed by oil-lessness then they’ll invent

something. It’s your generation’s job – you guys have to deal with that.” Then he would laugh. I didn’t really know whether the laugh was directed at me or my generation. I would tell him, We, as a generation, would be proud to handle the job, since he had done such a great job sitting around on his ass. “Stop arguing with me, all you can do is just sit there and be old, telling me what to do, since you and Yours apparently never got it done.”

That would always make him laugh really hard, over hard maybe. He was only forty-something then, always laughing about how he was an old man, though complaining about his back. “My damn back’s broke.” He would always make himself laugh; I never needed to add the old-man line – he could always do it on his own. For the purpose of self amusement, he was always conjuring up puns and songs. “Good old Rocky Top, Rocky Top Tennessee, Good old Rocky Top, now I have to pee.” “They asked me if we had any bird problems down here. I said no, the birds leave us a loon.” “A loon!” That one would make him wheeze. He would tear up.

“Come on, Dad, let’s get in the car; we’re going to see the wiener dogs. Your favorite! They run around the track and you get to watch – you’ve always loved them.” He himself looked like a dog, like a mutt that had been combed; the contrast between whiteness and darkness in his eyes seemed to elicit pity by suggesting some unsuccessful yet sincere effort, his expression bore resemblance to that tentative pre-treat waggle that white haired men and scraggledy puppies seem to have in common.

Dad used to be able to make himself cry at anything too. He would fake cry at dinner every night when nobody wanted to talk about their day. Dad would say, “Nobody loves me,

ehih ehih ehih,” and my brother would say, “There, now that we’ve gotten that out of the way,” causing dad to burst into his explosively loud three second stint of laughter again. He could also cry at sports movies, mainly *Hoosiers*, which he made us watch at the start of every basketball season. One time he cried during the opening credits of *Rudy* – the part where the camera pans across the empty football field that’s covered in a cold mist the morning before tryouts. I’d throw the tissue box at him as he sobbed, “This is such a good movie.” I would be laughing hysterically because it hadn’t even started yet. He’d cry at *Mister Magoo’s Christmas Carol* during the part when Tiny Tim asks for a Christmas tree with “lots of stuff on it,” including “razzleberry dressing.” There was that whole song based on the razzleberry dressing.

We arrived at the track, about an hour or so away, and got him all situated on the bleachers at one end, near the front row. “So you can have the best view. Look, here they come dad, it’s the wiener dogs. You’ve always liked the wiener dogs since the beginning of time.” My brother gave him some mittens and a little cap out of sympathy. We gave him a program and pointed out all the different colors of dogs. He didn’t understand, but he had no ability to do anything but go along with things in the passive state of semi-bewilderment he had existed in for several years.

Back then dad was always coming up with brilliant ideas. “Did you hear my brilliant idea?” No. “Imagine this: a fur factory that sells cat fur. You have to feed the cats though, so you feed them rats. And you have to feed the rats, so you feed them the skinned cats. It’s a cycle. The cats eat the rats and the rats eat the cats and the

fur goes to market! What do you think?” He would always laugh like he had us outsmarted and walk away. Then there was the brilliant “10:30 rule” requiring children to be downstairs by 10:30am on weekends. And there were many other brilliant ideas like, “I know, here’s a brilliant idea, why doesn’t somebody pick up the God damn mess in the kitchen,” or walk the God damn dog, or do the God damn dishes, or finish their God damn homework. And there was the infamously brilliant “Peony Run,” the time when mom said that we had to get the clippers and trim the peonies on the edge of the yard and Dad decided that we should run them over with our bikes instead. He had his feet on the handle bars and his fists in the air and he was screaming “Ramming Speed!” as he flew down the hill towards the overgrown peonies when his head smacked into a low growing tree branch, flinging him backwards off the bike. The bike kept going; it eventually stopped in the neighbors’ yard. We thought he was dead – he was lying there motionless, but when we caught up to him we realized that the reason he wasn’t moving was because he was laughing hysterically, there on his back, staring up at the branch that had just knocked him off the bike, giggling as if there was some sort of secret joke between he and it.

He would always fake cry when we got too old and began to refuse to watch *Mr. Magoo’s Christmas Carol* with him and when we began to refuse to let him read us *The Polar Express* on Christmas Eve. But he wouldn’t cry now. I think he’s beyond comprehending sadness anyway, he probably only understands confusion. Besides, I think he’ll actually be proud because the most brilliant idea he ever had was this one. “Here’s a brilliant idea. Children, someday when I lose it,

when I've just completely left the farm, you know what you can do? Just the way those people did it in Jersey? When I've become an old useless pain in the butt. When I've wasted all your money and forgotten how to wipe my own ass. You can say 'Dad it's time to go see the wiener dogs; they're your favorite.' And you can take me there and just leave me. I don't want to become a burden to my family, drive them crazy all the time. No, I'm serious; take me to the wiener dog track. Death should be simple, we should all just be put in burlap bags. And even though I won't have a clue in hell where I am, who I am, or what the hell wiener dogs even are, somehow, deep down within the depths of whatever soul I'm supposed to have, there will be a part of me that will recognize that my evil children have taken me to the wiener dog track and I'll know that it's time to go, and the realization will be so funny that I'll just start laughing so hard that I'll float right up to the ceiling, like in *Marry Poppins*."

"Dad, you stay right here while we go get you a bag of popcorn."

Melissa Miller
Washington University



Helen Pfeiffer
Washington University

INTERLAKEN EASTER

Rattled off my teeth—
Nazi. Two syllables
split my father

with a guillotine.
Papa came on Easter
in '42—a lamb for mother.

We stood in the yard—
I was a soldier, waiting
blindfolded—taking pictures,

everyone pretending
that there was no war.
There was no war

in Switzerland, and father
said a prayer before
he slaughtered it.

Reid McCollum
Washington University

ON TAXIDERMISTRY

A child, you surfaced
among dirt,
resurrecting seagulls with a stick
and embalming beetles with cologne
or bits of gauze.
You were heedless of disease;
your mother's voice caught
on boughs like mistaken
leaves, like forgetting
the leaving.

*

You said the other day
how you dreamed
of Lorca's dove-
stuffed forests,
of walking through corridors
where the pigeons
don't turn
their epileptic heads,
of taking the scalpel,
formaldehyde, and needle
into your own hands.

*

It's not the death
that fascinates,
but the spasms of stillness,
those moments when walls
seem to breathe,
wind ruffles pasty feathers
and plateaus swell up again.

*

You want to bring it back—
to see yourself again
in glass eyes,
to stick a hand
in sawdust stomachs.
You reassemble everything,
heavy,
the way it should be.

Christine Whitney
Washington University



Amy Fontinelle
Washington University

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Solidarity Against the Villanye of Plate Tectonics. . .
FIGHT THE MOLIEN MACHINE!!!

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