

S P I R E S

TWO THOUSAND TWELVE
SPRING





I will wait for you here

I could give you even that I have to give

This place means nothing if I am the only one here I have nothing

Please don't leave

You will be safe here I promise

S P I R E S

intercollegiate arts & literary magazine

- spring 2012 -

Copyright 2012 of Spires
Volume XVIII, Issue I
012345 First Edition 67890

All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from Spires and the author.

Critics, however, are welcome to quote brief passages
by way of criticism and review.

Front cover: “Open Mind” by Bridgette Zou
(paper collage, Rhode Island School of Design, 2012)

Front cover, inside: “You Will Be Safe Here” by Martin Melto
(collograph, Washington University in St. Louis, 2013)

Back cover, inside: “Field of Frozen Creatures” by Martin Melto
(Ink and gouache on paper, Washington University in St. Louis, 2013)

Back cover: “yet out- not over-doing” by Catalina Ouyang
(mixed media on paper, Washington University in St. Louis, 2015)

spiresmagazine@gmail.com

CONTENTS

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|----|
| Sophia Nuñez | Making jam aquí en Gallinas..... | 5 |
| Daniel Smight | Running..... | 8 |
| Roxana Harrison | ¿Como Se Dice Venezolano?..... | 13 |
| Roxana Harrison | Hardwire..... | 16 |
| Emily Stein | Dressing for a Funeral..... | 18 |
| Emily Stein | Clockwork..... | 19 |
| Sue Hyon Bae | Teatime..... | 20 |
| Elsa Guenther | Putin is President Again..... | 21 |
| Spence Balazak | A Seven Letter Word for Grey..... | 28 |
| Diana Sevastyanova | Glowing Embers..... | 30 |
| Bobby O'Rourke | Logic Unburdened..... | 32 |
| Michael Lipkowitz | Tales from Von Steuben High..... | 34 |
| Scott Nobles | In the Beauty of Thought..... | 39 |
| Kait Mauro | Cocoon..... | 40 |
| Abhishek Saxena | Born Burnt..... | 41 |
| Alex Kelsen | Vacation..... | 42 |
| Brienne Pierce | Self Portrait..... | 45 |
| Travis Lau | L'Automne..... | 46 |
| Travis Lau | Morningside..... | 47 |

ART

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Bridgette Zou | Open Mind..... | front cover |
| Martin Melto | You Will Be Safe Here..... | front cover, inside |
| Bridgette Zou | Seaside Neighborhood..... | 22 |
| Vasiliki Valkanas | Longing..... | 23 |
| Catalina Ouyang | Laundry Bones to Dirt to Mush..... | 24 |
| Catalina Ouyang | Shutterbug..... | 24 |
| Katy Wilbur | Defective..... | 25 |
| Sarah Ettinger | Abstract Flower..... | 26 |
| Catalina Ouyang | Adonis Leave..... | 27 |
| Martin Melto | Field of Frozen Creatures..... | back cover, inside |
| Catalina Ouyang | yet out- not over-doing..... | back cover |

STAFF

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Editor-in-Chief: | Eric Hintikka |
| Literary Editors: | Nora Long Paul-Gabriel Morales |
| Treasurer: | Trace Palmer |
| Layout Editors: | Alyssa Celentano Susannah Lohr Miriam Zawadzki |
| Public Relations: | Cassie Snyder |
| Staff: | Peter Jones Sophia Nuñez |

Making jam aquí en Gallinas

Of course you could drive
to the store to pick up some berries,
glistening through their plastic box
as though it were a treasure chest,
or simply buy a jar of jelly
and be done with it already.
That would be the path of least resistance –
a half hour, downhill,
from Gallinas to Las Vegas,
New Mexico.
The road, though curving,
is paved and shaded,
and has guardrails.
You know it's not the time
of the conquistadors anymore.
A rich man down the road
even wants to land his airplane
in a field next to his house.
No, but that's not the way, either.
The road is shaded and curved,
the río is stocked with trout
up by the campsites in El Porvenir,
the air is dry and cool,
spinach grows wild in the neighbor's lot
now that the trailer's gone,
and the best chokecherries
are yours for the picking.
Monotonous work, a monotonous town,
not even a town, you think,
una aldea at most, and named after chickens?

but grab a grocery bag
and perch on a rickety bike
with half the gears too stubborn to shift,
and meander down the road anyways.
Grandma, ambling behind you,
will spot the dark berries if you don't,
will know the likely patches
and which ones the vecinos claim.
Of course it's finder's keepers
and on this side of the fence,
but all the same, if señora
goes to make jam and finds her berries gone,
she'll ask you where they went.
Don't worry about not finding much;
the best ones grow in the cemetery, anyway.
Park your bicycle in the barn
between the tractor and the circular saw,
borrow Grandpa's windbreaker,
and come up the path
to pick chokecherries
in the crepuscular light.
Here, the berries are ripe and plump,
here, where no one your age
would think to look,
where ¡Dios mío! Grandma and Grandpa
have already chosen their shared plot.

But in these last moments
before the sunlight drops behind the mountains,
cross yourself
and lose your fear of this place.
Fill your bag of chokecherries,
and come inside
before the sunlight gives way to stars.
Don't go trip across the gravel driveway.
Come inside and leave infinity
and be every summer of small again.
Wash the chokecherries,
cook them, strain them, add sugar and maybe pectin
and keep stirring.
Sanitize the jars in another pot of boiling water,
and line them up dry and waiting
along the counter
to pour the jelly,
sweet as cabecitos de azúcar,
but only when it's ready.
You can try some on a teaspoon
or on a piece of toast,
but don't go trying to rush these things.
That's not how it works aquí, en Gallinas.

Sophía Nuñez

Washington University in St. Louis, 2013

Running

He ran in the evening. The evening was the best time to run. He stuck to the same route and left at the same time. He wore New Balance track shoes and Adidas gym shorts and a Nike tee shirt. He owned an iPod but he never brought it, preferring the rush of the air and the ambience of the city instead. He kept his keys in his pocket and a phone in his hand - just in case of emergencies. But there weren't any.

It always started the same way: the swift stretches against the brick wall, the slow build along the narrow sidewalk, the left turn onto Central Park West, the steady sprint up to 96th. Cars and sounds and people shifted evening to evening but none of it really changed.

It takes three weeks for a behavior to become a habit.

Once, as an experiment, he left a few minutes later than usual, expecting to find an ocean of unfamiliar things outside. But he was met by the same busy bricolage of sights and sounds and smells, the same stable rhythm as every other run.

Cold sweat. Pounding feet. Sore arms.

By 86th, he was gaining speed: heart beating in his ears, hands pumping through the air, keys jangling against his thigh. Annoyed, he plucked them out of his pocket and gripped them in his hand. The teeth dug into his skin.

Ahead, a group of kids were gathered outside of a

bodega, blocking the runner's way. He kept going, trusting they'd move. They did. He wanted to thank them but they were already too far behind. Besides, they'd never respond.

Tingling flesh. Strained eyes. Itchy elbows.

The light was red at 89th but he ran across anyway, risking a collision with traffic. There was none - only empty asphalt and open space. He felt disappointed.

Light head. Hard temples. Aching legs.

He slowed to a jog and held the base of his neck. An evaporative sensation now seized him, a sudden rush of blood to the head. He saw a white force swimming at the edge of his vision - soft, singed, insidious. He steadied himself, taking several deep breaths as a passing bus belched exhaust into the air. He hacked. He coughed. He spit. He imagined noxious fumes invading his alveoli, attaching to tendrils of soft supple tissue. He hacked. He coughed. He spit.

He stumbled towards the trunk of a tree, its withered roots buckling the concrete and its branches swaying in the breeze. He leaned on the bark, touching it with a timid hand. It felt rough and sick and resinous. He shut his eyes, letting the pressure subside in his head.

He saw intersecting shapes and colloidal figures flowing into some fractured vision of the world around him, arcing into an eidetic image of

the city, of reality, of the things and forms and objects encircling and crisscrossing and transpiercing his nightly run. Street signs. Trash cans. Storefronts. Manholes. Taxicabs. Windows. Alleyways. Drains. It was all there - twisting, tumid, trembling - writhing in his brain. He held the tree tighter, dug his fingers into the bark, tried to solidify his thoughts but they only shrunk, shriveled, fragmented and flew away.

Upon opening his eyes, he was met by his dim reflection in the window of a minivan. He stared at his red face and wet hair with a dull focus, unable to look away. Then, he detected a slight shift in the car - someone was sitting inside. He couldn't make out her features through the tint of the window but there seemed to be a woman right behind his reflection, an attractive face fixed behind the glass. He stepped back and walked on, wiping his brow with his shirt and cursing himself under his breath. He stared down at his shoes and rubbed his keys against his palm, expelling his embarrassment with each sharp stroke. After some time, he summoned the will to run again, passing 92nd in a rapid blur and 94th with throbbing knees - faster and harder and faster and harder. He felt a thick lactic burn rising in his legs and a draggy mass pressing on his chest. He inhaled air with a heavy rapacity as he threw his feet against the ground.

Heel - concrete - toe - release.

It takes three weeks for a behavior to become a habit.

He passed over a length of metal grating leading down to the subway. He felt hot air waft up from its messy depths, heard the shrill hiss and whine of a passing train, had the incredible urge to jump in and break through, dropping down to the track and into the dark: running in, running on, never stopping, never ending.

A red light at 96th.

He skidded to a halt, held the streetlight for balance and punched the cross button for passage. He paced back and forth, bounced up and down, watched traffic travel and the sun set and buildings burst with speckles of compressed light. The red hand of the signal was still flashing, seething, holding the runner in place.

"I didn't say that Nikki!" A man nearby was shouting into his cell-phone.

His tone was earnest but his face was angry.

"It's as simple as calling me more. Just call me back."

A taxicab almost clipped a cyclist.

"That's not true, I call you all the time, all the time."

The red hand was still there, waving.

"Is it so bad that I want to hear your voice? Is that a bad thing?"

A flock of pigeons landed on a sign, taking sentry.

“Just check in more. That’s all I ask. I just want you to check in.”

The quick flip to green, the brisk dash across the street, the shadowed refuge of the park. The runner stayed at the same pace as the world got silky and the trees got thin and his hands went numb. He flexed them to ensure their existence and in doing so dropped his keys. They hit the ground with a thud and he doubled back to pick them up. But as he bent down, a doberman lunged out of nowhere, barking and jumping and bearing its teeth. Startled, the runner fell back, thrusting his hands forward as some defense against this feral creature. Its owner was an older woman holding the end of a taut leash, struggling to keep the animal away. Finally, she grabbed the dog by its collar and dragged it into the distance, its barks subsumed by the roar of crosstown traffic and the rustling of surrounding trees.

The runner flexed his hands: open - close - open - close. No bites, no damage. They looked the same. They felt the same. But he still felt different, strange, uneasy, off.

He reached down to pick up his keys but stopped midway - his back hurt. This was frustrating. With great effort, he leaned down, winced through the pain and picked up his keys, rubbing the rusty teeth against his fingers, feeling their

corrugated quality against his skin. He threw them into his pocket and tried to stretch his legs. He couldn't. So, he walked through the rest of the park at an idle pace, passing joggers and families and fountains and foliage before stopping at 5th and 97th.

He coughed just to hear himself cough. He spit just to see himself spit. He paced just to feel himself pace. He performed these actions, expended this energy, gave motion to dead verbs through dense relationships of intercostal muscles and synaptic ignitions. But no one else noticed. No one else cared. Not the businessman standing beside him nor the nanny at the light nor the hobo by the gate. They all stood there - silent, stiff, staring at some point in the distance. The runner noticed a single window illuminated in a high-rise.

A shadow moved behind the glass.

Then, the light turned green.

The businessman marched forward, the nanny pushed her stroller and the hobo limped behind. The runner watched them move off into the night while he hung back, frozen at the fringe of the park, stalled in the shade of the trees, waiting for the red hand to return. It did, blinking to life with a bristling authority, emanating its message in waves of red and black. The runner stared into the signal, trying to trace its teeming colors and tessellating shapes towards the origin of its manufacture but the whole causal skein was too

much to consider so he abandoned the task and dragged his keys against his hand - faster and harder and faster and harder.

It takes three weeks for a behavior to become a habit.

He felt something wet in his palm and raised it up to the light. Blood. He'd cut through the callused center of his skin, leaving a set of superficial scrapes oozing smears of red. He licked off the fluid and felt a sour aridity on his tongue. He hacked. He coughed. He spit. He saw his saliva land on the asphalt and adhere to the treads of a passing tire. He wanted it back in his mouth.

A shadow moved behind the glass.

Then, the light turned green.

The runner hesitated, stepping tentatively into the intersection. His shoes made contact with the ground. They were New Balance. His shirt was Nike. His shorts were Adidas. The light was green. The sky was dark. His hand was bleeding. He was supposed to be running but he stopped. He stopped in the middle of the street as the light counted down from 20, 19, 18, 17...

He wanted to leave but he couldn't, he was rooted to the road, fused to the crosswalk, stuck to the surface. Cars were beginning to honk and drivers were starting to shout.

"Get out of the way!"

"Whaddaya doin'?!"

...10, 9, 8, 7...

"Get goin'!"

"What the hell!?"

...4, 3, 2, 1...

The hand flashed several times before fastening the runner in place. He immediately dropped to the ground, shoved his hands against the asphalt, extended his feet from his body and pumped up and down, up and down, performing a set of push-ups in perfect form. He counted each repetition.

1, 2, 3, 4...

More screaming, more honking, more hollering. He didn't heed their voices. He didn't hear their words. He resisted the hands of intruding pedestrians that tried to pry him off the street. He suffered the shoes of cabbies, the boots of truckers, the sneakers of messengers and the loafers of doormen, each heel and toe and welt and tongue probing his arms, patting his chest, inspecting him like an insect. But he kept going, pushing, heaving. Counting.

He kept counting.

...23, 24, 25, 26...

Wet lips. Bloody tongue. Humming skull.

...58, 59, 60, 61...

He forgot the cuts and the pain and the keys. He forgot his reflection in the window and the girl in the car, the dog's barks and the episode in the park - the then, the there, the that, the them: the dense swirls of deictic language dissolving into nothing. He was only here, now, present: moving, breathing, sweating, resisting the arms of strangers and the gloves of police officers, enduring the impact of their batons, the force of their blows, the power of their hits and kicks and punches. He let himself go limp and lifeless under their assault, submitting as they hoisted him off the street and shoved him into a squad car.

He kept counting.

...108, 109, 110, 111...

As the vehicle sped downtown, its siren wailing, he stared out at the passing landscape, watching the city whirl by in distended shapes and bloated scenes and broken colors. He closed his eyes and saw everything. He saw everything without even looking - solid, still, smooth.

He kept counting.

...306, 307, 308, 309...

It takes three weeks for a behavior to become a habit.

Daniel Smight
University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

¿Como Se Dice Venezolano?

In my grandmother's tiled kitchen,
everything is made to represent
earth; the forest green clay bowls,
brimming with *papaya*, *yucca*, *mangoes*,
fresas y aguacate.

A wooden spice rack delicately
labeled with her spidery handwriting,
measured, always full.

& everywhere plants. Hanging from
ceilings, their tendrils touching
even the metal of the faucet
dripping tepid water onto
elegantly arched stems. Flowers
thick as my grandfather's
native lips, and brimming with their
heady scent, musking the humidity.
There is life here, a constant promise
of nourishment and magic.

My grandmother stirs *arina pan*,
into lightly salted water.
Her deft fingers knead dough,
I am six or nineteen or fifty.
The music of our language
ebbs like the sunlight through
the back window, into our conversation.
my unclever mouth makes the
words, muddled by my inherent
sting of *gringa*. Born a native
to this country, I have never felt
so uncolored.

I want to explain like birdsong
that I feel everything in this
country is mine, even if I can't
remember it. I want to *mambo* my
sentence structure and *salsa* my
diction so my vocabulary can
merengue into the rhythm of her
smooth and sweet trumpet, always
a high and sultry slide.
But all I can make is American jazz.
My thick tongue isn't slick enough
for the ballad of our differences,
and my meaning gets lost into the
spice of her *carne mechada* as
she fries the meat with *cebollas*,
y pimientos. My traitorous mouth
waters.

At the counter, she presses her hip
into the soft wood and says come.

sleeves rolled to my elbows,
I let the dough slide smoothly
from one hand to the other.
She directs my palm to flatten
it, with just enough pressure
to make a thick disc. Soon, we
will bake the *arepas*.

I am six or nineteen or fifty,
as my grandmother, in her most
American way says, “Good!”
and teaches me how to feed
all of her great-grandchildren.

There, in the jungle of her kitchen,
exploding with the vibrancy of
my nativity, *yo no hablo español*.
Y yo no hablo inglés.

Sometimes, there are no words.

Roxana Harrison
Rutgers University, 2014

Hardwire

In his starched uniform, with his
shoulders holding the weight of 30
other men in a platoon. . .
he is not a grandfather.

He is a cog, with edges clinking
smoothly into the Great Machine.
Every spit of tobacco on rice-paddy
floors leaves a bloodstain.
A heart is a rifle, firing
haphazardly into the darkness of
these jungles which nurture a
humid hunger. His heart is napalm,
burning and hurting and consuming
his chest; all's that's left to feel is
the fear of this faceless enemy.
What shadows he sees, beckons
him forward.

With the smell of singeing men,
covered in oil and agony—
the screams lead him closer to an
ocean. He wants to go home, but
every cog propels the Great Machine
and his son might be born without
a father.

It's almost as much of a tragedy
as the man who falls into his
life-taking hands (their faces he fights
to forget) His body is a phoenix,
half ash and man and beats, slow-
slowing.
he shudders through a nightmare,
but never wakes up.

Eyes as ghosts
carry the memory of bodies,
empty of personality save for a
small whisper that they were once
more than cogs, more than human.

Lips more pricked than roses
forgetting his name but remembering
Johnny's—whose sister fortified into
a shell when her only brother saw
himself lifted into the air and
spread out over a country he
couldn't even pronounce.
They say Johnny
didn't even feel the heat of the
explosion,
gone too soon, baby eyes lifted
skyward and repented

At 76, my grandfather is a great
warrior, fighting a battle he doesn't
know exists. He doesn't remember how
to tie his shoes, the touch of his lover's
soft fingers on his back, or that he had
a son at all before the war.
He sits in his chair, examining a
wall, playing pictures only cogs
will never stop spinning into view.

At 76, my grandfather is a survivor
who has finally forgotten
all of our names.

*Roxana Harrison
Rutgers University, 2014*

Dressing for a Funeral

I sit on the bathroom counter
in my bra and underwear
in a house I don't know
anymore.

I remember
glass birds in the hall,
war photos in the den,
the faded green rocking chair
resting by the kitchen:
familiarity gutted by fire.

This new house
is all hardwood floors,
granite countertops,
pristine white walls,
and a bathroom in the back
where I am trying
to put on pantyhose.

Emily Stein

Washington University in St. Louis '14

Clockwork

She was always good with machines.
When she dismantled every clock
and every lock, she turned her attention
to the pieces, and began to create.
Her small fingers sorted through gears
and fashioned a mechanical jigsaw
of nuts and bolts and burnished bronze,
and when she finished, she had assembled
a coffin. It stood two feet tall and opened
down the middle like a door. Each hour
on the hour, the coffin opened and
an angel emerged. She moved stiffly,
ancient wheels under mismatched robes,
and carried a black and white clock face
embossed with Roman numerals.
She spoke of the future and the past,
of time and death, of thoughts not meant
for mortal minds. Her maker took
the clock face, leaving the angel
cold and silent as energy crackled
from metal to skin. She tied the clock
to a string, and hung it around her neck
and hid it under her shirt, so that
the second hand matched the beat
of her heart. Each turn of the gears
slowed her still more, and she skirted
the slippery shadow of her clockwork coffin:
another caught cog, blind to the pendulum.

Emily Stein

Washington University in St. Louis '14

Teatime

Of course you do exactly what scares me the most.

Infants

small enough to fit in the oven should stay out
of the kitchen.

You might slip on the cooking-greasy floor.

You might catch your fingers in the cabinets.

I might drop

something.

I might swivel around holding the hot

kettle.

You should wear bells. I should clean more.

Of course there are knives point up in the open dishwasher.

Of course you try to touch them. It's like you've planned

the best way to frighten me into eternal supervision.

Don't go exploring

corners. I'm sure there's a mixingbowlful of dirt here.

I love you. My back hurts. The trash is full. Go away.

Sue Hyon Bae

Washington University in St. Louis, 2013

Putin is President Again

“Putin is president again,” he says

and I respond with,
“I know, I heard it on the radio,”
and immediately I am sorry
not for the Russians, no,
but for myself,
for needing to tell him I found out
first.

Then I am sorry for the Russians
but not for the Russians’ sake, no,
but for me
for being an idiot
for not thinking about the Russians
first.

And then I am sorry
because he has moved on,
surfing the waves of the web,
because his information wasn’t news
(to me)
and so I say,
“Why does this world keep doing this to itself?”
but I can tell he’s thought of this
first (too).

Elsa Guenther
DePaul University, 2014



“Seaside Neighborhood”

photo collage

Bridgette Zou

Rhode Island School of Design, 2012



“Longing”
acrylic on canvas

Vasiliki Valkanas
Northwestern University, 2015

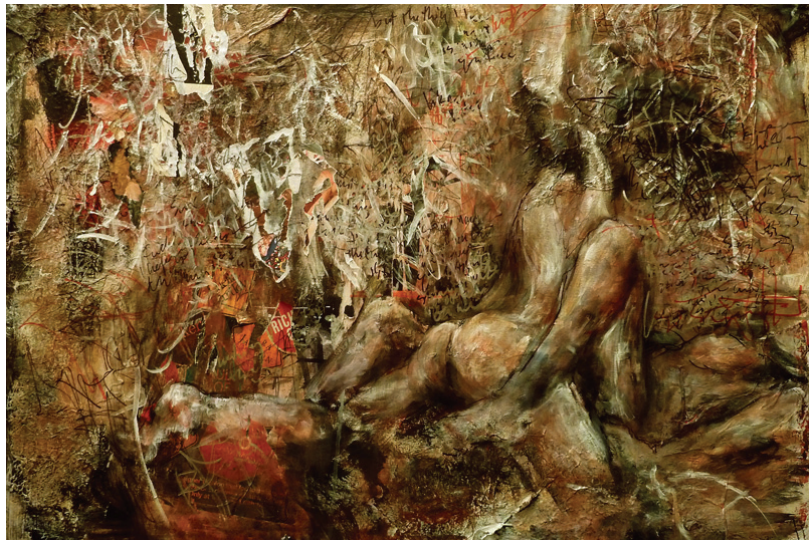


“Laundry Bones To Dirt To Mush”
mixed media on paper

Catalina Ouyang
Washington University in St. Louis, 2015

“Shutterbug”
mixed media on
canvas

Catalina Ouyang
Washington University
in St. Louis, 2015





“Defective”
photograph

Katy Wilbur
University of California San Diego, 2012

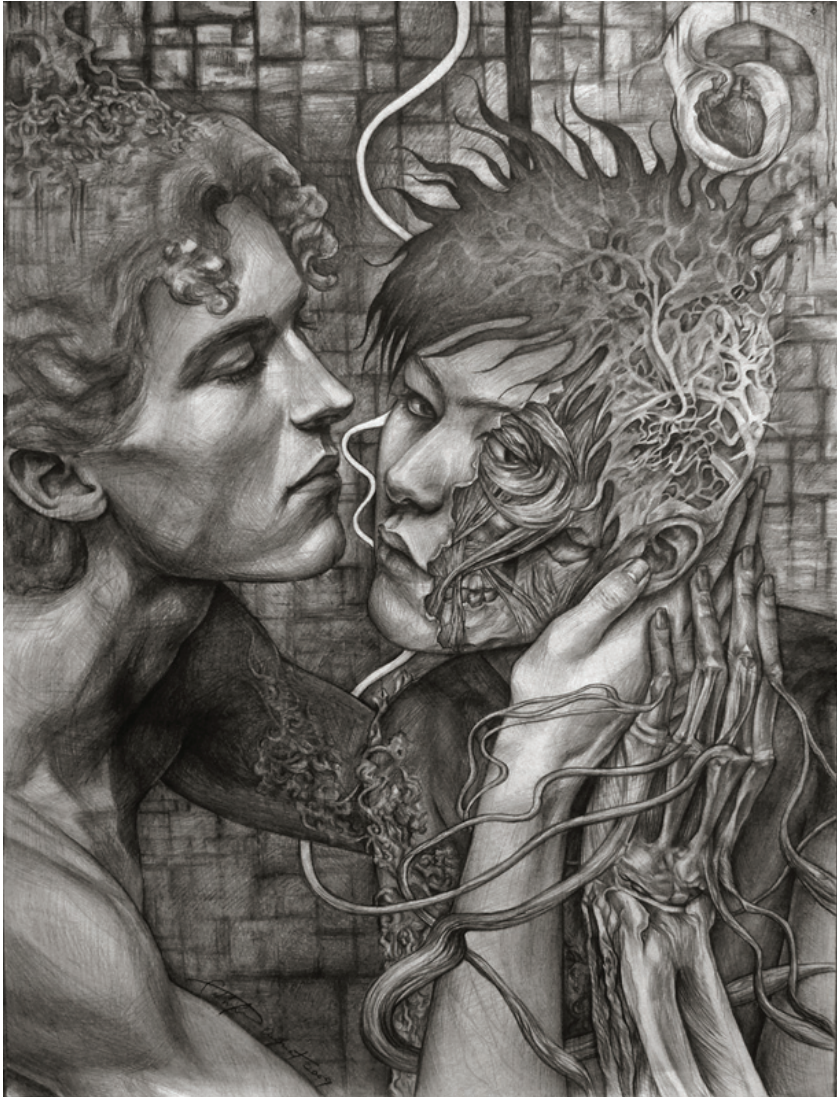


“Abstract Flower”

pastel on paper

Sarah Ettinger

Washington University in St. Louis, 2015



“Adonis Leave”

graphite

Catalina Ouyang

Washington University in St. Louis, 2015

A Seven Letter Word for Grey

The painting had an anguished plainness. The result of seven weeks' work had been for naught. She wasn't just being hard on herself; it was objectively terrible. The letter came in the mail. The graduate art fellowship in Marseilles had rejected her. They even sent her a video of judges setting fire to the copy of her painting. She made a mental note to loathe everything French.

She wandered down a gray street, cursing the world and adrift in her thoughts. She noticed a dead squirrel on the side of the road. She imagined it talking to her. The squirrel told her that she hit a dead end. The blunt squirrel was probably right. She nodded, shrugged, and began to cry under the shadow of a tree with no leaves.

A figure walked down the road towards her.

Mondays were his favorite day of the week. It meant that the *Chicago Sun-Times* had its easiest crossword puzzle, and he might actually have a shot at finishing it. It's the little things. He also knew he might have the chance to cheer someone up since 95% of other people hated Mondays. His ears pricked up from the sound of sniffing, and he lifted his nose from the folded up paper to have his eyes meet hers.

He began putting creases into the folded paper. The mascara that slid down her face was quickly dabbed at with her sleeve. He couldn't take his mind off her gorgeous cheekbones, and it made his heart sag to see them covered in tears. He then held out his hand with his finished work of art.

It was an origami platypus. She held an expression on her face that mixed surprise with curiosity and utter joy. He extended his other hand. She took it, wiped her cheeks one more time with her sleeve, and accompanied him down the smackle colored road.

The Earth circled the sun. Flowers withered then bloomed. Children grew up.

He woke up, and the other side of the bed was still warm. It was still early in the morning. He put on his Kermit the Frog slippers and went downstairs to investigate. She was cooking bacon and wearing an oversized Rowan University t-shirt. She then set the table and placed tulips in a vase. He stepped passed the now barren bedroom that sat in the corner of the house. He chuckled warmly at the thought of eating breakfast *at a table*. He used it for nothing more than loose papers and the occasional jigsaw puzzle. Her eyes began to tear up, but she refused to let him see. Of course he saw.

His grin faded as he remembered what the day was: the first Monday of classes. He thought about cheering her with a silly hat or burning himself on the coffee, but in the end he sat down at the table and gestured toward his lap. At first she was hesitant. After about 10 seconds she completely lost her composure and embraced him like an octopus. He clicked ready a pen and presented her with it. Together they did the crossword puzzle without saying a word. An ever so slight grin crept onto her face.

They both took their time with Time, and it returned the favor. When they were 90, they felt as though they had lived for a thousand ages.

She would rock on the front porch with her grandson on her lap drinking sweet tea from a glass with a pink umbrella in it. The little one got up and ran around the yard with a ball as she got up and stretched her tired legs. She put on a multi colored beanie with a spinner on top and waited for her ride to the church. The beanie even had some smackle in it. The car pulled up to the house. She called cars “land dragons” to feel whimsical. The two got in, and the little one leaned against her. She pulled out a book of *Sesame Street* themed crossword puzzles, and pulled him close.

Spence Blazak
Rutgers University, 2015

Glowing Embers

We searched for each
other in worn-down
blankets and fourteen
year old memories
sparked by oleander
candles and cluttered
sticker books.

Old versions of us
swam up from the
never-before-measured
depths of frigid salt
water and
broke
through the surface,
filling their tired lungs with
humid air and heavy skies.

Faded photographs
(the backs of which
are tinged with captions
that were neatly
scribbled some time ago
by hands now buried
in the earth)

made me want to see you
in every color, but the
black and white
of it all left me
tangled up in
a quiet, dark ember
of a feeling,
glowing steadily
brighter by

your sleepy
sheepish grins
and your
“oh no’s” and
“yes of course’s.”

That part of you
never went away,
it just needed
dusting
and an
overwhelming
sense of peace
overcame me,
as if I’d known you
forever or maybe
just that—

No matter where you
go or where
“We” goes,
you’ll always be
the shy boy in shorts
two sizes too big,
looking into
the distance
at something
you’d forgotten,
but that must
have mattered
very much.

Diana Sevastyanova
University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Logic Unburdened

How can nothing be nothing?

Prayers are love letters, remembrances, memoirs, lamentations, pleas
Thrown into a black and motionless sea
That we imagine cares if we live or die.
This sea is nothing.

I send my doomed missives via a carved rock jammed rudely into the earth
Dreaming, prostrating, begging they be received
Only singing so, that muteness would be just as real.
Unheard, and therefore unsung
Toned words tossed to a tongueless grave, seeping into the moist earth
Heavy as butter, verbs and sibilants too weighty yet insubstantial for the grass.

Better to chip away at the grave marker—
I'll make more noise that way.

A name, choruses of the same name, whispered and shouted, fall around the granite slab
Empty as outstretched palms.
I think of sleep, practice for death. But no!
Sleep, practice for nothing.
I think of sleeping here, with my lips on the stone.
Mine is only a wet face
on the wet grass or the granite.
I think the dew on the grass must be from the black and motionless sea.
Water, tears, and perhaps alcohol—what cleans also burns.
Wash off the dirt and find more dirt,
perhaps a bug
or spider scuttling
away.

Singing to a slab, a body, a spirit.
I see the first
I knew the second
What third?

There is nothing third.
In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Third.
Third is nothing.

I mute myself, I mute the trinitities, and I hear silence.
I hear silence.
Not there, but there.
Even silence is something.

The wet is something, the dirt is something, the spider is something, singing is something, being unheard is
something, not listening is something, not being is something, nothing is something.

A song falling into a sea
That is something.
I think of a hand touching mine
That is something.
Silence
That is something.
How can nothing be nothing?

A wet hand on a rough grave. Even silence is something.
How can nothing be nothing?

Bobby O'Rourke
Rutgers University '13

Tales from Von Steuben High

Loosely based off real Chicago news

Tom from Geometry said that Angie Rice's parents are foreign diplomats and that she lives by herself in a giant mansion. Jenny from English told me during break that Angie writes about killing everybody in that neon green composition notebook she always carries around. Stacey told me while we were doing laps in Gym that Angie was caught stealing a manhole cover five blocks from school. But Stacey didn't know if it was true or just a rumor; nobody knew who this girl really was.

At Von Steuben there were two kinds of girls: the girls that you talked to and the girls that you wouldn't touch with a vaulting pole. Angie Rice was one of *those* girls. She wore a pair of goggles around her neck and her coat was covered with cotton patches ripped from different Moroccan fabrics. Her hair had been dyed so many times even *she* probably couldn't remember the original color; God knows when she had last washed it. She used to take Latin, but then the program was discontinued; that was how Richie knew her.

There aren't that many outsiders at Von. It's a magnet school that gets students from all over Chicago, even the furthest neighborhoods in the South Side. (Only thing is you gotta take your own transportation.) But since everyone is equally an outsider, we all sorta get to know each other, become friends with people from different backgrounds. There are no racial lines here, as opposed to the rest of the city, which is literally drawn along lines of race. So how could a girl like Angie, with her toffee-colored mixed skin, become such a social outcast at Von? I watch

her everyday as she walks through the halls on the way to home room. What is she thinking about as she stares at us through those smudged goggles? What does she see?

August 24th.

Strange things happen in this city, but people don't really talk about them. A pitbull ran onto a CTA bus in Bronzeville. Its owner, a 60-year-old single man, stood shocked outside the bus holding the leash as the dog ran down the aisle, growling and yapping at some poor old ladies wearing swimcaps. What was that pitbull thinking? It must've been so excited, its one moment of excitement in an essentially mundane life filled with two walks a day and the same bowl of kibble. Afterwards, its owner probably scolded it and punished it somehow. Locked it up in an iron cage. Poor dog.

When will my 15 seconds of excitement come? I wait and I wait, stare through the bars of this cage, walk around on a leash through these brightly-lit halls. Dad is never home and Mom feeds me the same microwave dinners every night, like kibble. Are things that different for me than for the pitbull? I step onto the Foster bus to go to Jeff Park every morning and the other girls from Von cower away as I growl and foam at the mouth. Don't worry, I say, scowling, my bark is bigger than my bite...

I've only ever heard Angie Rice say two things. The first was at the mandatory assembly that was held after her sister was mugged and shot in Lakeview. Her sister's name was Marcie and she was in the Scholar's program which, at a school as small as Von, amounted to reading an extra book every summer and writing a report about it. I remember she read For Whom the Bell Tolls and wrote a paper that won the Bookworm Award for

best book report written by an honors student. That summer there were only three Honors students. I wasn't one of them. Richie and Stacey and I sat in the back row at the fall awards ceremony popping bubble gum and snickering as they were handed their awards.

At the assembly commemorating Marcie's death the principal took attendance and Angie said "Here" and that was the first time I ever heard her speak. Everyone turned to look at her at once, as if to say, "That's the girl who got us out of Calculus", or, "Poor freak", or, "Look at her hair". Angie's voice cracked when she said the word "Here" and the room sort of felt different afterwards. Like after a bell rings at the end of class—when the ringing stops you're in the same room with the same people, but the air is somehow different.

The assembly dragged on, Principal Rodriguez talked about mourning and coping and being there for Angie in her time of loss. The whole time Angie was scribbling in her stupid composition notebook with a Bic pen. Before that assembly, she had been your average wallflower, but now? Now, a science exhibit, evidence of life on Mars. We stared at her as if through a pane of glass. When she walked through the halls, she was in her own personal aquarium tank, floating dully as we stared at her making bubbles.

September 2nd.

They found a cat walking around with an arrow through its head downtown. A lady screamed and fainted and then an ambulance came; the medics didn't know if they were

supposed to revive the lady or the cat.

They ended up sharing the ambulance. It took them three hours to remove the arrow from the cat's skull but it was fine; the arrow narrowly missed its brain.

Nobody knows how the arrow got into the cat's head, or whose cat it is. They put it in a shelter in Lincoln Park but it was immediately adopted by a caring gay couple in East Lakeview. She was renamed Cupid. Like a new baptism; a second chance at life.

That is how they must see me, walking around. Like I have an arrow through my head, or I have this big open wound on my side or something. If I collapsed to the ground and started convulsing like Marcie did I don't think any of them would think twice. The police officers told me that she was killed instantly and didn't feel anything as she bit the ground. But I think she felt something, her soul being ripped out of her body like that. Her body being ripped out of her name. She must've felt cold.

I want to start over. I want to go to a new school and start over. I'll get a new name...

The second and only other thing she ever said to me was during gym. We collided in the locker room, and she said "Sorry". I was too stunned to reply, hearing her voice; I stared at her, and she stared back, and the whole locker room went silent for a second. The smell of Axe stinging my eyes and the sound of a locker slamming brought me back. She sneered at me, pushed me to the wall, and walked past me. Through her eyes, I was just like all the rest.

I wanted to write an article about her for the school newspaper. It would be such a great addition to our column section: an exposé on Angie Rice! We needed something to spice up the next issue; instead of reading it, my friends had been using it to make paper wads in the bathroom. Even teachers were using it as a placemat for their coffee mugs.

But I didn't just see her as a pity case, like everybody else. I dreamed of talking to her, of asking her who she was and why she wore those goggles around her neck and if she really lived in a big mansion all by herself. I would ask where she got those Moroccan fabrics from, find out if her parents were really foreign diplomats. What if that were me? All alone in that big mansion, my parents halfway across the world? I close my eyes and think about it and see dark hallways and shiver.

I never planned on talking to her until I found her journal underneath the bleachers after gym. It was a flash of neon green in the corner of my eye as I was packing up my gym clothes into my knapsack. Holding it in my hands, I felt its holiness: it glowed and vibrated. I put it in my knapsack and carried it around for the rest of the day, relishing the little bit of extra weight on my back.

When I got off the bus that day after school I ran home cradling the notebook in my arms, slammed my bedroom door, and locked it.

October 23rd.

The winters here are brutal. In mid-February this year

when the snow finally melted they found the body of a 60-year-old woman lying at the intersection of 31st and Halsted, in Bridgeport. She had been missing since just before Christmas. Her family said she just "walked off" after dinner, for a "nice evening stroll". Investigators say she probably died due to cold exposure.

Around the same time, a man was found frozen to death in his home on West Birchwood Avenue in Rogers Park. He was pronounced dead at 1:45 AM at the Stein Institute. Witnesses say he was discovered in his home with no heat; why, I wonder? Had his radiator malfunctioned overnight? Maybe he hadn't been paying the bills?

*Or maybe, maybe, he turned the radiator off himself. Maybe, maybe, that Grandma in Bridgeport knew *exactly* where she was going when she left home for her "nice evening stroll".*

Lunch at Von is a big thing. The school lets all students go off-campus; there are huge underground subcultures revolving around where you go to eat. Where you go says everything about the kind of person that you are. I usually eat under the bleachers out of a brown bag I packed myself. Everyday I see the cool kids go across the River Walk to Northside and the burnouts walk down to the river behind school, where they always smoke weed while eating lunch. I don't envy them at all. They stare at me when they come back with blood-red eyes, jaws slack, laughing.

The winters here are brutal.

"What does it mean?" I asked, flipping through the pages. She stared across at me with no expression on her face. Shafts of sunlight filtered through the bleachers. Tom told me she hung out

down here during lunch and smoked cigarettes.

“Why do *you* care? Leave me alone. Give me my journal.” She grabbed it from me, ripping a few of the pages. “Look what you did, you moron!” She collapsed into a heap in the grass, the notebook lying open beside her. It was a drawing of a cat with an arrow through its head.

“This is pretty gruesome, you know. If one of our teachers caught you with this you might get sent to the school counselor.” She groaned. “I never told *you* to read it. Besides, so what. Already go twice a week.” Her voice came muffled through the grass.

“Why?”

She kicked at me, but she missed and hit the stands.

“Go away!”

I turned to go, but something kept me rooted to the spot. The sun glinted off her goggles; I stared at the mysterious geometric designs that she'd traced into her jacket, began to draw on the skin of her forearms. I looked at my own empty white skin.

“No. Listen, I know you don't have any friends. I know you think we all treat you like some weird science experiment or something. But I...I want to listen to you. You can leave if you want, ok? But that's your choice to make not mine. I...I'm listening.”

She lifted herself up onto her knees and sighed, tracing her finger across the design in her knee patch.

“They're...they're things I hear in the news. Strange things that happen here, in this city. I write about them. Or sometimes draw pictures, I guess.”

“...like the cat?” I winced.

“Yeah. It's real. They found a cat walking around with an arrow through its head. Nobody knew where it was from.”

November 13rd.

They found a human foot in Lake Michigan. A woman was running along the lake in Ravenswood and she saw it bobbing, bits of bloody tissue still hanging from the end of it. The white bone shimmered in the sunlight when the police came and pulled it out. It gathered a big crowd even though it was midday Wednesday. They used sonar equipment to search the waters. Gossip about the killer spread through Vón like lightning bolts. Everyone texted their best friends and loved ones. People started staring at me, whispering. Pointing.

Eventually police came to school. They pulled me from Chemistry and took me down to the police station as a suspect in the alleged murder case. My heart was throbbing the whole ride there, but by the time they got there, they turned around and sent me home. Apparently, after eight hours of searching, they discovered that the foot was just a Halloween prop.

There is so much beauty in this damned city, so much ugly beauty: deer that give birth behind an apartment complex, robbers hiding stolen loot in a baby diaper, a man climbing

telephone wires to steal the copper. Men throwing condoms filled with vomit. One woman pulled the fire alarm in a bar because she didn't like the music. Another woman plunged from a third-story window, hit a parked car, and then wandered inside a nearby apartment and took a nap on a stranger's couch. Little things like this happen everyday, but who is watching? It all happens so fast. And if I don't document it, will it even exist? Mr. Raiman says that if nobody hears a tree falling, it doesn't make a sound. Something to do with sound waves and particles of air. But what about me: if nobody sees me leave class, and nobody hears me crying out here under the bleachers, am I even here at all?

We talked some more after that, but I don't remember most of it. I should've been memorizing everything she said—so I could write it down later. But for some reason, I forgot. Everything there was calm and quiet; everyone was off-campus for lunch, or smoking weed down at the river behind school. It was like we were in our own world. I got a break from all my friends, all the gossip and the pressure of living in such a segregated city. Cicadas buzzed, feverish. She told me story after story; we didn't talk about Marcie, or about her parents. I still don't know very much about her, I guess.

If I told Tom or Stacey that I talked to Angie Rice under the bleachers during lunch hour, I don't think they would believe me. But I don't want them to know, anyways. At a small school like Von Steuben everyone gets to know you so well you don't feel like you ever get a chance to do something unexpected, be somebody different. But after that afternoon I felt like I had a secret,

like I could lead a double life if I really wanted to. Now I pass Angie in the halls and we smile at each other, and there is something nice about that. We don't talk anymore, but maybe one day, maybe.

I went home that day and I bought a red composition notebook from the convenience store down the street. I started writing things in it, things that I saw, on the CTA or at school. I only write in it when my bedroom door is locked, or in the bathroom stall at school. Angie almost transferred to Whitney Young; she never told me why. Eventually, people stopped talking about her; they forgot about the assembly, and that business with the plastic foot in November. They didn't know but I started to see things differently, to talk to beggars I once ignored and examine empty storefronts that used to be bustling with life. I don't know why. It brings me back to that feeling I got under the bleachers, of being apart, being given a chance to see things differently, to be somebody different. This is a strange city, you know, when you really start to look at it.

*Michael Lipkowitz
University of Chicago, 2012*

In the Beauty of Thought

In transition to
nowhere the old
timers say

Van Goghs and Monets no longer
distinguishable and
with that why
have any eyes when
orange crème anglaise is just
crème and not the backdrop to
something beautiful, stained
into one's mind

accidentally

like the glass of merlot that
slowly bleeds
and in the
act of itself . . .
itself being
selfish
leaves a
note that
once said
something
to mean only
a memory
now

a red

opaque stained

thought

Cocoon

When I go to the protest to be arrested, I tear
pages from the library books. I fold each, tucking
the poems into the sides of my underwear. I am hoping
not to be strip searched, I am hoping
not to be alone in that cell.

Kait Mauro

Washington University in St. Louis, 2014

Born Burnt

I never liked to wear it. Not at home or at homeland. Too dark, but never dark enough. A burnt edge of a paper. I always frayed out. Identity stuck to my lips like bitter tamarind grinded to jelly, which I poured over last night's curry of garbanzo beans. A stench that still suffocates me, this sunrise. I try to wash my mouth, dried by the taste of burnt rusk. Leaving stains on the pristine napkin. The corner of my eyes catch the deep oranges and reds that warn me of the danger that is rising. Mangos bleed into the sun from ailing bark and broken branches that loom over my grandmother's house. Fallen to the same soil that covers my grandfather's grave. And I begin to sweat. I wish to take it off, but I am stuck. Mud dried on my body, I've tried to wash and scrub, but I know I can only wear what I was born, no matter how it squeezes and chokes bones and muscles. A constant reminder of the dirt that will crush me, so that I blend, forgotten in my ancestors' earth.

Abhishek Saxena

Washington University in St. Louis, 2015

Vacation

When you're on vacation you don't need to wear a watch. You can go by the tide or the shadows on sidewalks or the pangs of hunger in your belly. And when you're on vacation you don't have to worry about people knowing you. You can do as you please. Come and go as you wish. You can be who ever you'd like to be –like Michael or Sal or Roger. It all makes no difference. So tonight I'm Randolph and I work in Wisconsin, and I'm in South Beach for the weekend. I'm also very successful, but I don't like to talk about that because I'm humble.

I think that's what she probably notices first: my humility. She walks over to me and leans on the bar. She gives me the look like I can buy her a drink. I do –a cosmopolitan. We speak. Her name is Carmela. She has soft brown eyes and a quiet sense of humor.

"That guy over there," she says after our second drink, "he's looking for men."

"Get out of here," I say, taking a heavy sip of beer. Her eyes are serious, though. "Why do you say that?"

"You can just tell. Look there," she points to a hot brunette making her way to the restroom. She struts her stuff by the guy. With his back on the wall, he looks at her, and then looks away toward a group of girls and guys playing pool.

"See?" she says.

"What?"

"His eyes never looked down her. He didn't even notice her tits or nothing. He was looking for eye contact and when he didn't get it, he went back to those college boys playing pool."

"Get out of here," I say again. "How do you know that he's looking at the guys? Maybe he's looking for a younger girl. Maybe he's just into college girls. "

She looks at me and we both take a defiant drink. A couple minutes pass and the brunette is out of the restroom. She walks past the guy again. He doesn't look. She heads directly to the bar, cutting in between Carmella and me, and orders herself a drink. While she's waiting she looks at me and smiles. I look back trying not to do it. But I cave and look down at her tits. She gets her drink and walks away. Carmella looks at me and we both laugh.

If it was my humility that she first noticed, then I guess I'd have to say it was her confidence that attracted me. She's very comfortable with herself. Even now, she lies on the bed naked, one leg crossed nonchalantly on top of her other knee, as she sucks the end of her cigarette. The position makes the fat around her stomach roll up like a wave and I can see the cellulite on the bottom of her thighs, but her hands never move to cover it; the sheets lay idly by, crumpled and sweaty by the base of the bed. She wears her fat well. I turn toward her and place my hand on top and lightly squeeze. It doesn't faze her. She sticks the cigarette in my mouth. I got a no smoking room, but no one follows that anyway –plus, it's a

vacation and Randolph likes to smoke so I inhale deep.

“I think I’ll stay the night,” she says.

“Okay,” I say, sticking the cigarette back in her mouth. “But I have to get up pretty early. I leave tomorrow.”

“No problem. I’ll be gone when you need me to.” She pats my head and we laugh.

She gets up and heads to the bathroom. She has a nice ass and I watch it until the door closes. I hear the water start to run. I close my eyes and begin to doze. A few minutes later, her phone goes off. I open my eyes. It’s a really annoying ring –it’s one of the ring tones that come with the phone. I get up and knock on the bathroom door.

“Carmella! Hey, Carmella!”

“Yeah?” she shouts back. The water turns off and she says again. “What’s up?”

“Your phone’s ringing.”

“Would you mind bringing it to me. It’s in my purse.”

I find her purse under the covers and pull out her phone on the last ring. The caller ID says it’s Sid.

“It’s Sid!”

“Can you bring it?”

The door opens and I hand it to her. She takes it in and calls him back. The door closes again, but I can still hear her talking. I hold her purse in front of me, then stick my hand inside. I weed through a tampon, some gum, chap-stick, a few loose coins and some hair clips. I pull out her license and a cigarette. I head back to the bed, light up, and blow a puff of smoke onto her picture. Her hair’s in a bun and she’s wearing glasses. It reads: Jessica Prichet. She’s from Connecticut and her birthday is in May.

We’re delayed. The plane takes off at eight thirty. I have a magazine and don’t really care. The flight is only two hours to Newark. The flight attendant asks us to fasten our seatbelts for the landing. I buckle up and sit in quiet anticipation. The moment when you’re just about to hit the runway has an oddly calming effect on me. I can sit back and let my brain go on autopilot. Just as the wheels of the plane come out, hovering mere feet from the asphalt.

For that brief moment, I look at the TV in the back of the chair before me. It’s turned off along with all other electronics. I stare at the reflection before me and a guy stares back, a guy sitting in a living room with his wife and two kids, eating a TV dinner and watching reality shows. Then with a light thud, the wheels meet the runway, steadying me. Randolph disappears, and Jason steps out and takes his seat.

When you get ready for a vacation you pack

everything but your baggage. When you come back, and pull your bag off the conveyer belt your surprised at how heavy it suddenly becomes.

Sometimes, usually during our TV dinners, I find myself thinking about Randolph and Carmella. They were a good match. They could have been together and have been happy. They could have been anything they wanted to be.

Alex Kelsen

Rutgers University, 2013

Self Portrait

Greetings to she who I was,
She who was born hairless and mistakenly a boy until
three
She who rounded up all her friends on the
playground and chased them away
So full of cartilage, so full of iris,
sisterless & Living in a cul-de-sac, chasing ice-cream
trucks and believing my brother when he reported
every man wanted to kill me in Puerto Rico

Greetings to she who I was
Born side ways and at the perfect weight
Who fell out laughing and sniffed tags
She who hid in long grass, Who was full of teeth
and Filipino friends who made her pray whenever she
slept over.

Greetings to she, who fell backwards through her
dreams and thought only under pillows
Who stayed up for an entire evening naming everyone
she could think of,
She who drowned just to prove she could swim
Who watched her brother , a wingless angle, neck
gripped air soaked body afloat afloat
She quieter than velvet.

Greetings to she who I am becoming
A poet down on her knees, a girlfriend wrapped in the
light of his body tremors, an ex girlfriend wrapped in
the carcass of his coriander,
A patron of all things yellow, she who doesn't mean
to, but hates the sound of people eating cereal, She
who wants to put everything in this poem, who has
compartmentalized her life into a series of mantras
she is trying to integrate, who once accidentally hiked
for 11 miles, who sleeps subdued by artificial night,

she who spares slingshot smiles from the back of
a train, who marred the memory of her childhood
into a kaleidoscope, Who cried Rumi in the ocean in
Santa Monica before Erik taught her how to dance on
the roof of no one she knew.

Greetings to she who has probably lied to you and
more than once, who choked on a heliotrope in
Roosevelt park turning down drugs, she who fell into
the belly of a monastery and found her own breath
on the wall, who pockets all her love like chocolate.

Greetings to she who I am becoming, who can't
seem to face the other side of the bed, who is
wading through a one-size fits all institution, who is
trying to take the blame without taking the blame,
who imagines your body nude like the neck of a
saxophone, who keeps trying to look for the God in
things, who cried to Salinger with a cigarette papered
to her lips, who thinks the cat on the stairs is another
part of her who has the courage to make a break for
it

Greetings to she, languid and full of words like
crescendo and intimacy, she coming into her own
power, she who admires tom waits for telling the lyric
to go fuck itself or really just wait until he gets home,
she who crumples like tinfoil the moment we touch.

Brienne Pierce
Rutgers University, 2013

L'Automne

Maple descends into
petite flames:
embrowned
like votives.
Set to pavaues
is the sunset
without a tourniquet,
as I cart the day
off to its
deflowering,
dark like the
bruising
of old fruit.

Travis Lau

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Morningside

Sunbeams flay
the misty film
in urban husks
promenading.

I, decked in yawns,
lag my bergamot sips
to fit my matins
humming in the ether
between my
lips and tongue.

Travis Lau

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

This publication was designed by Susannah Lohr, Alyssa Celentano, and Miriam Zawadzki set into type digitally at Washington University and printed and bound at Midtown Printing, St. Louis, Missouri.

The type face is Centaur MT, designed by Bruce Rogers.

Spires accepts submissions from undergraduate students around the world. Works are evaluated in small groups and then recommended for further review or for elimination from the review process. Spires is published bi-annually and distributed free of charge to the Washington University community at the end of each semester. All undergraduate art, poetry, prose, drama, song lyric, and digital media submissions are welcome for evaluation.

Special thanks to: Washington University Student Union; Mike Rogger of Midtown Printing; and the authors, poets, and artists who submitted.

SPIRES
spiresmagazine@gmail.com



