

the garland

spring
2000



the garland

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loyola college

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Jenn Vogel
Jenn Vogel



from the editor's brain

"I now believe that the only way in which Americans can rise above their ordinariness, can mature sufficiently to rescue themselves and to help rescue their planet, is through enthusiastic intimacy with works of their own imaginations."

--- Kurt Vonnegut

It is not an unfamiliar question posed to young writers: "But how do you plan to make a *living*?" Apparently, Kurt Vonnegut's opinion isn't a popular one. In a progress-oriented society like ours, value is only measured by dollar signs and profit margins. To choose writing, art, or performance is to choose a life wrought with tactlessly stated outside opinions that your endeavors are "useless." To be an artist, courage and confidence are almost as important as skill. In Vonnegut's world-view, that is criminal. So here, in these pages, we recognize the brave individuals who have committed to giving of themselves in the name of creative expression through words or images.... The individuals who have an answer to the dreaded questions about careers and income.

Taking a moment for formality, I'd like to extend special thanks to Jessica Anderson for her help with publicity in the earliest stages of putting this magazine together. Also, my most profound gratitude is extended to Andrew Zapke, for his amazing patience (with me), his artistic skill, and editorial input, in general. Without his assistance, this magazine would never have come together.

And to the writers, photographers, and artists who pick up this magazine, thank you for taking the measures that make this sort of publication possible.

Rebecca Burrett



Brian Garzione

Woman in Blue

I.

'til thread bare

bare backed
- thread blue

each strand an otherwise
unstated transition

she pauses

at an empty mirror
spotting the stray fray-

II.

moonlight defines
buildings which once eclipsed

now thin columns so reduced -
not compromised by delicate beams

she slips into the background
where texture - if not light -

holds still

where things never mean anything
more than this

III.

the sayable - all that remains unsaid - makes us all
so vulnerable always to false meaning

soft shuffle under foot -
underbelly - the knowing breeding

in the breeze -
wind brushes over what was not said

she becomes aware of air
gently lifting the fold of her skirt

Nothing ever means anything
more -

Beth Barnyock



Crystal Ciervo



Phil Berretto

Revolution

A one armed poet stabbing for freedom
running
and screaming in his native tongue
his overrunning saliva
washing the dirt from his tanned face
a barefoot warrior giving all he has
for all he's ever wanted

His rage is exhaustion and bewilderment
walking
and pleading with God in his native tongue
his sorrow spilling from his soul
staining his journal with bloody experience
a barefoot genius telling all he knows
about the tragedy and triumph of getting
all he's ever wanted

Peter Sabatini

street signs

Behind the dark window of the drawn out
limousine sits a man unknown,
hidden by my reflection which
stares back at me.

Neon signs spell out names of those
sweet syrups that go down hard
and fast — a painkiller of sorts
twisted and backwards,
drunk in their own sense.

Bright fire flashing, a warning from the
swanning neck of the post
to slow, stop, look both ways to
where my ragged, hollow eyes,
appearing as drains that swallow the pain
of the blackness of his window
while I wait to cross.

Our distance is greater than the glass
that separates us,
an unbalance sputtering through time.
Yet we continue to seek clarity, unthwarted
by shadowed glass and
long to be found before leaving the
darkness of our failures.

Jessica Anderson



An Answer

During a time in my life when the pressures of pleasing the world threatened to defeat me, an understanding friend jotted a letter that recommended I meditate in the bottom of a trash can. I chose the Smiths' kitchen garbage bin, hoping to remember why sunsets are beautiful. Dinner hour arrived, and I was bombarded with slimy potato peels and chicken fat. Homework time followed the meal -- pencil shrapnel and crumpled long division problems came showering down. "It's useless!" I yelled in frustration, banging the can with my fist so hard that it toppled forward. Limbs flailing, I spilled out onto the yellow linoleum and was greeted with an imploring smile from little brown-eyed Tommy. Standing tiptoe on the kitchen chair with his skinny arm trying to stretch up to the highest cabinet, he whispered deviously, "Please, Mr. Aemell, can you grab me a cookie?" I handed him three, and then he placed one back into my palm. He spoke with an authority that could lead a country: "Here, you deserve this cookie -- it has the most chocolate chips."

Colleen Hughes

Ecstasy Underground

a leaf falls
and where it meets a drop of water
I am reborn
curled helplessly in the womb of Mother Earth
I find myself at her mercy
heartbeat my only reality
aside from her own rhythm
pounding gently in my ears
in solitude and blackness
I am taken back to my birth
a harmony never felt before
peace
infects my soul
I'm left stunned
sitting
resigned to where it takes me
I don't even know what it is
Her outstretched hand
my guide
everything shimmers
like a hazy veil has been lifted
and all things once mundane
are spiritual

Christine Drayton

Beth Barnyock



Autumnal

*"I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air" SYLVIA PLATH*

Reborn a goddess.
Reborn a red demon.

Jealous of the autumn leaves,
she hennas her hair a flaming crimson.

Working the dye deep into the roots,
scalp burning. Lumps of thick juice form
wet piles of snakes above her forehead.
The reflection - a bleeding Medusa.

A single saturated curl worms toward her eyebrows,
drops behind a splash of sepia.
Lingering while the dye sets,
devilish veins stain the tips of her ears.

Warm water runs like thin blood
as she rinses the inky heap -
leaving a ruddy ring around the tub.

Beth Barnyock

May Night on Maine Water

That thick, velvety ink glows
With the silver dust of angels, flashing
In time to the music
Of soothing night wind combing trees
And ever-alive water tumbling over itself.
The crowded boat rocks
To the joint song
Of the elements
As if it belongs here.
Cool breeze sweeps off the water,
Kisses my cheek
And passes away
Like some sweet thought
Dreamt and unreal.
When you are under such a dark
Dancing
Undeserved sky
Made from the shadow of
His palm over North water,
You are obligated to listen to the song
That never ends
And to remember
Things of which you have yet to dream.

Kelly McGuinness



Andrew Zapke

Wallpaper

Heather Rybacki

Tiny purple flowers trailed after each other across the wallpaper. They reminded her of those chasing Christmas lights her father put up outside the house last year. Or how the dotted yellow line looked from the back seat of the car when she was a little girl. She used to become mesmerized by those yellow dashes as she stared out the window on trips to the beach. Then she would throw up.

The rails of the kitchen chair pressed soothingly against her back. It was nice to sit here, her mind speculated, staring at purple flowers, listening to the occasional sound of a passing car, not thinking, not feeling.

Methodically, she brought a low-fat pretzel to her lips, chewed on it, swallowed, brought another to her lips. The flowers continued to play their game. It was hot, and she could smell the sweat of the boy sitting next to her mingling with the marijuana smoke that clung to their clothes. He was devouring a container of Ben and Jerry's. She glanced over to watch him bring a grotesquely overfilled spoonful to his mouth. It looked delicious.

She hardly knew this boy. He was cute, at least all her friends thought so, and when she told them he had asked her out, asked her to hang out with him, asked her to get high with him, they had all died of jealousy. But she didn't think he was that cute up close, and when she told her friends about the acne scars that lined his face, they had laughed and told her it didn't matter. After all, he was two years older than her. That meant experience. Her friends had been drooling over him and his friends since freshman year, but he hadn't noticed her friends, he had noticed her, sitting alone at one of his baseball games. He caught up with

her after the game, saying something about her jacket. It was purple, like the flowers. He said he liked purple. And he *did* have a cute smile.

"Come downstairs with me?" the boy asked coyly, setting the ice cream aside. Last night, they had made love on the beat-up sofa in his parent's basement. It had been her first time, but she tried to do everything right, tried to imagine candlelight and sweet murmurs, tried to pretend she knew what she was doing. Occasionally, his friends had glanced back from their video game. She hoped that she hadn't disappointed him.

His lips curved in a weak attempt at a sultry smile. She wasn't sure she quite trusted the devilish look that his half-closed eyes gave him. He reached around to place his hand on the base of her neck, and she wondered, as she focused back on the wallpaper, what he was going to do now that he had graduated, now that high school sports were behind him, now that he was in the real world.

He moved his hand to her leg, up and down and up and down her thigh, looking through her with glazed-over eyes. Fascinating, she thought as she continued to stare at his mother's kitchen walls, the little dancing flowers. He stood up and his hand reached out towards her, pulling her away from her trance.

She stared up at his face, the pressing smile, the hazy eyes. It was late. She'd been here for hours. Her parents would be wondering why she wasn't home yet. She'd only had her license for a month; she didn't want to make them mad. She had to wake up for church in the morning. Her eyes shifted back to the wallpaper. She really should go.

Silently she accepted his hand. She watched the heels of his boots disappear behind curves of unraveling brown carpet as he led her down the steep basement stairs.

water cycle

Moisture crawls through the open window, into your lap
Where you sit, writing at the kitchen table; while outside
Raindrops.

This army of raindrops lighter
Now, for the storm is surrendering
Retreating into sky.
The rain hits the ground, like us,
Continues the cycle,
It has no origin. The water is

Released, time permitting
It succeeds in finding the earth. The rain lies,
will soon be summoned; of course,
Back into the air, and this quiet, rising
Mist is a symbol for love, a cycle, and soon

Heavy, hanging in air, it will desire the earth again.

Kristin Hagert



Beth Barnyock

Jenn Vogel



The Burden of an Artist

Eyes watery pink like he just realized that all along he's been trapped. A stark contrast to his usual lack of expression. Beautiful eyes, sometimes, even when asking so much.

Fingering the collar of his turtleneck as though it had become unbearably tight, those weakened, runny eyes turn to her, begging silently for a solution. Such melodrama. "You did this to yourself," is her declaration.

"Sometimes I get to be the heartless one," she thinks triumphantly. Hopelessly unsatisfied.

On the bearskin rug, naked rising and falling together with shadow mimicking their movement, almost taunting in the flicker of candlelight. He whispers to her that she is so beautiful, angelic, and he would like to paint her — later. But his hands grope like an animal, and she knows inside he'll never do it. A hollow script, repeated every time. He needs sometimes to pretend he is giving to her.

But he only takes. Once he has taken what he wants, he collapses, sweaty, onto the soft white fur beside her. His eyes are illuminated by candles, and she is struck that he looks almost demonic there, that his eyes seem to have no color at all.

She is rigid. "I just wish you fucking loved me." Glistening tears stand in his eyes.

"I know, babe." A satisfied smile. Then he is asleep.

Yesterday he told her she's his stability, eyes still vacant. "You don't have much going for you," she tells the eyes.

It sometimes occurs to her that there might exist warmth within his slight frame, perhaps even a tarnished gray soul. Only when she watches his face talking about painting. "The only joy in my life is art," he pronounces flatly, knowing what she wants him to say, enjoying keeping it from her.

Such animation as he works, moves the brush slowly across the

canvas. Gentle, giving wholly. She aches for half that tenderness.

*

Like a baby he sleeps curled fetal, long lashes shielding his eyes, surrounded on the floor by tubes of paint, charcoals, brushes. A canvas, crucified Christ weeping, is propped in the corner. He likes to awaken to disturbing images.

He likes to awaken to next to her.

He says these images make him feel real again, as if slumber is just a transitory peace we accept between long days of agony. A sick joke.

What's agony? "You, mostly," he declares, mouth a straight line.

*

The time they were runny, like undercooked eggs, she told him she'd hold on for him, wishing she were humoring him, knowing she meant it purely. She waits on him, like Haley's Comet. The black holes open up once an eon, show enough truth to recapture her hope, then glaze black again.

That blackness somehow swallowed her whole, now it'll never go. Despite his rages and his selfishness, his beauty is in his art. That is where she sees him, the person he could be, where he sheds his ugly exterior. Her facade often cannot endure this bittersweet tragic beauty. She is not as strong as he is. She cannot construct strength enough to emulate his hardness.

Feeling overcome, she smiles and opens her mouth to tell him she loves him, though she's come to expect no response. But his attention is on the canvas, and he glances at her and says, "You distract me." His eyes are now alive with color.

"It's all your goddamn fault," she snarls, and she leaves him to his love, remembering runny eyes that started it all, trampling bearskin on her way out.

Rebecca Burrett

Shades of Fall

For B, the soon-to-be ex

She startles me today. Her radiance streams
through pales of trees, her heat delayed by space
and time, the fires diffused somewhere between
us two. I slip my shades on, to be safe.
She's fading here. The leaves she fed 'til green
with chlorophyll now turn to dirt to feed
the worms for chirping beaks when Springtime's clean
refreshing air kills winter's chilling weed.
For now, the hard-backed beetle skitters on
to find remains of fallen swallows; crows
cry out for death. So life begets from dawn
till dusk, then dust to dust, and so it goes.

You don't fit me like those hundred dollar
Ray-Bans lost in Hampden movie theater.

Heather Rybacki

Storm Sketch

Josh Warner-Burke

*"I can't bear it when
lamlight struggles with
daylight: everything seems then
at it's worst, I think."-The
Diary of Dostoevsky's Wife*

I've stayed in my
sleeping chamber and held
in my hand a small nugget
of red crystal: the opium of
smirking Chinamen,
a kind of ruby recovered from
a shipwreck.

The sun eludes us
this morning:
she languishes
invisible in her
day chair.

The smoke in my mouth
was more than smoke:
the Orient held its sallow
lips to mine and exhaled.

I floated a few inches above my bed
and forgot that I was in a dingy room
with almost no furniture, in the back of
a studio on Fourteenth Street, the rent
five weeks late, torn posters adorning
the walls. I envisioned a lake of pure
mercury a thousand feet below me.

I prayed for a downpour,
a chthonic force to extinguish my
lamps and carry me out into the

flood and into the lives
and dreams
of others.

The opium tasted of
burnt sugar,
it coiled like
a question mark inside
me, my eyes shut
out the lamplight
and the daylight,
and my body began
to drift on the mingled,
glassy surface of good
and evil.



Anthea Joseph

White Water

German prayers slid
Off her tongue,
Like pale water slipped
Off the brink of a waterfall.

Her weightless frame was pulled
Into the boat —
Her startled eyes were
Those of a child
Taken from her mother's arms.

She was unlisted,
female.

Her name, powder
Crumbling off
A gravemarker in Lancaster.
Blood in mine,
Mixed with that of
Of other ghosts
Whose names slid
Into the dark ocean,
Like white water slips
Over the edge of a waterfall.

Kelly McGuinness

"Story"

Mike Coffey

I never got up this morning; some days the best thing you can do is stay in bed anyway, I mean, that's the way it really seems when you hear your alarm blaring and you turn over and release this agonized groan and focus your eyes, gradually, on the numbers on the clock and see that you've already overslept because you

set your
alarm for
the wrong
time, which
m e a n s
you're late
no matter
how you
figure it,
and then,
crash, all of
a sudden
some flood-
gate opens
somewhere
in your
brain and



abruptly you remember everything about who you are and that your life is and how seventeen days ago your girlfriend (who isn't, to be honest, really your girlfriend, but merely the woman you

love, the sweetest, kindest, loveliest, most intelligent, most amazing human being alive, the girl who used to be your girlfriend, until you fucked that up like you somehow fuck up every last little trace of happiness, of beauty, that manages to trickle its way into your miserable life) told you how absolutely ecstatic she was to be dating this wonderful new guy (who, naturally, is the handsome, cultured, strong, teddy-bear genius you were always sure you could be, and ten times a better dancer, anyway, than you ever were) that a friend set her up with, to which you, spiraling heavily down into a whole new layer of personal hell, could only respond halfheartedly that it certainly was nice to see her in such good spirits again--it's at those moments that you become horribly aware, in the same way one typically becomes aware of having stepped on a rake, that, well, today's a day like any other, and you're going to have to see that beauty, that angel, just as you have for the past sixteen, and for so many before, you're going to have to watch your chances of ever winning her back, of repairing the terrible damage your incredible thoughtlessness has wrought, disappear rapidly, dwindling acutely with each passing second, going to have to deal with the sharp reality that her friends, whom once you considered your friends as well, are trying to drive a wedge between you, going to have to trudge listlessly through yet another day of wondering what corner she'll be around next and how much it'll hurt to see her this time, another day in a long, unrelenting sequence of identical days, you're going to have to face the same harsh facts you've faced for two and a half solid weeks now: that you probably never could give her what she needed in the first place, that she probably has more fun on one date with him than you could show her in the lifetime of dedication you'd do anything to give to her, that the gap between you is by now far too wide to bridge, that you'll find

yourself choking back this same acid pain every time you think of her, every day for the rest of your godforsaken life, that you'll compare every other girl you ever date to her and none will stand a chance in hell of measuring up, that one day you will find yourself crying at her wedding, that you probably, subconsciously, set the alarm wrong on purpose, to sabotage yourself, that it's still going off, drilling holes of screeching noise, blast after blast, into your skull, and that suicide, panacea though it will occasionally seem, is an act whose successful completion requires a man of far, far greater strength of will than you dare hope to possess.

(photograph on page 33 by Andrew Zapke)

Thaw

Snow cracks open like an eggshell.
Icicles sweat bulbs of rain,
cratering the snow like the face of the moon, where I stand
in the gray transition
under a frozen ash sky.
Translucent topography of slush grows along the curb
into a dingy sewer valley.

Night and day lie down together
in an intimate equinox
like the half moon blooming on a calendar day

As inevitable
as the story over the Easter table
about my grandfather and the waitress,
new to me, but I know
he will keep dying before I am old enough to remember him
because time believes in pressing on
and swallowing what remains still.

The wet world chalk drawing drips and smears,
ice age melting.
Sun belts through the cold air, persisting,
knowing full well
the end.

Maureen Traverse



Phil Berretto

Anthea Joseph



it figures

Joan Miro, Untitled

there's a pointy-faced man
in the corner
who thinks i'm
his right angle

he enters my sphere
in a stiff movement
to ask me to be
his complement

my curves
are in opposition

i smile a contemptuous grin
i hate to be obtuse
but
i'm bent

Beth Barnyock

In the Aftermath

Rebecca Burrett

*"I don't know why red fades before blue,
it just does." -Ani DiFranco*

He took me to Marblehead because he wanted to share it with me and me with it, "because it is beautiful and so am I," as if the sea has eyes with which it can view me. He thought it would bring hope back to me. He never understood that, between sporadic periods of frenzied attempts to believe, *nothing* has ever fostered hope in me.

People who see a light at the end of the tunnel have always impressed me. He knows the world as a work of art, living and breathing like we do. Myself, I know I am a small insignificant speck on this ball of gasses and optical illusions. All things are happenstance: God, the sun rising in the east, grass growing green. Nothing dictates life but chaotic circumstance, and all that I feel and see are things tangibly present. Where do human beings find a source of faith and hope, when one day, the lights are going to go out, and all that they waited for — salvation, redemption — will be salty water through their fingers? Nonetheless, I envy that belief in the meaning of existence, in the validity of emotion.

It was stunning to see rocks, stalagmites in sand, slumbering along the shoreline in eastern Massachusetts. It made me wonder how those rocks came to be there, so perfect. Wondering what chaotic act of nature created this natural perfection, I said I needed time to think. About him, about us, about life. The only real thing I had ever known was dying, and we both felt it. And I knew there is no life after death for us or anyone else.

"Take as much time as you need, babe." His smile told me he wanted things to change somehow, by my thinking here on the beach.

Climbing to the highest rock with a dent that looked like a seat, I pulled out my tattered journal and inhaled. He watched me climb, then walked down the beach with his acoustic guitar. He played, but I could tell only by sight. The wind carried his music away from me, leaving me alone with the water. The soft whisper of the tide rolled around inside my head

like tiny peaceful blue droplets of calm, repeating like the mind-numbing chant of a misled people. In and out, in and out.

It has been said that faith is based on a fear of accepting rational limitations. Reading those words for a philosophy course, I felt that truth had been shown to me for the first time in my life. Belief equates with nothing more than a chosen delusion. An elixir for a wearied, terrified human mind, drowning logic in a tidal wave of lofty promise and mystery. Lulling like the ocean, providing a tangible answer for an intangible question, the soft constancy of the waves can put you to sleep.

Dreaming there on the rocks, my mind slipped into a timeless place. He walked over to where I sat and seated himself beside me. He watched me for a while, writing fervently in my book and occasionally looking up to gaze out at the sea. "So pensive," he stated, sighing. We sat in silence, absorbing the waves' crazed calm, watching the sun grow orange.

Absently strumming his guitar, he asked me if I ever thought about the horizon, how we look out as far as we can onto a sphere, and that where it curves away from us, we see a straight line. The straight line is promise of another infinite expanse, something that can never be reached but constantly striven for. He sees infinity in the finite. Remarkable, he says, to see a line when you know the earth is just bending away.

Tricks of perception.

He always sees things in colors, like hope is yellow and despair is deep purple. I am a silvery black and white, he says, the only one he has ever known, but vibrant red too. Two-toned, I'm literal and passionate. It turns red where the sidewalk ends. He is blue, the Blueman. Blue means peace and trust.

"Today's a purple day," he would say. His music, on purple days, sounds like the crash of angry waves. Blue days give him soft melodies; red days, tortured chaotic rhythms. He dreams in colors too, everything bathed in a vibrant expressive hue. Yellow dreams usually awakened him, sweating and shaking, needing me to comfort him in the dark softness of night. Lately those yellow dreams were *about* me, and my presence in the bed beside him brought no comfort. His blue dreams are about the past.

That spectrum is something real to him, his source of believing, feeling, and hope. There's something telling him what it all means. The colors in his head are as concrete as the ground he stands on. He believes in

them.

I never see his kind color. At Marblehead, these waves are what is concrete to me, or the rock upon which I sit, or the book in which I write. His arms are something to believe in. His words are simply air and melodic chords from his throat, not threads tying me to him. His promises nothing but beautiful sounding lulling chants, like the mind-numbing delusion of a misled people. I could no longer allow myself to be rocked to sleep by uncertainty.

"What's certain, if we're not?" I say I know my blood is red, from the time I had a pebble in my shoe and my sock saturated with blood. I liked it. I told him the blood and the pebble let me know I was still real. The pain told me it was true. "I should tie one into my shoe," I say, "so that sense never goes away." He thinks love keeps us real. Love is silver. I am silver too.

He wants me to know color and believe in silver, he wants me to have reality and permanence in my heart. "I cannot," I tell him, "be what you want me to be."

"All the colors, your colors, make a profoundly beautiful picture," he says. I point out that my red and his blue would create purple, his despair color. He turns away.

I think about my friends, believing in worlds that are unable to be proved, gods and emotions that so easily betray. There is no such thing as permanence, I tell him, but you call me your permanent color. I know he loves me and will forever, he says. "Is that not enough?" I tell him he already knows the answer to that question, because there is no forever and we have nothing to hold onto in the meantime, as we work toward forever.

"It cannot be over," he declares. "You need me, because you believe in me."

"It may not be over," I reply, "but we reached the end of the sidewalk, and now we have to sit here or jump off." He asks me if everything has to end with me. I tell him he already knows the answer to that one, too. His gaze travels out to the horizon and mine follows. We are not looking at the same thing.

The sand gives way slightly beneath my feet. The water is blue calm, lapping slowly on the rocks. I see this blue but it brings no peace. Crystal blue like certain Irish eyes, his eyes that see me in brilliance and cry

to perceive a shred of hope on my face. They shine distantly like polished glass.

Nothing except what I can touch and know could ever be real ever again. Even my occasional moments at attempted belief flew away. Never again. No reason to strive for what lies around the sphere since there is a chance the horizon is an optical illusion that just stops where the eye reaches its limit. All of the hopes and dreams hinging on the horizon's continuity would be left to drown in the finite sea of reality.

He thinks we are so huge, our shared emotions monumental and impermeable. "But how can we ignore our smallness on this huge sphere? We are just two tiny flecks, flesh sitting on the rocks, waxing poetic about philosophy and music, straining to see further down into the horizon, staring chaotically into the sun." The yellow brightness provides no home for me. I see myself on a boat, alone, floating out to the horizon, surrounded by sleeping waves and watery clear. A speck of nothing on a vast blue nothing. A sphere, or so they tell me.

Dangling our feet into the icy Massachusetts water, we are blotches, red next to blue to the overhead seagulls.

"We could just ride those waves out to infinity," he says. "Together." I feel the thread winding that solitary pebble, comfortably painful in my flesh, is loosing.

How do you float away on the waves toward an ever-moving horizon and expect the ties to stay? How will we know if we ever get there? He promises we will. More melodic floating words, lulling like the waves. I want so desperately to let them numb my mind, but it will not accept the hollowness or uncertainty. The pebble falls out into the sea, my red blood turning pink, fading in the salty water as my only reality sinks to settle with the sediment on the ocean floor.

We have to say good-bye.

There come thoughts of our hugeness too, floating on glass of rippling blue, this binding love hitting me like a tidal wave. Salty water always tasting of oceans and tears, smelling like a musician's body meeting a writer's body for the last time clasped together on the shore, tiny but somehow immense, the horizon blue like you, eyes and hair like the sun with me black and white — silver you say, but red too, shining always in the blue of you.

I got lost once, thinking the endless horizon was inside watery blue flawless eyes, the horizon at Marblehead nothing concrete. Our love, once concrete, now floats on the real horizon with salty water around me, rolling over me, down my cheeks as I wave, choking. His eyes become smaller turning to gray, as the empty ache of grief for a promise of something never attained but somehow lost settles into my stomach, keeping me buoyant on the turbulent waves.

He likes to imagine what exists on the other side of the sphere. I doubt anything exists. "Maybe it's all just a bad dream." He thinks on the other side there may be beauty manifest. And what I see before me isn't a horizon of saltwater on this great spaceship Earth, but him and me, beautiful, stretching out to infinity, getting there only to find a straight line.



Phil Berretto

Opening

When movement liquifies,
I climb out of the tide of arms and legs,
pause in the doorway,
and survey the landscape, a trail of cups and glasses,
the remnants of my undoing.
Beyond the window, on the screened-in porch,
three specks of orange light,
the glowing tips of cigarettes prick the night,
bob and reel, buoys in dark water.

I weave like smoke into a chair beside some him,
face in light diffused,
eyes in pockets of shadow,
broad smile - I cannot focus on his teeth with
the patchy quality of my vision like an art film.
His arm grows around me; I recount my loss:

how the past had found me in a box of space I could not break
until now when I opened in some new physicality.

My numb limbs,
the breaking open of that air,
his fingers down my spine became
transcendence
so that when someone slid from the sea to us, I vaguely
extended my arm and introduced the him

in whose hair my fingers had just been dancing
and evangelized
"He and I...we're into transcendence!"
like the words in a dream drained of their sense upon waking.

Reeling, I have yet to discover
in the bathroom mirror how my face will fall
when for all the reaching
I remain
a rudimentary conglomerate of parts,
still small
still stumbling
in the corners of being undone.

Maureen Traverse

Andrew Zapke



47

Grown-Ups

Julie Weller

Tyler sat at the kitchen table, his twelve year old frame awkwardly huddled into the chair. From where he was sitting he had a perfect view of the storm raging outside. The sky was flat gun-metal gray, unbroken for as long as the eye could see. Through the illumination of the front porch light, Tyler watched the snow beat down in a smooth, hypnotic rhythm. In the background he could hear the high-pitched whistle of the tea kettle.

"Tyler!"

Tyler's body suddenly stiffened at the bark of his mother's voice. Heaving a sigh, he slowly unfolded himself from the chair and stretched as the tea kettle screeched incessantly.

"Tyler, get the damn kettle! Must I do everything around here?"

The boy heard a thump and recognized that to mean his mother was finally out of bed. He glanced at the kitchen clock and saw it was a quarter to four: his mother had just awakened.

"I'm coming to bring your tea, Mom," Tyler called up the stairs. "You decent?"

"What the hell kind of question is that? Just bring me the tea! I feel like I swallowed a freakin' desert!"

Tyler rolled his eyes, and caught a glimpse of the crack in the living room ceiling, noticing at how it was snaking its way up and back the length of the room. Someone was going to need to fix it.

Seeing his mother's door slightly ajar, Tyler knocked and gently shoved it open with the toe of his work boot.

"Took you damn long enough," the woman grumbled from her favorite armchair. "Good thing it wasn't an emergency! I'd be dead by now."

Tyler ignored her and went about fixing up her TV. table. Avoiding her gaze, he handed her a steaming cup. "Drink the tea Mom, it'll help you wake up."

"You are such a dear, taking care of me like this," Caroline McViern conceded, patting her son on the hand. "I know I'm not the easiest person to

live with Ty, but you're the man of the house now."

Tyler knew the routine by heart. His mother would rant and rave for awhile and then fall back into a stupor soon after. He would just have to wait it out.

"You're not like your father, God Bless us all for that!"

"Mom, just drink your tea," Tyler repeated soothingly. "Do you want me to open your curtains? It's snowing."

Tyler made a move to spread the thick drapes, but the sound of his mother's dry, rasping cough stopped him. He turned and watched as the woman bent low and flattened her chest against her bird-like thighs. Her thin shoulder blades were outlined by the ragged cotton housecoat she wore, seemingly, on a daily basis.

"Get me a hard candy or something Tyler, don't just stand there!" She croaked the words out, saliva darting from her narrow lips.

Tyler left her and when he returned, found his mother tipping a bottle of amber liquid into her steaming cup of tea. "Here," he said gruffly, shoving the peppermint into her pinched face.

"What's with you?"

For the first time that day, Tyler chanced a look into his mother's eyes. "Nothing," he answered lamely.

"What are you staring at? Didn't I ever teach you to mind your own business?" Caroline's voice had hardened, slurring over the word *business*. She looked about ready to strike her son. Tyler dropped and closed his eyes, trying to stamp out his mother's wild look.

"Oh I'm so tired all of a sudden," she complained, falling back into her chair. "I don't know why I never have any energy."

"I'll let you get some sleep Mom," Tyler whispered. But the woman had already lapsed into a deep slumber.

Lacking much energy himself, Tyler draped an old quilt over his mother and removed the clear bottle from her death-grip. He tip-toed out of the room, leaving the door open slightly. Pausing outside and resting his head against the wall. Tyler listened for the familiar wheezing breath of his mother. She wasn't going to awaken again for awhile.

Sadly shaking his head, Tyler pushed himself off the wall and headed back to the kitchen. With an air of repetition, he dumped the contents of the bottle down the drain and washed out the sink. When the last of it had been

cleaned out and the tea pot had been put away, Tyler collapsed onto his perch again. He sat mesmerized by the soft white flakes falling. He knew that the storm was not about to taper off soon. With a contented sigh, he cradled his brown head in the crook of his arm, cheek pressing against the cold Formica tabletop.

The complete lack of sound woke him up. He stretched like a house cat. The comforting hum of the refrigerator was absent and he detected no noise coming from his mother's room. She was still dead to the world.

"Aw damn!" he exclaimed in frustration. "The lights went out!"

Tyler checked his watch and the face glowed, illuminating the digital numbers. "Five-thirty! It's only five-thirty?" He thrust himself up and walked over to the window. Twilight had set in and the snow had slowed, but the wind had created large drifts. He shuffled to a cabinet and pulled out a flashlight, testing it. A ring of deep yellow shone in his eyes, grew weaker and went out. Pawing through the various cups and half empty liquor bottles, he was unable to find more batteries. He moved to another cabinet and picked out the tallest of the used candles. Humming under his breath, Tyler set to work arranging it in the empty scotch bottle, a trick he had learned from his mother, and lit it.

Gathering a blanket around his shoulders, Tyler carried the candle into the living room and up to his mother's room. He leaned his ear into the door before peeking inside. His mother was still slumped in the easy chair, her head tilted in a painful angle. Tyler glided toward her and gently propped her head with a pillow. Caroline McViern didn't stir.

Biting back the urge to slap the drawn, pasty-white cheek, Tyler pivoted away from her and his eyes came to rest on the old wedding photograph on the bureau. The man and woman in the picture seemed so far off from who they were that day. Caroline McViern's eyes had been crystal clear. They were nothing like the ones he had stared into that afternoon. Broken blood vessels wove an intricate web through the whites of her eyes. Despite her problem, Tyler could not imagine having another mother. He still loved her.

Holding the melting candle, Tyler left the room and entered his own across the hall. His head was crowded with a mental slide-show of his life and he succumbed to it. Tyler curled himself under his blanket and watched the candle wax drip and dry on the cool bottle. His last conscious thought was of his ninth birthday party, the day his father left them, forcing Tyler to take

over the role of care-giver. Tyler's face set into a grimace.

Each step in the over-sized boots, the only thing left of his father, was tentative and slow-going. Every few feet Tyler would have to yank his foot out of the thigh-high snow drifts and plod on. The boy paused, banging his gloves against his legs, attempting to crack the icicles that coursed through his veins, and hoping to wake up his hands and legs.

"Gotta keep going Ty," he encouraged. "No fun dying all alone in the snow."

A few paces later his foot sank down; irritated, he plunked his body onto the crusty snow. Through frozen eyelids hooded with a layer of exhaustion, Tyler studied his surroundings. The rural landscape, monotonous in the dry seasons, was now an unbroken plain of white that melted into the sky. Glancing south, he saw his deteriorating yellow ranch house poking up from the stark-white snow. Ten yards to his left was the mound of his mother's Chevy, laid to rest under a blanket of new snow. Even without the bad weather, the car had been stationary for the last month, due to a dead battery.

"Stupid piece of junk," Tyler grumbled. "It never worked right even before it crapped out."

Tyler's lamentations were cut short when he saw a dark figure bounding over the field from behind their dilapidated barn.

"What the hell?" He struggled to his feet. "Rusty!" he yelled, smacking his hands together. The sound was hollow and small in the empty terrain.

"Here boy!" A large black Labrador sprang over to the boy, pushing his front paws onto his chest, knocking him over. "Hey boy!" Tyler sputtered around the wet kisses. "Oh man, you smell like Callie! Were you hanging out with the Ryders' cow again?" Scratching him roughly behind the ears, Tyler joked, "You didn't scare her calf again did 'ya?" He affectionately added, "Oh you dumb mutt."

Picking himself up from the indent in the snow, rejuvenated by his visitor, Tyler whistled low through the small gap between his front teeth and motioned for the dog to follow. Rusty bounced ahead, his small feet barely grazing the hardened surface and his dark coat dusted with snow. It wasn't

too long before another farmhouse loomed up out of the horizon. Tyler noticed the swell of gray smoke as it boldly rose from the large brick chimney.

"Hurry up boy," Tyler called out to Rusty who had raced off to chase a jack-rabbit. "I betcha ol' Man Huller has some hot cocoa brewing. Let's get over there!"

Running as if stuck in a vat of thickened whipped cream, Tyler stumbled toward the old house. With a final burst of energy, the boy vaulted himself over the porch railing and sprawled onto the hardwood piling face-down.

"Well look who's here!" Emma Huller, a vivacious red-head, exclaimed from the front door. "Tyler McViern, what in the world are you doing on my front porch?"

Tyler's face burned as darkly as his maroon wool coat. He shyly met her piercing green eyes and fumbled mentally for something to say. "I, uh... I was just coming over to visit Mr. Huller. Uh, is that all right?" Tyler sheepishly picked himself up, brushing off his jeans.

"You're telling me you trekked through this stuff?" she asked, her Louisiana accent deepening with incredulity.

Tyler scuffed the toe of his boot on the floorboards and casually nodded his head. "It was really no big deal. I mean, I wasn't scared or nothin'. I'm used to this Wisconsin weather."

The older woman wagged her head, making the fiery curls shake. "Come inside Tyler, you must be half frozen by now!"

Without another word, Tyler followed her inside, catching her sweet smelling perfume mixed with the scent of fresh pie,

"Let me take your jacket, Tyler." She stepped over to him and touched his collar. "Grandpop is resting right now, but make yourself comfortable in front of the fire."

"You baking something? It sure does smell good."

"It's peach pie, right out of the oven. Want me to get you a slice?"

"Thanks, that would be great! Do you have something to feed Rusty?" Tyler jerked his thumb toward the dog curled on the hearth. "I'm not sure when he ate last."

"One large ham bone, courtesy of last night's dinner, coming up."

Tyler let out a smothered whistle of appreciation watching the sway of her hips as she gracefully exited. Unable to sit still in front of the fire, Tyler

drifted over to study an old piano crowded into the corner of the living room. He traced his fingers over the yellowed ivories and smiled at the metal cylinder covered with markings that reminded him of Braille. He remembered a story Old Ferris Huller had told him about his player piano. He claimed that his grandfather had won it during a poker game way back when Lewis and Clark were traipsing around buying up land. Tyler recalled his completely falling for the story then, a naive and childish nine year old.

"I brought you some hot cocoa, too," Emma said, breaking into his reverie.

Taking the steaming cup from her hands, Tyler's heart raced like a marching band snare drum as their fingertips grazed. He quickly turned from her and walked over to the ancient gramophone. "What's your Grandpop's favorite song again, Miss Huller?" Tyler bent down low and spoke into the horn, his voice echoing back like the ocean in a sea shell.

The woman chided him. "Tyler, we're friends. Call me Emma!" She then continued in a serious tone. "Moonlight Serenade," was her reply to his question. She walked over to stand next to him. "When Grandma Penelope was still alive... you remember her, right?" Tyler nodded mutely. "Well, she and Grandpop would dance the night away to it. Whenever my Momma and I were up visiting from Louisiana, it always seemed that it was dancing time for them." She motioned her head toward the still form in the other room. "He would get up from the dinner table and say, 'Penny my love, I hear our song playing.' She would laugh and pretend to be shy until he put the record on. He hasn't listened to it since," she added, sighing.

Tyler sucked in his breath, uncomfortably aware of her body so close to his. "I liked watching them dance too."

"You were five when she died, weren't you?" Again he silently nodded. "I was fifteen and I still remember like it was yesterday."

"I really miss your grandma's cooking. She made the *best* Polish meatballs."

"She was good at a lot of things, but she was the best at loving Grandpop. No one could make him happier." Emma moved over to the wall covered with frames and old tin photographs, pointing to one. "Their wedding made headlines of the *Wisconsin Tribune*"

Tyler drifted over and saw what she was talking about. It was a framed copy of the 1944 edition of the *Tribune*. The banner read: "Wealthy

Landowner Weds Local Immigrant." Underneath was a photo of the young couple exiting the church.

"Grandpop never once thought about her poor background." Emma clicked her tongue against her teeth. "He was so damn proud of her."

Tyler wandered over to the dining room where the old man lay sleeping in a rented hospital bed. The large table with its impressive chairs was shoved off to the side, making ample room for the temporary occupant. The gnarled, hairy fingers with cracked and blue-tinted nails loosely clutched a TV. remote on his large stomach. Tyler noticed the re-run of M*A*S*H mumbling from the old black and white at the foot of the bed. Somehow the scene looked oddly untroubled to the boy, as if it was perfectly normal to have a dying man in full view of everyone.

"How's your mom, Tyler?" Emma asked softly, joining him in the entranceway.

He shrugged and stuffed his hands deep into his pockets. "I left her ranting in the dark when I came here."

"You lost your power?"

"Yeah."

"Why don't you and Rusty hang out here for awhile? She'll fall asleep soon."

Tyler nodded his head. "She always does."

As the late morning sun rose higher in the sky, deepening the shadows across the floorboards, Emma draped her arm around Tyler's shoulders, noticing how they were almost the same height. The two stood like that, the grown-up supporting the man-child, as the fragile old man lay unconscious and unaware. On the small screen, Klinger, proudly decked out in a pink dress and pill-box hat with a matching patent leather purse, pranced around Hawk-Eye and Major Houlihan as the tinny studio laughter crescendoed.

Brian Garziona



55

Donuts and Coffee

While father gave the sermon
I envisioned the church as
a grand playground
Scaling the walls
of the giant modern cathedral
could make time go
faster
and at the age of six there
is not much
to do
except sit still and wait for the donuts
at the end.

Leonard Desson

Half Hour Romance

A Viagra pill-popping addict ten years removed:
"Am I adequate?"
To love and lust but always in hate
She spends her days
"Looking for a good time."
I crave it.
What?
Real love. Like the kind on TV
He censored his life to fit a sitcom,
But a half-an-hour leaves little time.
Plus commercials:
"Buy a ring. Buy a rubber."
It means nothing now.
She sat with him — watching - but never once spoke.
At the end of the night a cheap thrill and bedside tears.
I'm going out. For what?
A blonde, perhaps twenty years younger.
Is that her age? What's his?
Fuck off. "Sensors please!"
Sorry. What? Sorry. I'm so sorry.
Pathetic. More like it.
Important. What? Important
I want to feel... Important.
Impotent. Oh, shit.
A pill: to love again.
I love you... again.
She forgot, but now remembers. Rerun.
Click TV and sit there.
Smiling.
Happily ever after.

James Beaver



Anthea Joseph

