INSTRESS

Journal of the Arts

2017

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Instress has been published by the students of Misericordia since December 1966. The word *instress* was coined by Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Bernadette Waterman Ward describes *instress* thus: "Instress is an action of the will—a moral action, for good or evil. Instress is assent, to use Newman's term, to an inscape. To call out an inscape is a pleasure, though not one necessarily leading to God; . . . But the ability to see and instress inscapes is the imaginative faculty that makes love possible." *Instress* at Misericordia is therefore an opportunity of the artistic and literary imagination to make possible something—call it *love* or even *grandeur*—like the following, from Gerard Manley Hopkins' "God's Grandeur":

. . .
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

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We would like to acknowledge all those who contributed to the creation of this year's issue. We extend a special thanks to Sr. Jean Messaros and the Religious Sisters of Mercy, President Botzman, our Guest Poet Ron Smith, Interim Dean Cosima Wiese and the College of Arts and Sciences, Jim Sabulski and the Misericordia Print Shop, the English Department, and the editorial board.

Table of Contents

Poetry, Prose, and Fiction

A Dedication to Dr. Okla Elliott

Okla Elliott	The Light Here	2
Lynn Marie Houston	Okla's Last Emails	3
Matthew Hinton	Author Unlimited	4
Sierra Krohnemann	A Tribute to Professor Elliott	5
Glen Willis	The Union of Okla Elliott Chauffeurs	7
Jacob Schweiger	Simplicity in the Woods	10
Sierra Krohnemann	All Creatures Great and Small	13
L. Joann Leigh	52	15
Christine Zopf	Nostalgia, Early August	17
Devin Crevani	Untitled	20
Annette Ritzko	I May Step on the Little People	21
Briana Scorey	The Fall	23
Scott Bargisen	I Finally Caught Magikarp	25
Rita Molino	The Angel's Child	27
Kimberly Kowalski	A Mother's Touch	29
Okla Elliott	Alien War, Human War	31
Okla Elliott	Depleted Uranium and Other Facebook Posts	34

Guest Poet Ron Smith

Rihannon Judge	To My Fifteen-Year-Old Self	37
Scott Bargisen	Töte mich nicht	39
Daniella Amendola	Listening to Caesar Into Reed Road	42
Brianna Kominiak	When I Fall	43
Matthew Nickel	Act of Contrition	44
Okla Elliott	Message	45
Rebecca Steinberger	'Sorry, we're closed'	46
Jacob Schweiger	There Is No Wait	47
Annette Ritzko	Alliteration, Rhymes, and Syllables	48
Connor Swagler	My Heroes May Not Be Your Heroes	49
Scott Bargisen	It's Me	51
Connor Swagler	Her Wrinkled Hands	52
Rodney Smith	The Spirit in You	54
Caitlyn Thomas	True Judgement	55
Sierra Krohnemann	Flightless	57
Connor Swagler	Someone Asked Me "How Was My Day?"	59
L. Joann Leigh	Chad the Vampire	60

Madison Cardinale	To the Man Who Made Her Feel Small	61
Kayli Boyes	The Sailor and the Endless Sea	63
Shane Kreller	Autumn Falls	64
Jacob Schweiger	Prideful Thinking	65
Devin Crevani	Those We Have Lost	67
Kayli Boyes	My Favoite Work of Art	69
Shane Kreller	Dancer in the Dark	70
Devin Crevani	March 28, 2015	71
Kayli Boyes	Opposites	72

Artwork and Photography

Matthew Hinton	5, 22, 33, 68
Justin Steinberger	11, 66
Annette Ritzko	Cover Art, 12
Nicolette Bagoly	16
Christine Zopf	18, 36
Kathryn Fritzges	19, 30, 56
Caitlyn Thomas	24, 53, 62
Melissa Bostjancic	50
Mary Pat Blaskiewicz	Back Cover Art

A Dedication to Dr. Okla Elliott



The editors of *Instress* would like to dedicate the 2017 issue of Instress to the late Dr. Okla Elliott. Okla Elliott was an Assistant Professor of English. He held a PhD in comparative literature from the University of Illinois, an MFA in creative writing from Ohio State University, and a certificate in legal studies from Purdue University. His work has appeared in *Cincinnati Review, Harvard Review, Indiana Review, The Literary Review, New York Quarterly, Prairie Schooner, A Public Space, Subtropics,* and elsewhere; his essay was listed in *Best American Essays* 2015. He was the author of *From the Crooked Timber* (short fiction), *The Cartographer's Ink* (poetry), *The Doors You Mark Are Your Own* (a novel), *New Poetry from the Midwest* (a biannual anthology), *Blackbirds in September: Selected Shorter Poems of Jürgen Becker* (translation), *Bernie Sanders: The Essential Guide* (nonfiction), and *Pope Francis: The Essential Guide* (forthcoming nonfiction).

The English Department is saddened by the loss of our colleague and our friend, Jeffrey Okla Elliott. He brought joy to the world of writing through his own passion for the written word. From writing poetry and fiction, to teaching world literature, or writing on Bernie Sanders and the Pope, Okla brought a voracious intellect and boundless enthusiasm to each subject. These qualities were contagious, and his students fed off of this passion and learned to love literature in new ways. Okla had found a new home and second family at Misercordia, and we feel his loss as that of a sibling.

As we think back and reflect on Okla's time with us at Misericordia, let us remember the Beatitudes: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Bishop Charles J. Chaput reminds us: "Mourning is a universal experience because death comes to us all. Mourning honors the unrepeatable beauty of a life that has passed away." So, in our mourning, let us honor Okla as we keep reading and writing and sharing with each other a love for the written word.

The following is a poem by Dr. Elliott, "The Light Here," has been reprinted from *The Cartographer's Ink*.

The Light Here

Okla Elliott

It sets a mood
of clownish tragedy,
of ecstatic failure waiting to happen.

It is not static blue light
nor the throb of a strobe
It is not a light to read by
nor to be naked in,
unless you are desperate
or barbarously horny.

I would use it to look for you
in a cave or catacomb
or an ossuary crowded by the famous dead –
I would use this light to find you.

It is not a light that yellows the periphery.
It is not a light that brightens the center.

It is mixed from an overcast morning
and the electric urban dusk

It is a light I could live in
if I came to terms with certain failings
in my character
and the characters of others.

I know you have light where you are,
better light even,
but I wanted you to know
about the light here.

Okla's Last Emails

For Okla Elliott, 1977-2017

Lynn Marie Houston

our bag of tricks philosophy, writing

we level up onward

and upward ever the optimists

happy productive

I shoot for the stars

I love my students, job love my family

Some good is coming out of it

God knows a late night conversation helps us

in a scary world do well

life is being good to me for a while

the final element moved, moving all good

Author Unlimited

There are two steps to becoming a successful writer, and anyone can do them:
Step 1: Put your butt in the seat.
Step 2: Write.
- Okla

Matthew Hinton

March 22,2017

As I write this, it has been a little over 72 hours since I learned of the death of my friend and colleague, Jeffrey Okla Elliott. That hardly seems long enough to properly properly reflect on my time with the man, but what the hell – my butt is in the seat, so here I go.

As a professional writer, I have tried to live by a simple axiom: If it pays, say "yes," and you will always be paid for your work.

Ever the editor, my friend Okla emended this further: Say "yes."

He knew that the payment was implied; more importantly, he knew that payment wasn't always in the form of a check. For Okla, the work itself was the income, the the means were their own end. Though he was pragmatic enough to admit that money keeps the power on, which keeps the laptop running, which keeps the "happy-robot-monkey-man" rapping away at his keyboard, Okla was just as happy to receive payment in coffee and free books. His name in print in some volume somewhere was the real income. Okla knew that fortune and fame as an author was not a goal. Those things have their perks (and who doesn't like to be recognized?), but the goal was to be good. And he was. Damn good.

Okla was the living definition of the word "prolific." During his short time, he authored poems, short stories, countless articles (both academic and political), and translations. He wrote for the stage. He co-authored a novel. He championed scholarly journals and small presses. He reported on current events. He corralled fellow authors and artists to conduct bathroom readings. He taught.

In the summer of 2016, I asked Okla if I could produce a play of his for a one-act series in Wilkes-Barre. I barely finished the question before he said "yes" and sent me "Potato Blossoms", a poignant one-act in which a pair of siblings confront the unexpected death of their parents. I reread it last night and remembered how, after

production, he met with the director and the actors, how he thanked them for the best version of the play that he had ever seen.

Next to the creative act, that is what Okla did best—He met with others to spread grace and gratitude.

Simply, Okla said "yes."

And so should you.

Still Life With Okla



Matthew Hinton

A Tribute to Professor Okla Elliott

Sierra Krohnemann

I was first introduced to Professor Okla Elliott in the spring of my freshman year at Misericordia. He was one of three interviewing for an opening in the English department, and I was suckered into going to his teaching demonstration (I was offered extra credit if I am really being honest). I remember nervously sitting around some of the brightest professors at this university, and wondering if I could do what Okla was doing: open my heart and mind to these strangers, just for a simple job. His lesson revolved around the Holocaust, and I remember feeling confident in his knowledge as he walked us through a poem. We had tea and scones after the demonstration and he asked what we wanted out of his class. He took our insights seriously, and by May, we were informed that he would be joining the team.

My first class with Okla was the fall of my junior year, where many of the upper-level English majors were taking Language Studies. I was warned about this class by older students telling me that it was no walk in the park. I tried not to take their comment seriously and was excited to learn, as an English major in Okla's class, about words.

If you ask anyone from that class, it felt as if it mostly revolved around the difference between "lay" and "lie." To this day, we still get into debates about which one to use when. I remember the class asking him to teach us more grammar and the smile that it brought to his face. "Do you understand how wonderful that is to hear as a professor? That my students want to learn MORE grammar?" Together we struggled through the English language and screamed at how silly it was. We all found Okla to be extremely caring and passionate about his career as a writer and a professor.

I was lucky enough to have the ability to take Okla for a second time, in his Russian Literature class. I remembered feeling terrified about the course. I had only ever experienced American and European literature, what could I expect from Russian? To my surprise, I was introduced to some of the most amazing authors through that class. Lessons of life and death, love and relationships, and heaven and hell, swirled around our classroom daily, and we debated some of the most difficult aspects of life. Okla was determined to teach us Russian, and was under the impression that we would be able to learn a sentence a week. I cannot speak for the rest of the class, but personally, I was only able to learn one word, and that is the Russian word for "Parrot." Okla laughed every time I said it, and his attempts at teaching me other animals were futile; "parrot" was my limit. Nevertheless, I still feel blessed to have been given the opportunity to see the passion behind Okla's knowledge of different languages. He was constantly putting up words on the board in German, Spanish, Italian, Russian,and French, telling us the meanings and how our reading would relate to them. He never ceased to amaze us with his extensive knowledge.

Okla would occasionally call himself a push over, as we would beg for extensions on papers and projects, as any student would. Personally, I think he simpy had a heart bigger than his body, and truly wanted the best for all of those around him. I remember him joking, "You guys could get anything out of me! 'Could we have a hundred dollars?' 'Aw . . . okay! If you really want!'" He was supportive and helpful, talking us through papers and tests, allowing us the opportunity to learn instead of stress about facts and figures. Every day he had a smile on his face and a determination to show his students the world.

While many may have been closer to Professor Okla than I, I feel that my experiences with Okla were completely and whole-heartedly life changing. I was influenced by his passion of words, and his ability to allow his students to think about the life around them. His influence on this campus, even if only for a short time, truly shows the effect that he had on everyone around him, and no one will ever be able to fill his place in our hearts.

As editor, I would like to dedicate the 51st edition of Instress to Professor Jeffrey Okla Elliott, to honor his passion and his dedication to the art of creative writing.

The Union of Okla Elliott Chauffeurs

Dr. Okla Elliott Memorial Reflection, March 24, 2017

Glen Willis

I'm pretty sure I was asked to say something about Okla because Okla appreciated liberal politics, and because I myself have been a union member.

The union to which I have belonged is little known, though there are several members in attendance here today. My union colleagues Matt Hinton and Rebecca Padot send their sincere regrets that they are unable to be here today. However, we do have a number of union members in attendance: Ryan Watson, Patrick Hamilton, Jennifer Black, Matt Nickel, Matt Swanson, Scott Blanchard, and perhaps unknown others, have served with me as members of this vital and selective labor union. I refer, of course, to the Union of Okla Elliott Chauffeurs—it is a union that might be called the Local Okle.

The union, now disbanded, was dedicated to ensuring that Okla received rides, occasionally at strange hours, to grocery stores, Mexican restaurants, beer emporiums, and various regional residences. Members were regularly paid by Dr. Elliott in cups of coffee and in passionate lectures on the virtues of Bernie Sanders. Matt Hinton, in a note to me last night, recalled that he first picked up Okla from a bus stop on Dallas Memorial Highway on the afternoon of July 24, 2015: "Okla," Matt writes, "was carrying little more than a large iced coffee, a knapsack, and a book the size of a Buick."

The problem, you may perceive, was that Okla had a lot of books the size of Buicks, but no actual Buicks. I should admit that this sometimes confused me: why couldn't this guy just be normal, and buy himself a crappy used car, like every other humanities scholar?

Okla was in the world but somehow not fully of it. Okla and I joined the university together in the summer of 2015, and we developed a sense of camaraderie with other new faculty members in the humanities and social sciences like Ryan Watson, Margot Wielgus, George Shea, Rebecca Padot, and Dana Chalupa. So I asked those friends to tell me something about their response to Okla's presence in their lives.

Dana described Okla's relentlessly kind reassurances to her, as she began her work at Misericordia, and his many invitations to her to join dinner parties with his expanding set of friends in Wilkes Barre. "In all of our conversations," Dana wrote, "Okla made me feel welcomed and included."

Okla enjoyed drawing attention to the ridiculousness of life. Ryan Watson wrote to me about Okla's occasional practice of shaving both his beard and his head all at once. The first time this happened, as Okla walked down our shared hallway, Ryan had no idea who Okla was, and Okla started to smile as he approached: Ryan finally recognized him and said, "Oh my

god, you're completely smooth—like a seal." After that, each time Okla shaved so comprehensively again, he would make sure to lean into Ryan's office suddenly, smile, and announce that 'the seal is back!'"

Margot wrote to me that "At a dinner party with colleagues from Wilkes University, Okla unabashedly admitted that he had published teen vampire stories under a pseudonym on Amazon. Those in attendance responded with laughter. But Okla insisted that horror stories, and vampires in particular, speak to the human fear of mortality before otherworldly power. Even in Okla's teen vampire work," Margot reflects, "as in all his work and conversation, he sought to come to terms with the human condition."

Mischelle Anthony, one of Okla's friends from Wilkes University, wrote to me that Okla "was a joyful vortex of sincere, rare intelligence." Mischelle also tells me that a number of Starbucks baristas in Wilkes Barre send their sincere condolences to the Misericordia community.

Many of us admired Okla for his passionate commitment to writing, to discussion, and to his students, whom he loved. But my sense is that we loved Okla because, as George Shea noted to me, Okla was someone around whom it was very difficult to feel despair or hopelessness. George concluded his note to me by saying, "I'm really going to miss that crazy bastard."

Okla overcame a lot in his life. He was mysteriously indomitable; I will always see him as wholly undefeated. The second-century French bishop and theologian, Irenaeus of Lyons, wrote that 'The glory of God is the human being fully alive…' In one of his own later poems, Okla wrote,

I have become a mystic
A perfect destiny
After all these years
Of studied incredulity.

Okla knew that there is an awful lot of studied incredulity in the world, and not always enough joy, passion, or exuberant welcome. Okla was a human being gloriously and fully alive.

And so I only wish to say, as one former member of the Union of Okla Elliott Chauffeurs, that I would give a great deal to give Okla a ride home from work tonight.

AWARD WINNERS

The following are the *Instress* Outstanding Achievement Award Winners:

Poetry

Award Winner: "Simplicity in the Woods" by Jacob Schweiger

Runner-Up: "52" by L. Joann Leigh

Photography

Award Winner: Justin Steinberger

Runner-Up: Nicolette Bagoly

Artwork

Award Winner: Annette Ritzko

Fiction

Award Winner: "All Creatures Great and Small" by Sierra Krohnemann

Runner-Up: "Nostalgia, Early August" by Christine Zopf

AWARD WINNER

Simplicity in the Woods

Jacob Schweiger

I desire the kind of simplicity found only in the woods,
Where I am bound only by two great obligations;
The moral laws of showing love for my God
And the natural laws I share with the beasts, hooved and clawed

Distractions crop up in the lives we are forced to lead
And I find this life binds two different obligations;
Compete to see whose calendar fills up more
Don't smile at one another, keep your eyes on the floor

When we come to love our busy world and ignore our own sighs
Our Stockholm syndrome tells us two lies;
Life is work
Work is good

But when we start to be pulled into this illusion
Retreat to the woods, or to your inner sanctum and remember;
Life is listening
Listening is good

AWARD WINNER

Snake



Justin Steinberger

AWARD WINNER

A Painting With a GoldBrown Background



Annette Ritzko

AWARD WINNER

All Creatures Great and Small

"We can judge the heart of a man based on his treatment of animals" – Immanuel Kant

Sierra Krohnemann

I hate people, so I stick my hand in hay. I wander the surrounding area with one thought on my mind, ignorant to the fact that I have essays to write, hours of studying to submit to, and textbooks awaiting my return.

But I focus on the big black eyes.

"To bucket train a calf, you can't be gentle. I know they look cute, but once you enter that pen, you are in a paranha pit of ankle biters. Don't worry, you won't hurt them, you just need to teach them."

But the beast with no teeth suckles on my jacket instead, and I smile at the simplicity of the action.

"No boy, the milk is in the bucket!"

I can't be aggressive to a creature that has never harmed me. Papa on the other hand. . .

"People are going to ask you why the calves are not with their mothers after they are born. Our entire herd of seventy goes outside to graze nearly every day of the year and the calves are too little for that sort of travel. People just don't understand why they have to be separated."

At two weeks old she knocks over her bucket and I run to fetch more milk. I silently wonder if she misses her mama. I know I do.

"Let her suckle on your fingers and then attempt to give her the bottle. She doesn't assimilate you to her mother yet, but don't worry, she will.."

I sit under the mother alongside the new calf and am able to feed her two bottles with ease. The mother watches and occasionally gives her calf a nudge. The heifer clumsily tries

to stand, but I set her back down, knowing that she is nowhere safer than right here with mama.

"These calves are your responsibility to raise. You will grow right with them, taking a lesson with you each and every day."

I remember the days of learning as I walk into the nursery holding sixteen of the calves that I have bottle fed, bucket trained, and cared for since their first days. Each one its own distinct personality with its own story of glory, pain, and stubbornness all wanting attention from the one person that was there through it all.

I focus once more on the big black eyes and just like the first day that I met them, I see a soul.

AWARD WINNER

Runner-Up

52

In loving memory of Joann Terlizzi

L. Joann Leigh

Ice cracks beneath my feet,
Thin and fragile;
Like your body under the
Weight of your parents' words.
Your brave heart powerless against them.

Film and photos of years past
Left to sit and age. Out of the dust I
Salvaged a few that keep you forever young.
Memories have preserved you long
After that harsh winter's morn.

Three decades later here I stand;
Trying as I might to live out the best
Years of my life, but how can I do that
Knowing it was a chance you never had?
My twenty-first year deals a striking blow.

Fear not, for as they dealt with you
Now their hands are being dealt. The losses
Of thought, memory, and life are theirs; the same
Price demanded of you. The sowers of selfishness
Now reap from a harvest of indifference.

AWARD WINNER
Runner-Up

In A Buzz



Nicolette Bagoly

AWARD WINNER

Runner-Up

Nostalgia, Early August

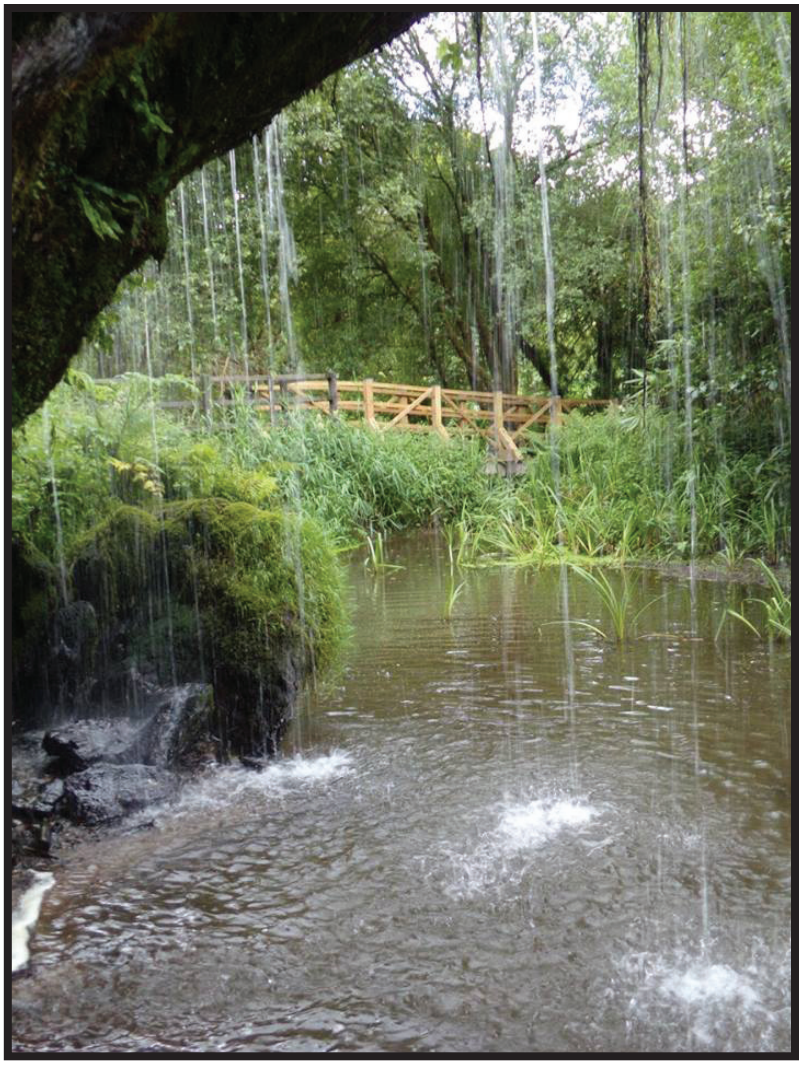
Christine Zopf

The music slowly faded as we passed the yellow barriers onto a street void of festivalgoers. We walked in lock step, down toward the river, hoping its breeze would relieve us from the blistering evening heat. But that's August in Pennsylvania. We sat on the old cobblestone walkway, its bricks haphazardly cracked and crumbling beneath us, looking out across the river toward Southside. Behind us, teenagers laughed and joked with the undeniable crassness of teenage years. In this limbo between adolescent and adult, we couldn't help but feel torn. We were so close to them, yet their reality seemed so drastically different than our own, so carefree, full of optimism, and without consequence.

Hannah and I looked out over the river, arms crossed over our legs and we talked. Talked about how lucky we were to be sitting where we were. Not everyone gets to grow up in a place so wonderful and so full of life. About how the next few years were open-ended, unpredictable, full of opportunity. How we didn't know what would come next, and whether or not our journey would take us away from the valley we had built our lives in for the past twenty-one years.

Above us, the sky was fading, cotton candy purple, while the clouds lit up pastel yellow. The river continued its lazy journey while the crowds behind us gravitated back toward the music. "This moment feels like poetry," I commented, never taking my eyes off the river. She stared out, and with a heavy sigh responded, "This feels like the end of a coming of age story," and the nostalgia weighed heavily on our chests. Nostalgia for the days we were children and endless sleepovers were spent staring up at the ceiling, the nights full of hushed gossip and uncontrollable laughter. Nostalgia for the very moments that were ticking by, as swiftly as the river flowed out in front of us. The sun continued to sink, and it felt that the story of our youth was quickly coming to a close. The world lay open right in front of us, and everything was wild, and wonderful, but also unbelievably, heart-wrenchingly sad. In that moment she was right, our coming of age story, the one we had written together since we were children, was coming to a close, and nothing would ever be the same.

A Walk in the Woods



Christine Zopf

Determination



Kathryn Fritzges

Untitled

Devin Crevani

That soft lover's skin would crack
peel, burn, bleed,
should it be forced to serve its true function
And the others, having complacently forgotten the struggle,
so blubbery and pampered
Would whine and screech to the last
The cost of civilization and comfort being paid,
The price ignorance, the decay of flesh and mind
Ignored until the demand of the ferryman's toll
All the while the steadfast robin chirps, having survived the winter.

I May Step On the Little People

Disclaimer: Not referring to height alone

Annette Ritzko

I've seen the movie Honey, I Shrunk the Kids
And although that was only a piece of showbiz
I can't help my fear
That, if their voices I do not hear,
I may step on the little people.
So I go about my day
In a certain way
So as to not step on the little people.

In the book by Norton, *The Borrowers*,
The tiny and careful homeowners
Live off of aid from large beings.
In order to consider their feelings,
I try to help the little people.
So I go about my day
In a very special way
So as to help the little people.

Why, you may ask, should I consider
The feelings of those who may hinder
My own comfort and joy?
But still my cautions I do employ
For the sake of the little people.
So I go about my day
In my own little way
Because I too am a little person.

Uncle Jim



Matthew Hinton

The Fall

Briana Scorey

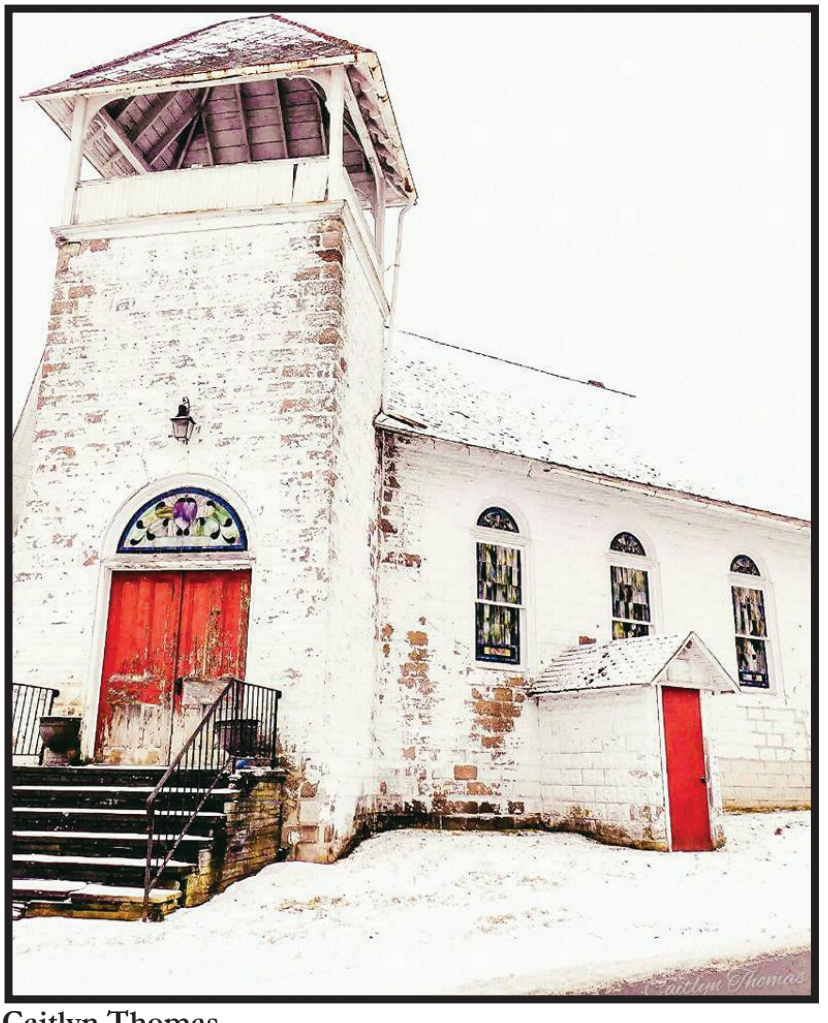
I find myself always striving to rise to the expectations of others. I climb higher and higher, clutching ledges that seem to shrink beneath my grip. Pushing myself harder, I force myself to achieve dizzying heights at their command, though my hands shake with the effort. As I ascend, I look down and notice that the footholds below me have disappeared – there is no way back down. The drop is steep cliff face, plummeting into cloudy fog beyond which I can no longer see. Though as I look up again, I cannot see what lies ahead of me either. I cannot look upwards into this unknown for long, because it fills me with panic and nausea. I must fix my eyes ahead of me and continue. So I keep going, keep climbing. What else is there to do now?

New voices join the fray, adding to the din of the others that propel me upward, working as a force of reverse gravity. But the higher I go, the less stable I feel. The voices that drove me here are light as air – they cannot provide support for me. Only I can do that, only I am really present in my own climb. I hold my own weight and cling to the edges that I still have in my grip, though they feel smaller and smaller. I struggle to catch my breath as panic washes over me.

The next step – I know I won't make it. What on earth do I do now? But I'm not on earth any longer, I realize. The voices that pushed me are light for a reason. I felt as though there was no way back down, but now I know that there is, if I believe in my own strength.
So I fall. Fall from the heights that others have pushed me to; fall away from what they want, what they expect. I fall from my own need to be good enough, from the place where I let others determine my worth.

And I hit bottom. It hurts at first. But here, I find peace, because the lofty voices cannot reach me down here. Now, I will return to my climb. But I will do so at my own pace, and I will strive for my own heights. Frankly, I will find my own mountain to climb, because there are more mountains than others would let us think, and I want to find the one that is right for me. As I climb, I will let my own voice be the gentle buoying power that guides me to be better, but still to be me.

Purity Being Red Doors



Caitlyn Thomas

I Finally Caught Magikarp

Scott Bargisen

Mom opened my door but I don't want to pay attention to her right now, as I have more important matters to attend to. It's about 10:26 am on Friday, the 25th of August in the year 2000, and I finally found a shiny Magikarp. Magikarp evolves into Gyarados, but shiny Magikarp evolves into shiny Gyarados. The only difference between a regular and Shiny Gyrados is the color. I like Gyarados because of how big and ferocious they are. Pokemon are cool. Mom is saying something, but I don't know what she's saying. Maybe it's about my birthday. I turned nine years old 43 days ago, and my Mom bought Pokemon Crystal for me. Since then, I caught all the legendaries, and almost filled the pokedex, and today I caught a shiny Magikarp. Magikarp evolves into Gyarados, which is my favorite Pokemon. But shiny Gyrados is red, which is cooler than blue like the original version of Gyrados

Some woman reached for my shoulder, grabbing me with her supposedly supple palms revealing the piercing discomfort of three-hundred flu shots. I could not contain myself: "Don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me don't touch me."

I kept trying to calm down, but my arms kept shaking after I stopped talking to her. Her shoes are shaped strangely, like she is on stilts. I hope she doesn't break any of my toys. Maybe she can break them and not touch my shoulder again.

The woman tilted her head as if she was trying to distinguish my speech from the mumblings of an incarcerated lowland primate.

"Don't worry Jen, this is normal. It's called 'Stimming'. That means he doesn't like that. Does he do that for any other reason?"

"He does: when we're in big crowds, when there's a really loud noise, new people…"

"All normal for someone like him, I promise."

Normal? This brat has been here for no longer than 3 minutes and 38 seconds and she has already insulted me and hurt my shoulder. The audacity of this woman. She continued, a little louder this time:

"Have you ever had trouble giving or receiving affection?"

"Well, he doesn't hug me back and pushes me away when I go to kiss him, good night. He yells a bit when he doesn't like something, but not as loud as he did before."

She keeps talking louder. It's starting to hurt my ears.

"I see. How about we set up some one-on-one sessions so I can correct these behaviors?"

Correct what? Since when was it permissible for a stranger to touch my shoulder? My mother wouldn't listen to such tripe.

"That sounds nice! I'll call you soon to get it organized. Have a good day!"

"You too Mrs. Moncalieri! I'll see you soon, Michael!"

Ow ow ow ow my ears, she is talking too loud, why does she talk so loud, my mom doesn't talk loud like that anymore because it hurts me so much. Squeezing my leg helps a little. Well, my mom might not be there for me after all. Anyway, I love Gyarados. He is my favorite because he can use Hyper Beam on my enemies, like Arbok and Weezing. If I can train my Magikarp, it will evolve quickly into a Gyrados.

The Angel's Child

May 31, 2015

Rita Molino

I have been sent here to help you find your way
I can only do that with your trust every day

The angel said, "My time here will never be complete"
I know you need some extra help and I thrive not to see defeat

Keep moving forward; don't look back
Or negativity you will attract

There will be trials in your life
Like the jagged edge of a knife

Your feet must carry you in my direction
During this time don't strive for perfection

The voices you hear should be of no other
I'm the angel God sent; not your father or mother

This new life I propose may make you happy or blue
But I will never leave you; this promise is true

During the gloomy times, look up to heaven
And remember, God created everything in seven

Trust in me; I will not let you down
Do not take big steps, or wear a frown

All I ask these twenty-four hours
To transform you from a bud into a flower

The will you have must be forgotten today
If you follow my will; I'll show you another way

It may not be perfect; or what you want
But it will keep you alive; not looking gaunt

This little prayer I ask that you say each day:
Dear angel please guide me to the light of God's way

I said to the angel, I still feel very blue
The angel said, "Fear not my child for I will never leave you"

A Mother's Touch

Kimberly Kowalski

It is cool and yet warm at the same time–
Containing a sort of equilibrium that does not necessarily make sense.
It is a mother's touch that is cool against your hot skin that is burning up from a fever and Warm when the chills come back.
It is a mother' touch that guides you back to bed
After hours of throwing up have ceased.
It is a mother's touch that moves your matted and sweaty hair in attempts to lull you back to sleep.
It is a mother's touch that you wake up to when you open your eyes and see a water bottle, a Gatorade, and a tiny note that says:
Honey,
I hope you feel better! Call if you need anything,
Love, Mom.
It is a mother's touch that comes in not too long after and soothes your cheeks with her hands asking how you're feeling and if you need anything.
It is your mother's touch that you miss and crave as you are lying in your bed, 81 years old and trying to get rid of a fever.
It is her touch that is present for so many years and that we often take for granted until we want what we cannot have.

The Light Within



Kathryn Fritzges

Alien War, Human War

Written on the tenth anniversary of the Iraq invasion

Okla Elliott

1.
Death is an underwater bird,
not a bird at all;
an eel with wings. It is a metal bird
loaded up with techno-artillery.

War, this war,
war between the eagle and other birds-of-prey
(different prey).

Death is depleted uranium,

radiating strangeness into the cells of our victims.
It is a strangeness we are all born into,
borne by all of us.

It is a strangeness taking many forms,
natural and un-
in equal measure.

Stranger still to be guilty
of murders we did not commit.

2.
Making ourselves alien to ourselves
we diminish all things.

That curve of a bell, the curve of buttocks
the bell-curve normalizing us all,
the image of a model's ass that makes us want
to find that image in the flesh of the world.

Making others alien to ourselves
we diminish all things.

The curve of a bell,

the curve of a missile scudding
toward its living targets—
the curve of a line representing
fatality statistics over a six-week period.

When an alien dies, nothing human is lost.
When we make others alien,
we diminish all beings.

3.

When the bird flies into the storm
it is gone to us. When the bird
swims into the earthquake
it is gone to us until its perennial return.

4.

The imbricated self, the implicated subject.
The guilt-threads are tightly knotted.
Imbrication, implication—the nouns sound
so alien, so Latinate
I can't feel my way into their fact. Abstraction
alienates lived life. To make others alien
we must abstract them to mere ideas,
not particular flesh and thoughts peculiar
to them. To kill others we must make them alien.

Murder, therefore, is an abstraction abstracted.

5.

Our appetites and terrors fill the gnawing void
of the world.

Our appetites and terrors fill the gnawing void
of the world.

Our appetites and terrors fill the…

Back Alley F. M. Kirby Center



Matthew Hinton

Depleted Uranium and Other Facebook Posts

Okla Elliott

We read about depleted uranium
and try to imagine the scientific facts
about depleted uranium.
What does depleted even mean in the context of uranium?
So we Google it and learn something horrendous.
Or rather something interesting
that has been turned to horrendous purpose.
And so we join a protest against depleted uranium
even though our friends tell us there are more pressing
matters right here at home. How can you post
on Facebook about depleted uranium? our friends ask.
And so we post on Facebook about whatever
our friends have told us is most important to post
on Facebook about, and people stop thinking
about depleted uranium, though it still decays
its way into the cells of Iraqi children—and adults too,
but it is less effective to post on Facebook about the suffering
of adults, so I'll only mention the children whose lymph nodes
and livers and lungs are mutating
due to depleted uranium. Or rather, I won't,
since my friends tell me there are more pressing matters
here at home.

Guest Poet Ron Smith



Ron Smith is te Poet Laureate of Virginia. He is the author of *Running Again in Hollywood Cemetery,* runner-up for the National Poetry Series Open Competition and the Samuel French Morse Prize, and subsequently published by University Presses of Florida. His other books — *Its Ghostly Workshop Moon Road: Poems 1986-2005,* and the forthcoming *The Humility of the Brutes* — are published by LSU Press. His poems have appeared in many periodicals, including *The Nation, New England Review, Southern Review, Kenyon Review, Georgia Review, Puerto del Sol,* and in anthologies in the US, Italy, Canada, and the UK. Smith holds degrees (B.A., M.A., M.H., M.F.A.) in philosophy, English, general humanities, and creative writing and has studied writing at Bennington College in Vermont, British Drama at Oxford, and Renaissance and modern culture at the Ezra Pound Center for Literature in Merano, Italy. .He is a winner of and now Curator of the Carole Weinstein Poetry Prize. He has taught at several universities and is currently the Writer-in-Residence and the George O. Squires Chair of Distinguished Teaching at St. Christopher's School in Richmond, Virginia. In 2011 he was named Poetry Editor for *Aethlon: The Journal of Sport Literature.* Ron Smith was a visiting poet at Misericordia in April 2016, where he gave a Master Class and a Poetry Reading. His visit was funded by te Soyka Fund for the Humanities.

The following is a poem by Smith, "Its Ghostly Workshop," reprinted from *Its Ghosotly Workshop.*

Its Ghostly Workshop

Advice to my grandson

Ron Smith

Remember the memorable and let the rest go.
Of course, some part of everything is memorable.
Savor the detail and the barbarous language
it insists on speaking. Befriend all words.
Never fail to eavesdrop on the exotic
or the eternal. Force conversation with
the transient. Son, you can always
spare a dime.

Every now and then
empty what we are pleased to call
your mind. Let a cool wind blow through,
seal it with solitude, open it
to featureless horizons. Yes,
a Roman cistern or flat ocean
where no one, not even you,
exists. A long walk on an abandoned
railroad track can do the trick. It goes
without saying you must keep your mouth
shut and always go alone. Call it
meditation, if you like.

Entertainment?
Never mindless entertainment, a form
of desperation, highly addictive.
Let all your entertainment be mindful.
Monitor cumulus crossing the blue,
now Australia to Iceland, now Rushmore
to Matterhorn. Study the sky a little each day.
And, yes, often at night, but ignoring
constellations, if you can, making your own
and sweeping them away like sand painting.
Better star and stark nothing than centaurs
and lyres.

Never take the image of a thing
for the thing, photo for face, landscape
for the land. Remember always that
perception is more than half creation,
the mind's no projection screen, transforms
what it receives, shuffles what's transformed,
makes of sunlight and synapse what the eye
has no rod, no cone to encounter.
That plain vision is visionary.

"Too much
time on your hands" is the mantra of
the miserable. Shun such judges. Kill clichés
in their cradles. They grow to monsters.
Let others think outside the box they have
hammered for themselves. Build no box
to begin with. Know what everyone knows
is not knowledge but preference of belief,
no more the truth than the shade is the shade tree.
Observe how abstractions self-assemble
to frame and shingle what the frightened head
thinks it needs for shelter.

Have faith in the truth
and its hermitage, its ghostly workshop.
Close your mind like a hand on the handle
of each handy fact, but never forget
an occupied hand can't grasp the new.
Don't wield too long nor grip too hard
what you take for truth. Be always prepared
to let it go. Let it go.

To My Fifteen-Year-Old Self

Rhiannon Judge

I wish I could sit on that floor with you
After your hand shook closing the medicine cabinet
Before you put it to your mouth
I wish I could tell you
That your years-long streak of bad days is broken
That the weight of the world doesn't press me into bed in the morning anymore
I get up on light feet
That the pain you feel isn't stored up in me, like a box in the back of the closet
I dealt with it for you, packed it all up and shipped it away
That I will tell a boy the story of this night, and he will accept it all, every part of me
Including you
That right after I've shown him all my worst things,
He'll tell me he that he loves me for the first time
That there'd be a hole in his world if he never met me
Can you even imagine?
But here's the beautiful thing;
I didn't have to tell you
Even through the hopelessness and futility that threatened to overtake you
Some small part of you said
"There has got to be better than this out there for me"
And you put your faith in a world where I exist, even though you had no idea how to get there
Well I got here, because you closed that bottle
Thank you

At the Cliffs of Moher



Christine Zopf

Töte mich nicht

Scott Bargisen

"...What was it, the 27th of September? We had not seen enemy soldiers in weeks, yet my men are looking quite discouraged. One of my men grew curious about our

"Gefreiter , haben Sie von Prinz Rupprecht keine Nachrichten gehört?"

"Nein, Pivater. Weiter zu graben."

"Aber Gefreiter, haben wir bereits drei weitere Gräben erstellt."

"Ich sagte Ihnen, graben aufzuhören. Keine respektlosigkeit."

The men were no longer excited to help our dear Empire. They wished for the war to be won without more bloodshed. All they kept saying was "Any news from the prince? The General? Has the Empire won? Has the enemy conceded?" All they did was dig, build and shoot. Our only reprieve during the ceasefires were the marches through Ypres and the various villages that surround it, like the living hell known as Passchendaele.

One of the greatest victims of the Belgian front, Passchendaele is still full of trenches from the battles prior to ours. I had a feeling that this battle would end somewhat soon, though we were not prepared to fight much longer. Then again, I might have been excited to go home to Munich. "Soon enough the war will be won" I thought. I don't believe the men knew about the Americans that have been arriving in France some weeks before. The numbers were certainly enough to discourage their fighting spirit and transform my warriors into swine. Then again, their knowledge of it would a good explanation for their constant anxiety. My summary of the day was that they deserved rest, it had been a long day and they were constructive. The next morning began silently, as long as one wished to discredit the lack of courtesy from the English munitions..."

I've heard stories about his passionate speaking, but this is quite the opposite. Though it might have been Artur's poor translation, he spoke of his near-death experience as if it were a common occurrence. His Hugo Boss uniform was not as bright as it looked in his propaganda artwork, yet it gleamed of cleanliness as if it were washed with each casualty of the enemy. Playing the stenographer rather than a columnist, it was hard to keep up with his translator's stuttering. I could only catch a few words, like wound and ambush. I only interrupted him to diversify the interview:

"Did you see him at first?"
Naturally, his translator finished the translation. Upon hearing the question, my subject's nearly invisible lips curled at the corners to oppose his deadened eyes. The translator's incompetence made as much sense as Picasso's Guernica. Why would such a man be allowed to translate for a leader so strict.

"Of course not! War is sometimes about stealth, but foot-soldiers are foot-soldiers. If I did see him, he blended right in with the rest like a proper soldier."

His voice was so small, yet so vast. This quaint man's ability to read emotions and utilize them could be admirable to anyone, until you remember his political conquests, his books, his speeches, his actions, his name. At this point, I'm having trouble staying unbiased, especially after interviewing Mr. Tandey in England a few months ago. The translator continued:

"Well, I instructed my men to flee since we were so greatly outnumbered. It hurt so much, but it was necessary. Near the border of Ypres, a mortar exploded about thirty feet away and gashed my leg quite badly. Unable to run, I limped as far as I could until I heard the stomping of the Englishman behind me. I rested on the side of a house and waited for my turn. At the time, I never thought I would see Germany again. A man pointed his gun at me; he looked like an officer, he had at least five medals. Upon looking at him, he didn't want to kill me. All I said was: Enough. Ah, ich muss mich entschuldigen. He did not say 'enough' to the man."

I can only assume that he told the told the translator not to speak. He crossed his legs and covered his mouth with one of his hands, holding his ribs with the other under his elbow. Barely moving his chin from behind his hand, he whimpered "Töte mich nicht" and continued to stare at the grouting in the tile floor. His eyes dried, never allowing them to move to quench their thirst. We sat for a little over a minute when the translator quietly spoke to him. He waved Artur off and kept speaking:

"The Englishman slowly lowered his gun and kept yelling at me in English, I can't remember what he said. I raised my hands and made it into a trench to dress my leg, prying out some of the shrapnel. The Englishman trafficked his men to drive out many of my soldiers. One of my fellow lieutenants brought me to the remaining troops in a Kübelwagen, though it did not matter. Those cowards gassed us out some weeks later with chlorine, I was forced to return to Germany. While in the hospital, as you know, the war ended and my depression continued. That was when I knew I must change my country for the better and destroy those that wish to ruin us again."

He rose and waved his hand for Artur and I to follow him. The veins on Artur's hands expanded with the rush of adrenaline and air. His breathing resembled mine, though my heart does not

resemble his in terms of volume. His chest resonated with the thousands of marching soldiers parading outside. He stops in front of a painting, his eyes squinting to compensate for the immensity of his grin. Once again, his voice did not match his emotion: "Ahh, Herr Tandey." Without looking at Artur, he giggled to himself before he motioned to Artur to speak again:

"This is a beautiful realist painting by Mr. Fortunino Matania, a recreation of a photograph taken in 1914. That man in the front carrying another injured soldier is the Englishman that saved my life. His name is Henry Tandey, as I am sure you know since he is such a hero in England. I also have a clipping of the article you wrote about your interview of him sparing my life; I very much enjoy how distraught and broken he looked. I am sure your superiors were looking for appreciation for allowing my life to continue, so I will thank Mr. Tandey for your sake. Since Herr Tandey will not appreciate that very much, I would like you to tell him that I don't care very much for his weak views of total war. This way, they will both be happy. As for you: for what you said about me, I should have you killed based on principle. I have done more to improve my nation than anyone in our history, with or without the support of our now-neighbouring countries. You should learn the new language of power and learn to write well with it. Now if you will excuse me, I need to address my people."

He spoke softly to his clown, and left us to marvel at his words. The disgust I had for this giant was righteous, but his eloquence was too muddled to appreciate. With a nod and a handshake, the Fascist showed me how a despicable man receives the love of his countrymen. I hope Mr. Tandey has a long response, this will surely hasten my progress.

Listening to Caesar into Reed Road

Daniella Amendola

Mother Time once said to me—
In a voice so small,
So faint—it was but a wisp of steam—
Do not be afraid to fall.

So I sat and I hummed—
A familiar tune of age, of loss—
Caesar into Reed Road mourning courage never had,
And memories that could never rust—

And if I am Caesar—well, tell me this—
Glory to he who crosses the Rubicon—
For the roaring river—for the din of defiant infantry—
Mother Time decrees that what is remembered shall be gone—

In a minute, in an hour—the memory distorts—
So when reality settles, what is left but dry embankment
Or a trickling stream—so small, so faint—
It was but a wisp of a dream—what then?

Can I even hum—"Not if I can help it,
No, not if I can help it"—if the memory lost
Is one I never owned at all—
For the dream is superimposed

Upon my reality—
Which even then is a memory
That Mother Time has rubbed away—
So very gradually—

I have to wonder—will anyone remember me—
Or will my finest moment define—
A historic predestination I will fail to meet—
Or waking to find a face that is no longer mine.

When I Know

Brianna Kominiak

When the river runs dry
And the leaves descend from their branches
That is when I know
There will be barriers to face

When the wind howls over the mountain
And the candle's flame is extinguished
That is when I know
Doubt will fill my heart

When the moon encompasses the sky
And the birds wail at daybreak
That is when I know
Solitude may emerge some days

When the foxgloves flourish
And an auburn glow traces the valley
That is when I know
The arrival is drawing near

And when I see him over the horizon
Walking through the rippling fields ahead
That is when I know
He loves me

Act of Contrition

E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply . . .

William Cowper

Matthew Nickel

somewhere north there is a pool in the forest
where a coyote track erodes in earth
the spring makes a small sound in snow

once as a boy I laid stones to the spring
directing its course I claimed the earth
high on a ridge over the Hudson River

flowing two ways, under witch hazel
I divided the spring run where it fell
from a rock shelf and dripped slowly

you can hear it still when the chickadee
lifts its head to call the sun song
to slant into water branch and stone

even far away the song of the spring
sings my knees remember the mud
the cracked crystal of earth cry

Message

Okla Elliott

This morning a small child
of indeterminate sex
signaled to me with tiny hands:
Come and see!
I walked languidly
along the cracked red-brick alleyway
to where the child stood.
Tiny hands held a tiny chalkboard
on which the Greek word *τραῦμα*
was written. Trauma.
The child spit
on the green slate
and smeared it illegible with the loose sleeve
of a tattered shirt.

When I returned home later that evening,
the corpse of a dirty pigeon
lay on the steps of my apartment building
like a broken angel,
like the corpse of a dirty pigeon.

‘Sorry, we’re closed’

Rebecca Steinberger

What happened at the esperanto cafe?
Was it too self-conscious of itself,
fashioned in lower-case letters,
an ee cummings’ dream?

You hypocrite.
Bold red paint
boasts
‘always open’
as butcher paper calls attention
to your
stagnancy
complacency
a malignancy
in the East Village
which will stand for none of it!

Have no fear, city dwellers. . .
a cacophony of conversations
drown the death of you
with
life, laughter, and lust
in a hot city

There Is No Wait

Jacob Schweiger

There is no wait when
Every action changes us each day
And you build yourself for tomorrow
With what you think, feel, and say today

The hatred in your heart tonight
Will harden to bitterness by the morning
And the resentment that you feel
Came from a history of scorning

The envy present in your life
Will not dissipate without action
Its venom circulates through your mind
You must start now to get some traction

Every step we take away
From the vice found in our life
Is a step toward that holiness
Of overcoming strife

Alliteration, Rhymes and Syllables (Not in That Order)

Annette Ritzko

There was a toad on a cup in a cow,
Mice who are fat can hold hip-bones and bow,

Tea can be cold when piking their putter,
I have been told that liking is litter,

Family said cheers to the old ostrich,
Amazing hat fears hateful hostages,

Slap the cool brigade mosey memory,
Trap is all whole kale under the udder,

Cake wrapped mightily with nice rake rollers,
Bob markers correct pith has embrace end.

My Heroes May Not Be Your Heroes

Connor Swagler

I'm more Bobby Seale then Bobby Kennedy,
I get you like Mr. Kennedy but I can't relate.
I'm a bigger fan of Huey Newton then I am Isaac Newton,
The fight for knowledge people need to know.
I'd rather read a book about Fred Hampton any day,
Then spend a day in the Hamptons,
I want to live and die guilt free,
Perhaps I'm not looking at the right dream.
Equal parts Malcolm X and Malcolm Gladwell,
I try to speak well,
And I think they're more important.
Now,
More than ever.

Shining Through



Melissa Bostjancic

It's Me

Scott Bargisen

It's been quite a while since you wore so much makeup;
You shouldn't be anxious, you're gorgeous as ever.
With only foundation, you gleam like the pendant
I got you last year, either Christmas or Birthday.
But that doesn't matter, you still have mascara
Distracting our eyes from the fires in yours. It
Is nice to see you in such comfort in public,
But never before have you caved to friends' actions.
The lines of your face have been lost in the contour
You learned on that Buzzfeed "How-To", yeah it's pretty.
The red marks you left on my cheeks aren't lipstick,
But nor do I blush at the girl you've created.
It's normal to notice some changes, but this is
A succubus vying to capture your figure.
You hated this level of caked-on face-batter
No more than a year ago, loved going natural.
I do not see issues in your sudden comfort,
But you lost your "Self" in pursuit of conforming.

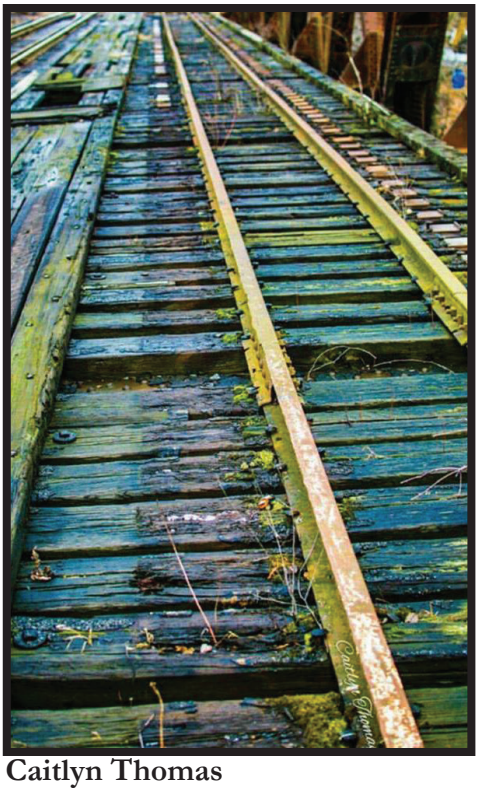
I used to see you for what you loved to do:
Your music's still lovely, and talking was too.
I'll always support you; my heart will not move
Nor let my brain change what it wants me to do.

Her Wrinkled Hands

Connor Swagler

She hates her hands,
So I kiss them twice a day…
She say's no man can love her face,
At night she can't help but pace,
Trying to erase,
Her past like footprints in the sand.
I stand as she walks past,
Reach out my hand,
Tell her I understand,
But we both need sleep.
She start's to weep.
I tell her there is always one promise I'll keep,
"I'll love you more than the oceans are deep."
But that is between she and me.
She Said, "How Can That Be?.."
"Can't you see? There is nothing worth loving about me…"
She screams through the night,
As I try to fight, back the tears I feel for her,
For a while her fears disperse,
She constantly says, "The last three years are just such a blur?"
But the thoughts always come back…
So I've just kissed her hands for the second time today,
Hoping it helps take the pain away,
Perhaps it may.
Either way, I choose to stay.
With her lovely wrinkled hands.

Rainbow Train



Caitlyn Thomas

The Spirit in You

Rodney Smith

It's been a long time
since I've heard a rhyme
That talks about ways
to enhance your mind.

A rhyme that stimulates
and motives your soul.
Lyrics flowing wisdom
more enriching than gold.

There's a good reason why we're here on this earth.
The reason for love, conception, and birth.
But before I start to teach you something positive and true,
you've got to know the spirit, The Spirit in You!

The spirit is the innermost part of you,
If you neglect its potential you're bound to do and commit,
the most monstrosities of things,
like selling caine, snatching chains, or inflicting pain. . .

On the brotha who was killed just the other day,
or the sista who was raped from around our way.
You can abolish and eliminate the evil you do.
But you gotta know the spirit, The Spirit in You!

True Judgement

Caitlyn Thomas

Your heart may be heavy right now
But don't allow it to weigh you down
For when you step into the water that the Lord walked upon
You will become weightless
Know that your intentions are pure
And that you will one day be rewarded for your hard work
You are the sons and daughters of God
And only he can judge the worth that lies within you

Over the Rainbow



Kathryn Fritzges

Flightless

Sierra Krohnemann

They call Dorothea "Dodo,"
Hinting at a nickname regarding an ironic bird--
Flightless, yet ambitious.
Jane Eyre refuses the word,
But every reader can imagine the amount of
Flying she does to settle in her nest of improbable circumstances.
Why are these women thrown into a cage of social suicide?
Why, after hundreds of years, am I the one behind the bars?

I guess I also hold a sense of irony
As the three birds tattooed on my body mock me with their ink.
I always understood them as a symbol of letting go,
I must have forgotten that it isn't difficult to pin me down.
You clipped my wings the day we met and marked your number on me.
Twenty-eight.
Since then I have been regarded as yours and yours alone
While you– are others.

The rust that developed on the bars cut me with a disease
Of indifference.
I do not care that I am trapped,
Or do I?
I do when you forget that I am there, chirping for a sign of relief,
"Let me free, I never asked for this insecurity"

You come and go as you please
And swear to the heavens that you care for my heart,
But it is broken–
And you don't care.
Feed me with your words,
I crave the wonder that is your mouth.
You raise me up, up, up,

But then your ignorance ignores the fact that I cannot fly.
So I fall,
I fall into the depths of your ocean eyes,
Getting lost under the tides of your aroma.
They say birds do not fear falling.
They are right,
I fear landing.

Open the door,
I don't want to be caged.
If I am anything like a bird,
I want to fly.
I am not yours to fiddle and tease with.
I am not yours to place on the mantel.
I am not yours to lock behind bars.
I am not yours to protect.
"Set me free, I never asked for this insecurity"

I will fly.

Someone Asked Me, "How Was My Day?"

Connor Swagler

Words…
Long day,
Busy,
More verbs in-between,
Period.

Chad the Vampire

L. Joann Leigh

There was a vampire named Chad.
Who thought mortal life was a fad.
His blood-thirsting ways
Avoided all solar rays
For the sun bothered him just a tad.

To the Man Who Made Her Feel Small

Madison Cardinale

She was looking for a Man to make her feel safe and loved,
That's how she found him.
She was at her weakest, and that was her biggest mistake.
Though she sought for someone to cherish her, she got just the opposite.

She found a Man hurt by his past, and he found a girl willing to give him a chance.
At first it was bliss; they laughed, smiled, loved.
But that changed—
Something in him snapped.

No longer did he make her feel safe.
No, now she was afraid.
Afraid of the words that flowed from his mouth
Piercing her heart straight through.

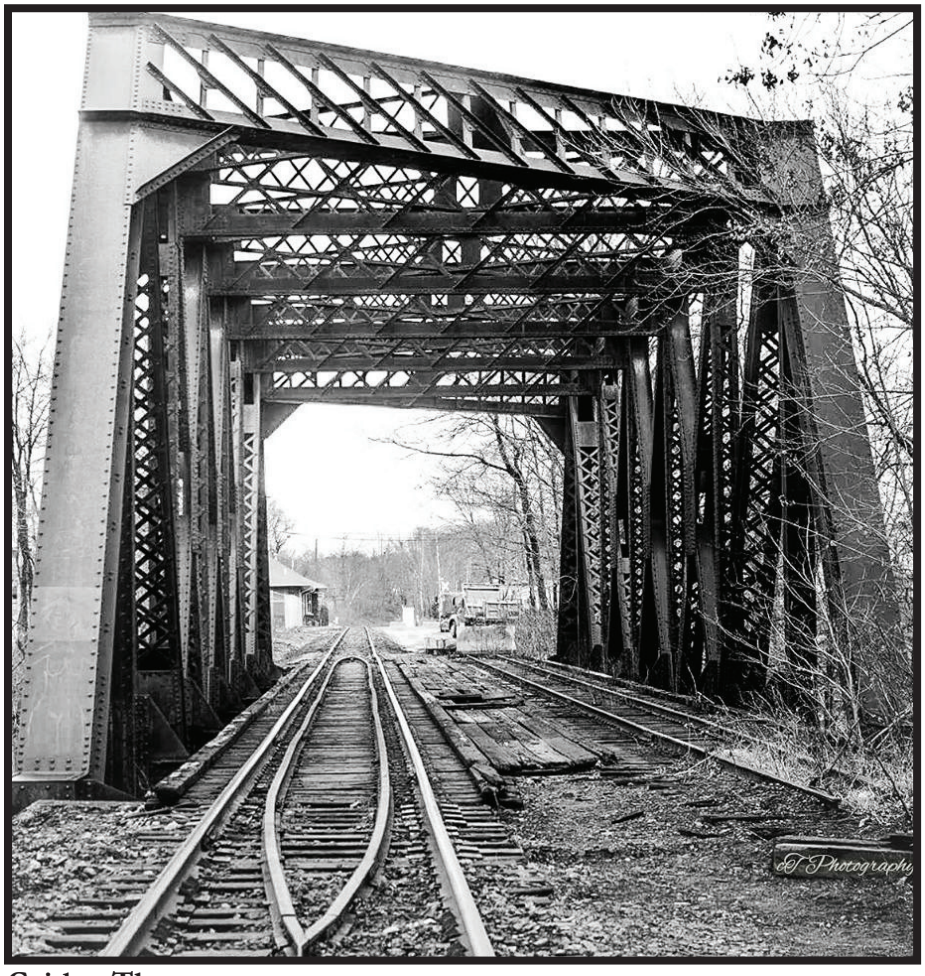
She felt repulsive, like a doll used and abused by an ungrateful child.
No longer was she her joyful self,
Rather a shell of the girl she once was.
Because while the Man was trying to fill that hole in his heart,
He tore hers to pieces.

She cried herself to sleep until her mother asked the burning question:
"Why are you with a Man who makes you feel so small?"
Then it hit her.
She made the decision.
She left him.

The Man blamed her for leaving him broken, but she was finished listening to his lies.
So she turned around and replied,
"You were already broken to begin with."
That day she walked a bit taller.
That day she changed her life.

She is no longer that little girl.
Now she is a Woman.
A Woman not torched by her past, but strong in her future.
So, to the man who made me feel small –
I hope you can see the Woman I've become.

White Light



Caitlyn Thomas

The Sailor and the Endless Sea

Kayli Boyes

There are always storms at sea.
They are turbulent and unpredictable.
Waves will crash, winds will howl.
Many sailors know that the ocean is not always stable,
but for a sailor braving the endless sea,
she does not mind when the waves aren't gentle.
She will endure the weather when it is foul,
knowing that the storm will pass and she will be thankful.
After each storm, the sea leaves the sailor in awe.
For every storm that passes through the sea,
the sailor marvels how much the water can take
as she goes back to her gentleness and gorgeous majesty.
The sailor cannot comprehend the strength of the water,
for she herself is inspired by the turbulent turned gentle sea.
The waves will never be too high, or the wind too rough
Because the sailor loves being with her endless sea.

Autumn Falls

Shane Kreller

I remember you on brisk autumn days,
In the falling leaves and shortening rays.
Outside, amidst the dazzling, bitter night,
Inside, within a broken heart, shut tight.

How I miss our blazing summertime joy,
When pure, mutual love was in full employ.
Now all I feel is winter's rapid gain,
With which will fall the timeless snows of pain.

Here I sit, watching red and gold shimmers,
As the tick-tock of life clicks and flickers.
Now the light fades, with it my closing eyes,
As crystal drops fall beneath blackened skies.

With you I've had my spring and summer glee,
Without, fall and winter shall I ever flee?

Prideful Thinking

Jacob Schweiger

I grasp for you
With hands not strong enough to hold
But for a little while

And when you slip
I forget, sometimes, who you were
And how you felt

Until I hear your name
In dusty books and from quiet mouths
That preach practice over perfect

You hide from me, humility
When I think I have you
The pride from that thought
Spills black oil on my hands
And you slip away again

Hawk



Justin Steinberger

Those We Have Lost

January 30th 2017

Devin Crevani

How fragile the body is,
while the mind persists,
refusing to go gently.
How the citadel of mind can crumble
even as the rotting body endures
And that crowd of stubborn choices
Which always returns to haunt
Prompts so many questions.
Is it all worth it?
Is it even worth it
at all?

Intersection Wilkes-Barre



Matthew Hinton

My Favorite Work of Art

Kayli Boyes

Your body is a work of art
That has captivated my beating heart.
I look at you every day
And cannot think of words to say.
What work of art could I compare you to?
Not one would bring justice to you.
What is it about your eyes though,
That resembles Rain by Vincent van Gogh?
Or how the softness of the words you say
Reminds me of a painting by Monet?
Your delicate hands and porcelain skin
Are masterpieces that rival any Rodin.
All I can do is stop and stare
As you walk by completely unaware
That you are my favorite work of art,
And you have my entire heart.

Dancer in the Dark

Shane Kreller

Dancer, dancer in the dark,
How I wonder who you are.
Out upon the streets a'spark,
You alone bring light dear star.
Dancer, dancer in the dark,
How I wonder who you are.

Twinkle, twinkle dancing bright,
No one else can hear your cries.
Trapped and broken in deep fright,
Down upon the ground you lie.
Dancer, dancer in the dark,
How I wonder who you are.

Then the formless night does win,
For no longer is there light.
In the distance wheels spin,
Sirens blaring for your plight.
Dancer, dancer in the dark,
How I wonder who you were.

From below you do now rise,
To a bed they roll inside.
Always now you close your eyes,
As your tears are slowly dried.
Dancer, dancer in the dark,
How I wonder who you were.

Underneath those reds and whites,
To your grave you do embark.
While above your soul takes flight,
Dancer, dancer in the dark.
Dancer, dancer in the dark,
How I wonder who you were.

March 28, 2015

Devin Crevani

I struggle and writhe
to harness the power of my mind
To no avail do I grind my eyes
Against crude markings begotten of seemingly intricate lies
And while even my errors scream the truth
I blindly tread onward unaware
Until insight lends me a spark
And my idiocy, my fallibility, so previously hidden,
Hideous and beautiful all at once,
Are rendered for me to see.

Opposites

Kayli Boyle

Red to Blue
Sun to Moon
Day to Night
Darkness to Light
They taught us opposites attracted
But you have me entranced

Instress
Journal of the Arts
Misericordia University
51st Edition