The Mitre
2012

"The longest running university literary journal in North America"
The Mitre 2012

“The longest running university literary journal in North America”
Acknowledgements

This 119th edition of the Mitre would not have been possible without the help of a handful of outstanding individuals, whose efforts and advice helped to bring this tradition to print once again. I would like to thank Caroline Rowell for her invaluable advice regarding the formatting of the anthology, Shawn Malley and Elise Gagné for their help, Tim Doherty for putting together the cover, and Stephanie Martin for her lovely cover image. I would also like to extend my thanks to Alexandra Everett for photographing the art pieces showcased by graduating fine arts students at the Gait Art Show, Alexis Chouan for collecting submissions from the one line story contest, which have been dispersed throughout the contents of the Mitre, and of course Annis Karpenko and the rest of the Bishop's University SRC, without whose support and funding, this project would not be possible. Lastly I would like to extend my thanks to the contributors, without whose prose, poetry, and art, I would have nothing to publish!

Lara Henerson
Editor 2012

Published by the Bishop's University SRC
Printed by Imprimeries Transcontinental
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>Ellen Jeffries (art)</td>
<td>p.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sisyphus</td>
<td>Frank Wildig (poetry)</td>
<td>p.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Guiding Light</td>
<td>Alex Morency-Letto (poetry)</td>
<td>p.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Drunkard</td>
<td>E. Blaurock-Busch (poetry)</td>
<td>p.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>Kristen Cleghorn (art)</td>
<td>p.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>Michelle Frise (prose)</td>
<td>p.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Stradivari's Daughter</td>
<td>Denise St. Pierre (poetry)</td>
<td>p.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Just So You Know</td>
<td>Jennifer Fytelson (poetry)</td>
<td>p.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>In Between Places</td>
<td>Aimie Turcotte (art)</td>
<td>p.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pasajes</td>
<td>Rebecca Estrada (art)</td>
<td>p.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Many Faces of a Black Swallowtail Butterfly</td>
<td>Katherine Perrotta (poetry)</td>
<td>p.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The World in Sam's Pocket</td>
<td>Yael Tischler (prose)</td>
<td>p.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>High Five</td>
<td>Skylar LePoidevin (art)</td>
<td>p.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Echoes</td>
<td>Kristy Benz (poetry)</td>
<td>p.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Phobophobia</td>
<td>Alissa Ralph (poetry)</td>
<td>p.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Suspended</td>
<td>Amelie Bouffard (poetry)</td>
<td>p.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Look into my Eyes</td>
<td>James Pomerleau (art)</td>
<td>p.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Two Connections</td>
<td>Tristan Matheson (art)</td>
<td>p.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The Garret Room in a Guesthouse</td>
<td>Lara Henerson (prose)</td>
<td>p.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Derivation</td>
<td>Zoe Costanzo (poetry)</td>
<td>p.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>In Dormie</td>
<td>Frank Wildig (poetry)</td>
<td>p.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>A Pensive Refugee</td>
<td>Skylar LePoidevin (art)</td>
<td>p.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Morning Glory</td>
<td>Denise St. Pierre (prose)</td>
<td>p.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Quê do you parle?</td>
<td>Janie Carrier (poetry)</td>
<td>p.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Herbie's Last Run</td>
<td>E. Blaurock-Busch (poetry)</td>
<td>p.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>Alison Petrovich (art)</td>
<td>p.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Where I'm From</td>
<td>Elyse Gagne (poetry)</td>
<td>p.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>On failed attempts to speak to the dead</td>
<td>Amelie Bouffard (poetry)</td>
<td>p.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Once there was a story, and the story was told to many people. Now the story has become a legend, which has no end."

— Anonymous

—Untitled by Ellen Jeffries
Sisyphus
By Frank Willig

Eternal fruitlessness? Endless labour?
The absurdity of our lives made plain?
I think not - I say it gives me a chore,
it's something to do again and again.

Think of it; at the least I am employed,
as I push upward, I have my own goal
and a good deal of time to fill the void
between the uphill push and downhill roll.

This is my career, to reach for the heights,
to give life meaning, to challenge my brain.
With each trying step, I find great delights,
to think otherwise would drive me insane.
And I say to you with your mortal powers
How would you fill eternity's hours?

Guiding Light
An Italian Sonnet by Alex Morency-Leto

Fiery mane embroils my heart,
Eyes of emerald thieves would take
Ivory pale, a milky lake
'Tis sin to swim from worlds apart.
Blessed lips from which I'd start
Devouring down to sweeter place
To fragrant flora’s tempting taste
Until undone by cherub’s dart.

And though rebuked and left afar
Desire rests between my sides.
Awoken by the thought of thee,
Likened to the evening star
To which the compass must abide
A needle that cannot spin free.

“"I am NOT drunk!" he bellowed, then promptly vomited into her brand new handbag.”

— Anonymous

The Drunkard
By E. Blaurock-Busch

He drank until he stumbled, then he fell.
He slept until he woke with stiffness in his back
and rose to take another drink from hell,
he cussed and gave the kid a whack.

He slept until he woke with stiffness in his back.
He often cried for life had passed him by,
he cussed and gave the kid a whack,
at times he laughed, could not say why.

He often cried for life had passed him by.
He wanted more. He wanted all,
At times he laughed, could not say why.
He’d long forgotten standing tall.

He wanted more. He wanted all
and rose to take another drink from hell.
He’d long forgotten standing tall,
he drank until he stumbled, then he fell.
You can barely feel his hand on the small of your back as you dance. The DJ is playing a slow song, one of those rock ballads that drip with emotion. Yet his hand just barely brings your dress to your skin. You want him to be fierce, to be passionate. *Grip me tightly! You think, hold me against you.* But you can’t make someone love you. You turn your eyes to him and watch his face. He is looking around, not at you, never at you. He is looking for her. *Why can’t he just let her go, forget about her?* She doesn’t love him, but you do. You try to remember when he started to sneak away. When did the late nights start? When did the goodbye kisses stop? Almost every night now you peak out the blinds in the bedroom, searching for his car, and when it’s not lighting up the dark street with its headlights, you take the time to look through his clothes, drawers, wallet, and calendar. The soft, intimate glow of the bedside lamp is the only accomplice you have during this ritual. Your hands shake as you search, knowing that at any moment a forgotten receipt, or an unknown smell could end everything. And then, finding nothing, you crawl into bed and bring the blanket snug around your body. You try to lie in the middle in an act of defiance, but always instead end up on your side, staring at where he should be. You speculate about what he’s doing, and who he’s with. Then you hear the reverberating hum of rubber travelling up the paved driveway, the garage door opens, and he comes in. The sound of his jingling keys hits the counter. He slowly climbs the stairs, he fumbles with the door handle and the door opens. He covertly slides into bed next to you, and you long for him to burrow close, to wrap his arms around you, to place his face in your hair and breathe in the smell of you. But instead he turns and faces the wall. His back against your back. This is how your evenings are spent. You reflect on this as you stand in the middle of the dance floor. You know he has already left you.
Stradivari's Daughter
Denise St. Pierre

My beloved has spanned the centuries,
from Byzantium to Venezia,
yet she remains immaculate.
Beneath my calloused fingers,
she sings to me.

I caress her waist,
the delicate arch of her back,
her graceful ebony neck,
inhalng the aroma of her rich mahogany skin.

I smell Cremona,
where her father gave her life—
carving the delicate curves and constructing
a maple bridge, across whose void
he stretched the viscera,
long since replaced by impervious steel.

The chronicle of our romance
reads like a transcript of
clandestine desire.
Impassioned cadences, sustained notes,
which resonate through her body.

I shift along her fretless lengths,
the medium between her world and ours.
I am mechanical, the apparatus drawing
the horsehair furiously across her,
and nothing more.

Her scroll has told a thousand stories
of grief and passion
betrayal and birth.
My imprint will inevitably fade
when she finds comfort in the arms of another.

But for now, she is mine
in the exquisite bliss of our unity as

we crescendo to the climax,
in the unique timbre of her voice as
we approach the frenzied release of
one final note.

“No, you're not spoiled goods, my love. We all come with preservatives now.”

– Anonymous

Just So You Know
By Jennifer Fytelson

Just so you know
8 AM is a
horrible
time to be
told
of your stupidity.

I'm
going back
to sleep.

Read my eye
mask:

Do not disturb!

“He sat down. He rose. He flipped his place mat and died abruptly. What an
exemplary man. His name was Carl.”

– Anonymous
THE MANY FACES OF A BLACK SWALLOWTAIL BUTTERFLY

By Katherine Perrotta

1. I never noticed it before but
   Your eyes are the same beautiful shade
   As the wings of the black
   Swallowtail butterfly

2. When the black
   Swallowtail butterfly
   Flutters, caressing your skin,
   Think of my fingers

3. Look at the sky
   And miss me.
   The black
   Swallowtail butterfly
   Will cry with you

4. Pin me down and
   Study me like
   The black
   Swallowtail butterfly
   Under glass

5. Cover me in kisses,
   I want to be blanketed by
   Your overtures like I’m
   Being wrapped in the wings of
   The black swallowtail butterfly

6. Imagining life outside our minds
   Though pleasantly frightening
   Is a fantasy just as delicate as
   The wings of the black
   Swallowtail butterfly

7. There’s something of the night
About you, my beloved.
You're just as mysterious
As the black swallowtail butterfly
And just as poisonous.

8.
Let me get inside your head
And spin cobwebs of doubt and lust.
Let me trap you like a black swallowtail butterfly in my web of desire and lies.

9.
My love, do you know
That if you rub the wings of
The black swallowtail butterfly
Hairy dust stains your fingers but
It's not as magical when you're older.

10.
The human heart is not a child's toy
And a butterfly's wings are not as lovely
When you take off those colored glasses
And see the black swallowtail butterfly
For what it is.

11.
A butterfly's wings can
Birth hurricane waters
And the tears of the black swallowtail butterfly
Wash away your sins.

12.
I know when your laugh is forced
And when your tears are made of crocodile skin
I know when you'll change.
Emerge from your cocoon like
A black swallowtail butterfly
From Eden's garden.

13.
Somewhere a clock
Is ticking to infinity
And somewhere a child
Plucks the wings off
Of a dying black swallowtail butterfly
Butterfly.
chocolate chip muffins. Also one of Sam's favourite things is fans, so even when it is very cold, he will ask over and over again if you can turn on the fan and if you do he will just watch it go around as if it is the most interesting thing in the world and if you are lucky he might use his words and tell you that it is a very nice fan. Sometimes he gets so happy about the fan that he makes noises like a baby bird and jumps around like he is full of beans, which does not mean he is actually full of beans, it is an expression. But I do not see what the big deal is with fans. And also Sam is not fun like other people's brothers who like to play hide and go seek and sardines and go on the teeter-totter with you and do puzzles. But the worst thing about living with Sam is that sometimes he poos in places that are not the toilet, like in your room and it smells for days and days and days.

“Ashleigh, you're not telling me the truth,” she says. She is really good at doing the serious voice. “I need you to tell me where Sam is.”

“I can't tell you where he is if I don't know where he is,” I say really fast like my words are alphabet soup. Mum takes Charlie and the Chocolate Factory out of my hands and then bends her knees so she can look me in the face and she says, “Ashleigh, if you still want to go to drama camp, you will tell me where Sam is,” which I don't think is fair at all, because drama camp is the most fun thing ever that I get to do in the summer and you get to put on all the costumes they have there like princesses and pirates, and make plays, and some of the plays use the stories of a man named William Shakespeare, only not his real words, because they are very hard to say, because he lived a long time ago when people talked funny.

“I left him at the toy trains,” I say, which is true. I took Sam to see the trains, because I know he likes trains. When Sam plays with trains, he puts them in a big long line on the floor. He puts the red trains with the red trains and the blue trains with the blue trains, the yellow trains with the yellow trains, but there is no Sam.

“I can't tell you where he is if I don't know where he is,” I say really fast like my words are alphabet soup. Mum takes Charlie and the Chocolate Factory out of my hands and then bends her knees so she can look me in the face and she says, “Ashleigh, if you still want to go to drama camp, you will tell me where Sam is,” which I don't think is fair at all, because drama camp is the most fun thing ever that I get to do in the summer and you get to put on all the costumes they have there like princesses and pirates, and make plays, and some of the plays use the stories of a man named William Shakespeare, only not his real words, because they are very hard to say, because he lived a long time ago when people talked funny.

“I left him at the toy trains,” I say, which is true. I took Sam to see the trains, because I know he likes trains. When Sam plays with trains, he puts them in a big long line on the floor. He puts the red trains with the red trains and the blue trains with the blue trains, the yellow trains with the yellow trains, but there is no Sam.

“Ashleigh, that is not okay,” says Mum. “You can't just leave your brother alone in the middle of a department store!” I can tell Mum is very angry, but that she is also trying to do Self Control.

“Why?” I say. “He doesn't care.” Which is true. Sam does not notice when he is alone or not alone. Mum says that he lives in his own little world, which to me sounds funny, because it makes it seem like he has a planet small enough to carry around in his pocket and that he can take it out and shrink himself inside it whenever he wants.

“We'll talk about this at home,” says Mum. “Where are the trains?”

I lead Mum through the store to the toy trains, which are right next to the Barbies and the Hot Wheels, up the escalator one floor. When we get to the toy trains, they are all in a big long line, the red trains with the red trains, the blue trains with the blue trains, the yellow trains with the yellow trains, but there is no Sam.

I look at Mum and she looks very very stiff like somebody just took her out of the freezer. “Where is he?” she says, but she has trouble saying this, because she is breathing very fast, which I have not ever seen her do before. “I don't know,” I say and this time I am telling the truth.

We go back to the lady who is not that happy to see Mum again, to tell her that Sam is missing, so that she can tell the other people in the store to look for him and then call him on the loud speaker. “He probably won't respond,” says Mum. “But it's worth a try.” Then Mum drags me up and down the aisles very fast looking for Sam. I did not know that Mum could run that fast. We run for a very very long time until finally Mum has to rest, because she is out of breath.

We sit down on the floor next to the towels. When I look at Mum, her eyes are wet. She is trying not to cry. I think maybe she is scared that we will not find Sam and that something bad has happened to him.

“Don't cry, Mum,” I say. And I put my hand around her shoulders, which is what Mum does sometimes when she wants me to feel better. And then I get this yucky thought in my head that now it is just Mum and me with no Sam, which is what I thought I wanted, but it does not feel good, because Mum is scared and maybe I am a little scared, too, because Sam is not like me and you and he might not know what to do when you are lost in a store, which is to go tell an adult who works there that you are looking for your Mum and then what her name is, because everyone calls their Mum “Mum,” but all Mums have a different real name.

“I can't believe I took my eyes off you for even a second,” she says, but it does not sound like she is saying it to me, because she is looking so very far away. I once heard Mum say to Dad when they
thought I was already asleep that if anything ever happened to the children that it would break her heart. When she said this, I saw in my head a picture of her heart breaking open like glass and all the strings going all over the place and the blood pouring out everywhere and it was all messy. I wonder if maybe this is what it really looks like when your heart breaks, like the part of you that makes you you leaves your body and goes somewhere else, leaving you sad on the floor not knowing what to do.

And then I remember something very important.

"I think I might know where Sam is," I say.

"What?" says Mum, like I woke her up from sleeping.

"We should ask if there are any fans in the store," I say.

And when I say this, Mum jumps off the floor like something stung her. We go back to the lady and Mum asks her to show us where the ceiling fans are.

When we find Sam, he is standing under a fan looking at it like he is in a cartoon and being hypnotized. (Mum says in real life it is not like this when they hypnotize you, but it is still what Sam looks like.) Mum runs over to hug him, but he does not look at her, just keeps looking at the fan. "Isn't it a nice fan?" he says. Mum doesn't answer, just cries and hugs him. She told me once that sometimes people cry when they are happy, too, which seems sort of silly.

I look up at the fan and watch it go round. It is funny that when a fan is stopped, you can see all of its arms, but when a fan is moving very fast, you can only see a big fuzzy see-through circle the colour of a pencil tip. And if you keep looking at the fan without looking away it starts to turn other colours like purple and red and gold and seems very magic. I wonder if fans look like this on Sam's planet all of the time.

"Yes," I say to Sam. "It is a very nice fan."
echoes
by kristy benz

dark
wasted through to never-being
never-was
never-has-been
as in the shiverer
don’t-go-away-or-you’ll-never-come-back

she would leave
anyway.
she wasn’t bothered by the vertigo
(00-00-00)
she was used to falling by now

the burdens of being
had worn her away
(away-away-away)
until the skin hung from her body
in rags that old lovers
tore off with their teeth
to clean the mud
from their shoes

so she shivered in the shadows
in her Empire of Loneliness
and plucked the hair from her head
and wove it into a blanket
that she would give
to her never-born child

(come back-ack-ack-ack)

Phobophobia
a villanelle by Alissa Ralph

Don’t tremble, shake; don’t turn your daunted back,
fear often makes the tamest beast seem wild.
All things unknown look dangerous in black.

If dim skies brood and foreshadow attack,
let rain bewitch, your lightning-soul beguiled.
Don’t tremble, shake, don’t turn your daunted back.

Remember when your fortitude is slack,
when fierce winds howl, no longer sweet or mild,
all things unknown look dangerous in black.

On evenings when you pace sepulchral tracks
to marble graves, where mortals’ bones are piled,
don’t tremble, shake, don’t turn your daunted back.

When fate in nightmares lead you t’wards the rack,
the executioner’s indifference tiled,
all things unknown look dangerous in black.

The glass in which you look begins to crack,
the shattered face that looks back is a child’s.
Don’t tremble, shake; don’t turn your daunted back;
all things unknown look dangerous in black.

“She enters the room and I’m frozen. My breath. My heartbeat. All centres around her, and the most important and mesmerizing thing: her gun.”

—Anonymous
suspended
By Amélie Bouffard

rond de jambe à terre, pas de bourrée coure
  ten little girls—pink ugly ducklings—waddle on a stage
parents on cloud nine
doible cabriole, grand battement en cloche
  hearts beat together on regular eight-beat melodies
seven days a week—sweat trickles
down the small tired backs
changement, chassé, releve volt
  six faces cry
hopes shattered by 'too fat', 'too short'
and 'go home while you still have your pride'
développé, arabesque
  five remaining bodies bent to perfection
the limbs twist and turn—a factory in pastel leotards
sissonne fermée, dezax, dessous
  four pairs of feet bleed in pink satin
the nails are broken—they dream of ghosts
Odile, Giselle, and the flamboyant Firebird
échappé, en diagonale
  three swans at the edge of the stars—and not enough tickets
to the moon
pas de chat, jeté entrelacé
  two rehearsed lovers entangled in a pas de deux
temps lié sur les pointes, rond de jambe en l'air
  one prima ballerina beyond effort—grace floats
at the end of her fingertips
one fleeting moment
  —suspended

—Look into My Eyes by James Pomerleau

—Two Connections by Tristan Matheson, Gait Art Show
The Garret Room in a Guesthouse

By Lara Henerson

She can't sleep. Instead, she tosses and turns in the stiff little bed, gazing though the yellowed lace of the curtains at the flickering street-lamps of the old city. The tired bed-springs screech, complaining of the girl's restlessness. The solitary sound underlines the silence of the garret room. The girl wonders how long it's been since anyone has slept in this bed, with its rusty frame and frayed sheets, here on the topmost floor of the old guesthouse.

There's another creak, but this time she hasn't moved. Sharp turn of the head—nothing has stirred. The only movement is the irregular shudder of claw-like shadows, projected from the curtains. Behind them, shrieking wind softly rattles the glass panes, from under the faded beige blanket, the girl peers out at her surroundings as red veins fan out from her icy irises. Brown stain on the ratty carpet, crooked oak desk, jagged cracks criss-crossing the dust-covered mirror. Another creak—she freezes. The clock, maybe? Eyes dart to the solemn grandfather clock in the corner—it has stopped, the heavy brass pendulum frozen at an odd angle, defiant against gravity. The same rigor mortis suspends the hour and minute hands.

She pulls the thread-bare blanket under her chin with white knuckles, begging her eyelids to shut. She hears it again—it's more of a rasping sound now. Her eyes dark again—to the stain on the carpet, the crooked desk, the mirror, the clock, back to the desk. And then she sees it. A shudder scuttles up her spine.

The thing stares with empty eyes, orbs like deep black holes. Its form shimmers over the desk, translucent, vaguely tinted grey. Croak, rasp—sound lingers in half-formed waves around the apparition. Its contours are ephemeral like mist, shifting matter, straddling the line between body and cloud.

The girl's own body stiffens, each limb trembling independently, motor functions having been unanimously abandoned. Her skin has turned paper-white, and fleetingly she wonders whether she might be becoming like it—this thing on the desk, a specter lingering from somewhere beyond the realm of the present.

A scream clings to her throat, not coming out, tethered by a rope. The thing tilts its shadowed head, hovers off the desk—gliding closer, closer still. The rumble it emits sounds like distant thunder coming from nowhere, and from everywhere; like the blazing crackle of a campfire devouring twigs—closer still, it flows.

Shut your eyes she wills herself. The thing is inches away now, peering into her like a mirror. It is shaking too; through her fear she wonders if the thing is mocking her. It stops before her, close enough to reach out, to touch her, strangle her—but it doesn't. Instead, it continues to stare into her. She stares back, having no choice. Fear grips her like a magnet, locking her into the thing's empty gaze—bloodshot human orbs falling into bottomless pits, and back again—forging brittle phantom bridges across realms with every breath, as if trying to morph both beings into one mind, one thing. For what seems like an eternity, they tremble to the same rhythm, trapped in the current of a non-human pulse, the pulse of the spirit world that hangs behind rational thought, that merges with the metronome of the girl's own heartbeat. Both are drained of colour, shivering from within the cradle of stillness that holds them, until one of them, the girl, severs the fragile connection with one sharp thought: So this is death.

All at once the thing plunges into her, diving down her pale parted lips like icy rapids breaking through a dam. Panic tears at her eye-lids, stretching the road-map of veins. She feels knives ripping down her throat from the inside, clawing the walls like starved rats, slashing deeper and deeper into her as she chokes on toxic fumes, gagging and convulsing until one final thrash throws her body into stillness. Limp white limbs scatter haphazardly like fallen match-sticks over the rusty bed.

The thing extracts itself through her nostrils like a breath, and hovers over the corpse, as if examining its work. For a moment the empty holes of its eyes flicker in shades of icy blue, before turning dark again. The rattling subsides into shaking sighs of satisfaction. Finally it shifts into a tornado and swirls away, out through the little garret window, sucked out into the night. The crackling sound fades into emptiness. Left behind, there is only a corpse on a bed, surrounded by a stained carpet, a desk, a mirror, and a grandfather clock that swings its brass pendulum upon the stroke of every minute, throughout the night.
Derivation
By Zoe Cassavoy

I am from soft lips;  
from red lip gloss and cheap mascara.
Late nights at the bar  
to early mornings in motel beds.

I am from long stemmed sunflowers,  
chocolate boxed in cardboard hearts,  
earrings and pearl rings  
and sterling necklaces.

I am from rough hands;  
from wet kisses and dry skin —  
moist and musky —  
to aftershave and the morning after pill.

I am from one gentle touch,  
two short breaths,  
three seductive words,  
and zero inhibitions.

I am from silk taffeta,  
clasped hands, gold rings,  
from I do to I don’t know  
to I’ll love you forever.

I am from soft lips  
red lip gloss and cheap mascara  
aftershave and the morning after pill  
clasped hands and gold rings;  
Unified.

"Daybreak always has and always will smell the same. Daily croissant, daily coffee. Only the presence of chocolate and Chanel odours changes.”  
—Anonymous

"I sung Happy Birthday to myself, one last time.”  
—Anonymous

In Dornie
By Frank Willig

It was here a school house and post office stood,  
And railway tracks passed by the new saw mill,  
Hard-weathered Scotsmen would float all the wood  
Down from the farms on the river Delisle.

Under chestnuts and elms, trains would arrive  
As prosperity filled the charged air,  
Here was a place so vibrant and alive,  
With its promise affirmed everywhere.

In weed, root and vine, nothing now remains,  
As my son and I stopped along our way,  
No trace of the past but a bridge for the trains  
And a plaque recalling that bygone day.

We continued our drive and back, from the past,  
We marveled at how such dreams rarely last.

“Heedless of whether their destination existed, the steadfast travelers continued, their purpose unclear, their guidebook missing many pages.”  
—Anonymous
“Hey Ma, I think I’m going to be sick today.”

I call to my mother from the bathroom, where I’ve all but poured myself into the sink.

I hound my face with my hands, trying to find some colour in my pallid complexion, but to no avail. My head is swimming with some sort of jumbled language—a mixture of gibberish and a few chords I’ve been attempting to teach myself on an old Gibson that some seedy ex of my mother’s left lying around. Phrases float through the transom of my mind, evading full consciousness.

I’m evading full consciousness.

I shot straight up in bed around three thirty this morning and barely made it to the bathroom before I was treated to a spectacular display of digestive pyrotechnics. I spent a good few hours at the foot of the toilet, reduced to a quivering foetal form. This has become typical. It feels like I’ve contracted some facsimile of the plague and I figure taking the day off isn’t such a bad idea, in my condition at least.

My mother believes otherwise.

“Oh honey, you say that like you think I give a shit.”

I wonder if she thinks I can’t hear her, but this thought races out of my mind as quickly as it came. I believe the last trace of parental concern vanished from beneath this roof ten years ago when I began to exhibit the first signs of adolescent independence.

My mother is in the next room, knocking back a cup of coffee laced with spirits, as per her usual custom. It is Monday, after all, and the unmistakable stench lingers in the air. The stench of inebriation is pervasive, and I’ve known it all my life. Her voice is coarse and laced with a hint, just a hint, of malice. Untrained ears wouldn’t be able to detect it, but after years of her disgust, I’ve become attuned to it. I can hear the incessant screeching of the springs of her recliner as she rocks, nursing the mug against her chest with more tenderness than she ever nursed me with. I anticipate that she’ll be in the exact same place by the time I get home. Perhaps she’ll have unfolded her legs and let them dangle limply off the armrest. Perhaps she’ll be unconscious. Precedent makes me think it will be the latter. I drag myself, dead weight, out of the bathroom. Maybe if she can actually observe the overall shitiness of my countenance, she’ll sympathize.

“Have you seen me, Ma? I look like I got hit by a fucking freight train last night.”
I lean in the doorway of the living room, making a conscious effort to slouch at an even more obnubis angle than usual. She sips from her cup, dutifully ignoring me. Her eyes wander erratically around the room, acknowledging every object save for me, the spawn that she disgusts with such fervour. This, I suppose, is indicative of my years of impassioned rebellion against her preferred method of absentee parenting. I study her face—the leathery skin; the unnaturally angular eyebrows she had tattooed on sometime before I was born; last night’s makeup collecting in the shallow creases—and nausea swells over me in an awesome wave. How I’ve served eighteen years beneath this woman, I’ll never know.

She continues to evade my gaze, leaving mine to wander about the room. It falls upon a cross-stitch sitting on the end table, some juvenile hobby project long since abandoned. I recall running my fingers over the exact same unfinished stitching as an eight-year-old, fascinated by both its intricacy and its potential to be a true testament to our attempts to function as a normal family. She had smiled proudly and told me she would hang it in the foyer above the shoe rack.

The packaging, still intact around the little hoop frame, claims it should say: “A happy family is but an earlier heaven,” attributed to a John Bowring, some guy who (among other things) was the fourth governor of Hong Kong.

Fucking Hong Kong.

I see “A hap” shakily embroidered at a rather unseemly angle in three different coloured threads. This trinket, like so much of our life here, was discarded at the first sign of inconvenience. I’m fairly certain my mother has no idea who John Bowring is, although she’d certainly be fascinated by his illustrious political career. Not to mention, atheism is one among the many stenches that hang in the air around here. The concept of heaven is foreign to us. Hell, on the other hand, is all around us, like love or Christmas. This family, this home and everything in it; we all reek of bullshit.

“Go get your shit together and get the fuck out of here,” she says, waving me out of the room like an unwelcome insect. A nuisance.

Why a school bus is necessary for anyone over the age of fifteen is beyond me, and I thoroughly resent my submission to it as I step in. As much as I hate the trek to school, I’m certain that nothing could occur during that walk that could be so emasculating as passing through the doors of the bus and taking a seat next to a fifth grader in pigtails. She acknowledges me with a hardware-wracked smile, and I turn to press my forehead against the window. I let my eyes glaze over and pretend that I don’t notice the bewildered stares of my peers as the bus creaks by them. Couples embrace on the sidewalk in front of the school, pawing at one another like newly declawed cat paws at furniture. Like they’re rediscovering the world or something.

That was exactly what I needed to see. I feel the bile rise in my throat. I’m going to be sick. I curse my mother in a harsh, hushed voice and make it through the bus doors just fast enough to stumble into the bushes and throw up.

I slowly regain consciousness in second period science when I realize that even coffee digests painfully in my derelict condition. I press my face against the desk and let the cooling sensation of the wood laminate permeate my skin. The teacher, blathering on about nomenclature, has been ignoring my nonchalance in his class for quite some time. This is decidedly unimportant to me, as I only need to get by this credit in order to graduate. In my yet-to-be-decided future plan, the only thing I’ve decided is that it won’t include things such as nomenclature. Food webs, perhaps. But not nomenclature.

N-O-M-E-N-C-L-A-T-U-R-E.
No-men-clay-ture.

I let the word drift around in my head for a while, mingling with the ever present chords that have been circulating there. Maybe I'll write a song about nomenclature. Maybe I won't. Maybe the song will write itself in my head. Now.

I become aware of the fact that I just might be drooling on the desk.

Yes...it's definitely pooling.

I wish it would pool enough for me to drown in it.

I drift down the hallway towards the cafeteria like some embattled spirit, nearly passing through my peers, though they make every effort to avoid me. We all move towards the double doors in a pathetic sort of formation, like we're cattle being driven to the slaughter. Not a far cry from what is served in there, to be honestly. I scrutinize the meat on my tray as I pass through the line, which I don't even recall entering; I'm nearly positive it still has a heartbeat. Yet, in my condition, hallucinations don't seem too out of the ordinary.

I take my rightful place at the very back corner of the cafeteria. I've all but resigned myself to the outsider status attributed to me so thoughtfully by my peers. It has penetrated my psyche, wrapped itself around my brain and squeezed out all outward signs of a personality. All that's left to do now is watch.

I cut into the roast beef. I never noticed until now how similar the flesh is to my own. I wonder if this thought makes me a cliche, and quickly decide that I don't care.

I chew. I watch. They watch.

I glance up at the clock.

It's barely eleven-thirty.

Qué do you parle?
By Jann Carriere

I speak languages
from the Mexican Quetzalcoatl
and Canada's native tongues.
I speak languages,
figurative and literal,
quiet and explosive,
and all mixed up together
—I'll call it esfranglish—

I speak words
from my mind
and my heart.
I can be afraid,
happy or angry,
and turn these moods
into words.
I can say fuck, damn, shit!
But it never feels as good as
Chinga de tu madre!
or even better
Tabarnak!

I can be mute and
still speak,
sometimes more clearly.
Tears run down my cheeks;
huddled up, shaking,
then smiling, mumbling a melody,
making my eyes slant, and
later flash with danger.
My face turns red, my jaw tightens
And after all,
I can yawn or
just nod off
and I don't need to say a thing.
I also speak through art.
Just one piece of work,
one single word
that speaks to millions of souls.
Que habla usted, ellos y yo
Qui parle votre langue, la leur et la mienne
Art!
Your eyes scanning down the sheet
are listening to me
I can draw, write,
-compose, paint
and then die
—I'll still be speaking to you.

So you ask me what I speak?
and I'll say...

what I speak is what I am
La que habla soy yo
Ce que je parle, c'est moi.

Herbie's Last Run
By E.Blaurock-Busch

Death has its own timing.
Time does not care
that light shines through
milky curtains of snow
blinding those left behind
while birds cling to icy branches
and pearls roll off frozen cheeks.
Time does not care.

You are so still, devoted, dear.
Your paws are crossed beneath your head,
your breath and gentle heart change beat.
In spite of pain
your eyes, no longer clear,
are filled with trust.

—Untitled by Alison Petrovich
Where I’m From
By Elyse Gagne

I was born to a wolf-pack
led by good ol’ reliable Lance
raised on all fours
among heathens
in a pagan Darwinian cult.
Mid-summer,
we’d dodge the Caravan
and paddle into the mystic Algonquin.

My childhood spent in battle
we had no dry gunpowder
but ream upon ream of snow
and a fortress forged,
frozen white with a hose.
Then fresh from the fight to the fire
and we’d feast on roast beast
and s’mores.

I grew up amongst
garden gnomes
gargoyles and gerberas galore,
came from thorns
bare feet
and neighborhood wildcats
all claws and flea collars.

I came back to mourn
marking graves with popsicle sticks
as is the custom there.
And even now
I can count on all my fingers and toes
every playmate and pet
real or imagined
left behind.

I tried white,
middle class suburbia

(continued without stanza break)

but this,
this was more familiar.

On failed attempts to speak to the dead
by Amélie Bouffard

I have lain on your grey stone
through rain and hail
and under black suns
Until I could have fallen though the empty sky
and my body was stiffer than the cold marble

I have wished upon a star
when the moon was hidden behind a thick cloud
and a sudden tiny ball of light shot through the sky
Until the last spark got swallowed
by the night
so dark

I have been to where you were supposed to be
so close I could have reached up with my hand
and touched you
there I’ve prayed
there I’ve shouted
from the top of mountains
and the top of skyscrapers
Until the wind carried your name away
and it vanished in the distance
and deafening silence boomed
in my ears

Not even your echo would answer me back
Self-Inflicted Freedom

By Erin Shea

Do you live as others or do you have a self?
Are you vividly alive?
Do all the big questions still keep you awake?
Do you ask them anymore?

When did you get lost?
Where has your quirky liveliness gone?
Do you dance, laugh and breathe?
How often?

Can you bear to hear the sound of her walking away?
Did you imagine that things would turn out this way?
Were you aware of how thin she became?
Did her translucent skin cross your selfish mind?

Where were you the first time you tried it?
Was it worth it?
Do you regret trading affection for affliction?
A loving family for this miasma of despondency?

Do you live as others or do you have a self?
Are you vividly alive?
Do all the big questions still keep you awake?
Do you ask them anymore?

“I am pepperminted awake by hot tea in the mug you left behind.”

—Anonymous
January 2013. Maya believers reschedule apocalypse.

—Anonymous

Empty Tea Cups
By Jennifer Fytelson

Last night, Bushwackers called.
The allure of Mr. Hudson and the dance floor
was too much.
He wore that bumble bee hat.
After, we all went to Shakeey's.
In the morning, two empty tea cups
sat on the kitchen table.
The flat I once resided in was now
hollow and empty.
Most came to say good bye
Who says I can't make here, my home?
(Oh yea, Dad did)
Bills, school and family beckoned.
He hugged me: "Be a good girl".
As I walked off into the terminal,
leaving him behind,
I was hit with memories,
swooping around my head like pigeons.
I could still hear his laugh
(My fear of pigeons always amused him).
Memories of gulping down Bulmers Pear cider,
Holding his hand while we ran through Camden,
Falling into him on the tube to Euston.
How familiar he looked...

Freak
By Alexis Chouan

He had other projects; he had always known they would get in the way between the both of them. He had met them first and for a while they were all he had. In his loneliness, he had created a life where he wouldn't need anyone else. He had his projects and passions. They had furnished the space of a life left vacant by his inability to connect with others. He certainly had not wanted things to end up this way. He had long dreamed of a surrounded life – one among the crowd, one of their own. But of course, a relationship required the effort of two. With his fantasies, he was at liberty to create whatever he wanted all on his own. Resigned to being a one-man-show with no audience, he had planned out his independent life, not by choice, but need. It helped him survive, and beat the hell out of complaining about it anyway.

But then, she had come in. He had wanted her, but never dared expect her – a long-lost desire, negating all the plans he had built. His projects had saved him, but also locked him into his own mind, cut him off from the real world. He'd had a hard time letting her in, beyond the barriers he had put up, equating her with his imaginary. Yet, she had made it through, into his life and world. There had not been much room for her at first, but she had managed to make some. She had walked into a house filled with his large ideas and furnished with his ambitious projects and for a while, she had observed it all. She had taken it in, contemplating him, understanding him. Then, eventually, she began to redecorate. Slowly at first, she moved around the smaller ideas, just to compromise and have more space to herself. As she grew in comfort, she started taking on his bigger projects, and moving them to a room at the back of his mind, where she could not see them anymore. She knew that did not erase them, but at least she was more visible, when she was not crowded by all the other important things in his life.

It was not a vicious attempt to change him, but her own strategy for survival, in competition with everything else he held dear – all of that, which had a capacity to suffocate her. For even though he did not know it, she needed him just as much as he needed her. He had spent so much time alone, he had never given much thought as to her own loneliness. He was grateful to have her, and just assumed she had been fine before. That this was her normalcy. But in fact, it was her exception as well. Like him, she had once been a freak.
So now, here they were. Did he love her? Probably. But not necessarily the most. His biggest tragedy was that he had met his great love long ago, but it was not a person. It was an idea. An idea was safe to love: always present, never demanding. It would be his to own forever. But in the end, it was a solitary love, an exclusive one. It would only allow further company to be temporary. And it broke his heart.

His world was now decorated according to the projects she found flattered her. He loved this vision she had of things and dared to believe it was compatible with the rest. But deep down, he knew it was not. Sometimes, after she had fallen asleep, he would wander off to that back room, where she had stored all his solitary ideas – those that did not match their relationship. There they all were, lined neatly on the shelves, accumulating dust. He softly caressed them, nostalgic of all the energy he had put into them, the time they had spent together and remembering just how much they had saved him, when they were alone together. He would pick one up and gently cradle it in his arms. A baby, if he ever had one. Rocking it back and forth, he would try to show it that it was not forgotten and, in a glorious moment of contemplating the future, he would slowly whisper to it: 'Someday…'

-Four Years, Four Months, Four Days by Regine Neumann and Lili Xu

Gait Art Show

The Physicality of Love

By Leah Davidson

Your eye perceives sunrays in the black of night.
Shadows fall, concealing the promise of tomorrow.
You tiptoe slowly,
longing, needing, trusting.

Your ear extracts and deciphers music amid the noise.
A cry breaks forth from the crescendos and diminuendos of a lullaby.
You find me heaving,
chagrined, empty, alone.

Your mouth searches from a treasure cove of words.
Syllables spill into a sea overflowing with fish in haphazard circles.
You call to me softly,
gentle, wistful, patient.

Your hand follows the curves of my body in yearning.
Bumps protrude, belying the slickness of Vogue.
You love me regardless,
warmly, unconditionally, blindly.

Your foot stands by my bedside as I nightmare and ail.
Colourful dancing beckons beneath a monochromatic sky.
You wait prayerfully,
for me, for tomorrow, for us.

You take one final, long glance in my eyes.
Light twinkles, igniting an inextinguishable fire.
You find my soul aligning with yours,
bare, spacious, beloved.

"Under warm covers, refusing to see the red digits of morning 'till the radio sings; I am the winter bear."

-Anonymous
Just Drive On By, Nothing to See Here

By Kristen Cleghorn

This place should probably not be open at this time of year, economically-speaking. A few cars, lots of trucks, a Greyhound every week. It's not enough to operate on, but since we live here, might as well stay open. You know the kind of place I'm talking about – the sad, ramshackle type. You wonder about these places aloud as you pass at full speed, but there is usually no reason to stop. Definitely not for a delicious meal, unless you love frozen then deep-fried fare. Those that do stop are a different sort than most, the kind that really need to fulfill their cravings, be they overpriced calories or just the need to see a human face after miles of lonely road. We are here for those that are wandering, running, unable to anticipate their future desires. After all, lodges like this are an institution, a reoccurring rite of passage for that certain breed of traveler. Truckers resting their asses, for example. Those truckers, they sit all day in their trucks, only to sit somewhere else on their coffee breaks. Maybe you become a trucker because you hate to stand.

People stop here only when they need to. Sometimes they buy something, not because they want it, but because they pity us. They wonder what we are doing here, how the circumstances of our lives culminated to this point. Not that this is a hopeless situation. You get used to it. You get comfortable. There is a certain amount of freedom in being stuck on some remote stretch of the Alaska Highway. Freedom to be whoever we want.

Customers expect us to be weird. They would be disappointed at an uneventful stop. No danger or intrigue to liven up their rare foray out of the vehicle. A bit of eccentricity doesn't really pose them any threat – they're in and out in five minutes, half an hour at the latest.

When you hear of something gone wrong on an all-but-deserted stretch of highway, you sympathize, but still can't help but feel as though it was expected – those people knew what they were getting into. Or, their affiliation with isolation had probably been leading to that point long before they arrived. It's easy to understand that those places, they get lonely, and those people, they were already a bit off before the long, northern winter set in. They chose to come live in the cold and dark, along the vast frozen stretches of road. It's dark all day here in the winter. It can do strange things to people. We all cope in our own ways.

Some people are here because they were unable to find work somewhere with higher standards. There is probably an ex-con working in the kitchen, but is he of the more dangerous variety? A rapist or murderer? Or simply a bank robber or petty thief? Not to marginalize former convicts, but there are those who deserve the stigmatization, when they take advantage of remoteness, vulnerability and close quarters. But you can't kick someone out to wander the highway in -40. We're all in this together, so we pick our crew wisely. Remote locations force us to rely on each other, for security purposes. Isn't that what group living has always been about, in terms of evolution? It depends on the people, though. Some people don't play well with others.

What starts as mild discomfort can escalate as the winter becomes longer, colder, darker. Your whole world seems to exist within the confines of a lodge that is falling apart, never warm enough, with a trickle of passersby eating burgers and filling coffee thermoses for the drive. Your sleaze tolerance mounts, and you get that nagging feeling that things are not quite right.

Then, when tension builds, people pick sides. The breaking point probably takes place in February. A new rhetoric begins to develop: "That tease has been flirting with him all winter, what did she expect?" Good question. What can one expect in a place like this? Living in the North breeds a certain kind of strength. The ability to do what must be done. It's like killing the spare puppies you can't afford to feed. Sure, it's sad, but things happen that must be dealt with. Yes, there are laws and rules, but we are far enough away, and morality has a different flavor here. Drifters and unwanted types tend not to be missed. Officials take awhile to get here, and when they do, there is not much to find.

"The odour was unpleasant; the corpse had been rotting for a while; no one will ever elucidate the murder of a transgender prostitute."

—Anonymous
Lethe
Denise St. Pierre

I stand stricken on the shore;
my grief is hard, fast, and immutable.
Sucking in breaths through a sandpapered throat is no small feat, you know.
(Evidently, you have left me.)

This loneliness has metastasized spreading through every sinew, like a handprint on a sweating window, you remain long after the initial impression has faded.
(You are a cancer in my sanity.)

Everything around me is you; the perfumed air, the forensic proof of your presence. The wind is mocking me, whistling the subtly sweet notes of a song we once loved.
(Can it be that it was all so simple then?)

I grasp at the shreds of you, carelessly left behind. Your parting words stick in my mouth like toffee. I gnaw at them, yet I find no meaning.
(I never liked sweets anyways...)

I find myself drawing absentminded shapes into the mud, a convenient canvas that will erase my shame. A cross, the sun, the moon, and the swirling symbols of a brown-skinned people.

(I've forgotten how to believe.)

The world is eternally temporal, yet nothing holds me here. What once bound me to you has long since washed away. The river overruns its banks; everything is lost.

—First 3 AM Dream by Lili Xu, Gait Art Show
"Jeremiah lived in a deep and humid well. He liked to call bohemians to sing to him by yelling long and melodic shouts towards the sun."

—Anonymous

Inception

By Zoe Costanzo

i.
Timeworn library:
old wooden shelves,
stained glass windows,
filled with the memories
of Shakespeare
Heighron
and J.K. Rowling.

ii.
Unopened notebooks
and unsharpened pencils.
Collecting dust
atop a worn piano;
fissured ivory collecting fingerprints.

iii.
An old green table lamp
(long ago lost to a garage sale)
and Aunt Joan’s ugly pink armchair.
(It met the same fate.)

(continued with stanza break)

iv.
Sunflowers slowly nurtured, mimicking
the sun’s brilliance, reflected in ripples of the lazy ocean.

v.
above shines the sun
and the moon
and the stars
and the northern lights
(just like they did that summer in the mountains)

vi.
Memories, warped
by stained glass windows;
forgotten and lost—
until you remember.

—Into the Woods by Anonymous

45
I watch intently as my guests examine their sumptuously furnished and decorated surroundings with uncertainty. Ever since I acquired it through a risky gamble, I have been telling visitors that I inherited Tudor Hall from a distant relative. Tonight, my guests are a motley crew—the seductive Miss Scarlet who I know to be more cunning and deceptive than she appears. Mrs Peacock, a seemingly mild-mannered governess with a chequered past, and great wealth of knowledge on subjects that would not be found ordinary schoolbooks.

I walk past Mr Green who has spent the last five minutes studying my collection of souvenirs and trinkets on display. He spends most of his time in London’s East End, pick-pocketing and conning unsuspecting tourists and visitors. I have already told my staff to be on the lookout for any missing artefacts. He holds up a revolver and examines it.

“I wouldn’t touch it too much if I were you, old chap” I say lightly. “These were not all acquired through registered dealers.” I wink and Green hastily replaces the revolver, trying to wipe his telling marks off as much as possible with his cuff.

Colonel Mustard gives Green a disdainful look from over by the fireplace, where he is smoking his pipe. He knows more than he lets on about firearms and acquiring questionable weapons. In fact, it is thanks to him that I have such an impressive collection.

Professor Plum is examining with great interest a book on the subject of evolution that I have left on the table. It was an interesting collection of essays on scientific evolution as well as psychological development. His obsession with antique books and magpie tendencies are the cause of his own collection, which would rival many libraries.

My gaze travels over to Ms White, my housekeeper, as she pulls the rope to draw the curtains. She has gnarled calloused hands that have aged through darker activities than chopping vegetables. It is a chilly night and the fog has settled.

‘So, Mr Black,’ Miss Scarlet purrs as she delicately rearranges her wrap. Real fur, of course. ‘What is the occasion for such a gathering?’

I smile at her. ‘I think you all know why you are here,’ I reply.

‘Can’t say I do,” Colonel Mustard puffs impatiently. “I’m afraid I’m not familiar with your other guests.”

—Second 3 AM Dream by Lili Xu, Gait Art Show
"Now, that surprises me, Colonel," I respond, taking out my cigarette case. I take my time lighting up and blow out puffs of smoke in little circles. "Surely a man of your intelligence and history has worked out the connections in this room?"

Everyone eyes each other suspiciously:

"But then again," I laugh. "Does a man need an excuse to gather some of his... close friends for a weekend in country?" Out of the corner of my eye I notice the Professor shift uncomfortably. He has never had close friends in his life. Nor will he ever, I suspect.

Ms White begins serving cups of coffee. Only I notice some nervousness in her manner that had not been there before. My guests accept, but do not drink. Mr Green eyes the whiskey decanter in the corner, but does not attempt to help himself.

"There comes a time when one should broaden one's social circle," I say, with a hint of irony. "Now is the time to become acquainted with one another. Miss Scarlet makes a condescending sound at my suggestion—she prefers to operate autonomously. If my guests do not trust each other now, it is highly unlikely that they will after this night.

Now, I admit openly that I have led a life that has been far from respectable. I haven't been entirely honest with the people in my drawing room tonight, nor do I intend to start now. The past few months I have had no doubt that one or all of them would come after me. I am tired of waiting and living in fear, the largest of which being the consequences that would arise if my houseguests were to form an alliance. They would be the most ruthless criminal group known to society, and I have foreseen the hideous fate that awaits me should this group align themselves against me. It is for my own safety that I wish to prevent this from happening.

"Well, I think it's time for me to retire," Professor Plum declares. "Mind if I pick a book from your library, Black?"

I nod. He leaves, taking a candlestick with him, and I can hear his footsteps die as he hurries towards the library. I have no doubt that the books he takes tonight will not be returned.

"I think I'll do the same," Miss Scarlet says. As she sweeps out the room I notice a small knife strapped to her ankle hidden beneath the flowing material of her evening gown. I smile. How very predictable.

Mrs Peacock stands to follow Plum and Scarlet.

"Would you like some assistance with the understringing?" I ask.

"No, thank you, Mr Black," Mrs Peacock replies politely. There is a steely edge to her voice. Perhaps she has made the connections between my guests already. Or maybe she has planned some unsavoury activities for later tonight. "I have a bed wrench. I'll tighten the mattress ropes myself."

Mr Green leaves quietly and without ceremony. Colonel Mustard has taken no notice of the departures and continues to stare into the dying embers.

"Good night, Black," Colonel Mustard says quietly after a while, taking his leave.

"Good night, Colonel," I reply. "Watch out for the pipes outside your door. The plumber and carpenter have left their equipment here while they work on a few restoration projects."

The Colonel nods stiffly and leaves. I down a glass of whiskey and leave the drawing room myself. I walk slowly up the staircase. At the top, I pause and turn to survey the vast mansion that I have called home for the past decade—the richly furnished rooms and secret tunnels that lead from one to another. It is time to go.

I hear footsteps behind me, but before I can turn around something heavy connects with the back of my head. I feel my knees give way, and collapse in a heap. In those last few moments of hazy consciousness my only thought is that the web of lies and treachery is about to unravel, and I only bemoan that I cannot be there to witness its collapse.

"Intelligence has discerned that the stranger calls himself 'Dave'. Shortly, he will no longer be a problem."

—Anonymous
The Fall
By Kristy Benz

I

I know this place in summertime.
Now, in autumn, it is a mystery
with its shadows and loneliness
and lady bugs
all crawling towards that wasteland
of snow and darkness.

But today is different.
The sunlight drifts across the meadow
with the smoothness of honey
in contrast to these days of rust
and rain.

The rays slide down the tree trunks
like egg yolks,
caressing stone and leaf alike.
There is no chill on the wind,
not even a hint.
But the leaves of fire
tell another story.

Change approaches, appropriates this clearing
for its triumph.
The wind rattles the boughs
and clusters of leaves
part from their cradles.
They swirl into the sky
for their one flight of freedom
before they fall into the dust.

II

Autumn is death
some say.
But it is not all dirt and darkness
and decay.
This world of colour, this air of agelessness all beg you to address that proclamation: "Stay gold Ponyboy."

But why, Robert? Although gold is green and green is good, isn't the silver cloak of frost also welcome? True, the days will grow short, true the gold will fall and fade, and yes, the realm of fears and furrows will reign.

But there is honour in the Fall and beauty in the desolation to come. Those shoots of green will wither whether you tell them to stay or not. So instead, breathe in the light as it shivers towards dusk and embrace the secrets of nightfall.

The sky is a canvas the colour of tears and a vapour-stream wavers against it, streaking towards the east. Already the plane has passed into the realm of night and those brushstrokes of silver are the only evidence of its existence.

Imagine Adam and Eve on board, causing a stir in their fig leaves, banished from their homeland in the sun, and seeking someplace else. Whether someone begged them to remain, or chased them away with swords of flames, they will pass onto the other side. They will feel the fire and the frost.

"Prince kisses Princess. Royal necrophilia scandal."

—Anonymous

"White Feathers. Sunbeam then shadow. Bird poop in the face."

—Anonymous

—My India by Alison Petrovich
The Decision that Changed my Life

By Monica Lozano

Hotel Hampton Inn, Costa Rica. February 2000. With only a hundred dollars in my pocket and a plane to take in 2 hours, I must make a decision. Should I stay or go back to Colombia?

One week before, I promised my family that I would come back today. But I won’t do it. I have no work there. I didn’t finish my studies, my ex-husband is harassing me constantly, my mother does not stop telling me that I shouldn’t have divorced him and that I am a bad mother. If I stay here I could start a new life. Nobody knows me. Nobody tells me what to do. I can make my own decisions and if I am wrong, nobody will judge me. The yoke would definitely be broken.

I take the white van that brings me to the airport. With me, there is a group of people. They take pictures and talk and laugh joyfully. I am thinking of how lucky they are. They don’t have any idea of the storm I am earning inside me. While I am awaiting my plane, I open my passport and have a look at it. What a waste. It is full of empty pages that might never be used. The last one has my picture. I look sad. I remember that day. Three weeks ago, I went to the International Relations office at Bogota and I got passports for my children and for me. I had hoped to bring them with me eventually and offer them an opportunity. Now those expectations have evaporated.

I have this blue booklet in my hands. It has a fancy Taca Airlines logotype on it. It contains a boarding card with my name and a plane number and many other numbers that I cannot decipher. It is a Russian roulette ticket with two bullets inside: freedom or prison. Would I ever have enough money to buy another one if I returned to Bogota? Come back. Why? I have nothing there. Yes I do. My children are waiting for me. They are so little, so innocent; nobody will take care of them the way I do. My mother was right. I am a bad mother. Why am I here without them in the first place? How could I think to leave them? I love them so much. I feel tears running down my face. Oh God help me. What should I do? The clock is running. Each tick tock is like a mallet beating my heart.

There is no future for us if I come back. I remember that each time I saw a plane gliding across the Bogota sky or when I see people walking towards the international gates at the airport. I ask myself, “When will it be my turn?” Today I achieve it. I have left a country which never gave me an opportunity. It only has given me bad memories and an interminable list of mistakes one after the other.

I like it here. It is so peaceful. There is no violence. People wear their jewellery without fear. In one week here I have not seen any policeman. If I stay, I may find a job and bring my children with me. Am I recounting lies to myself? Am I amnesic? I have been looking for possibilities but haven’t been able to get anything. It has been a week of rejections. Just yesterday, I burned my last cartridge. I went to this place “Rancho San Miguel”. I saw its brochure at the hotel. It attracted my attention because it had pictures of horses in it. “Here, there is something I know.” I thought. My father is a former horseman. I grew up among horse parades and ranch festivals. So I went to offer my services. A beautiful place, a touristic ranch for Spanish horses. I heard the Andalusian music from outside the arena and the familiar sound of the horseshoes beating the concrete rhythmically. I entered that imposing hall. There were people and splendid horses adorned with bright colors. They were rehearsing a show. I talked with the proprietor’s son. He looked me up and down skeptically and said, “No sefiorita. I cannot help you.”

I should accept once and for all that I will never be good enough.

“Ding Dang Dong. Passengers to Bogota Taca Airlines flight 570 please board at Gate 5.”

It is time to stop dreaming. I have a plane to take. My head weighs two tons. I am so tired. I regain my strength to pick up my baggage. I am walking towards gate 5 through a long gray corridor when suddenly a thought floodlights my spirit. At the end of the aisle I see a woman behind the airline counter. I run towards her and ask, “Excuse me, could you tell me what would happen if I do not use this plane ticket today?” She rakes it, looks inside and with the serenity of Saturn she gives me the answer I need. “It is good for three months. Would you like me to change the date?” I answer, “Yes, two weeks more. Please.” I go back to that airport many times during the next three months to change the date of my ticket. However, I never take that plane.

Something happened in that corridor. It was supernatural. I was invaded by an extraordinary force that burst the bonds apart and also drew a big smile in my face. When I walked away from the gate, I was sure. The doubts had disappeared. I knew so strongly that I had an opportunity that I couldn’t waste. I was sure I would bring my children with me. I was certain I would have a better
life. When the automatic doors opened in front of me, I saw in my spirit a brand new book opened with gleaming white pages, and I knew that that book was for me. I left the airport with my head held high. I was ready to start again. I thought, "Well today is the day." I felt unstoppable.

Now, 11 years later, I do not regret my decision. It seems like somebody in heaven decided to give me a hand by taking me out of the mess I had been making for thirty years. Since then, every year brought good things. My children arrived six months later and I am married to a wonderful man who loves them as his own, and treats me like a princess.

—Poésie de l'eau by Maryse Fillion

—Myanmar Monks by Skylar LePoidevin
"There once was a student who needed a few bucks to pay for textbooks, so she entered a one line story contest hoping to win the prize."

—Anonymous

Save Us

By Julien Amar

Save us from poets; they just point out problems, complain, and do nothing about it.
Save us from glitches, from the blue screen of death, when you were just about to save and the crash goes unexplained.
Save us from fast food and the deep fryer you love so very, very much.
Save us from the Sunday morning church bells and the ring in your ears after you hear a loud noise.
Save us from Jesus, his hungry, gaping mouth eating dollar after dollar.
Save us from the military trampling and confusing and wasting what precious little blank we have.
Save us from bad dinner parties – awkward hosts with too much alcohol in the punch and not enough flavor in the chicken.
Save us from ourselves – from the unconscious wrongdoings and dreamy sins.
Save us from paper plates and Styrofoam – especially Styrofoam, O that angelic white; it’s artificial beauty more relevant every day, just shouting and laughing at how cheap and disposable and good it is.
Save us from the public perception of crime and the reality of a supply and demand kind of world.
Save us from our own blueprints which template nothing other than: doom, doom, more doom.
Save us from the children who ask too many questions and save us from the children who don’t ask enough.
Save us – open the emergency exit and have the whole plane empty out single file into the ocean 30,000 feet below.
Then save us from drowning.
And the fall.
Save us from the annoying relative with his bad breath, his worse jokes.
And,
Save us from poets; they just point out problems, complain, and do nothing about it.
NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY
CONSULTATION SUR PLACE
Contributors:

Aimie Turcotte          Kristen Cleghorn
Alex Morency-Letto     Kristy Benz
Alexis Chouan           Lara Henerson
Alison Petrovich        Leah Davidson
Alissa Ralph            Lili Xu
Amélie Bouffard         Maryse Fillion
Denise St. Pierre       Michelle Frise
E. Blaurock-Busch       Monica Lozano
Elyse Gagné             Nicole Rutberg
Erin Shea               Prerna Ashok
Frank Willdig           Rebecca Estrada
James Pomerleau         Regine Neumann
Janie Carrier           Skylar LePoidevin
Jennifer Fytelson       Stephanie Martin
Julien Amar             Tristan Matheson
Katherine Perrotta      Zoe Costanzo