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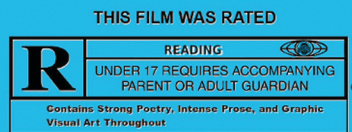
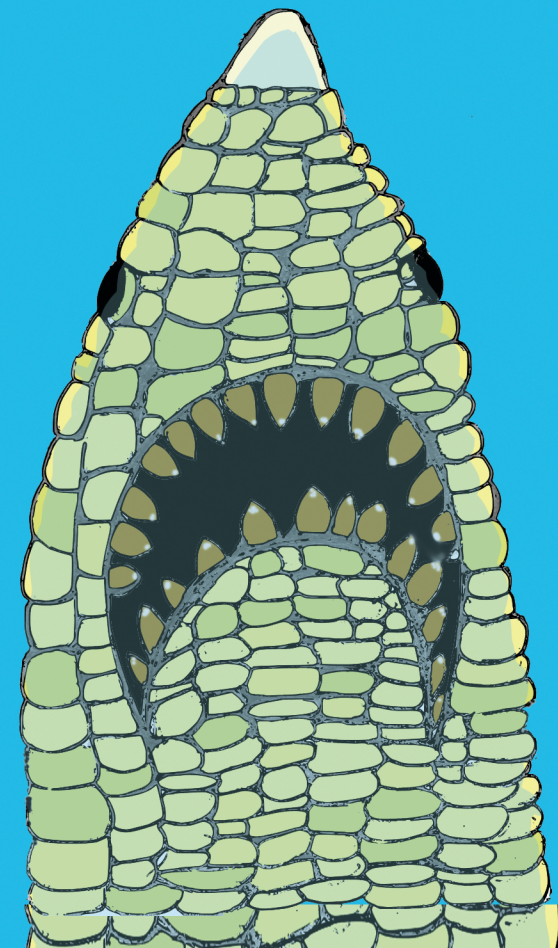
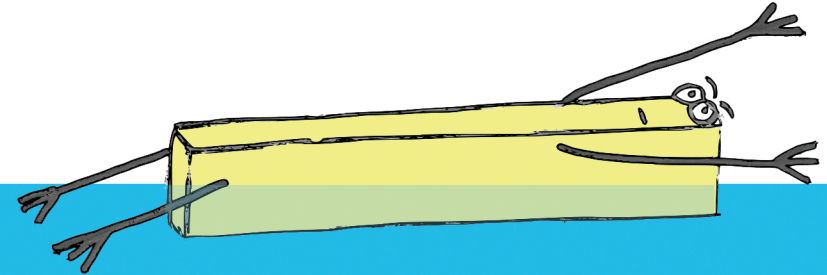
FIELDREVIEW

POPITY ISLAND HAD EVERYTHING. CLEAR
SKIES. GENTLE SURF. WARM WATER...

...POPCORN POPPED THERE EVERY SUMMER. IT WAS THE
PERFECT FEEDING GROUND.

OSU MARION PRESENTS "THE CORNFIELD REVIEW" STARRING BEN MCCORKLE AS "THE DOCTOR"
CASTING BY BRIAN WILDS STORY BY SAMANTHA LYNCH SCREENPLAY BY JOHN LONG
EDITED BY STEVIE EVANS PRODUCTION DESIGNER CASEY EDGINGTON
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MEG WEATHERFORD MUSIC BY MELISSA PUCCI
DIRECTED BY BEN MCCORKLE

CORNFIELD REVIEW | 2014 | 31



By the Creative Writing
Community at OSU Marion

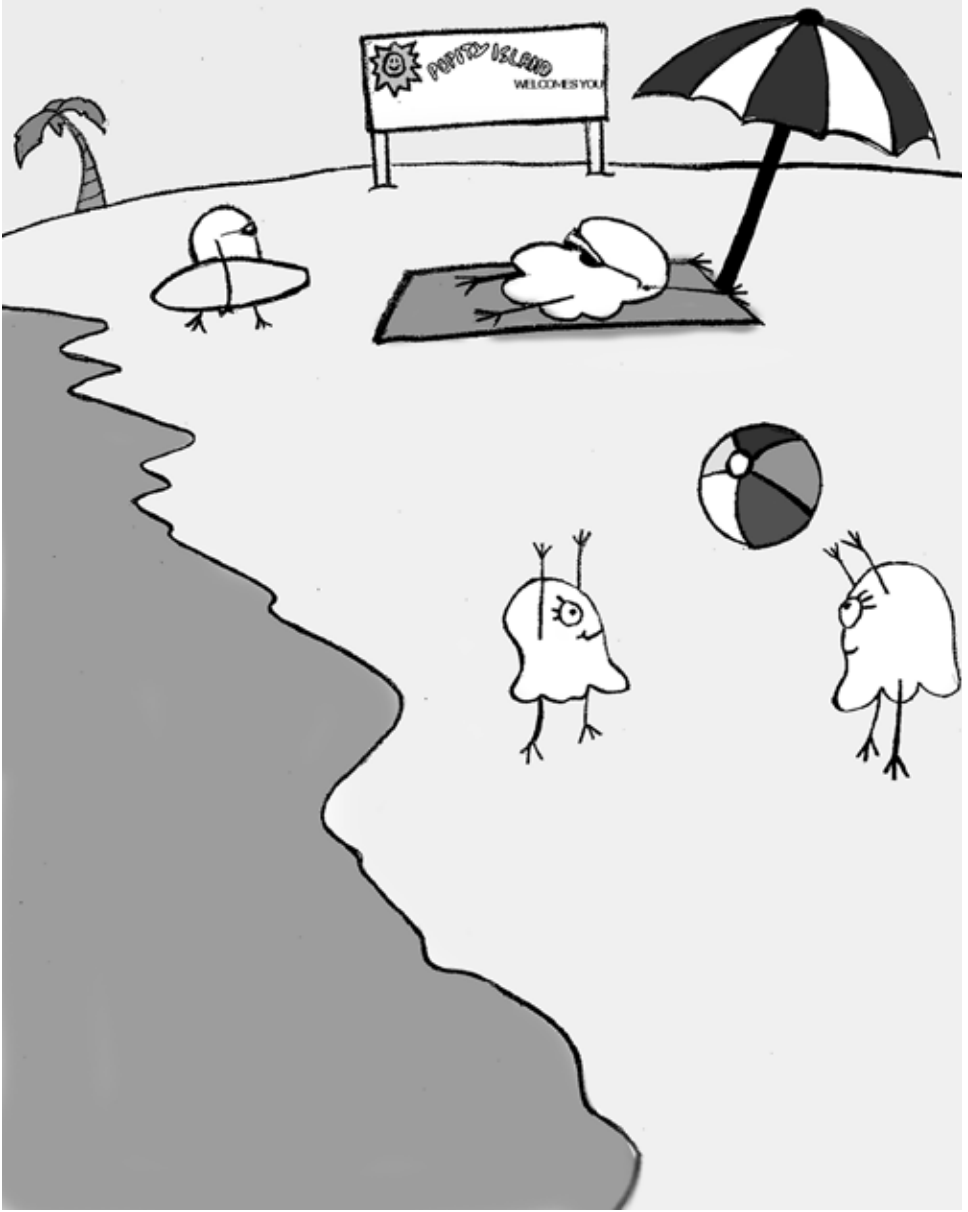


The Cornfield Review, OSU Marion, State University, Marion



CORN

FIELDREVIEW



A Literary Publication of The Ohio State University at Marion

VOLUME 31 | 2014

PREFACE

“WE’RE GONNA NEED A BIGGER BOOK!” This line, paraphrased from *Jaws* (incidentally, one of my all-time favorite films, and an obvious nod to our parody cover design), was uttered on more than a few occasions as the Editorial Board of *Cornfield Review* worked tirelessly to curate this year’s volume. A smaller group than usual (seven) confronted a much larger pile of submissions than we typically get (nearly two hundred poems, short stories, and photographs). But much like those three rag-tag members of the Orca confronting a 25-foot, three ton great white shark, they got the job done. Thankfully, no one was eaten in the process.

We are especially thankful for the support—financial, emotional, and otherwise—we have received during this issue’s production. First among this group is the administration of OSU-Marion, led by Dean Greg Rose. Additionally, our English faculty, particularly our teachers of creative writing, including Stuart Lishan and Mike Lohre, have encouraged students to submit their best work to us. Mary Fahy, who annually teaches a digital photography course, is a steadfast friend of our publication as well (and based on the quality of her students’ submissions, a fine teacher to boot!).

This year’s Editorial Board was indefatigable, and worked through a long, bleak winter to bring this issue to life. Members of the 2014 Board consist of: Casey Edgington, Stevie Evans, John Long, Samantha Stover Lynch, Melissa Pucci, Meg Weatherford, and Brian Wilds. Given the heft of this year’s workload, the Board definitely deserves a slow clap of appreciation.

Cornfield Review is published annually. The Editorial Board is interested in quality poetry, prose, artwork, and photography. Submissions are primarily solicited from students at OSU-Marion, Marion Technical College, and Columbus State Community College-Delaware, although we accept submissions from off-campus writers and artists as well. For more information, please email me at mccorkle.12@osu.edu, or visit us online at <http://cornfieldreview.osu.edu>.

— Ben McCorkle, Faculty Adviser

The Cornfield Review Mission Statement:

We strive to represent the literary and artistic voice of Central Ohio by giving area college students (as well as others) an opportunity to see their work published in a professional literary journal. Additionally, we are passionate about achieving a cultural impact that goes beyond local campuses and reaches into the greater community.

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poetry

See This Play, The Air Guitar.

Make music on the wall.
Broom stick fixed, washtub.
Then string it up with a gut.
Rib bones rattle in the hand.

Tap-it-tea-tap, bottle cap shoes
Listen to the bayou blues.
Smack on a lonesome lap.
Ham-bone, flip-it-tea-slap.

Mo-Jo root in a locket jewel.
Tiny tinny perfume tools.
A new sound, liquid mud.
Smack it with a new thud.

Accordions quarrel, phalanges
Napoleon fiddle in Franceangaea's.
A thing in the swamp, shallows.
Shell necklaces, eating shallots.

Hurricane wind, hot sauce espresso.
Trumpets blown for those that've gone.
Air guitar in the bayou, when singing song.

—*j.a. cummings*

The Dawn

Upon the dawn comes the morn
To shine light on the poor and forlorn
May it bring new hope to those in need
And with its grace our mortal souls to feed

Rises of golden light shine bright
Showing us His unending might
Thought strong and powerful is His will
To the delicate flower He is gentle still

Causing new life to come forth
And us all our grief and sorrow to bare
Through within His arms we shall rest
When in death our arms are folded on our breast

The meadows glisten with morning dew
Instilling in us a gift we never knew
A gift to know our savior there
To live without sorrow and without care

—*Devon Lyle Hardwick*

Electrical Serenade

I wake, I stir, and finally rise
To find the morning's light fill my eyes
I journey down the stair
To find my old friend firmly rooted there

With its humming, humming sound
Filling the air immediately around
With reassuring comfort and joy
Reminding me of some simple toy

Yes this metal box is my friend
Who is always willing to lend
A cool breath of air to soothe
When my life falls out of groove

At noon time still there it stands
With lunch and goodies in its hands
And there I set in blissful rest
To view the robins building their nest

As the day grows ever long
It happily plays its electric song
To fill my kitchen with life not there
And stands up tall without any care

For now the dinner bell has rung
And the pots and pans are all neatly hung
I shall sit with my dinner freshly made
As my refrigerator plays its electrical serenade

—*Devon Lyle Hardwick*



A Forgotten Model T

She sits dormant, waiting for
life again.

Curves and sharp lines make
up her body.

A bonnet trimmed in a dull chrome,
covers her sleeping soul.

Pistons frozen with a lifetime of
rust and dirt.

Panes of glass frosted with
dust.

She dreams of the rush and speed of the
accelerator.

—*Devon Lyle Hardwick*

My Life To Take

My life to take
 A heart to break
No tears to shed
 For the recent dead
The sod laid 'ore
 My God I implore
No breath to take
 A stone to make
To mark the place
 That time will erase
The lines long gone
 The path trodden on
To decay the shell
 Of life's earthly hell
To bid my life
 Free from all strife
One final farewell
 Farewell...

— *Devon Lyle Hardwick*

Ode to Falling Water

Hidden in a world of green
Lying spread out on the ground
Water rushing
Oh how serene

Undisturbed, horizontal pure lines
Panels of amber glass
Ancient stone shrouded in vines
Light pouring in, in mass

A man of great thought
A mind never ending

The fame never sought
The love never ending

To create a world of his own
Never knowing the cost
A lover never to have grown
So much had to be lost

A world known style
A legacy resolute
Beauty that would beguile
A greatness astute.

—*Devon Lyle Hardwick*

English 4566 Group Ghazal, October 2013

The world parts, as vacant hearts descend in cold December,
And memories, blackened, look for means to mend in cold December.

Goosebumps arise on my arms and knees.
Arthritis makes it hard to bend in cold December.

My grandma's cookies and hot chocolate, so good!
Scarves are the latest trend in cold December.

The dead and the alive are seen at odds,
But both ends blend, in cold December.

Lost in dark shadows I barely remember.
Snow and ice make their amends in cold December.

The ash from the fire that burns my skin:
My heart I feel I must defend in cold December.

The chilly breath of winter freezing my flesh to the bones,
A burning, icy fire that your touch alone suspends in cold December.

How hard it is to travel with such sorrowful sight:
My raspy breath grasping for you in winter's sin, in cold December.

The hollow cries of forgotten children scream in the streets,
While within my mind my memories upend in cold December.

The homeless man sits in icy snow, shivering:
A piece of bread and change I lend, in cold December.

The brisk winter air continues to dwell
in my fingers' cold touch, that bitter friend, in cold December.

Here's to us on this journey together,
To have and to hold, as our beginning ends in cold December.

4,566 seconds equals just over 76 minutes (not even a week's worth of class!).
as sweet time with each other fails at last to distend, in cold December.

—*Stuart Lishan, Whitney Taylor, Stevie Evans, Brittany Long, Brian Wilds,
Janay Dyer, Ruth Albright, Melanie Waits, Andrew Pinkerton, and Ashley Irvin*

The Beginning and The End

(Inspired by Doug Ramspeck's "Mechanical Fireflies")

You showed me what you meant
When you told me it was only the beginning.

Sitting awake at two a.m.
reading Nicholas Sparks novels
in a lukewarm bath.

Watching the way your chest rises and
falls as you exhale in your sleep.

Smiling at the way your brows
knit when you frown.

Building an imaginary life
out of legos and masking tape.

Plucking emotions from a
worn and torn white
paper bag.

Bearing the desolate solitude
that fondles my lonely heart.

Removing the caked mascara from the
damp corners of my eyes and feeling
the stinging witch hazel that reminds me

I'm still alive.

.

—Brittany Violet Long

The Bonfire

crackle, pop, sizzle
breaking the muted silence
like a twig under foot

warmth radiating
rupturing the Autumn air
raw heat stroking flesh

orange embers blazing
undulating waves of lust
flames dance in the night

lolling trails of smoke
gray clouds floating in the air
white whirling wisps

fierce fire creeping
up old, forgotten logs
final wild slumber

Soft light in the darkness
remnants of a bewildered soul
a lamp in the night

—*Brittany Violet Long*

Good Friday Shrapnel

I'm pretty sure Jesus talked to me
in a dream last night,
while I was tucked beneath my sheets.

I dreamt of water,
a vast body of water...
I think maybe it was the ocean.

The morning sun had settled in the sky
and I was swimming alone.

A stern voice cried out to me to be careful.

The voice sounded
worried and weary.
But I didn't listen;
I just kept swimming alone.

I swam past the desolate pier.
I swam past the bouncing buoys.
I swam and I swam and I swam,
until my mundane life began
to disappear.

I let the sun soaked water embrace
my tired body. I could feel the sun
baking my back into a crispy shade
of salmon pink. I let the smell of salt
and brine sting my nostrils. With every
inhale I felt the moist evaporation
resisting in my lungs.

I swam past an old rusty, red dredge
and vaguely noticed the commotion
on the auxiliary tender anchored
by it's side. Until...

I heard the screaming protest of
metal shards exploding.

I can remember feeling
jolted

alarmed
alone and
frightened.

I tried to duck
beneath the surface of the water,
but the shards ripped and pierced
the skin of my burnt back .

I tried to swim fast, but
my arms were too heavy and my body
had grown weak and slow.

Then a man who I thought
was maybe my father,
swam out to meet me.

Appearing out of Nowhere.

“Take a deep breath,” he said,
as he pushed my head and
my body under the water.

I can remember feeling panic.
I thought he was trying to drown me.

But the man was hugging me.

His muscular body twitched
and contorted against my own.
Agony escaped from his mouth,
freeing air bubbles.

I started to drown and then
I woke up, feeling out of breath.
I was lying in a damp sea of
sweaty sheets; salt water
seeping from my pores.

I looked at my palms because
I could have sworn I would find little pieces of
metal shards in my hands.

—*Brittany Violet Long*

Silence.

The Silence is so loud

It hums violently

Screaming at my eardrums

It threatens to bust my resolve

Driving me insane

I hate the way it sounds

The heavy

Ringing

Ringing

Ringing in my head

The lulling sound whispers my name

Hypnotizing me with its spell

I try to fight it

But I just can't escape

—*Brittany Violet Long*

Where the Magnolias Grow Wild and Free

Down in Louisiana there is a house hidden in the bayous under the moon.
By the Sabine River where the Magnolias grow wild and free near the sea,
Spanish moss flows like waterfalls from the trees lining the streets.
If you listen, you can hear the swamp blues along the Baton Rouge. Rhythm
guitar, sultry saxophone and the Cajun accordion making ripples in the water.
There is a woman named Josephine, whose veins flow full of southern magic.

In the purple shadows, Madame Marie grew a mistress of magic.
Josephine learned the art of dark kanga under the blood red moon,
foreshadowing power to come like the wrath of Gustave upon the sea.
Musty departed ancestors walked the violet-lit streets,
while her beauty was frozen in her features. The immortal rhythm
of the forever-young moves like the gentle sway of running water.

Where black steel lattice fences covered with trinkets of fresh rainwater
surround the old house with peeling white paint, keeping the magic
from escaping, a sacrifice was planned but a curse was made in the moon-
lit night echoing like the dreary melody of a distant violin rising from the sea.
Can you hear the ghost of Beauregard whisper "Shiloh" in the streets?
A lulling come-hither of voices rising from the grave, quickening your heart's
rhythm.

Immortal love drips like single particles of sand in an hourglass. The rhythm
of a broken heart ceases leaving blood to boil like water
in a red, hot kettle. Love forbidden by the bindings of magic.
The lovers made a vow to love through life and death on a moon-
less night in late November. Emotions found peace by wandering the shores of the sea,
when she could no longer hide from the haunting vestiges of lost love lingering
in the streets.

Red brick dust lines the floors of the doors on the streets.
Her thumping heart beats like a quick drum rhythm.
A rose-scented, cross-shaped candle in a basin of oil and water
Chalk, sulfur, blood and hair: The foul aroma of dark magic
hangs in the air. Heaviness hovers like the creeping moon;
Deities wash over her like blustering waves in the sea.

Her milk-filmed eyes looked as cloudy as the stormy sea
Her possessed screams rumbling through the desolate streets
French connotations rolled off her tongue in staccato rhythms
"It is time Lord, to break these chains of the Devil's hold. Let water

wash over me, Lord, cleanse me of this sin foretold." She could feel the evil magic causing her convulsing body to collapse into a silent coma under the eclipsed moon.

Thirty days under the Louisiana colored sky, while the moon was in full bloom and the rhythm of the calm sea seemed to swoon, there was a mysterious man standing near the water, far from the streets of Bourbon: A man whose eyes had a slight gleam of magic.

—*Brittany Violet Long*

Before the Nova

They were bored that night when they switched on the monitors and discovered that the snow was in its advanced stages.

A few remaining people had left their long-since buried cars and were leaping to their deaths from bridges.

They disappeared into the white banks below them.

A scan through each building over the next few days confirmed the suspected: save themselves, only a small band of militia remained alive in the world. Plans were drawn and they waited.

On the seventh day after they had begun to monitor, the soldiers arrived at their door, placing them under arrest. That night they ignored the locks, withdrew their pistols, and one by one, shot the sleeping army. Their work done, some walked outside into the now quiet snow. Others took pills. The last one looked into the barrel of a gun while the trigger slid back.

On that last day,
the white earth was still,
and the Perceiver smiled.
And the smile smelled of spring.

—*Tony Marconi*

If I Woke to Find You

if I woke to find you
sleeping in my arms
the first light of dawn
faint against the rhythm
of your beating heart
my senses would be filled
with the taste and sound
of your breath
the scent of you
caught in shadows dissolving
as our hands entwined

if morning found you flushed
stirring beneath touches
only dreamed before
i would answer
the songline urge
with my lips
until the waiting years
fused our bodies undefined
into nerve and muscle and will
forever heard
in the echoes of your sighs

—*Tony Marconi*

Eva's Song

Twice at my hand it was nearly over,
and countless times my thoughts have let me die.
To have loved such a one as that: The world stares
fascinated, asking only to be properly appalled.

What was it like, Eva, tell, to share
your bed at his twisted whim?
Were the blood-drenched lips smooth
against your awkward body? Did he beat you down,
burn holes with cigarettes, and shave your pubis bare?

The feckless would know; they beg to know
what gives this man his power over them.
The conqueror's robe, shining,
and dropped by night at my bedroom door,
rises of its own to haunt their dreams.

These hounds of death prattle unaware;
frightened by the answer locked in the eyes
of their own silent wives.

For when, at last, the sheets have fallen free,
leaving the master of this house
prickle-pocked with cold and drained of will,
I alone am left to feel the course of history
as beads of sweat that run across my breast.

—*Tony Marconi*

Gästhaus

Wooden tables rest in the embrace
of the fire's open warmth. Old men
pour wine from a bottle and sip on
memories of vintage years in pasts
now story-booked in their distant eyes.

The younger men raise their mugs in song,
preparing a chorus of frozen moments
against the maybe-hours of future age.

Whispering couples in darkened corners
steal furtive touches of reassurance,
blending with the bubbly smiles
offered by the almost pretty bar maid
whose thick thighs tease maybe
beneath her short, rustling skirt.

We all have private homes, easily reached
by short walks through the snow-crisp winter air;
but to leave would be unthinkable; to leave
would be an act of wanton destruction;
for here, we are one—as a family,
kin to the forest outside to which
the falling white clings, even as we cling to
each other against the cold and empty night.

—*Tony Marconi*

Masada Cries

Masada cries,
and I am torn up the tortuous crags
of barren peaks so void of life
that even the blood
from a thousand cut throats
could never cause
a single grass blade's whisper.

Pride carries me to god-made,
man-made walls; pulls me, pleading,
to the ranks of the already fallen;
the fallen to be.

Are nations always born in death?
Is not the world a nation bound
in the sorrow of slaughter?

Yet, Masada cries,
and pride swells through my legs;
lifts my arms to shield and sword.
It whispers, a seductive harlot,
making me a man spitting
defiance against other men.

Masada stands: The rock of my soul,
the soul of my flesh; solid within,
destiny and regret, impaling
far deeper than the Roman sword.

—*Tony Marconi*

Facade

*In the flesh do we find life?
Dancing around within the day
Joy and peace joined together
But be careful because I may
Lead you away and astray*

*Flesh we see is falling off
Disconnected and disarrayed
Cut from life and left alone
Wandering streets, from home to home
In need of life, I now know*

*For what I thought when I said,
"Dancing around within the day,"
Was a dream, disguised to me
By blindness in my ignorance
I now know, new days I see*

—Andrew Pinkerton

Identity

Identity. You and I strive
To establish who we are. But
Maybe—and I could be talking crazy—
But maybe identity is not
Yours or mine to define.

You see, maybe we are the source
Of our meaning and purpose
And those dead dudes with
Bushy beards were dead wrong, or
Maybe we've bought the lie that
A product of chance could possibly
Make such a presumptuous leap.

But let's think this through.
Finite beings trying to tran-
scend into the infinite
Something simply doesn't add up.
What if those dead dudes were
Right and we don't have a right,
Neither you nor I?

Then, we were meant for more
Than selling our bodies for selfish hobbies
Then, we see our hope is set on
Nothing more than sinking sand.
Sand that falls and fails and disappoints and
Points to a hope that will prove
Itself worth the worry and pain and
Joy beyond wealth or power or
Your favorite football team winning
A silly game. So game on, right?

See, Paul proclaims and points to
This powerful point: Our hope and
Joy are bound up in one
Beautiful phrase: "In Christ."
In Christ our strength is sure
In Christ we're called a child of
The living God. In Christ we reign
Forever in heaven. In Christ love
Has been lavished on the rebel who,
Apart from grace, would never have it.

So, identity. We're struggling to fight
But it might simply be that
In Adam, it's harder to see that
In Christ we're already free.

—Andrew Pinkerton

Infected

They're coming, taking over
It doesn't matter; they're inside and out.
I can feel it in my head,
No matter, I can't escape
My dreams, they reside there too.
I believe I've been infected

My home, my town have been infected
This fight, it's far from over.
I need to know, where can I run to?
I fear and feel there's no way out
If I run, my escape
Will be only in my head.

If it were simply in my head
Then I could write off this infection
As insane, but it's just an escape
And when it's all over,
My fictional way out
Would be damnable too.

Have you felt, or heard it too?
Come; confirm it's not in my head.
Will we work our way out?
Send me some cure for this infection,
And will you whisper, "It's over?"
Or that we need more than a hero with a cape?

I've found the way to escape:
It's larger than just us two.
Fight, for it's finally over.
It's not a way to get ahead,
But rid ourselves of this infection.
Only now, follow me out.

You said to me, "Out
Here, it's too bright," but escape
From infiltration and infection
Will at first be painful to
My untrained senses but ahead
I saw my problem's over.

Now I'm out, and it's all over.
My escape started in my head,
But was bigger too, because I was infected..

—Andrew Pinkerton

Slightly Vanilla

My childhood began by realizing I was different;
I found that I had abilities no one around could wield.
I knew acceptance and community, and discovered
a magic in my chest that cannot be diminished.

At ten years old, I began an adventure
to return an old relic back to a distant land.
I learned the meaning of friendship,
loyalty, and perseverance.

At age thirteen, I dug into my core
and forged myself anew with feminine armor.
My gender is not a weakness or a restraint,
I am a warrior, a magic-maker, and a savior.

At fourteen, I emerged from my egg as a serpent,
breathing fire around my just-hatched scales.
I awaited the destiny that comes to all those like me,
those who are small and grow to the heavens.

Fifteen found me fighting with the divine,
deciding who was worth saving and at what cost.
Once I had grown to heaven, it could no longer hold me;
I fell knowing that good and evil aren't always clear.

Sixteen was the age where I grew my wings,
feathers catching fire from the sun that I flew towards.
When given the choice to be a hero to others,
I fought savagely instead to save what was mine.

Age seventeen gave me a disease I didn't know about,
making me count the rose petals as if they were poison.
Self-identity is what I strove for, freedom,
and I heard my thoughts be whispered from their lips.

Eighteen was the year I tasted diversity and swallowed identity;
I knew who I was, learned the canvas of my mind.
Separation of ourselves into small boxes enraged me,
and I set the system on fire as I burned.

Here I am at age nineteen, reading the words
that I have just written and smiling.
Because through all the adventures,
I never once got a papercut from their pages.

—Aly Reed

deception

you're half of what you could be
so please stay that way, My dear
your hideous magnificence
bound by luscious light
that burns My eyes

I'll dazzle you with beauty,
whisper words in your ear;
your sweet Selfishness
seeped in the Shadow
that I crave

I'll scream out your Worthlessness
and lock you up inside
your own Darkness;
drown you in hurt
that heals Me

I want to build you up
and break you down,
piece by lovely piece;
harm your heart
then maul your mind,
and there find My release

—*Rachel Schade*

My Shadow

There is a little girl in the mirror,
Who peers at me and smiles;
She says it's OK to be silly,
OK to dream a while.

There's a little girl whispering,
Saying to hold on tight,
To believe and trust in God
Who loves with all His might.

There's a little girl who sees
In all there is some good,
Despite hurt and heartache when
They don't do as they should.

This little girl, she shakes her head,
While my young heart grows old;
She knows though I tire and doubt,
And though I'm rarely bold,
I'll be fine and I'll find rest,
If I just do as I'm told.

—*Rachel Schade*

Words

Words are futile and empty.
They just aren't enough.
They can't let you dream my dreams
or feel my feelings.
They can't show you the pain
or make you hear the laughter.
They can't vanquish my nightmares
or bring a heart back to life.
They can't return what is lost, heal wounds,
or fill voids.
They won't encourage change
or ignite a cause.
They can't destroy or maim or
devour.
They will never ease the ache of suffering
or dry up a well of tears.
They can't save or renew you.
They'll never change your mind.

They're too feeble to explain
the paths I've taken,
the mistakes I've made,
the fears I wrestle,
the nights I face,
the hopes I cling to,
the stories I carry.

They're a cry for understanding
or a scream for help in the dark
that won't move you.
They can't haunt you
with their music or dissonance,
with their love
or their hate
or their indifference.

It's only in how they're shared and received
that they find their power
to kill and revive..

—*Rachel Schade*

The First Fear

It began in the mud
As most evil things do.
From primordial sludge
When the world was new
And it waited
And it hated
And it waits now for you.

—*Robert Sexton*

Fighting Sleep on a Lonely Country Road

A lonely country road
All around me darkness and silence
The moonless night a harbor of bad dreams and distant storms
Except for my headlights and reflections of passing signs
Ghastly outlines of eerie shadows
The white line my only anchor with reality
Tired eyes longing for sleep
But my brain saying not yet
Just a few more miles a few more curves in this winding road
The constant drone of the engine lulling me to sleep
Yet slumber is not an option
I must stay awake
Reality and fantasy blending like fog creeping through a valley
Casting shadows of fear and doubt
I cannot go to sleep
My mind playing tricks of the seen and unseen images on the road
Just another mile just another mile
Alas
The lights of my driveway a welcome reprieve
I am home
Sleep can now be my companion

—*Whitney K. Taylor*

The Finale

My mind slowed to that of a trickling stream along with my heart
How am I able to feel in such a way after something so emotionally exhausting
 Maybe it is because she is no longer in pain
 Then the tears began
 I cried uncontrollably for what seemed like an eternity
 Sleeping day in day out became my escape
 On occasion I had restless nights where sleep did not exist
I would sit in the old rocking chair in the room where she once laid staring at the
 wall
My mind playing memories like a 35mm film projector casting images through
 my brain
 Playing stopping replaying scenes we shared together
 I could see her in all her beauty
 Smell her sweet perfume
 Feel her warm embrace
 Hear her calming voice
Like a vacant old theater at a matinee on a Saturday afternoon
 The curtain came down and the theater darkened
 I walked home sad and alone
 Feeling that chill of the cold rain

—*Whitney K. Taylor*

The Lemon

fruit

from the tree

Gently picked by migrant worker
hands
and placed in wooden crates
loaded onto trucks for shipping

put

on the shelves

Of our town's local fruit market
stand
handled and smelled by the
customers who will take them home

fresh

in the bowl

Yellow colored, smooth, and oblong
shaped
shiny and glistening
a pleasing citrus aroma

cut

into halves

Then squeezed into Grandma's old glass
jar
add sugar and water
tasty lemonade anyone

— *Whitney K. Taylor*

Waiting For the End

I had been sitting by her bedside all night
The room only lit up by a small flicker of a sizzling candle
The wax burning down to the last remaining rung
Her breathing slowed and was getting more shallow
Then at one point she gasped and then stopped breathing
I remember thinking is she going to take another breath
But clearly she was now gone
My hands were numb and clammy from holding hers
I don't remember what I last said or thought or even what I said afterwards
My mind was running through past memories at a perplexing pace
But there was nothing now
Just a black curtain of darkness
The candle had extinguished just like her
She's gone she's gone she's gone

—*Whitney K. Taylor*

I Will Never Disappear

I am stronger than I may appear
Your vile nature will never hurt me
I will never disappear

You think that you can domineer
Trapped in your bars, never to feel free
But I am stronger than I may appear

With false words, you try to smear
My name in hopes that I will flee
But I will never disappear

I will not shy away in fear
Holding head high against the debris
I am stronger than I may appear

Your words are false and insincere
Dehumanizing in their degree
But I will never disappear

I will look into the mirror
And be proud in my guarantee
That I am stronger than I may appear
And I will never disappear

—*Meg Weatherford*

As Was True In Troy, We Also Wage War for Women

Whiskey, war, and women wake the werewolf
deep inside
While we drink this dose of liquid that tastes
just like cyanide,
And this lonely, languid world leaves nowhere
else to hide
So we sing our short lived sorrows with a single
shallow sigh.
We belt a boastful ballad all about our
stolen bride
As her father fights for feelings that we all know
as pride.
And we seem as Spartan soldiers so solemnly
we died
So now in angels all around me I aspire to
confide.
As down this fateful, flaming river Styx, rapidly
I ride.

—*Ryan West*

Dying Wings

I'll peel the dusty wrapper off
this old decaying sky.
The blue has turned to orange and red
the clouds, they float on by.
The colors make it easier
for me to say goodbye.
The horizon trades, Sun for Moon
and feelings go awry.
I forget my place, forget my name
while with you, I lie.
Your beauty fades as you decay
and I try not to cry.
But in my thoughts you'll always be
the perfect butterfly.

—*Ryan West*

Affair

Black thorns scorn deep into flesh,
Palms grasp crimson stained cotton.
Eyes plead for remorse decreed,
Iron aroma radiates payment received.
Sympathies of vertical lines mark scorned minds.
Plead...plead for emancipation,
Of loathsome deceit.

One moment in Eden's garden scorched,
Divided lines etched through faded script.
Coals dwindle leave brimstone coated debris,
Through ash walks the one who was deceived,
Buried within dark depths of ocean deep.
Plead, plead,
I emancipate you from loathsome deceit.

Prowling, chaos screams, through suffocating soot
Pray to your god; as I do for them to forgive me
Plead, plead, I emancipate you from loathsome deceit.

—*Brian Wilds*

Dreaming of You

I wrote a poem in my dream about you —
Watching the way each golden strain sings
into muted wind. Reaching for you was never true,
reality sinks its yellowish teeth with a venom it brings.

I wrote a poem in my dream about you —
Radiant silk skin that breathes from the luminescence
upon your neck. The end reads like an hourglass, through
each grain filtering the remains of your evanescence.

I wrote a poem in my dream about you —
Cancer has vanquished the hair from your somber head,
Leaving it vulnerable, naked. Flesh dried lines crackle,
with demonic bits exposed. Your eyes sky blue with shots of red,
tied to a crimson room by iron shackles.

I wrote a poem in my dream about you —
It was six words... one line stanza
"No one — can ever — be you."

—*Brian Wilds*

Gettysburg Bleeds through Memories Means

Brown suede shoes brush the green hue,
with razor edges leak on the white sole.
Here in 1863, in this flush farmer's fields,
stationed a crimson bath uncontrolled.

Swords flared and bounced in blinding beams that struck,
across tattered creases in iron stained affiliated suits.
Black powder blast rang, dashed like a dying buck,
but effectively laying a field of empty boots.

Today though, she has regained her graceful cover,
tainted by human flesh, she still smiles through nature's grace.
Her name male...Gettysburg, but her form like that of a forgotten lover,
Skies bellow asking her to stay steady for memories of a historical place.

A mystical cannon sends sharp pierces to visitors, like a message of times past,
Yet they stand only in an empty field, where memories breathe and must last.

—*Brian Wilds*

The High

Trapped memories, release entwined veins
Blood flow bent nature, seeks drug induced clarity
Needles dance, numbing tracks leaving ebony stains
Arms branch, releasing sighs of self-loathing disparity

Blood flow bent nature, seeks drug induced clarity
Captivated in my fix, my personalities echo screams
Arms branch, releasing sighs of self-loathing disparity
Fixated, collapsing chill, altering reality meets dream

Captivated in a fix, my personalities echo screams
Plagued voices amplified, families love bleeds through pleads
Fixated, collapsing chill, altering reality meets dream
She whispers, the final act of the scene reads...

Plagued, voices amplified, families love bleeds through pleads
Roaches pace, through slivered skin
She whispers, the final act of the scene reads...
Cross burning deep in my chest, apologizing for empty sins

Roaches pace, through slivered skin
Cease these iron shackles which link these chains
Place vision, to eyes which are blind and bleed
Trapped memories, release intertwined veins.

—*Brian Wilds*

House of Lies

I built this house upon ruins and lies,
Then watch the world that burnt with me.
A somber essence suffocating cries.

I'm wise of infectious denies,
Which ash filled we drearily disagree.
I built this house upon ruins and lies.

My Tears are embed jagged incise,
They exonerate truth which leads to absentee.
A somber essence suffocating cries.

A breath now escapes that expresses demise,
My foundation crumbles descending debris.
I built this house upon ruins and lies.

Grasping, waiting for a brutal chastise,
I ponder when falsehood engulfed destiny?
A somber essence suffocates cries.

My soul is jostling seeking reprise,
I reach and seek to redeem what to see.
They built this house upon ruins and lies,
Their somber essence suffocates cries.

—*Brian Wilds*

Sanity In Sin

Forgive me father for I have found sanity in sin.
Caramelized flavors of iron and death live vacant
within me. I watched a man implore and defend
with thoughts of empathy. His soul tarnished like a vagrant.

Weeping with words of his family, freely
speaking of wife and daughter. Transit in time,
I play upon burnt memories. Why should I see
sanctity in his empty plead? Living his life is the crime.

He found favorable pleasure through sodomy of souls
transposed through youth, with his wife barren begging for
lacking love. Her eyes bleeding with tar stain tears, full
knowing his indiscretion. A window of opportunity now a door.

I place the metal devil deep upon his pulsating temple,
as his breath increases. Fear breathing a fragrance across
the desolate room. I place in his hand a portrait of a simple
family, one which is his own. He grasp his chest for his heavenly cross.

Laughing, my finger depresses, relieving his family and humanity.
Defining revenge though lines of karma's developed insanity.

—*Brian Wilds*

Prose

CANNIBALISM

—*Brittany Violet*
Long

IMAGINE HAVING THE CAPABILITY to lock up a butterfly in a glass box placed upon a pedestal. Your slicked back hair and glacier, glazed eyes captivated me; I was a prisoner locked behind the confines of surrounding glass, vulnerable in my raw nakedness with nowhere to go. There was a time when I didn't enjoy tearing my own grainy flesh from my milky bones just to forget about the way your fingers felt tracing the contours of my cheekbones. I remember a time when I loved taking long runs through the misty woods before sunrise. When running through the dense fog was like emerging from beneath the surface of a dark lake for the first time. I ran like I was being chased by those dark shadows lingering behind those tall trees. I ran with sweat dripping down between my breasts while my heart pumped blood beneath my flesh. I ran from my dark nightmares and I was free. Haven't you ever felt eyes moving over your body? While you were home alone, lying restless in bed when your dreams weren't enough to satisfy the cravings of your soul. Your desires wandered, always coveting what you knew you couldn't have, like moths circling a flickering light in the basement of a house you can't quite remember. It's like trying to feel your way through those dark hallways while being followed by something lurking just out of sight. I couldn't seem to make my way through the blackness, beyond your alluring grasp, but there was a moment of transformation, in those few moments before the sun would rise with its orange and yellow radiance painting soft streaks across the morning sky; the very moment when I transformed into just a fragment of a memory. ⚓

THE MECHANICS OF LOVE

—*Brittany Violet*
Long

SOMETIMES, LATE AT NIGHT, when whispers and muted sighs were all I could hear resonating down the shadowy hall, I would read to understand what love was while hiding beneath my covers like I was playing hide and go seek with the dark. Under my sheets, words danced upon the pages like dancers doing a waltz. Before my eyes answers would manifest like the rain falling gently after a sunny day. The stories told me that love was two bodies drenched in slick sweat, arching their bodies against each other and groaning into the night. Love was a blissful tango between the sheets to the sultry sound of the beating of a lover's heart. Love was the raw emotion that left you wanting and needing more. Too many of those Mike's Hard Lemonades and a skinny boy in tight black jeans with rolled up sleeves and a cigarette behind his ear was the love I found on the third hottest night of summer my sixth grade year. I can remember how devastated I was that the only memory of the love I had were the dark purple splotches on my arms and neck and the bloody, throbbing pressure between my thighs. All I ever wanted was to feel the type of love I used to read about, but I had it all wrong. Love doesn't really exist. 🚢

BABY

—*Michaela N. Pfarr*

Her name was Evelyne, but most people just called her Baby. She was, in practically every way, a child to the ones around her: the only child to the Èmir, and the only granddaughter to the Sovereign Elder. Although it was twenty years after her birth, her face still held that gentle round shape that all babies have, and her eyes were wider than the greatest river, and darker brown than the richest soils of the world. Baby never wore her hair up, as she was often instructed to; instead she allowed her cornsilk curls to cascade down her shoulders, passed her elbows, and brush the small of her back. Though she was thin and fragile, she was tall and held the same regal air that her father, and her grandmother before her, also held. The air of a ruler.

But there was one misfortune that hovered over the heads of the Royal Family: their darling Baby did not speak.

Whether it was because she couldn't speak, or she just didn't choose to, no one knew. No amount of expensive medicine could undo what had been done, and she remained silent.

"How can you rule with no voice?" Her grandmother, the Sovereign Elder, asked her. This was a question that wasn't foreign to Baby's ears; she heard it every morning during their breakfast.

And just like every morning, Baby looked across the table at her grandmother and smiled, as if she knew a secret that nobody else did. Wouldn't you like to know, Baby thought.

Like clockwork, her grandmother rolled her eyes and turned to her son--Baby's father as well as the ruling Èmir. "Isn't there anything you can do? We cannot have a mute Èmir ruling over the Coalesce Regions."

The Coalesce Regions, Baby had been taught, were the continents of the World. Once they had been separate--all with their own rulers and religions. Once they had all been at war and people had died. Now, under the rule of the Èmir, there was no war, there were no religious tensions, there was just peace.

"Mother," the Èmir huffed, setting his fork aside, "we cannot rush what ought not to be rushed. Just because Baby cannot speak, it does not mean she is simple. You've seen her study records! She will talk when she is ready."

Baby grinned gratefully at her father. He'd supported her silence--in fact, he encouraged it. He believed in not only the power of words, but also the power of actions and emotions that could be expressed without a single uttered syllable. But no matter how many times her father defended her against her demanding grandmother, Baby knew that he, too, wished to hear her voice.

After breakfast the family dispersed. The Èmir had his daily duties of paperwork, phone calls, and conferences to attend to, while the Sovereign Elder had her own personal agenda to carry out. Baby had once spent the day with her grandmother and found it dreadfully dull: long hours spent in the Courtyard flirting with the young servants, puzzles, paintings, and other elegant delights wasted on the old woman's talentless hands. Baby refused to spend an entire day with the woman after that. She loved her--of course she did--but Baby couldn't seem to get that image of her grandmother batting her ancient eyelashes at the slender man serving tea out of her mind.

With everyone seeing to their own duties and pleasures, Baby found herself wandering the seldom-used corridors and small rooms of the palace. The building

was older than Baby could comprehend; she'd read stories about it in ancient texts and seen pictures from sketches done long ago. She knew, though, that this building had to have been kept standing in some way. The only "ancient" part of it was probably the stone slabs that made up the floor. She stopped in front of a relief sculpture, so old the edges were crumbling off the stone, and touched the wall gently. She knew that, beneath all of the manufactured marble and stone they'd used in renovations, there was a foundation that had seen so much history--so much culture--that it made her feel dizzy. Baby continued down the hall, which eventually ended at a window that reached her waist. Gripping the ledge, she leaned out into the open air, the wind catching her hair and twisting it about her face. The city below was just a blur of colors and shapes--not one human being was recognizable from the great height at which their palace sat. Beyond the city were the mountains, shrouded in morning mist and the clouds that never seemed to leave. Everything was green and grey until you looked directly upwards at the intense blue sky bathing in the golden sunlight. If Baby had gotten her hands on a pair of binoculars, she could see the very tips of the ocean before it vanished into the horizon. With a sigh, Baby leaned against the window sill. This was her favorite spot. Here, she could

see the city as it was, not as it appeared to be directly in front of the palace. Some days, if she remembered to bring those silly binoculars, she would spy on the families below. She knew most about them than any other cluster of families she'd spied on: she knew that the woman with the short brown hair had once had long, beautiful locks, but had cut her hair to afford some formula for her baby boy. She also knew that the woman had one other son, who was a soldier, and a husband who was often away on business. She knew that there was an old, well-to-do couple who gave the woman money and food and clothes and companionship. Baby even knew about the secret alcove in the mountain on which her palace stood. She called it Lover's Keep, because of all the young lovers she's seen steal away into it for a few passionate moments.

"Who goes there?" A man's voice bounced off the stone walls, breaking Baby from her surveying. Baby lifted her hand in an enthusiastic wave as the man stepped forward into the natural light from the window. He wore an officer's uniform: grey pants and a blue and white military jacket. There was a single star pinned to the collar of his crisp white shirt. The man bowed, "Highness. I didn't know you were here."

Baby rolled her eyes, "You really oughtn't lie to the future Èmir."

The man smirked and sauntered

forward, "Well the future Èmir shouldn't be lingering in the dark corridors of the castle, spying on commoners."

Baby leaned out the window again, causing the soldier to hurry forward and grip her forearm. She shot him a look of mock-horror, and returned to her view out the window. "I'm not spying, Justin. I'm just... observing. You know Father won't let me go outside--not as long as I'm not speaking. And God knows what Grandmother would do--maybe have a heart attack?" She sighed. "Besides, I cannot see anything from this prison."

Justin handed her something black and slender--but heavy. Her binoculars. "Not without these, you can't."

Baby smiled, but didn't take them from the serviceman. "No, I don't think I'll use them today."

"Has something bothered you?"

Baby shrugged her shoulders gingerly, too afraid that the improper, mundane action would get her into trouble even without her grandmother present. "Is it so hard to accept that I don't speak?"

"But you do speak. You're speaking to me right now, aren't you?"

Baby waved her hand, dismissing his comment. "No, no, no. I mean speak around others. You know I've never said a word--I didn't even babble as a babe!"

Justin shook his head, "I don't understand. You speak with me perfectly. You even sound like an Èmir."

"Despite my... disability, I was

still given the same schooling any member of the Royal Family would have received. By reading and listening to speeches I was able to talk. The doctors called it selective mutism; I could talk if I wanted to, but I just didn't feel like it. When I met you," she smiled, "I'd been speaking for only a little while."

"It was still a surprise to hear you speaking at all," Justin chuckled.

Baby rubbed her arms self-consciously, "I don't know what I'm trying to gain by lying to my father like this. But by being quiet my whole life, I've been able to see so much!" She gestured out the window. "There are people down there who can't afford to feed or clothe their children. A woman had to sell her hair--her beautiful brown hair--in order to buy some formula for her baby! We might not have war, but there is still poverty and hunger living at our feet."

Justin's eyes had started to shine as tears threatened to spill. "Where is this woman?"

Baby motioned for the officer to produce the binoculars, and pointed into the blur of houses down below. "She lives in the white house--the one right across from the nice blue one. She had hair nearly as long as mine before she cut it." She absently touched the hair framing her face. What a terrible thing, she thought, to have to sell hair just to afford baby formula.

Justin made a choking noise and pulled away from the window, tears spilling down his face.

"What on earth's gotten into

you?" Baby demanded.

"That's my mother's home," Justin muttered. "I'd known things were bad, but I hadn't known how bad. My father's a tradesman, you see. He's gone most of the time, and half the time the money he makes is 'lost,'" he made quotation marks with his fingers, "overseas. If you ask me, he just drinks or gambles it all away. My God, if I could just--" His sentence was cut short when Baby's fragile little arms encircled his body, and she held him in a firm embrace.

"I'll talk to my father," she whispered. "This will stop."

Later that evening, as the Royal Family sat around the table for supper, and the Sovereign Elder complained about her day, Baby was plotting. She had promised Justin she would do something this very evening to stop his mother's suffering--as well as the suffering of everyone else. She knew that it would involve speaking, and her stomach formed anticipated knots that left her feeling parched.

"So, darling, how was your day?" The Sovereign Elder asked, hoping to coax a word or two from her tight-lipped progeny.


Baby pushed her roasted baby carrots around her plate for a moment, mustering up the courage to say something--anything.

"Dear, don't be impolite," the Emir scolded lightly.

She looked up with a smile,

“Eventful, Grandmother. My day was eventful.”

Forks clattered onto plates and mandibles dropped low, revealing half-chewed food. All manners set aside for this one moment of pure shock. The Sovereign Elder stammered, trying to find her own words, but it was the Emir who spoke: “Your voice...”

Evelyne pushed aside her plate and stood before her leader and once-leader. “Not just my voice, Father... I have seen things that you, who are so swamped with other duties, cannot see. Or perhaps you choose not to see them, for they are quite ugly. But I have seen them. I’ve seen the sadness, Father. I’ve found my voice, though, and I want to use it for the sad. That is, if you’ll let me speak.” 

BENDSVILLE

—Andrew Pinkerton

BENDSVILLE HAS ALWAYS BEEN the idyllic little family town where it seemed the perversions of modernity had somehow overlooked its existence, or perhaps, to be more accurate, modernity chose not to wander so far through the hills and fields and forests for fear of becoming lost. Many of the entrapments of larger cities, such as big box retailers and strip joints and the like, were hard to be found, and societal blights like school shootings and big-time theft were not to be heard of.

Yes, a town of picturesque proportions Bendsville is, the type one generally imagines exists only in a Rockwell painting or a *Little House* novel. You know, the kind of town where there isn't any fear from leaving your front door unlocked and your neighbor Edna has been your neighbor since you were a small kid. But if one were to enter town today, he, no doubt, would have justifiable cause to think it necessary to yank down a curtain of smiling, down-home pretenses and expose Bendsville as an undeniable fraud.

That would be overboard, however—probably even dancing into the realm of extreme. Make no mistake, though. The usual warmness of the town served too well as a contrast to the scene within my own home—a scene I'm sure is taking place in many a family's houses across town as well.

"I—I just couldn't get to him in time. I heard him playing around in the basement, and then—just the worst screams. He must have been playing around in the water. We don't have the filtration on down there..." Her voice trailed off, a tremble managing its way in, reminiscent of winter's slow yet recognizable intruding into fall. She, our next-door neighbor Peggy, sat on the plush sofa in our living room, picking at some of the frayed threads on the arm. I made a mental note to trim those off later. While her voice carried some traces of grief, her face, with lines crossing her forehead and eyes dark and low, was riddled weariness. Weary from scenes

like this playing out over and over. Her seven-year-old son Charlie was lying on a bed in our guestroom. He was quiet now; his breathing slowed, but was running a fever and was covered from head to toe with a faint rash.

I sat next to my wife Sam on the couch that was across from Peggy. I moved my hand to rest on Sam's thigh, but she pushed it away as quickly as I made contact. She knew it was less a gesture of any sort of affection as it was a "See, dear, this is why we don't have any children." We both watched her, truly wanting to help, but obviously knowing her son would pass soon no matter what.

A couple days later, the sun beaming down on us with very few clouds to obstruct its rays, we gathered around a plain grave site with a small handful of neighbors and Peggy, who stood along side her two remaining children, to bid our final adieus to Charlie. No one chose to wear black; we merely showed up in whatever felt most comfortable—there was really no need to get all dressed up, anyway. It was a simple service, really. Charlie was placed to the left of his father's own grave without much being said. There were no musician playing some melancholy chords and no slow-falling rain like you'd normally see in the movies. I don't even think there was any real reason to trouble the minister with coming out to such a simple event.

To be honest, I don't even think it would truly be worth coming out for if it weren't for the en-

suing gathering, hopefully providing some decent food and a little wine, as cheap as it'll probably be. Okay, maybe it sounds as though I'm erring a bit—or a lot, whatever the case may be—on the side of glib, or perhaps even inappropriate, if you think that's a better word choice. And, I'll admit, you may be right. But let me start by saying it's not that I don't care, because I do, honestly. But when scenes like this play out over and over, the entire bit becomes fairly rote. You play funeral, then you go on with your day-to-day life as if nothing ever happened. It's like the five o'clock news where the newscaster warns of impending doom for this or that country and then we immediately cut to a loud, flashy commercial about the furniture store's warehouse clearing sale. It all becomes, eventually, unrealistic in a way. I'm sure Peggy will be bummed out for a while, but eventually, even to her, it'll all become unrealistic and she'll also go back to the way things were.

Anyway, the gathering didn't disappoint at least. The cheapest supermarket wine and some deli sandwiches for all were available. We were all fitted into Peggy's small ranch house; thankfully, the majority of the neighborhood didn't deem it necessary to show up. Of course, the familiar chemical plant contamination chatter was present too. It always seemed to happen. Every time someone passed the way Charlie did, and it happened more than enough times for it to just be some anomaly, there was always talk about how it's all the plant's fault and how we can try this or that to keep it from hap-

pening again.

"You all know as well as I do all kinds of crap is going to come out of this. People protesting and wanting more regulating agencies or whatever. If it weren't for all the jobs that plant's given us, I just wish someone would take a torch to the place and put an end to all the dang commotion." Jim was, obviously, always the voice of reason in our community. There were six of us left, the rest having left after making their obligatory appearances. We were all sitting around Peggy's table, a few half-eaten sandwiches littered around the kitchen, waiting to be cleaned up.

"But don't you think that's a tad ridiculous? I mean, if the plant were the problem then shouldn't something be done? But anyway, there hasn't ever even been any kind of proof that the plant is even what's causing the problems," Steve, a skinny, younger neighbor rejoined.

"Well, maybe not. But you seem to have all the answers, Steve. Why don't you tell us what the real problem is here? I don't see anyone trying to stop you."

"Look, all I'm saying is that it would be nice if people could stop thinking about only themselves sometimes. If there's a problem, it needs to be fixed, regardless of how disruptive that would be. But I also know it's ridiculous to keep blaming these losses on fictitious chemical spills."

"Yeah, well, once you've lived here as long as I have, maybe your insight will be more valuable." Jim paused to wipe off some spittle that had accumulated around his moustache. "Until then,

I'd suggest it's better to keep your mouth shut about things you don't understand."

Bendsville's finest.

The conversation continued with that kind of tired back and forth for a while until Jim finally decided he'd had enough and made his way back to whatever hole he crawled out of. To be blunt, though, I do see Jim's point and don't figure there's any reason to be raising all kinds of hell or making some sort of wild assumptions about whatever is going on.

I was relieved to leave, being back in the comfortable quietness of my own home, and away from the townspeople chatter. Sam, however, sitting on the corner of our unmade bed, was unusually, almost eerily quiet. Must be some residual emotions lingering from the funeral thing earlier. "That was a pretty good service for Charlie, didn't you think?"

"Yeah." No emotion.

"You okay?" I moved closer, leaning down onto the bed, next to Sam.

"Yeah."

I took a thoughtful pause, weighing out the consequences of my next question, determining whether or not it was worth delving into. "Samantha, what's wrong?"

She paused too, probably a similar thought-process racing through her mind as well. I waited. And then waited some more. Finally, when I was near the point of getting up and dropping the issue entirely, she spoke. "I want to

leave.”

It took a few moments for me to process what the syllables ejected from her mouth meant. I felt a strong compulsion to give in to the anger quickly surging inside of me. But previous instances told me to put a hold on the anger for a moment. Sam never was one to be impressively articulate or in control of her emotions. “What does that mean? What do you want to leave?” The terseness in my voice must’ve betrayed my anger, for tears began filling Sam’s eyes and her petite frame began trembling. “Come on, Sam. You don’t need to be upset. Just tell me what’s going on. What do you want to leave? This house? I know we still have a lot of work today, but we’ve only been in here a few months. We’ll have it looking like a new home soon enough, just like we did the last one.”

Sam stood up from the bed, a few springs creaking as she did, and sulked over to her nightstand. The journey wasn’t that far, our room truly was more compact than I’d like it to be and the peeling flower décor wallpaper did expose the house’s age. She picked up a pair of socks and tossed it from one hand to the other. Back and forth. “Do you really think that’s what I care about?” She sounded hurt, almost offended.

“I honestly don’t know. You won’t tell me what you care about. It’s like you’ve been completely zoned out—in some other dimension—for the past couple months. I wish I knew what was going on

with you. Why are you talking about leaving?”

“Can’t you see, Paul? Are you blind? Something is not right with this town. It’s, like, some weird movie where everyone knows something’s wrong but everyone just wants to cover it up and pretend like we’re all normal.”

I tried, I really did, but I couldn’t keep a chuckle from escaping. “This is why I tell you not to watch Lifetime. It’s like poison, killing you slowly and painfully. Come on; let’s go to bed. It’s late, and I’m exhausted. We have too much painting to do tomorrow to spend the whole night talking about this.”

She stopped tossing the pair of socks around and let them drop to the floor. “This isn’t some joke!” Her voice cracked on the last syllable, eliciting more chuckling from myself. “Stop it! There’s something wrong here and you know it. It’s not normal for people to just keep dropping dead like they do here. It’s just not, and I don’t care if you think it’s funny. We need help, and you know it.”

“Sam...” I removed from the bed too and inched closer to her. “You know sometimes things just go wrong at the chemical factory, and pollutants get released. It was asinine to build it so close to our water supply, but they’re working on fixing everything. I don’t understand why you’re being so paranoid about everything all of a sudden. We’ve both grown up here; you’ve never had a problem with anything before.”

“I don’t care what ‘they’re’ trying to fix. That plant isn’t the problem. There’s something seriously wrong with the people here.

Something wrong with you. And me. I've never noticed it before, but I do now. And I'm sick of it. You and I—we're having a child. And I refuse to let him grow up here. I'm leaving this town, whether you're with me or not."

I froze, forgetting to breathe, all earlier pretenses of anger or joking scurrying away to God knows where. "You're...pregnant?" The words somehow finding their way past my lips.

Sam simply nodded, dropping the pair of socks to the floor. The tears from earlier resurfaced and started streaking down her face.

"But how?" We had already agreed on not having kids. We didn't want to take on that burden, especially while they were still figuring things out with the water supply.

She just shrugged. Apparently she had already exhausted her vocal chords.

I shut my eyes and breathed. Deeply. A part of me was furious at her for letting this happen. But she also looked so helpless, and scared. I reopened my eyes and wrapped my arms around her. "Let's go to bed. We'll talk about it tomorrow."

* * *

I awoke the next morning to an empty bed. Sitting up instantly, I scanned the room. No sight of Sam. However, all of her stuff was still here, so I don't think she could have run away. I jumped out of bed, threw some jeans and an old t-shirt on and walked out of my bedroom, through the hallway and into the kitchen. Scanning the room, I saw, taped to the refrig-

erator, a piece of scrap paper with Sam's handwriting on it.

"Went to see a friend. Will be back later. – Love, Sam."

I crumpled the note up and tossed it into the trashcan beside the fridge. I picked up the coffee pot, filled it with water from the sink and poured the water into the back of the coffee maker. Searching through the cabinets for the coffee can, I then realized we'd run out a couple days ago. Dang it. I threw on a pair of tennis shoes, deciding to make the walk to the local coffee shop the next block over, to the right of our house.

At the shop, the short, college-aged barista was by far too distracted by her headset to give any significant portion of her attention to anything else. Apparently, desiring a soy latte brought to 130 degrees is too much these days. Or at least for this nimrod, anyway. I took my over steamed latte from her, making sure to not tip her, and found a seat in the crowded café. I purposefully tried to keep my eyes locked on the coffee cup and small tablet before. For some reason, it was especially painful and bothersome to look at the faces of the people today. I had never noticed how ugly people were before. And their voices did nothing to help their cause. It seemed like everyone was set out on some self-pity trip, moaning about this or that problem and wondering why others can't realize they have a life to live too.

I did my best to block them out so I could figure out what on earth I was going to do about last

night. I knew Sam was just overreacting to Charlie's death. Her hormones were probably on overdrive from the pregnancy or something. And the pregnancy... I had no clue what to do about that. We can't have a kid right now; it's too much. But she seemed so scared last night, and so adamant about leaving. The way she is, she truly might just leave without me. Not that I could entirely put her I fault, as I can tend to be, perhaps, overly indifferent, or maybe calloused, at times. But I also don't think anyone could be much surprised that I am either; it's just the way things are here. I took a sip from my now cooled off latte and checked the time on my phone: 9:46. Looking around I noticed Jim had made his way in. Hopefully, he won't see me. I don't want a replay, with insider's commentary on last evening's conversation.

And then again, maybe Sam is right. Maybe something is wrong here. Maybe Bendsville is a town that looks nice from a distance but scrutiny has a different tale to tell. I laughed again, thinking about. I'm starting to sound as crazy as her.

My reverie was interrupted by my phone's vibrating. Looking at the number, I didn't recognize it so I let it go to voicemail. I'll call back later. But then whoever it was called again. Annoyed, I picked up. It was Steve.

"Hey, you need to get over here." His voice was riddled with urgency.

"What's going on? Why?"

"It's Sam. She's not doing

well. She just passed out."

"What are you doing with my wife?" The surrounding customers raised their heads in response to my elevated voice. I could feel heat rushing over my face.

"Just get over here." The phone clicked and the line went dead.

I shoved my phone into my pocket and stormed towards the exit, tossing my half-empty cup in the general direction of the trash.

At Steve's, who lives a few streets down from my own house, I walked right into the living room, not wasting time with knocking. Upon entering, I saw Sam lying on the couch, sleeping. A woman, who I assumed to be Steve's wife, although I'd never met her before, was dapping Sam's head with a moistened cloth. I dashed towards her and knelt down, cradling her face in my hands. I fought the tears that wanted to break out—this is the same condition Charlie had been in just the other day, right before he passed.

Steve bounded down the steps, pulling a jacket on, and came to join us at the couch. "Hurry. We've got to take her to Wash-town." Washtown was the next city over, a several mile drive north.

I shook my head. "There's no use. I've seen this too many times. Nothing can help her." I sank down onto the carpet, releasing my hold on Sam's face.

"There's a hospital there. They can treat her. She'll be fine, but we need to hurry. Please, trust me."

I looked at him for a moment. I never really could stand

him, ever since he moved here. But he looked so concerned, so intent on providing the help my wife was in need of. Reluctantly, I stood up and lifted Sam from the couch, cradling her.

* * *

I must have dozed off on the trip to the hospital. I guess all the drama had finally wrought its damage on me. When I came back to the land of the living, I was sitting in a hospital room, Sam lying on a bed, an IV in her wrist and her gaze transfixed on the television. I squinted; it was too bright in here.

Noticing my stirring, she looked over. "Hey," she smiled.

"Hey." There was something different about her visage, but what precisely I couldn't ascertain. "What did they say—"

My question was interrupted by a man, probably a doctor, and Steve entering the room. "Steve, thanks for bringing us. I guess you were right," I said, more than a little embarrassed.

He nodded and smiled.

"I'm glad to see everyone's well."

"So is there a chance we'll be getting back to Bendsville before night? I don't even shut our windows. Clouds aren't looking too nice right now."

The man who I presumed to be the doctor, judging by the stethoscope dangling from his neck and the prideful disposition about him anyway, chose to interject at that point. "Bendsville?" He asked, looking at Steve.

"He's kidding, obviously," Steve responded, chuckling. Then, to me: "You know no one's living in Bendsville, at least not since the plant caught fire and burned down

most the city decades ago. Come on, man." Steve then directed the doctor back out of the room, muttering something about paperwork or some other triviality. ⚓

“THE GIANTS MUST BE FIGHTING AGAIN!”

MY BROTHER, THE LARGEST GIANT OF THEM ALL


—*Ryan West*

My brother was so excited for another storm but with the curtains drawn, all he knew of them was the clashes and concussions that rang in the dark and cloudy air outside. I had sat by his bed each night and told him stories of Prometheus and Atlas and all the other titans. Sure, I may not have told the stories the way they were exactly supposed to be, but he was only six. I figured it could wait to explain the intricacies. For now, all his wonderfully imaginative brain could conceive was the giants in the sky, slamming their fists back and forth and stomping on the floors of Heaven.

“Why do they fight so much?” he asked me innocently from his bed, late one night. In a frenzy, I searched for a good answer. One that would be fitting of a young boy. “Well Grant, some people, when they go on to the next world... they become the fighting giants. But it’s only those who are the fiercest fighters in this life. And they must be fighting for good, otherwise they get even smaller than they are in this life.” I was turning simple thunder into a band of heroes that fought in the sky over the noblest of things. I just loved him too much to stop and try to explain science to him.

To this day, no matter what I know of the truth and science, whenever a storm is brewing I look to the sky for his face. Because after three years of the fiercest fighting I’ve ever seen Grant asked me the hardest question I’ve ever been asked; “Ryan, do you think I’ll be a giant?” There was absolutely no question in my mind that this boy was a bigger giant than any man or warrior before or since.

It was a lonely Tuesday
when my brother's hand let go of
mine and slipped away. The cancer
which had been destroying that
imaginative brain of my brother's
had finally beaten him. It was an
even lonelier Wednesday when
the Sun shone brighter than I had
seen in days. But every storm since
then I listen for my brother's voice,
leading that band of heroic giants
I had created as they stomp their
way across my world's roof. Some
would say the end, but I know he
isn't done yet.


The beginning... 

TAKE NOTE, TAKE NOTICE

—*Ryan West*

IF MY HEART WAS A STENO PAD, it would be crumpled and crinkled. It would have little bits of ash and tobacco on it from the cigarettes I rolled and then smoked incessantly when you refused to talk to me. It would have words scribbled and scrawled, and more often than not, scratched out. Sometimes so violently it tore through the page. And the edges would be stained from a mixture of spilt coffee and the grime from my hands as I carried it everywhere I went, day after day.

But mostly, it would be beautiful. Not because it was mine, or my doing, but because it was yours. Each and every one of yours who contributed. Each of you who added a word, crossed one out, smoked with me, walked with me, thumbed through the pages adding your own smudges, or spilt that scalding cup of coffee. It would be that. It would be you.

If my heart was a steno pad. 

photography



—Kyle L. Bailey, “Denial and Withdrawal”



—j.a. cummings, "PJ Jam"



—Manijeh Hadjarpour, “Downtown Columbus”



—Brittany Violet Long, “At the Water’s Edge”



—Brittany Violet Long, “Butterfly”



—Brittany Violet Long, “Child’s Play”



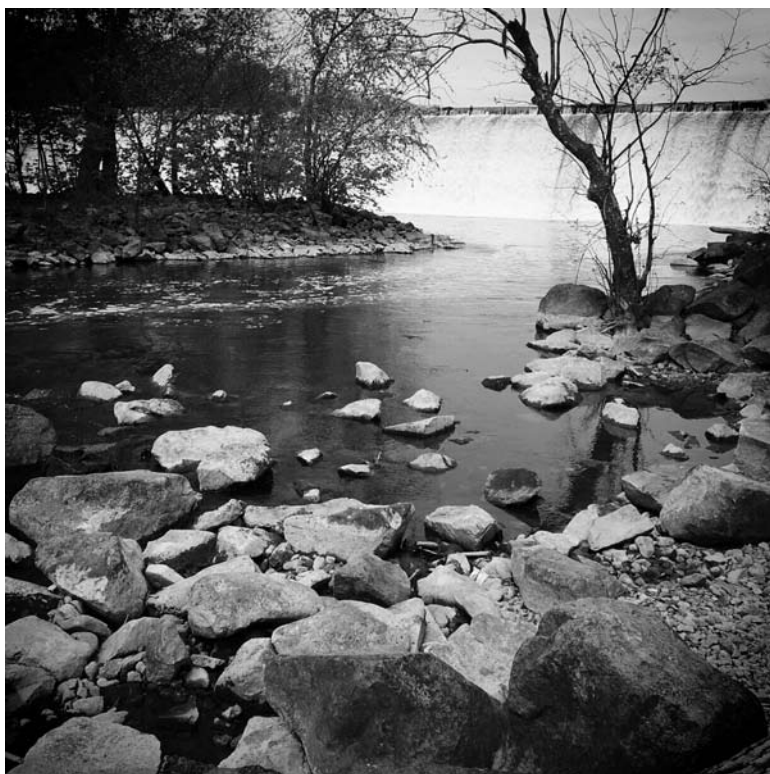
—Brittany Violet Long, “Lorikeet”



—Brittany Violet Long, “Mysterium”



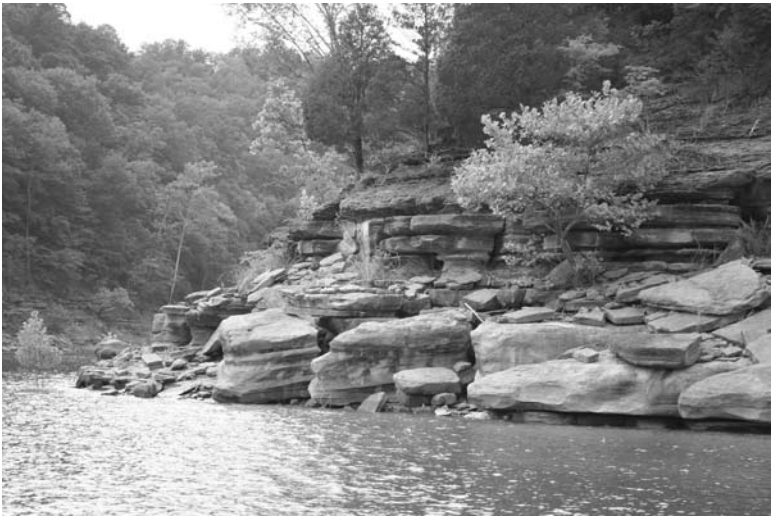
—Brittany Violet Long, “Ocean’s Brine”



—Brittany Violet Long, "Serenity"



—Brittany Violet Long, “Water Droplets”



—Mandy Lucero, “Around the Bend”



—Mandy Lucero, “Forgotten Window”



—Mandy Lucero, “Iron”



—Mandy Lucero, “Nature Reclaims”



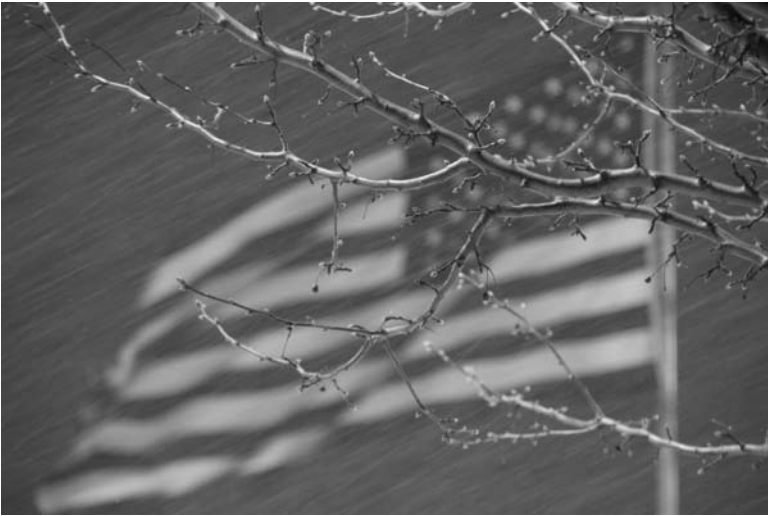
–Summer Mollenkopf , “Skeleton Keys”



—James Travis Oquin, “Barber Pole, Richwood , Ohio”



—James Travis Oquin, “The Chair”



—James Travis Oquin, “Gallantly Streaming”



—James Travis Oquin, “The Line Up”



—James Travis Oquin, “Stepping Back”



—James Travis Oquin, “Union County Courthouse”



—Meg Weatherford, “Center of the Yellow Flower”



—Meg Weatherford, "I Miss the Spring Season"



—Meg Weatherford, “Pink and White Petals”



—Sheree Whitelock, “Be Still in Beauty”



—Sheree Whitlock, “Rock Dove and the London Eye”



—Sheree Whitlock, “The Secrets of Oxford”



—Sheree Whitlock, “Taking Time”



—Sheree Whitlock, "The Winter's Tale Unveiled"

CONTRIBUTORS

Kyle L. Bailey: I am an Anime and Video Game Enthusiast. I enjoy being creative and imaginative, and allow my imagination to get out of control at times; Imagination Expert. I am from and currently reside in Marion Ohio. I'm attempting to get into Visual Communication Design, but I also enjoy writing creatively.

j.a. cummings: Hi, I am Jherek Cummings. I am 37 years old. I am working on my bachelor's degree at OSUM, with an English major and an anthropology minor. When I finish school in the fall, I will be pretty good at writing. In the future I will be writing in creative ways of expressing the experience of being human. I have enjoyed writing short stories, poems and prose. Whoever gets to read an issue of *The Cornfield Review* is really lucky, because it contains works from many artists including students at OSUM. I feel blessed to have been able to get my work published by the student publishers in Ben McCorkle's Cornfield Review class. I was in McCorkle's Cornfield class two semesters ago. It was a good experience and I would recommend it to anyone interested in publishing. Thank you and enjoy the readings from *The Cornfield Review*.
OH IO!

Manijeh Hadjarpour: I am a student at OSU Marion. I decided to go back to school after so many years and it was the best decision I made regarding my continued education. I have a son who will be graduating from OSU Columbus this semester, Spring 2014, in Business Agriculture with Applied Economics with Finance and Classics as his minor. I work at the Lazarus building in Downtown Columbus. I have tried to take Mary Fahy's Digital Photography course several times, but due to numerous conflicts, I was unable to until this semester. I am enjoying the class and have learned a lot from my instructor.

Devon L. Hardwick: Student at OSUM, majoring in History.

"4566 Group Ghazal" was written collectively by the wonderful students in **Stuart Lishan's** Autumn '13 English

4566 (Poetry Writing II) class: **Whitney Taylor, Stevie Evans, Brittany Long, Brian Wilds, Janay Dyer, Ruth Albright, Melanie Waits, Andrew Pinkerton, and Ashley Irvin.** About the ghazal form: It originated in the Middle East and in south Asia and consists of couplets that are supposed to be thematically and emotionally autonomous. According to the Poets.org website, "the first couplet introduces a scheme, made up of a rhyme [called a 'qafia'] followed by a refrain [called a 'radif']". Subsequent couplets pick up the same scheme in the second line only, repeating the refrain and rhyming the second line with both lines of the first stanza. The final couplet usually includes the poet's signature [called a 'makhta'], referring to the author in the first or third person, and frequently including the poet's own name or a derivation of its meaning." In the case of our group ghazal, the makhta was "4566," the course number for our class.

Brittany Violet Long: Recent OSU graduate, long-time contributor to *Cornfield*.

Also known as Mandy Lewis, **Mandy Lucero** is a previous student at OSUM in the English and History departments. She is currently working in a field completely unrelated to either of her majors, but uses the skills she mined from her college career every day. She hasn't lost her love of photography or literature, and still seeks to show the world her point of view through a camera lens. With the support of her loving husband, she hopes to someday be able to focus all her energies on photography.

Tony Marconi is a resident of Delaware, Ohio, and has taken creative writing courses at both OSUM and at OSU's main campus as well as the University of Maryland. He is a retired educator, a part time substitute teacher, and a full time observer of the existential processes by which he and his fellow human beings on this planet continue to define themselves.

Summer Mollenkopf: Student at OSUM, majoring in Psychology.

James Travis Oquin is a student, OSUM.

Michaela Pfarr: I'm an English major

with a Creative Writing minor, and honestly, I just published this story on a whim; I didn't exactly expect to get in with something so non-educational-based. I've been writing since I was thirteen, but creating stories since before I can remember; every second of my life is dedicated to writing, inspiring, entertaining, and maybe the occasional breaking of hearts.

Andrew Pinkerton: My name is Andrew Pinkerton, and I'm in my fourth year at OSUM, majoring in English. With my writing, I enjoy blending creativity with a fresh perspective on daily life.

Aly Reed: I'm a freshman in college [Columbus State] who's majoring in nursing, but really loves English.

Rachel Schade: If home is where the heart is, I'm a wanderer. I've had to lose myself to find myself, I've had to break to be whole, and I've had to be captive to be free. There is no joy in living half-alive, only in feeling every fear, every sting, every new wonder and miracle. Life is an adventure I don't want to miss, so I write, I write, I write. I've been brave enough to face the silence, but I'm still finding my voice. Can you hear me now?

When **Robert Sexton** is not busy writing, he can be found in the tool shed behind his house playing ukulele and watching *Sweeney Todd* on Betamax – the good one, with Angela Lansbury.

Whitney K. Taylor: I am a student at The Ohio State University Marion Campus majoring in English. Writing poetry has been a great catharsis

for me since my Mom passed away of breast cancer 12 years ago. Many of my writings speak of nature and experiences. I enjoy sharing them with others. Some of my favorite hobbies and interests are spending time with family and friends, watching my favorite hockey team the Pittsburgh Penguins play, reading, theatre, riding motorcycles, boating, snow skiing, lighthouses, thinking, and walks in the woods.

Meg Weatherford: Student at OSUM majoring in English, and two-time Editorial Board member.

Ryan West is currently a student at OSUM.

Sheree Whitelock: Life is about living and the only way to live is to experience as much as you can. If you're too afraid to experience it yourself, pick up a book -- that's what I do. Live 1,000 lives; that's what Martin says anyway. Oh, and I'm on Instagram: ShereeBonita.

Brian Wilds: I have written many pieces in my four years attending Ohio State Marion campus, and have found the *Cornfield Review* an amazing resource for sharing my work. This publication along with the English faculty have made this a most interesting experience. I encourage you to view the great artist in this journal, that have chosen to share their craft with you the reader. You will never find a more dedicated group of professors, which inspire and pull the most out of you. Enjoy the sweet words and to quote a great man and writer "break a line."

COLOPHON

This issue of the *Cornfield Review* is printed using **Palatino Linotype**, SC By the Sea (⚓), *sharp attack*, **AMITY JACK**, and **SELL YOUR SOUL** fonts. The layout was handled in Adobe InDesign. The interior artwork and photographs, as well as the cover design, were all edited using a combination of Adobe Photoshop and GIMP. The cover concept was designed by Casey Edgington.



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**"I'm writing a book. I've got the page numbers done."
—Steven Wright**



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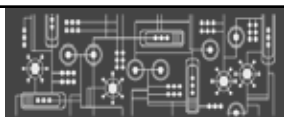


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Have you heard of **KAFW!**?

KAFW!

Every fall and spring semesters, students of OSU-Marion's writing club come together every two weeks in the library, room 105K, to listen and share their writing. We encourage all writers to come out!

If you have any questions, contact Stuart Lishan, (lishan.1@ous.edu).