

HIKA Literary Magazine

2006

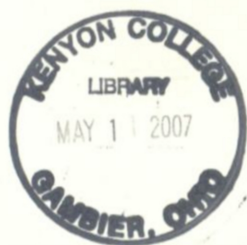
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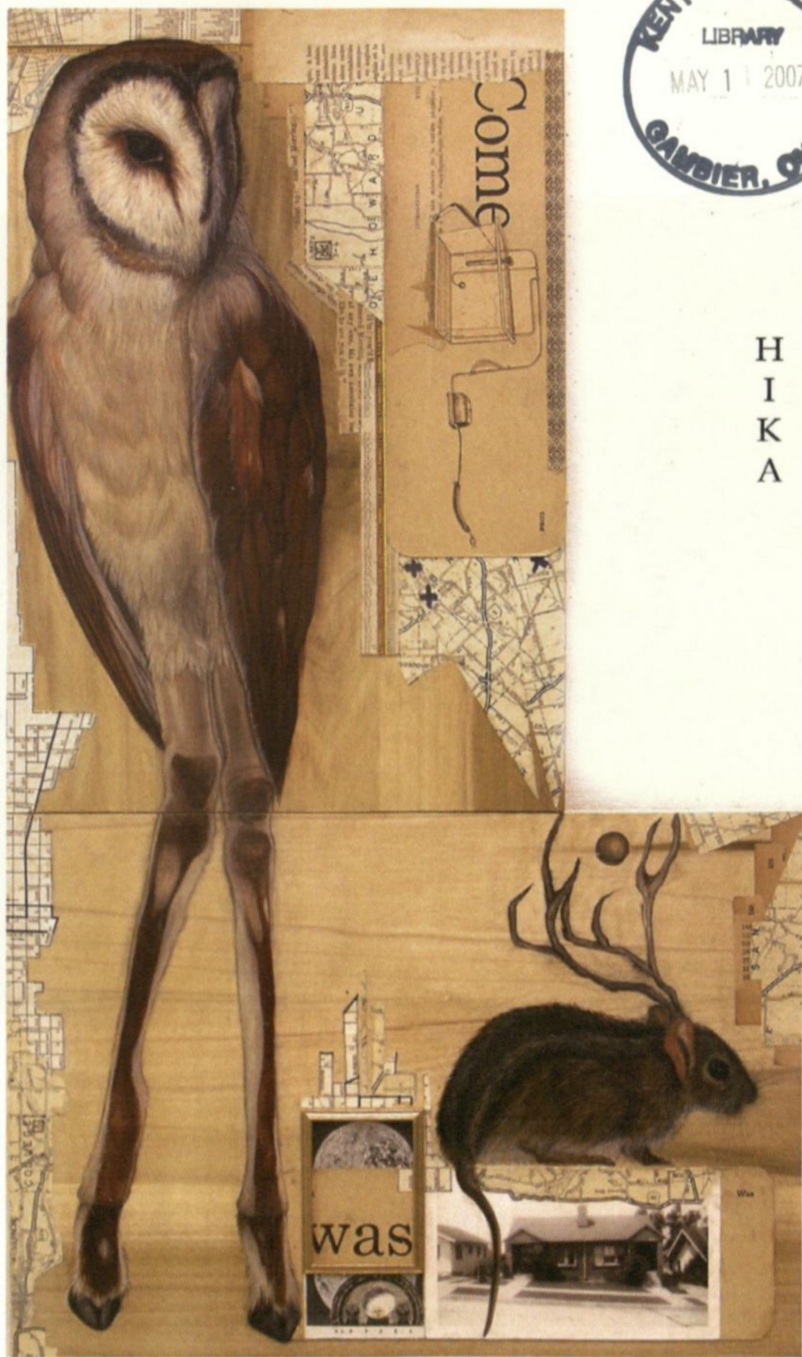
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HIKA

An Undergraduate Journal of Arts & Letters

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Windup

At a certain age I discover calculation,
Measuring by the line between each hardwood shingle
How far it is necessary to reverse the windup Hotwheels
In order that it make whatever the projected distance:
A closet door, Anabel's bedroom, a precipice of stairs.
In a moment I breach the sweet fatty coat of blamelessness,
And the great sprocket groans into a virgin motion
That will never be remitted,
Till the day I tinkle nimbly down the stairs.

Theo Goa

Weight

The deer in that beautiful place lay down their

bones: I must wear mine.

— Robinson Jeffers

I followed the trail to where it thinned
into a footpath
and found the deer still in its spots,
so young it looked at first
like a sleeping dog, thin limbs folded
with the weight of exhaustion.

It takes only a moment to realize.
I moved slowly first, not wanting
to wake it, and then stood motionless,
air trapped in my lungs,
the sound of the Green River behind me
occupying all space.

As the deer graze in Ohio's winter
and do not flinch when I pass,
I stumble on this memory—
the tiny frame so gently set,
so nearly asleep in that tall grass,
so subtly distinguishable in death.

What kind of man am I
if I envy these deer?
if sometimes I long to walk beyond
the bed of rivergrass
and give myself to sleep,
to lie and rise and take flight.

Colin O'Brien

Double-Theft

(Part VII from "The Zoophagophobe Coming: Mina's Dreams in *Dracula*")

I went to the sweet dry place of praying
plants supplicating the clear thorny sky
and he knew of birds that I have become
and I have come to commit nectar robbery
against you lover I have come to lie between
your sheets between you and your house
and to taste your throat the way you wanted
to be tasted by those vapors, I am still
yours still here still warm still blooded
and we could be closest of all, to disappear
overexposed, lover, I will take your Adam's
apple and be in you as I am from you now,
from your sheets your seal your stay away from me
now we can be eternal, eating and drinking

always lover hold me let me let me
pierce the stem and tongue the food of Olympus
no lover you cannot dust me in your fine
powder crumbs I will not hold your seed I cannot
double you but I can enter *no* lover I will not raise
my head to your stamens I will not take your mark
and carry it to my others

And how dare you steal my internity
And how dare you make this my reproduction

Withdraw your hand from me,
spider and recoil your silk.

Amy Strieter

Smokers

Daniel Poppick

I was in Texas because of my grandmother's "rust" problem, as the adults called it at the time, so Texas was where I saw him first. I heard footsteps in the grass coming down the bank and I started to reel in my line—it wasn't my grandfather, but a boy with a deep sunburn who was a little older than me, and skinnier. He wasn't wearing a shirt or shoes, and his overalls were rolled up his shins. He was missing his left eye, and had a patch of honeysuckle growing in its place. Soil was packed right in the socket, like a flowerpot. Dirt streaked down his cheek and neck. Bees gathered in the buds and sagged the stems; the wings brushed against his chin. Exactly as I had pictured him.

I tried not to stare at him; if I did, I might make a brush at his face. Those butter-white flowers, the grains of dirt—I needed to fiddle with things. If I could not touch an object, I got nervous, as if it was begging me to prove it was actually there but someone was forcing me to refuse. My hands tingled.

One of the bees landed on my forearm, and my fists uncoiled. But when I felt it crawling down to my wrist, I jerked my arm. The bee flew away. The boy snorted.

"They ain't gonna hurt you if you just let them sit," he said. "They're just trying to keep warm." I said nothing. Two buzzards flapped overhead, and a cow bellowed from far away. He walked up the bank and I lost him in the reeds.

I was out fishing because I wasn't supposed to be sitting around the house. Even if I did catch something, which I never did, I'd just let it flop around on the hook getting dirt in its gills, or hold it spinning in the breeze until it dried. Maybe let it swim on the line a few feet off the edge of the bank like I was walking the dog. I didn't have a dog.

My mom was out for the day dealing with my grandmother. I hadn't seen her in a few years—the last time, she nodded at me when I walked in the door, then spit on my shoes two minutes later, screamed at me to stop going through her bank account—that was the first reason for taking the trip. Then my mom thought it might do me good to spend a few days with my grandfather, who did not tolerate sitting-around-the-house under any circumstances—that was the second reason.

The sun dropped and the shadows inked out. It was nearly dinnertime, and he hadn't picked me up. He was probably lying dead on the kitchen floor with a pan of asparagus burning on the stove. I hated asparagus.

When he drove me out to the pond earlier that day, we saw a baby cottonmouth lying in the sun on the road, wrapped in fire ants. He made me get out of the truck to look.

"One time I almost got bit by a water moccasin. I saw it in time and hit it with a stick. But this little one won't hurt you. Go ahead now, give it a tap."

I kicked it lightly, and the ants rolled off like lace.

I always stood on a rock while I was fishing—those ants were everywhere. You could walk across a sandy patch in a field until you felt a nip at your

ankle, looked down, and realized you were standing on a little metropolis.

A spider crawled onto my shoe. My fishing line waved in the breeze and wrinkled the surface of the water. One by one, buzzards alighted on the branches of a leafless oak across the pond, to the west. A cool breeze ran against the back of my neck, the first of the day. I wondered how long it would be before the spider crawled up my body and down my arm and began to spin a web between my fingers. I threw my pole to the ground and started shaking my arms and legs; as long as I kept moving, no creature could make me its nest. My grandfather pulled up in his truck and shook his head.

"Get that line off the ground and stop this foolishness. Your mother's back."

I got into the truck and buckled my seatbelt. My grandfather looked at the steering wheel.

We drove through the fields and passed a slanted shack with a tin roof just on the other side of the fence at the edge of the woods. Vines were pulling it toward the ground, and the broken windows brimmed with leaves and flowers. The stone chimney stood erect, and sprigs of grass grew out of the top. It was impossible to see inside.

"Did anyone ever live in there?" I said.

My grandfather shrugged. "They don't build houses just to build them."

"But who?"

"Lived there? Beats me. But that's just what happens to a place when you let it sit by itself for too long a time—fills up with weeds. This area is your grandmother's, she never told me much about it. I just kept our house clean while she sucked back those cigarettes and painted her nails."

Fills up with weeds. I thought about the boy. Then something occurred to me.

"Did Grandma die today?" I asked.

The truck slowed to a stop, and my grandfather squinted at me. Then he turned back to windshield and continued driving.

"Your mother's already upset—so be good and pretend that you don't know when she tells you."

"Do you miss her?" I said.

"Not much to miss what wasn't there to begin. She hardly ever said a damn thing to anyone. But you'd probably go bananas too if you kept everything under a lid while the rest of the can was rusting away."

* * *

When I was very young, she was sitting on the couch flipping through a magazine. Her arm flab swayed like a wind chime. I couldn't help myself: I climbed up next to her and flicked it. The skin reverberated to her elbow. She placed the magazine on her lap.

"What in the heck are you doing?" she said.

I felt the tingle in my fingers and grabbed a handful of flab, twisted it like I was opening a jar. It retracted slowly, as if the jar's lid held its position by a weak magnet. It was like dipping my hands in balm.

My grandmother looked at me for a moment, then snorted and went back to her magazine. The corner of her lip twitched upward.

This was the only time I saw her laugh.

"When your mother was an infant," my grandfather once told me, "she would wake up in the middle of the night crying to be fed. I had to kick your grandmother out of bed—actually kick her, with my foot—to do the breastfeeding."

"Maybe she was tired," I suggested.

"I bet she was tired," he laughed. "She could be comatose while her own baby was screaming next to her ear."

One night she was looking after me while me parents were out, and she lit a cigarette on my back porch—I was six. She used to do it in the basement, but my dad complained that it made the laundry on the drying rack smell. I hadn't been allowed to watch her then, given the basement's poor ventilation, but my parents were not accustomed to objecting to my being outside—I didn't get very much fresh air.

She pretended to scan the sky for bats, and I stood rigid against the house. I followed the glow from her hand to face.

"Why does it glow without catching on fire?" I said. She exhaled hard, making a point to blow the smoke away from me, as she had been instructed.

"It is on fire," she said.

"There isn't a flame," I objected.

She didn't say anything. Her perfume was so thick that I tasted bitterness in the back of my throat whenever the breeze came from her direction—it made me squint. The sensation was barely satisfying enough to prevent me from grabbing the cigarette from her lips. I wondered if she would paint her nails before we went to bed, and if she would let me watch.

"There was a flame, otherwise I wouldn't be smoking it," she said.

"What?"

"Your daddy doesn't like you out here, you know."

"What?"

"What, what? Someday, someone's going to offer you a lot of money, and you're going to say 'what?' and that will be the end of that." She sucked back a long drag and held it in her lungs.

"Oh," I said.

"Your daddy doesn't like you out here."

"He said it was okay. Do you?"

"Do I?" she said.

"Not like me out here?"

"Doesn't bother me."

A crescent moon hung just above the trees. "Just so long as you don't go running your fool head off," she said. "Not with that moon. You'll get us both in trouble. So you best stay on the porch."

"What's wrong with this moon?"

"Sharp as anything. Haven't you got eyes?"

"It doesn't look so bad," I said.

"Well," she said, "it seems that you ain't seeing what you're looking at."

I heard a skunk scratching the roots of a tree. She took a drag, and the tobacco whispered and snapped. My hands itched.

“What?”

“Excuse me, young man?”

“Sorry. What am I seeing, please? I mean looking at.”

“The moon, for one. I can tell you a story, if you don’t tell your mother or daddy.”

I stepped up to the wooden railing.

“Back in Texas—it’s where I’m from, if you didn’t know—a boy used to walk around our farm at night. Stealing flowers. His parents were beekeepers, poor as hell, so he would help himself to the roses and daffodils my mother planted. Sometimes he left little bouquets on my widow sill. He fancied me, I think. Well, one night when there was a moon like this one, real low to the ground, a coyote stole the flowers out his hand. He chased after it, but the coyote ran him straight into the moon. Hooked his head right through his eye.”

I thought about this for a moment.

“That’s not true,” I said.

“Well, you’re wrong.”

“What happened to him?”

“Like I said, the family was awfully poor, and they couldn’t afford many nice things. So they turned his head into a flower pot.”

I didn’t move.

“I’ll tell you what—if you don’t believe me, walk to the end of the yard and back, all alone, and I’ll stay here and watch. If you can do it without touching the moon, I’ll let you stay up another fifteen minutes.”

I stood at the railing and looked out over the shards of moonlight strewn across the lawn. I felt my face get hot. The air was still, and the glow had almost reached the filter. She took it from her lips and blew the smoke away from me—it was too much. I plucked it from her hand, balled it in my fist, and tore off the porch and across the yard. I was halfway to the woods before I felt the burn. She ran up behind me and clapped her hand over my mouth, then pulled me into the kitchen and ran my hand under the faucet. Between my muffled gasps, she rubbed my back and whispered:

“Believe it now?”

* * *

When we pulled up to the house, my mom was sitting on a metal folding chair next to the front door, smoking a cigarette. I had never seen her doing this before. My grandfather looked directly at me as he walked into the house—his face was stone.

“You smoke?” I said. Her eyes were red, but she did not seem to have been crying.

Her voice was calm. “Listen—Grandma’s dead. She died. It happened today.”

I nodded.

“But you need to get back to school, so you’re going to fly back to LaGuardia tomorrow, and I’m going to stay.” She took a drag and blew it straight out, then fanned it away. “Shit. Sorry.”

“What about Dad?”

“He’ll pick you up at the airport.”

“He’s not coming to the funeral?”

She laughed. “Honey, this funeral just ended.” She threw the cigarette on the ground and stomped on it. “Did you catch anything today?”

That night, when I was sure my grandfather and mom were asleep, I left the house and made for the fields. I approached the slanted shack and hopped over the fence. I pulled the weeds off the door and yanked it open, and the entire structure swayed.

When I switched the flashlight on, I felt the room spin—the house was a cave of leaves and rotting particle board. Flowered vines wrapped around a water faucet caked in grime, a wasp nest in a rusted floor lamp, and in the back corner of the room, a patchy, white beekeeper’s suit. I wanted to touch everything at once—my hands felt like they were inside a teakettle. I had to leave. I walked back to my grandfather’s house without using the flashlight, and deep in the woods, I could hear a pack of coyotes laughing their heads off.

My mother had left the folding chair and an ashtray on the front stoop, and it reeked of cigarettes. I sat down and looked over the lawn and took in a big whiff of the ashy air.

I was not frightened when I saw him walking toward me from the dark, but a little surprised. He stood next to me on the porch, took a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket and lit one, then tossed one to me. I had not smoked before, but it seemed impolite to refuse. I hacked and wheezed all the way to the filter, but as it burned away between my fingers, I felt as if my hands had found a language that they could understand.

A bee landed on my arm, but I did not flinch. After a few moments, it flew back to his face. They purred around the honeysuckle, as if whispering to a third eye.

“You see?” he said. The breeze picked up, and I could smell perfume behind the smoke. “They ain’t so bad.”





Ape & Babe

Lawrence Keaty
mixed media



Tantrum

Laura Bomar
digital photograph

Night: Becoming

body lies
double knot

breaking curve
sin(spine)

allow me
to approach

vertical
asymptote

such lines should
wind in twos

Amy Strieter

Summa Adoratica

We proceed thus to the ninth argument,

Objection 1.

whether it is you or me who has destroyed what we used to have?

It seems that a two-backed horse writhes on the beach. Therefore, it is you.

Objection 2.

Further, Eden is sacked, the barn is lousy, the hay descends like severed angel wings. Therefore, it is you.

Objection 3.

Further, even without the horse, two backs writhe on the beach. Therefore, it is you.

I answer that,

It's not you, it's me. Man hath not ample time to contemplate two-backed horses on the beach. For thus writes the Philosopher: "And, moreover, that which is sought both of old and now and forever and forever missed is, what is Being." The eye focuses of its own accord. Telephone wires quiver without us. I learned this and acted accordingly. Forgive me. The sea is a mule.

Reply to Objection 1.

My perception might not be sufficient to substantiate my claim. I remove horse sighting from evidence.

Reply to Objection 2.

I've converted to Buddhism. Agriculture is for uneducated trash. Since falling hay clouds the eyes, it cannot be seen. I remove Eden, barn, hay from evidence.

Reply to Objection 3.

Although two backs undeniably writhed on the beach—

We remain thus on the ninth argument,

Michael Rabenberg

Self-portrait in light

(After Cole's "Black Camella" (after Petrarch))

Stained glass cast an alien pallor over my grave
Expression. I could bear ugliness, but not distortion.
Science's prisms taught me that every color of light
Combines into a hue of blank potential, that our eyes
Can only perceive the absence. I, too, saw only
The lacking. I reflected on the blue in sunsets.
I saw the cruelty in grace and genius of not-knowing.
I felt the heaviness of the open air, carbon oxygen hydrogen
nitrogen
Pressing upon me, begging me to become real
And invisible. I tried to press my soul in my inner ear,
Fail-safe protection from grubby fingers. I avoided mirrors.
To exist is to exist as evidence to a flaw. To serve imperfection.
But the blistering sun still cuts through the window,
Burning my exposed skin, this uneven casing, into something
radiant.

Lauren C. Ostberg

Popham Beach, January

We walked alone on Popham Beach,
hands squeezed into tiny
bloodless fists white as the winters
we remembered from our separate,
snowy childhoods.

The icy waters barely lapped the shore,
drawn out by the full moon perched
low and faint above the islands,
a whispering seawater ghost,
silent and insistent in its pull on the tides.

In the sudden winds, you pulled your scarf high,
your hat low to reveal only bluegreen
seawashed eyes that narrowed in the cold,
and praised or appraised the waters
with a voice I could not hear above the surf,

and I turned for a moment to face the wind,
watched it sweep over the wide beach,
inviting the sand to dance above itself,
particles leaping in wintry celebration of nothing,
only to settle in stillness.

Facing you again to realize you had not stopped,
I saw you ankle deep in that winddance sand
walking half a beach ahead of me,
small and cold and battered,
footsteps already being erased.

I wanted to run and join you,
to lift you in my own arms and hold you like wind,
pull back the thin band of scarf and kiss your cold lips
and pull you into the folds
of my jacket, let our warmth combine.

I did nothing. I watched you pause
and imagined you smiling at the sea,
the islands standing taller in the low tide,
more distinct and more separate,
bridged only by stretches of sand.

Colin O'Brien

Charm

Jon Porobil

"God damn it!" yells Prince Charming as he unsheathes his sword. With the most guttural grunt he can muster, he swings it through the overhanging branch. It clatters on the dirt path at his feet, and he kicks it into a bush at the side of the path, sending a squirrel running. There's the cabin, with its little straw roof, a sliver of smoke still slithering from the chimney towards the sinking sun. Prince Charming jogs the rest of the way, just in case the fire should spread.

Sure enough, she's lying on the kitchen table, her arm hanging down, her fingers splayed just so, the apple having rolled underneath the table. The orange flicker from the fireplace dances across her naked body. She has no pubic hair. Prince Charming checks the bucket near the fireplace, finds it empty. So he carries it out back to the well and turns the crank, with each revolution chanting under his breath *Why me? Why me? Why me?* Back inside, he douses the fire, finds some loose dirt under the rug to throw on it, then stands by the table, looking at Snow White. Funny how, aptly named though she is, she doesn't look dead. Something about her pale skin manages to look vibrant, even when she's in a sleep so deep she barely breathes. Birds twitter outside as Snow White's breasts rise and fall so slightly that Prince Charming is the only one who even knows to look for it, her smile as slight as her breath, and all Prince Charming can concentrate on is how artificial the whole experience is. How aware he is that she's set up a tableau for him. How annoyed he is at the fakeness of it all.

He bends down and administers a ginger kiss to her lips. Her eyes flutter open, and grins huge. "Hey," she coos in her twee baby-talk voice. "My Prince came and saved me." She puts her hands on the back of his neck and pulls in for another kiss, which Prince Charming resists. She smells like apple, peppermint, and rum. He breaks away and walks over to the fireplace. He doesn't know where to start: her alarming habit of poisoning herself to get him to come save her, her alarming habit of drinking heavily before doing so, or her alarming habit of leaving fires unattended while she's unconscious. "You shaved."

"I figured it would be sexy. You like?" She sidles off the table and walks across the room towards Prince Charming as seductively as she can, apparently not realizing she's still drunk. When did he stop liking this kind of stuff? He smiles, conceding to himself that to a certain extent, of course it's sexy. Of course she's attractive—she's the fairest of them all. And she's taking cautious drunken steps toward him, naked and very aware of it. But couldn't the fairest of them all have been a little more... normal? She finally reaches him and wraps her arms around his neck. It feels like she's trying to take him down, and Prince Charming realizes that she's hanging on to keep from falling. Or perhaps trying to make them both topple to the floor.

"Honey," he stammers. "Honey. Please. I...I thought we might...we might talk, actually. Why don't you have a seat?"

She lets go of him and takes a step back that turns into five steps back. Looking around the room, she asks, "Where? Not on those wooden chairs,

I'll get a splinter on my ass." She giggles at the thought.

"Well then put on some clothes."

A hurt look creeps across Snow White's face. "You just want me to put on clothes and talk? After all this setup?" That thin red lip quivers. "You don't think I'm attractive anymore, do you?"

"No, of course I do, but —"

As he protests, she bridges the distance between them again, and delivers him a bodily shove. "I shaved for you, you son of a bitch!" Prince Charming barely budges, stands his ground. "You don't like it shaved, do you? Oh god, I'm so stupid. I can't believe —"

Prince Charming shakes his head and puts his hands on her hips, noting how cool and smooth they feel. Did she powder them? "No, darling, of course I like it. It's very sexy. I just," he can't help chuckling to himself, shaking his head some more. "If only the shaving was all you had done..."

"You think I'm ugly."

"No, no, no, god no. Sweetheart, everyone knows you're the fairest in the land."

"But you think I'm ugly."

"No, of course I don't. When I first laid eyes on you, I knew you were the most beautiful woman I would ever see. That's why I just had to kiss you. I didn't even know that it was going to wake you up; you know that. I just wanted to know what it felt like to kiss a woman this beautiful." And he kisses her now, with all the love he can muster, given the circumstances and the overabundance of tongue. When their lips finally break, he whispers, "And it never gets old."

She buries her face in his neck. "Oh, my Prince," she murmurs. "I love you so much."

"I love you too. That's why I want to talk about this. I'm worried about you." Heedless, she continues kissing his neck, and starts to fumble with his shirt. "Now wait a second..." Snow White, unable to find the edge of his shirt to tug at, tears at it near his chest. He steps back and holds her shoulders at arm's length. "Wait, damn it. We need to talk!"

"Oh, what's to talk about?" mutters Snow White as she stomps into the other room. She reemerges with a blanket, which she drapes over a chair before sitting in it. Still naked, she crosses her legs, sitting up straight with her naked chest out and her hands folded neatly over her naked knee in a parody of daintiness. "What's to talk about? You don't love me anymore."

"Stop saying that! I'm just worried that you might be hurting yourself."

"Stop pacing."

Prince Charming walks around the table and sits sideways in the chair across from Snow White. "This better?"

"Maybe."

He puts his hands flat on the surface of the table and lets a look of desperation settle on his face. "Honey, I think you're hurting yourself. We never researched the effects of that...that stuff." He kicks the apple out from under the table, and it rolls up to the dull fireplace.

"You put out the fire."

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"I can't believe you put out the fire!" She uncrosses her legs and crosses

her arms. "I had it all planned out. You were gonna get here just as it was getting dark, and you'd wake me up, and then we'd make love by the fire as the sun went down! But no, you're talking about how you think I'm putting myself in danger, when the first thing you think to do is to put out the goddamned fire while I lie there half dead! And now I can't even see you to argue with you!"

Prince Charming lights an oil lamp and places it on the table between them. "You get drunk. Then you light a fire. Then you put that poison in your body and sleep while the fire is unattended. All for a cheap sex game? Honey, I love you with or without your kinky games."

"But I like them." She takes the corners of the blanket from around her chair back and wraps them around herself to guard against the coming cold, but it comes off as a gesture of defense.

"Fine then, maybe it's fun, but I'm really worried that one of these days, especially if you keep drinking while you're doing this, that one of these days I'm just gonna kiss you and kiss you and you're not gonna wake up. Please, honey, don't take my Snow White away from me."

Snow White turns her head, letting some of her hair hide her profile. "You can't say that. You don't know what it's like. It's just. . . It's the safest feeling in the world. It just takes me out before I even know what's going on, and the next thing I know, my Prince is right there, come to save me. There's nothing safer."

"It may feel that way, but you're putting yourself inches from death."

"You can't say that!" She jumps out of her chair examines the floor till she finds the apple, which she picks up.

"Sweetie, what are you doing?"

"You can't say things like that till you know how it feels. How can you take me seriously if you've never *felt* it?" She rolls the apple across the table.

Prince Charming catches it. "You want *me* to do it now? I'm trying to get you to stop!"

A long silence settles between them, Snow White refusing to sit down, keeping her arms crossed as she stares at Prince Charming, and he staring at the apple. "Fine," she says finally. "If you take a bite of that apple and let me wake you up, and it's not the most amazing thing you've ever felt, then I'll stop doing it. But I'm telling you. It's nothing. One instant, there's a juicy bite of apple in your mouth, the next minute, the love of your life is right there, keeping you safe, and all that danger stuff just disappears."

After considering the apple for a little while longer, letting it get darker outside, Prince Charming finally asks, "Are we really doing this?"

"I guess that's up to you, Mr. High-And-Mighty."

"Maybe if I do, you'll see how worried sick you can get." The Prince takes the apple and brushes off its surface dirt. Slowly he brings it to his mouth. "No, wait," says Snow White. "You need to bite the other side. Only half of it is poisoned."

He rotates the apple. "You mean, like, here?"

She shakes her head. "No, just bite it where I bit it."

"Why only half?"

"Because when the Queen gave it to me, she took a bite out of the other half to convince me it was safe."

“But why...oh, never mind.” Prince Charming silently counts down from three and takes a bite right next to Snow White’s original bite. He chews, makes a face. “You didn’t know to spit this out? God, this tastes weird! It’s just, it’s like...” His speech trails off and he topples from his chair.

Snow White picks up the blanket from her chair and wraps it around her body. The cold is starting to set in. She wonders whether she should wait, or just kiss him immediately so he can see what it’s like. Or whether she should move him. It’s always most effective when something has changed while she was under: if her body has been moved from a table to a coffin, or if day has turned to twilight. She tries to lift his body, but he’s too heavy for her. She drags him a few feet from the table, at least, so there’s room to make it romantic. She straddles him, but he’s fully clothed, and she’s naked, and it feels awkward. Outside, two dogs start fighting. She grabs the apple from Prince Charming’s hand and runs to the window. “Git!” she screams. “Shoo! Scram!” And hurls the apple at them. It strikes one in the side, and he yelps. Snow White returns to her sleeping husband and kneels next to him. “I love you, Prince Charming,” she whispers in his sleeping ear, before finally administering a long and tender kiss to his lips.

Nothing happens.

She tries again, frantically. She tries hard kisses, soft kisses, tender kisses, rough kisses, kisses with tongue. Nothing rouses him. She shakes him. “Wake up!” she screams. “Wake up, you son of a bitch!” She pounds on his chest and shrieks. “I *knew* it! I fucking knew you didn’t love me anymore! You asshole! You bastard! Why won’t you wake up? Wake up! Please...”

She grabs the lamp from the table and holds it out the window, searching for the apple, but the dogs have gobbled it up, and now they lie sleeping by the window. “Shit!” she yells.

She alternates pacing around the room, kicking Prince Charming, yelling at him, crying on his chest, and sitting in silent vigil, and in this manner she passes the night. As the sun rises, casting the forest outside in pink and yellow, she wraps the blanket around her more tightly. Only now does she realize she’s been shivering. She sits down in the chair she’s pulled up by his body and stares down at it sullenly. She sighs, watches her frosty breath dissipate in the air. “I knew it. You son of a bitch. Why wouldn’t you tell me? Wake up. I knew it. Why wouldn’t you tell me? Wake up, you son of a bitch. I knew it. Why wouldn’t you tell me? Wake up...”

And on she goes, waiting for someone to find them like this.



7

i bit into the lemon fruit
the juice ran onto the skin of my foot
it burned a hole and made me cry



if i lift my leg i can see the sky.

IVOR CUTLER

Lemon Fruit

Loren Bondurant
ink on bristol



Organ: The Lung

Max David Reisman
mixed media

The Sky is Paned

1
It is the branches, framing it so.

2
No, it is the sky, casting itself down.

3
Look. Twig-edged branches attenuate into each black line: plunge
down or rise down into each other. Dispelled to its thousand
penury dependents, a great estate wrinkles its broad trunk into
borders.

Upon this heartwood's exposure, spark genesis: hoary burs to tag
the open space.

Lichen scales molt,
puckering the rind,
jag the tissual sky,
hemorrhaging all the faint venal clouds.

My window is assembled geometry with all the pieces sky and all
the fine black lines tree.

4
But higher than your window, the reached tips lick tremolo.

The fluttering of butterflies tattooed to a naked woman's back.
Off soft white muscle, crackling strokes of wax paper pinching air.

Tremolo.

5
It is the wind.

6
It is the winter, sap is with tender retreats shushed and locked,
tight, to the pulpy heart.
Hollow sticks tumble dumbly down the muted terebinth,
a withered shutter beneath your feet marks the skeletal wreath.
They are put there by a heavy sky.

7
Look, see lights kisses. Thimble sized whorls of cream belie such
somber skies. Small tumblers those lips, they've creased the gray
in jettied lines that reach from kiss to kiss.

8

The sky begged those kisses, I can hear the muffled cry die in
its airy throat, and the sky wanted a lingering, but was turned.

It is the broken sky.

It is shot through with smoke and falling.

And yes, the branches are lovely, and aching, they are dear to me
too.

But they are single brush strokes on living water.

9

Look, North onto Mackinac.

Clean acetylene derricks, piers, and wiring iron launch upon
submissive shores.

Refusing stories tier in stark metal flight.

Dear, they are impossible.

Jesse Rosenbluth

Quantum Fox Gets the Pox

Stephen DeSanto

Black filaments and filigrees undulate against infinite shifting grids. He is among them. A decade passes. Arrays of numbers and letters slip through his fingertips. He used to know what to do with them, but now he wants to swallow them and feel the fours and psis catch in his esophagus. He wheezes and expectorates the Fibonacci sequence, crumbling to dust once each digit passes his lips. Every seven scythes through his skull, sharp aches and silent cracks.

A single point in space ripples into silver ribbons vibrating with the pulse of his heartbeat. He wants to grab it but can't, Heisenberg and God, damn them. He met them both, days before. Ice lashes his fingertips.

An old newsreel projects from his eyes onto the night. His colleagues celebrate the possibility of meeting the king of Sweden and he, the star pupil, Quantum Fox, is the guest of honor. The film catches fire in his mind and vaporizes. Shadows collapse into highlights and there is only entropic heat death, gray and stillness like a knife through the loins. It lasts a week. Then, darkness again.

Sir Isaac Newton appears and wheels him into another universe, past yellowed walls and endless subatomic particles.



Pale Skin Weak Stomach

Chuck Norris hangs near the ceiling
In an eternal flying dropkick, shirtless, shiny,
Black and white, and his foot is God's finger,
Anointing the cashier who sells
A gringo a fudgesicle
He won't be able to digest.

He gulps the brown bolus down,
Wipes his brow. Sweat in his eyes
Makes the cobble road shimmer,
Makes the puttering pickups look new.
He blinks, hails a tuktuk taxi,
Mutters his destination.

With a cobblestone bump, his esophagus
Spits out as chyme the fudgesicle
Into his unprepared stomach, which absorbs
The sugar, the fat, the water, its bacteria,
Shuffles and repacks them according to
His diabetic aunt, hypothyroid mother, and

His white skin which warns him
That he must be careful what he eats
While he visits in this world.
Here he is the fairest, blondest, tallest.
Here the giggling girls snap furtive shots
With their cell phones. Here he is rich,

Powerful, exotic, attractive, and even so,
The water, the simplest of needs,
Forces his body to contract upon itself,
To snap shut like a sprung trap, to revolt,
As if to plead *Take me home, take me home,*

I know I don't belong here—take me home.

Jon Porobil



Zohar
Saul Jaffe
paper on cardboard



Certified Organic

Lawrence Keaty
linoleum print

The Freeze

Daniel Poppick

Willa-Claire yanked out a strand of hair and dangled it over one of the thirteen candles on her birthday cake. Her father switched off the last of the lights.

"Now can I do it?" she said.

"Are you sure you don't want to sing first?" her father said.

She shook her head. "No way. Not until he's here."

"I see."

"He'll be here, he always comes for tonight. If it had been me, he knows I would do the same. Or he should!" She held her breath and swept her eyes across the kitchen.

He sighed. "Go ahead."

She lowered the hair to the flame, which flickered and hissed. An acrid musk filled the air above the cake. She narrowed her eyes and watched the tip quiver as she fed it down, slowly.

"Make sure you don't burn your fingers," her father said.

She finished and closed her eyes, mumbled something inaudible. The light trembled on her oily face, and her father smiled sadly.

She blew out the candles in a flash of amber, and the house was dark. A spool of smoke unwound in the moonbeam from the window. Her father stroked her back, and she buried her face in his shirt.

"Maybe he's just jealous, honey," he said. "He never got to have a birthday."

"I don't care." Her voice was drenched.

"Now come on. Are you sure you don't want to try the Ouija board again?"

"That thing is bogus. I'm not a baby anymore."

"No, you're a teenager," he laughed, and kissed her cheek.

The following morning, Willa-Claire stepped onto the school bus, and it turned around in her driveway. She lived on Esther Apiary, named in her mother's memory, which her father owned and managed. The bus had to travel several minutes off its regular route every morning to get there. The children moved books onto their adjoining seats.

She sat next to a boy sleeping with his face pressed against the window. She pulled a jar of honey and a packet of saltines out of her backpack and began to eat. The boy stirred, looked at her, and quietly swore.

"You want some?" she said, offering the honey. "My dad's bees made it."

"Is that supposed to be your breakfast?" he said.

"I'm a vegetarian."

"That's pretty retarded," he said, and put his face back against the window.

Willa-Claire finished her crackers and watched the pale brown swill of land and sky run past the window. It was getting cold—the freeze would come soon.

"My birthday was yesterday," she said. "Last night we had cake. We

made enough for my brother, but he didn't come." The boy pulled his arms into his sweatshirt.

"It was so rude," she said. "We had to put some in the fridge. He hasn't been around for a few weeks."

"He lost?" the boy said without opening his eyes.

"I don't think so. He might be mad at me."

"Maybe he's sick of hearing you talk."

"Maybe you should mind your own business."

"Dyke."

* * *

In hindsight, her father thought he should have foreseen the misunderstanding—she had only been six years old. They were checking for mites in the honey supers, and the hive was wide open. Willa-Claire was watching the drones cluster around the queen.

"Why do they do that?" she said.

"They're feeding her—see?" he said. She crouched closer to the hum. "They do everything for her."

"If she was alive, would we do that?"

"Yes we would," he said. "You and your twin brother and me."

"What happened to him, again?"

"Stillborn."

And Willa-Claire nodded as if she understood, which wasn't right. A six-year-old girl shouldn't know that word, he thought. But Willa-Claire had heard two words, not one.

Later that night, he heard her talking in her room. She laughed, and her father was struck by how strange that sounded. The door creaked when he nudged it open, and she stopped.

"Who's there?" he said.

She said nothing and picked at the white fuzz brimming out of the ripped neck of a blue rabbit.

"Honey," he said, "they're gone. You understand, right?"

"I do," she said, and popped another seam.

"That's good. And I love you very much. Now let's get you to bed. Please don't break any more of your toys."

* * *

After school, Willa-Claire walked into the woods behind the apiary. The wind thumped past like a dog. Shortly beyond the point where the house became obscured by trees lay the rusted corpse of a 1970's Cadillac, sucked into the ground. It had been there when they moved onto the land. The glass was kicked in, the wheels were buried in dirt, and patches of moss sprawled across the seats like drunken bullfrogs. A hole was punched into the rear backrest, the size of a small fist, leading to the trunk. Vines reached through the windshield and gripped the dashboard. The car was no longer litter. She climbed on top of the hood and waited.

"I'm not mad about last night," she said. "Just hope you know."

Something stirred in the trunk, though this was of no use to Willa-Claire—it was locked and bent. Others had tried to pry it open before her.

"Did you not get my present?" she said. "I burned a hair for you. I thought you might like it, because you never got any."

A squirrel jumped into a tree hollow. A dove cooed.

"I hope you didn't think that was rude. Like I thought I was better than you. I didn't mean it like that. I would never." The sun was turning red in the trees.

"A boy called me something nasty on the bus today because of you," she said.

She kicked the trunk as hard as she could and when she walked home her foot hurt, but she bit her lip. By the time she got back to the house it was nearly dark and a few bats were out. She thought that this was stupid—winter was coming, and every last one of them would freeze unless they got out.

"How was school today?" her father asked her over dinner.

"Bad."

"Again?" he said. The refrigerator hummed.

"A boy said something mean to me on the bus."

"He probably has a crush on you."

"He called me a dyke."

"Oh. I'm sorry, honey. God. Well, he probably does have a crush on you, but if he ever asks you on a date, you kick him right in the balls."

"Dad!"

"If you don't, I'll do something worse."

Later, her father came into her bedroom and turned off the bedside lamp. Outside it was raining. The shadows of rivulets, thrown from the window, ran along the walls.

"I want to hear a story," she said.

"What kind of story?"

"The kind you like. Something old."

Her father sat at the foot of her bed and thought for a moment.

"Out west, there was a robber," he said. "He wasn't exactly Robin Hood, but he wasn't so bad either. He had a family to feed, and a mule. He was in a saloon one night, and a drunk came up to him and said I like the looks of you, so I'm going to make you a deal. The robber was suspicious, but he felt sorry for the man, so he said, Oh yeah? And the drunk said, If you buy me a drink, I'll give you a treasure map. Again, the robber felt more sorry than curious, but he bought him some whiskey and took the map. The robber threw it on the floor as soon as the drunk left, and the next day he held up a train full of people wearing top hats. But the drunk was so moved that someone had listened to him that he never drank another sip of liquor for the rest of his life."

Willa-Claire's eyes were closed. He kissed her and went to bed. Outside, the temperature had dropped, and the rain had turned to snow. The thin streams of water froze to the window pane, as did the shadows on the walls.

Five inches of snow covered the ground by morning. School was cancelled. The storm was early and had taken everyone by surprise.

After breakfast, Willa-Claire put her boots on and walked into the woods. The sky was still overcast. Snow stuck to the branches like white veins. She approached the Cadillac, half swallowed by a snowdrift. The surface of the car was pristine except for a small dip on the surface of the trunk where the snow was damp, as if something had emanated warmth. Willa-Claire looked at the spot for a moment and yanked on the trunk. In the brittle cold, the latch broke open.

Among the dirt and mold, four bats lay clumped together, frozen solid. Willa-Claire widened her eyes and smiled.

"Well there you are. You're getting sneaky."



The Industrial Revolution

I took a left (or did the
mower take me?)

and turned Mom's
begonias into confetti.

Michael Rabenberg

East Jesusville

When the washing machine attacked Mrs. Chonch—
and killed her—
everyone in the neighborhood claimed they knew
almost immediately.
From the florist planting box flowers in Red McGovern's
front lawn,
the piano tuner in Leland Crow's parents' living room
kissing Leland's mother,
the plumber in the piano tuner's bathroom,
and the carpenters
furring our living room, to my mother, washing dishes
reading closed captions
to follow her soaps. Even our teachers somehow knew
to stop teaching.
We ran out into the streets, convened at that blue house
on Beach and Vine.
My mother, still wearing her yellow rubber gloves,
went in first.
And though she never described the sight to anyone,
I can see it:
Mrs. Chonch, pelvis crushed, blood spattered
on her blue hair,
clutching a useless broom, her unbalanced load
bouncing away.

At the funeral we make no mention of the day,
not the gruesome death,
not the Loffmore Company's hush money, nor
much of anything.
Searching for safe topics, the world's worst eulogist remarks,
"She was a Lilliputian woman."
And he speaks of the power that God has imbued
in all of us,
to know so instinctively the peril of our little old lady.
But it wasn't.

No sacred bastinado informed us, nor any nagging
of a fictional spirit.
It was her malodorous decay that drew us out,
the tendrils of stench
that exploded out from her body as soon as life left it
soared through East Jesusville,
seeped through every window, and we crept outside;
we followed our noses.
Our divine sympathy was a need to know
what in the hell
could make such an ungodly stench, and how
to extinguish it.

Jon Porobil

Last Night: Binaries

Moving down route 4 in your car,
When I looked over to you shifting and pivoting your limbs
To operate our movement,
I thought *I am the man she loves*—
the pendulum gold hair tapping your temples,
The nose raised, severely tipped,
And rigor, the tawny flesh of your movement,
Transfused to the inner workings of a greater machine,
A German make, always moving us places.
It is your energy that you pump like black
Petroleum into us.
In bed you drive me to do those things,
You show me the black ooze.

The same moment, the movement and
The car were never mine.
It is the same polished navy Jetta
You had before we met,
The same legs that clenched, protracted,
Clutched the greater engines in life.
Moving down route 4 in your car,
I thought *I am not the man who loves her*—

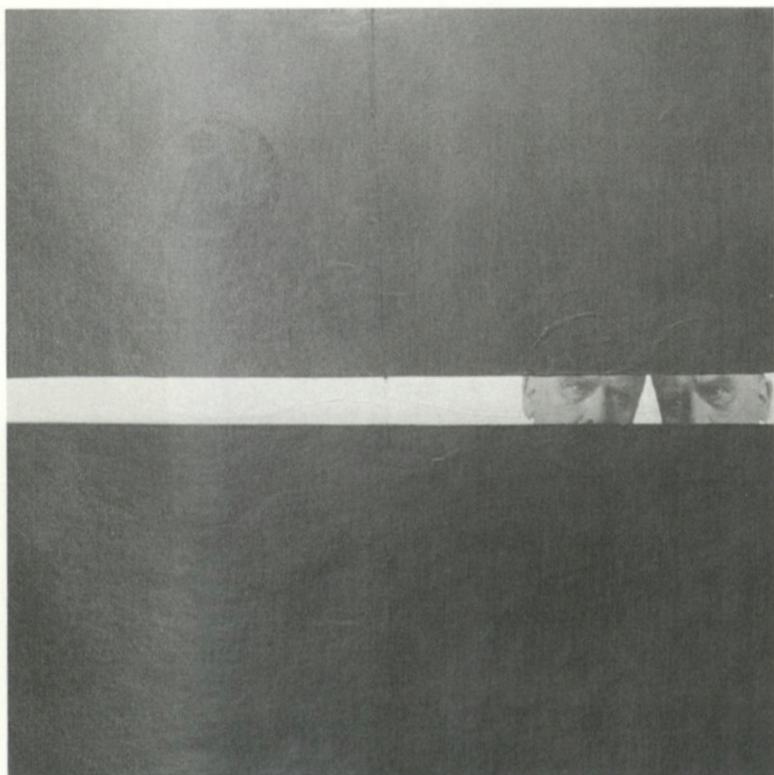
Reducing us to binaries.

Theo Goa



Tanaya

Maureen Rees
photograph



**A Painting of William McKinley,
Jr. the 25th President of the United
States of America**

Stefan Gunn

latex paint, acrylic paint, and silkscreen on canvas

Korczak's Desk

It is a difficult thing to be born and to learn to live. Ahead of me is a much easier task: to die. After death it may be difficult again, but I'm not bothering about that. The last year, month, or hour.

Janusz Korczak

There were darknesses and
Forty blank sheets of plain paper
Writ with gray layers of dust but
Words could not begin to
Describe it and

Several pencil stubs
Poised to transcribe the next
Letter from the King but
The Old Doctor was nowhere to be found so they
Rested quietly
In the darknesses as a

Cockroach scurries by as if
Conducting a regular checkup or
Looking for a diagnosis but
They say cockroaches are blind but
I say they live longer than
Any of us but
Who cares in the end? As an

Old pocket knife
Rusts in a corner
Cutting through the darknesses with
An occasional gleam and
Cutting through the dust as
Blood may have accelerated its rusting,
Now feeble and
I wonder whether the
Knife will outlive the cockroach, as

Set prominently in the center of the
Darkened drawer a
Stack of photographs that speak
More than dust and cry
More than blood and
Live longer than life, a

Story of a family, of
Children now in darkneses
Gone or lost from memory but not
Sympathy, crying of
Sixty years passed
Years passed
Years

William Cirocco

The scent of garlic

The scent of garlic lingers on my hands
from the dinner we cooked for your house,
the three roommates who you thought
would overwhelm me. Their laughter
echoed through the cold air and over
the old wooden floorboards as you converted
free verse into a reluctant sonnet,
and I sprawled on your bed to write
something that wasn't supposed to be
about you. The memory of garlic drifted
up from my fingers and there you were,
kitchen knife in hand, cutting vegetables
for the simple salad we would serve
as a centerpiece. When I find myself
back in Ohio in an apartment that defies
the din of your New England home,
the scent of garlic you made me cut
will hang in the air like the past
I cannot contain, taut as a story
I could never learn to tell.

Colin O'Brien

Geography of conversation

I. dismissive
or beckoning wave I take the hand
take the hand, break the wave, the wave
Dismissed. We step one foot—
no two—then the other two
Two by two is four we're
eleven feet tall together. We're
together.

II. location matters. position.
you ask and I return getting there
is half the fun. I'm there but you're
where. A tender place, perhaps.
Is this? Here? Half-silent
in no position to ask me why
I only speak self-consciously
while shivering.

III. On the stepping stones of your
spine I pretend to read Braille. Stone silent.
If you hold your breath, I will pretend
Step around it. But you are there.
Well-read, choking
back the inevitable references. I know that one.
No, that one there. Here. Don't you hear me
tracing your thoughts, inevitable

Crumbs along the path. The first stone
Is cast. And scene. Dismissed.

Lauren C. Ostberg

Shadow

San Francisco, U.S.:

The thin man trails nimbly on Balboa
Between Clara and me, she is my obsession,
Into the Mediterranean place—
We wonder together how this food formed a canon—
Then to the independent theatre;
He sprawls like a coat over the seats
And changes with the light cast by the animation show.
All this time,
And on the beach at Half Moon Bay,
He is the third consciousness, which makes Love rigid and less
possible.

If we could be alone
I might kiss her, and the stars
Could graph the aftermath—
An aftermath that can never be sure
Since the thin man and his oppressive black coat
Are with me always.

City Island, U.S.:

On the porch of an empty house
We discuss sex,
And the thin man writhes on the gritty wood planks:
I can feel the yank at my heels from which he stems.
Perhaps, though, he stems from deeper in me—
From my heart, which is impatient and hurt by the breeze and
The rushing of the Long Island Sound,
Recalling a memory: a young friend whose heart was arrested
To the bottom silt and wintry current.
His thin twisting becomes less evident
As the beer takes its strangling foot to me,
And now I can relax,
Like a drunk husband at the business gala:
Eyefuck the caterer
And slur my indecency in the night,
In my night suit, tailored to the measurements of
My voluntary ignorance.

Tyrone, Canada:

I married a thin man—
How embarrassing;
He wavers off onto the soy field,
And I wonder what might happen if I bury him there;
The soy and the red barn are enough,
The country slant rolls down to lake Ontario, rustles a little.
If I had been an empty mason jar, refracting

┌

This all, retaining every impression
As long as light will linger in glass,
Grace it fully, then pass on,
I might yet end up happy.
He stretches, slinkies back:
The thick preserves of what I've always been
Filling me, deflecting all that grace.
I am avowed.

Theo Goa



Nihilism

We dive into life
wearing concrete Speedos.

Michael Rabenberg

Hunting Magic

A man with a hat in a canoe is datable,
illegible creatures less so: the humanoid figure
with horns, the smear
that may or may not be the Tortoise God.
A volcano erupts. The atlatl gives way to bow & arrow
and the Moab mastodon has three toes
or four. In the vicinity of Gerlach, "seeing the elephant"
meant going to California
with the circus animals, circa 1910.
Multigenerational panels on basalt boulders
sear an ancient lakeshore.
In Reno some petroglyphs have been used
as tombstones: ranchers feel closer to the universe
in their presence.
The last Shoshone woodcutter near Goldfield
dated his glyphs in western script.
Otherwise, Coyote was responsible, or else the elders—
unnatural either way, and probably dangerous,
something to avoid. We remember
the important things through songs & stories,
not this fluttering of hands.
When the old ones were hungry
they'd simply move.
If you understand the people, you understand the art:
Andy Warhol with his soup cans, cars
that do or don't slow down
when the signs say to.
If you see an animal depicted in Great Basin rock art
it will be, nine times out of ten, a bighorn sheep.
Either the Paiute worshipped the sheep
god, or else they didn't. The site record is inadequate.
The last of the shamans is dead.
Lithic scatter in the foreground, longhouse
of suburban sprawl—
We want to look at images and get the answers.
We want a new Elvis for the bedroom door.

G.C. Waldrep



Untitled (de cabinet) no. 78

Ashley Lamb

collage and oil paint on wood board



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Sarah J. Heidt
digital photograph

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Untitled (de cabinet)
no. 283

Typeset using L^AT_EX
Printed by OSU UniPrint

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