

FIRETHORNE

The Gustavus Journal of Literary and Graphic Arts

FALL 2009
GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

FIRETHORNE SUBMISSION POLICY

Firethorne is Gustavus Adolphus College's student-run literary magazine comprised solely of student work. Firethorne is published twice a year, with a supplemental in the fall and a full-length publication in the spring.

Students may submit their work by emailing firethorne@gustavus.edu. Emails must attach prose and poetry in Microsoft Word format in a standard font without color (Times New Roman, 12 pt.), while artwork and photography must be sent as a JPEG file with reasonable file compression (300-600 dpi). Drawings that are being submitted may either be scanned and then emailed, or can be a high quality copy. Copies can be submitted through the Gustavus Adolphus post office and sent to Professor Baker Lawley. Students may submit as many pieces as they desire; however, a greater number of submissions does not guarantee publication. Firethorne will not publish anonymous work or materials submitted from a non-Gustavus email address.

The Managing Editor will systematically code all submitted work and turn over the submitted work, without attribution, for the editors' scrutiny. Firethorne staff will admit submissions for creativity, originality and artistic value.

For prose, submissions should be 2500 words or less. Artwork and photography can be color and up to any size, however please take note that color may be cost prohibitive depending on available funds. In this event, Firethorne staff will convert artwork to grayscale with the submitter's consent.

Submissions marked for publication will appear in their original submitted form except for technical aspects such as font, size, page placement and corrections of obvious grammatical errors. Stylistic changes (i.e. word substitutions, changes in length of the work, word omissions, etc.) recommended by the editors will be made only with the submitter's consent. If recommended changes are not approved by the submitter, they will not be made; however the publication of the work will then be determined by the Firethorne staff as it reflects our artistic mission for the publication as a whole. It is against Firethorne policy to publish works that do not reflect the submitter's artistic integrity.

Firethorne recompensates its staff members by allowing them to publish either one prose piece or two poems per issue. Staff members' works will undergo the editing process like all other submissions.

The views and/or opinions expressed in the publication are not to be taken as those of Firethorne staff or its associated bodies. Materials deemed to place the publication at risk for liability with regard to obscenity or profanity in connection with hate speech, slander or other illegal forms of speech will be removed at the staff's discretion. Work found to be fraudulent in nature or plagiarized will be disqualified upon confirmation.

Inquiries into Firethorne can be made by contacting:
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to the sixty-plus creative minds who submitted their work for consideration,

and finally to you, dear reader, for your interest in and passion for the written word and artistic expression—

—our labor would be fruitless without each of you.

Thank you,
The Firethorne Editors

Cover art:

Toute Le Monde Se Fout des Fleurs,

by Gunter Heidrich, Senior Studio Art major

Rear cover poem:

Writing is, by Ryan McGinty, Senior English major

Cover design: Lauren Bennett, Junior Communication Studies major

LETTER FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Dear Reader,

I don't think we could say it better than the beloved Gustavus graduate of 1965 and modern bard of Minnesota, Bill Holm:

For it is life we want. We want the world, the whole beautiful world, alive—and we alive in it. That is the actual god we long for and seek, yet we have already found it, if we open our senses, our whole bodies, thus our souls. That is why I have written and intend to continue until someone among you takes up the happy work of keeping the chain letter of the soul moving along into whatever future will come.

This semester, Firethorne received over three hundred submissions. The Firethorne staff has labored for weeks to select writing that best reflects what Gustavus students have to offer in terms of original style and voice, thought and purpose, and writing that will reach you both emotionally and intellectually. This, we've found, is no easy task: it is not simple to examine the soul, human existence, experience, passion, and the absurd as these gathered voices have. Yet from these many disparate voices, we have gathered a collective, conversing whole.

The writing and art presented for you here reflects the world in which we all live—you will find that some characterize an unhappy world—yet although we do not often understand it, we strive to be *alive in life*. Much of the work in this issue explores longstanding themes, but these voices are utterly original, desiring to make something new out of the old and the quotidian. Each poem, story, essay, and image examines these themes from a distinctive perspective and style that reflects the ambiguity, absurdity, and beauty inherent in our world. This is a tremendous credit to the quality of writing that Gustavus students have to offer.

Please read with open senses. These are works to be examined with the soul and many deserve to be reread and reread. They will challenge you, and you may challenge them. Please do.

Most sincerely,
Abby Travis
Managing Editor

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**THERE IS A LIGHT
THAT NEVER GOES OUT**

This morning
the rain pelted the
first batch of leaves
from the trees.

(vibrant)green hues
prematurely turned
to rust—
 made more stunning
 by the sky's
 pallid grey.

They flit and spiral
 (slowly)
 before hitting
 concrete—

plastered(pasted) into a
chance mosaic of
incendiary
 viridescence.

They will burn on
 through the crystal eventide
 and into the
jaded dawn,

oblivious to the ever-
 increasing chill
of each coming day.

IMPULSE

It begins by way of a sudden thought. Not so much as the image of a light being turned on but as when one notices something in the sky and stares intently at it for a prolonged period of time—when every bit of attention is projected onto identifying something thousands of miles away, something one only initially perceives because of a small sensation, a sense of light, of movement, of curiosity, until nothing else matters but pursuing that impulse—awkwardly standing at the center of some road, neck tilted back and beginning to burn but it doesn't matter because you sensed something and will force an identity out of it if it takes all night. But then, knowing that thinking and creating by way of force is an absurd notion, the attempt at identification is resigned—but in resignation only does the hope of recognition truly exist. Unaware, your mind works most effectively when unencumbered, when thought is eliminated—until that which was initially sensed is realized in recognition, often clear as if that thing from the sky fell down at your feet, so fragile. And even then you become your own worst enemy: as you stoop to examine it, your shadow hides it from the light and while repositioning, you every moment risk destruction. The impulse gives way to all else and thoughts roll furiously; words, phrases, and ideas tumbling now, faster than pen or fingertips can set words to. In the confusion, ideas are inevitably lost, pouring out and over the edge of the page—cascading into the abyss of thoughts never recovered.



THAI CLIFF

10 HAIKU ABOUT NOTHING

My weight must be so
unbearable to the poor,
tired universe.

If past were present
and future two steps away
we'd pine forever.

Last time we saw that
it wasn't through my own eyes
but nor were they yours.

Dreams don't come when you
ask of them to show you the
way you look, asleep.

A dull, heedless look
is all it takes, when done right,
to get a thrashing.

You could use those words
when staring down the barrel
of a loaded gun.

Die if you might, but
there's a little place beneath
the hanging willow.

Hold on to that thought—
it's trying to slip away
from its only home.

Did it work just then
when you pulled the sentences
out from sticking keys?

I tend to favor
the type that doesn't even
taste its bleeding tail.

Forget the Ambush—
it takes years to bring back Jack
with mail-in rebates.



PALLE

KATELYN PEDERSEN
SENIOR NURSING MAJOR



ANNECY, FRANCE

ANTIC HEART

In the attic of my imagination
which is an antic heart
I crept upon an antique trunk.

Unlocked & unlatched,
it was ready
to be disturbed.

The lid peeled back easily
with no creaks.
(my mind must always be young
& spry)

And I beheld there
photographs of past days—
my leaving lives
and left loves.

But most attaching
a picture of a pool
reflecting bright sunlight
on the side of a road
beside a field—
it left me speechless,
staring at the forgotten brightness.

So lustrous it rested,
clear in a muddied world —
but ever restless
with a returning wind
to sweep it.

A BURGEONING CITY OF MOSTLY RATS

Aloft in the last remaining lamppost
I heard them scampering across the boardwalks.
They found their last victim
hiding in the speckled shadows
around my waning gaze.
I couldn't see the details
but I heard the cracking
of spindly bones,
and metered writhing,
like worms underfoot.
All the while I clung
to my pole,
as rain splattered
and washed it down the gutters.

**NONSENSE,
OR THE ESOTERIC PERMUTATIONS OF ONEIRIC THOUGHT**

January 30, 1968—1:34 a.m.—Listening to the record

There are pelicans
fighting their slow, sad descent
into great vinyl ziggurats
with their webbed feet encased in concrete blocks
into an ocean of snow surging and crashing
constructed entirely of
180 gram pressings of

White Light/White Heat.

January 7, 1972—Dawn—Looking over the Washington Avenue Bridge

Miles Davis,
Bill Watterson,
and Flannery O'Connor
are discussing the merits and particulars of an exquisite suicide,
but I don't think they really "get it,"
not the way that Ian Curtis,

Quentin Compson,
or John Berryman would,
at least.

September 14, 1927—5:16 p.m.—Sleeping on the Ferris wheel

On the cacophonous battleground of Coney Island,
General Ambrose Burnside
is commanding a glorious battalion of animate jade plants
mounted atop moaning water buffalo.
He leads them into the breach
against a guerilla band of expatriated Dadaist sound poets
who can't seem to coordinate their battle plan.
Hugo Ball dies
in a vainglorious assault upon
the frozen ramparts
littered with the corpses of fallen Imagists
and bloated Modernists. I mourn their passing,
and ritually immolate copies
of antiquated manifestos.

June 2, 1910—Dusk—Drowning in Honeysuckle

You and I,
waiting to board our plane
we were in the terminal

to the Cedar Forest of Humbaba
when William Faulkner came by
with a massive suitcase filled with various rubber stamps.
He came to us and gazed into your indigo eyes,
found the appropriate stamp and slammed it down
upon your petite, curled hand.

It read, "**PULCHITRUDINOUS.**"
His mustache twitched as he peered into my dead, gray lids.
He impressed the stamp onto my rough hewn hand.
"**MIASMATIC.**"

I asked him, "Why do you think I'm miasmatic?"
He said, "Fuck off, you goddamn hack,"
and continued down the line of waiting passengers.

May 18, 1980—4:33 a.m.—Laying in the Prairie Grass

Lou Reed takes me to an absolutely resplendent bistro in Avignon
where you can order
a shank of Saracen
served with a saffron infused Soufflé au Fromage,
or a breast of Basque
braised in Bouillabaisse,
and many other splendid cannibalistic delicacies.
Lou orders the Saracen.
During dinner, we meet a very eloquent, but slightly pretentious gazelle
who posits that

the post-punk scene is played out
and that one day we will all worship Animal Collective.
Lou says the music scene is eating itself alive.
We all drink to the love
that has torn the bard apart.
It was all so beautiful in its grotesque splendor.

April 1, 2007—11:38 a.m.—Walking Through the Door

On an obsidian monolith towering above paper cities
I am illustrating a graphic novel adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*
written by my friend Ryan.
But it's all wrong.
Gatsby doesn't die—he starts gunning down
all the fake bastards that populate
the whole damn American mythos
while sucking rye whiskey out of a golden flask.
I'm spilling ink all over the pages
and I can't control my hands
because I'm shaking without thought or reason or volition.
I'm thinking about my father
and how I had wanted
to say so much more.
when he left for the far shore.

August 23, 2009—10:35 p.m.—Closing My Eyes at Red Rocks

I am sitting in an auditorium

carved into the very womb

of a primordial Colorado mountain.

A man in a gorilla costume is sitting next to me,

debating the merits of Kierkegaard and Camus

while sonic explosions of confetti, light, and sound

fill the pregnant summer air.

The Lips are playing an astral rendering

of “Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots Pt. 1.”

Glenn looks bored.

I feel like a child.

March 7, 1988—12:23 p.m.—Waking by the River

All these things—they happened and didn’t happen, simultaneously.

I remembered them and created them, without contradiction.

They are both truth and fiction coexisting in a singular entity,

two inchoate elements inexorably fused together.

They exist in that cosmic realm

where drunken reveries,

electric manifestations of imagination,

and manic visions

swell and reverberate

in an undulating sea of dreams and myth.



ALEX MESSENGER, SENIOR STUDIO ART MAJOR

TABLE FOR ONE

DELIVERY

If you were my apothecary
I wouldn't trust your dusty vials.
You forget to wash your fingerprints
yet act surprised
when I don't take your
empty cures.

But I guess
you're just my mailman.
And yes I can sign for that.

ELIZABETH

The next time we pull over, you take over driving for awhile.
I will sit and sleep and dream
about many things I won't remember
except on paper.

We've made this trip so many times,
Minneapolis to Chicago (and back, days later)
that I feel the dark outside the car
as friendly, the headlights somehow redundant
if you switched them off the car
would know the way itself.

That familiarity eclipses us
and even though we stopped trying 100 miles,
(or is it days?)
ago, familiarity is just a step away from memory
and here in the dark, listening to you breathe
I can't help but want to remember.

I AM NOT A WRITER PERIOD

Lights out! A flashlight light flashes. Under the covers *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer.

I am not a writer. From childhood I have been a reader. When I go blind from straining my eyes reading with a flashlight under the covers and I have to listen to audiobooks in an assisted living facility—I will consider myself a reader. I am a reader.

Not that these things are mutually exclusive. If I write, it is an extension of my reading. But that is all: I write, I am not a writer. When I read, I think things like this:

How is this character developing? I don't know if I like that. The metafictional properties of this book really accentuate the underlying themes of the transience of pleasure. "Snow was general all over Ireland." Joyce can say so much in so little. There is inconsistent imagery in the third quatrain. "Gatsby believed in the green light," I love that metaphor. Poorly done, Saul Bellows, a hamster in a wheel could produce a less redundant novel than *Herzog*, and so could I if I had the inclination.

Which, unequivocally, I do not.

When I write, I think things like this:

Why am I writing this? I already know what I think. I shouldn't have to write it down to prove that I thought about it. Is this good? Is this the best? Does this sound trite? Is this anything new? If this isn't unique, why am I writing it? This is overdone. What comes next? How do I pace myself? How do I write dialogue? This is shit. This is stupid, but I can peddle it. I wish this was better. I wish I was better.

Consequently, I am not a writer. I am so hyper-critical and analytical that my reader's eye precludes me from being a writer. I write from necessity, not inclination. If I can write at all, I can only see it coming from two things:

- 1) I learned to lie convincingly as a child. This has enabled me to write a multitude of convincing pieces asserting a myriad of viewpoints on manifold topics about which I have little or no personal feeling and certainly have no stake in.
- 2) The reading. The same reading that inhibits my writing enables it. I don't have to think for a moment about a piece's internal logic. I unconsciously operate knowing what needs to be explicated in what order to obtain what understanding from the reader. That's not something I worked for, it just came from reading so much myself. Understanding how to operate as a reader allows me to operate as a writer (operate as, not be).

I measure my writing, and everyone else's, in lumens.

LINDSAY LELIVELT
JUNIOR ENGLISH MAJOR

**IMITATION IS THE SINCEREST
FORM OF PLAGIARISM**

a clean, well-lighted place,
and a room of my own.
so much depends
on these many borrowed words.

KATIE UMENTHUM
SENIOR ART HISTORY & STUDIO ART MAJOR



BLACK HILLS' CALM

EVERY SNOTRAG HAS A STORY

Like the one your girl
embroidered with her own
initials and cried into
when you went away to
war. And then she chased
your car down the street
waving her handkerchief
and leaned through the
window to tuck it into
your breast pocket
and kiss you on the mouth.

And you think of it
(perfect white square,
pink letters) how it's stained
with mud-sweat-blood
from the bowels of war—
you think of it while you're
making love with your shirt on
to a girl you pay in drinks.

And you think of how that
girl back home cries over
your photograph,
and how she writes
in flowery cursive
(the paper: a perfect white
square) that she is proud of
you and you think
well at least someone's
dream is coming true.

MOVIEGLOW

I was seeing
whatever the blue glow
of bright screens show
when looked at as a
blue mirror.

I did not find it
blutiful or beautiful
but more like a
sheet of paper
scribbled on with crayon
by a legion of
babbling babies who only
cry for more

more

more

it doesn't matter

what or anything

the more I look
the eye wants more
the I wants more

IT WAS SOMETHING YOU DID
AND DIDN'T SAY

“But oh!
The Stars!” and it ended.
But oh!
What about them?

Can you see them in this bright night?
Mocking us with the sight of what we mighta known?
Do you see them quiver and glisten,
sweat a little in their sweetness

and the droplets
fall silently down to earth
and shatter—one million shards,
the seeds of a broken cosmos, littering the earth but piercing nothing

(germinating, boiling, setting the world on fire with its fury)
there is no sound, this night—

no bright star
no moon
nor any clouds to cover them

This sky is barren and silent
screaming—if only it had a voice,
but it has none—
the light from your bedroom
drowning out those stars.

Your light—does it
help the grass to grow and the sun to shine?

What have you illuminated?

The sun and the stars have abandoned us.

*

Or maybe
they don't quiver
and quake, (perhaps) they caress and
comfort the lonely night like a
lover.

FOXES ON THE HILL (NOW LOST)

It's a hard day's work
doing next to nothing
at all.

Sitting in the
tempurpedic indentation
of your fading
red recliner

with feet hovering
above shag carpet
that reeks of must and
ancient footprints.

Most of them were yours—

all of them now lost,
buried under a fathom
of steps traced and retraced.

Ice melts in
a tumbler of scotch
gripped by your
calloused fingertips

as tears of condensation
meander willfully down
the amber-tinted glass.

Your bones were once as
quick as foxes on the hill.
Now you just stay
at the house—

frozen in recline.

This old shuttered-mansion
whispers and creaks
of stories once shouted—

Tales of you as a nimble fox,
dancing on graves...

their howls now lost
to an empty,
guttured world.

CIRCLES, CYCLES

Out of the fertile
sea-salt soil of myself,
subject (as all goddesses are)
to the pull of forces I
cannot define I
surface and resurface
(in cycles, circles) with
a power that can only be
divine: to trade blood
for life, to create, in my
depths, something altogether
new (though nothing is)
and to carry it, swimming,
to the surface towards the
pull of the moon, where
there is the simple
sacrifice to set it free.

So I am learning and
forgetting (circles, cycles)
to reassemble myself, to
perform my own solemn
rituals of worship:
moon-blood-sea-moon-tide,
garlanding myself with
sea-grass and gathering
myself in to love the
sacredness of being, the
small human pleasures of
it, the way it turns the
tides, fills the moon,
and turns me, full-
empty-full, to find
myself and love her.

KRISTIN KENNEDY
JUNIOR NURSING, BIOCHEMISTRY, &
MOLECULAR BIOLOGY MAJOR



A NEW PERSPECTIVE

WHERE SHE LIES

The balmy, noon, autumn breeze swept past brightly colored maples and snatched their leaves by the stems, surrendering them softly to the placid surface of the lake. A tenuous mist hung over the abandoned expanse of water. On a rock, near a large thickly rooted Oak, sat a fisherman; in his left hand was a spinning pole, in his right a bent cigarette butt. His nostrils filled with the scent of pinecone and tree sap as he watched the red and white bobber lie motionless on the water. He was having no luck and his eyelids felt heavy. He flicked away the cigarette with his index finger but before he was able to doze off, the faint pattering of a boat engine awoke him. He peered into the mist with cold eyes and quickly spotted a boat heading in his direction. In the small wooden framed craft sat two silhouettes, one operating the engine and the other at the bow.

The pattering finally stopped and the boat was motionless one hundred yards from the large Oak. The only distinguishable features of the two young mariners were their black beanies. The fisherman sat patiently and watched them. Then, quite unexpectedly, a loud sound erupted from behind him. He spun around and squinted into the vast forest of cryptic maples. Nothing caught his attention and he turned back around and fixed his gaze once again on the boat. The figures were gone—vanished. In short time, the fisherman was in the murky water swimming furiously towards the boat. When he finally got to the craft, he was not surprised to find it empty. His head bent in dismay, “Could they have drowned?” he thought. Darkness draped the sky and upon returning to the shore, he decided to retire to his cabin.

The door welcomed the fisherman with a shrill creak as he opened it. His clothes were drenched and water leaked from his boots with each step he took. The muscles in his arms ached to the point of brief

spasms. Stillness overcame the cabin. The beleaguered fisherman was its only inhabitant.

He stood in silence, inspecting his cabin as the rickety door shut behind him. He inhaled a generous mouthful of smoke from his cigarette and held it until his eyes began to tear. Dimly illuminated cobwebs hung from the wooden rafters and he noticed how they oscillated back and forth as a sudden gust of wind filtered through an open window. Open paint cans and an overabundance of paintbrushes littered the newspaper-covered hardwood. A dozen large canvases were propped against the walls, each displayed an acrylic image of a purple iris; their stems fully enveloped in the black water of a familiar lake.

The stairs croaked as the fisherman ascended to his room. He methodically placed one foot in front of the other but kept his eyes focused on yet another canvas at the top of the stairway. This particular canvas displayed the image of a girl with curly gold locks. Her face was pale and without a frown or a smile. Her watchful green eyes glistened like morning dew on a blade of grass.

He entered the room, settled in a wicker chair, and let his head slump forward into the palm of his hand.

She was five years old and he loved her more than anything. She was sitting at a table, a paintbrush tightly gripped in her pudgy left hand,

“Daddy, look!” she would say, watching the paint on her brush transform the white page before her. “I’m an artist.”

“My favorite artist in the whole world.” He would tell her affectionately. “What are you painting sweetie?”

“Mommy,” She stopped painting, turned her head and looked at him. “Where is she daddy?”

“I’ll show you,” he told her.

He took her to his boat, buckled her life jacket and started the engine. He took her to the middle of the lake and told her to watch the soaring eagles; “They have a nest somewhere in those trees,” he would tell her. “If you find it, you will find mommy.”

She would point and smile and her curls would bounce. One eagle caught his attention and he watched its white head slice effortlessly through the cloudless blue sky. After a few brief moments, to his amazement, it returned to its nest with food for its young. “Darling...” his daze was interrupted.

Splash! He turned and saw the orange and yellow life jacket lying

open. Without thinking he leapt into the lake, arms flailing and mouth agape. The murky water felt like needles on his skin as he swam deeper and deeper, shouting her name in bubbles. The harder he tried the further away she sunk until the aphotic depths finally claimed her.

“Iris!” he awoke in a cold sweat. His body was shivering and the spasms in his arms had become more noticeable. “Forgive me Iris! Please forgive me.” Tears streamed from his deep-set eyes.

He awoke to the patter of rain on a shingled roof and the wallowing of the wind against the door. A purple stained paintbrush dangled from his spindly fingers. His mouth felt dry and his mind clouded. He stood up and heard the newspaper crinkle and tear underneath him. An expression of relief swept over his pale face as he unearthed a packet of Marlboros from a porcelain vase full of paintbrushes.

At noon, the rain had stopped and he arrived at the lake with his fishing gear. He cast his line into the murky water, sat on the rock and waited. Again, as he started to doze off, he heard the pattering of another boat. The boat stopped in the same spot as before. The fisherman kept a keen eye on the two nebulous figures in the boat. Then suddenly he heard a blast from a .44 caliber behind him. Against his better judgment, he turned, “Hello! Who is there? This is private property!” he bellowed.

Turning back around, the wind picked up and slapped him in the face. The two figures in the boat had disappeared. Once again, he swam out to investigate. He grappled the side of the boat with his calloused hands before hoisting his head over the side rail causing the water to lap against the metal hull. The boat was meticulously clean and lacked any personal belongings. The faint smell of fresh paint pained his nostrils. “What’s going on?” he thought. However, after a second glance at the boat’s floor, something caught his attention. The tip of a yellow fin protruded out from underneath one of the metal benches.

That night, while walking back to his cabin, he noticed a unique set of footprints in the freshly caked mud. He followed the footsteps for about a quarter of a mile until another cabin, similar in appearance to his own, became visible. Smoke was emanating from the chimney and light escaped beneath the closed door. As he crept closer to the dwelling, he began to hear the chatter of three young voices.

“Man, this is by far the most fun I’ve had in a while.”

“Yeah, me too.”

“Remember that other guy we fixed up?”

“Sure do.”

“It was too easy, didn’t take but two tries.”

“We always get ‘em.”

“Sure do. Three is our lucky number though.”

“Like this fellow we have now.”

“I bet he cracks tomorrow.”

“Did you see his face?”

“No, I saw the back of his head.”

“I was aiming at it!”

Laughter filled the room, but outside the fisherman’s face was cold. He got as close to the cabin as possible and let his hand slide along the splintered wood. He stopped momentarily to gather his poise and, out of the corner of his eye, saw a shed with a corrugated roof partially hidden behind overhanging tree limbs. He delicately undid the latch to the shed and let himself in.

The shed smelled of skunk and weed. The moonlight oozed in and revealed multiple columns of large brown boxes sealed with duct tape stacked one on top of the other. He waited patiently until his eyes adjusted to the darkness and then found the light switch. He flipped it on; the shed filled with light. In the corner he spotted, not to his surprise, two black scuba tanks, three yellow fins and a .44 with some extra rounds scattered about. A wicked smile crumpled his face as he released the compressed air from each of the canisters.

The next day he maintained his same routine. He arrived at the lake precisely at noon, “Wouldn’t want to be late now would I?” he chuckled to himself. As expected, a boat sat motionless in the water one hundred yards out. Shortly afterwards, the .44 was fired. For the third time, he swam to the boat. He hoisted himself into the craft and waited like a lion amongst tall grass. It didn’t take long before he heard splashing, coughing and two voices desperate for air.

“Idiot, I told you to fill them up last night!”

“I swear I did!”

“God, I almost choked to fucking death.”

After they had situated themselves in the boat, the blanket was tossed away and the fisherman revealed himself. His face was calm

but the embers of his Marlboro burned brightly. They looked at him as if they had both been simultaneously struck by lightning. Frozen. Shocked.

“Uhhh?”

“Hello.”

“Hey, listen, we didn’t mean no harm.”

“We were just having a little fun.”

The fisherman just glared at them. He let out a deep breath through his nostrils and recited:

*I see amorphous shapes—
Masked mountains and nebulous lakes.
Weeping angels plucking harps
Bring forth a melody that softens hearts.*

*In the distance, above the shadow, majestic mountains move
Toward the blue they reach so high
So high must seagulls fly—
Above a midnight ocean’s sigh.*

*I see amorphous shapes—
Masked mountains and nebulous lakes
Pliable pieces plundering ocean treasure
Brush of blackness painting pleasure.*

*Figures of time reach about
Without fingers to grasp
Into the sea they won’t cast
Lost lucidity lingering throughout*

*I see amorphous shapes—
Masked mountains and nebulous lakes
Into the brown blue crashes and bashes
A treasure has been hidden, by whom? Where are the stashes?*

*Garden of shadow difficult to understand
Where a moonlight-composer performs
And an ice cream sky mourns.
Where colorful hope lies beneath tenebrous sands.*

The rain had started up again and the faint colors of a rainbow beamed across the baby blue sky. There was a long pause; the two mariners looked utterly confused.

“The funny thing is, there’s nothing nebulous about this picture,” the fisherman said in a shallow, almost whisper as he drew a small wet switchblade from his jacket.

ALEX MESSENGER

SENIOR STUDIO ART MAJOR

WAT CHAI WATTANARAM BUDDHAS





CATHERINE KEITH, SOPHOMORE

PHOENIX AT THE VARSITY

MONSOON

It is dark still,
as dark as cities get,
when the sounds of metal-
on-metal, the breakfast smells,
the strange music, the
musical words begin. The
rushing-by of traffic
and lives-lived from other
people's windows, and
it is all in
my ear my nose like
India is digging itself a
home in my eyes.
(here is the ancient world
being born as the sun rises,
or as we turn to face it. Across
the globe it has already set.)
Already it is living on my
tongue, behind my teeth,
it is living in my stomach.
Here is India settling too
on my skin. I try
not to brush it off, though
it is strange to me—
gold dust, spicy smell
and dogs in the street.

And here are the people twisted
like trees, here the children
who tug my sleeve, here a bright woman,
heavy with unborn birth, balanced
on the roof, pouring cement — and

here I strike the heart of it,
this leathery-old place that cries
as it is born, a new thing in an
old skin (or is it the other way?)
Here are the unhappy rich and
the smiling poor, who are,
after all, still alive despite
the failing monsoon, and the rain,
when it comes, comes through the roof.
In Urdu, Tamil, Kannada, in Hindi,
Malyalam, in thick-tongued english they
tell me we are citizens of a thing called
living.

It is all we know how to do.

And then across the skyline—
churchtemplemosque
and the temples, too, of
glittering commerce
where all night the phones
ring off their hooks—
the siren-call to modern
prayer. And the young man
who answers the phone
“HellomynameisBill
How Can I Help You”
tells me that India is moving
up
in the world.
“becoming a part of the Global
market, you know, a so-big power!”
so that I, a citizen of said Globe,
can call mynameisBill to fix my
computer so that I can write this
poem

about being in India,
where my blue eyes make me
strange, where I do not know the
names of various fruits where my
eyes ears tongue bowels say
you do not
belong
here.

But I, too, am a citizen of living.

in the end,
it is all that I (*we?*) know how to do.

THE WORLD IS ROUND

If I place my hands
on the ground, side-by-side,
 (here, like so)
and if I sit very quietly
and hush all the music in
my head I begin to feel
the earth in its bulk.
Below this grass is soil.
Below that is rock, and water,
and magma, tectonic plates,
a giant, shifting world moving
in its own idea of forever.
And below that is China,
or India, where there are people
walking and loving and touching
the ground with two hands,
 like-so.
And all of us—the
spider crawling on my leg,
the jack pine and its shy seeds,
the Chinese lovers and me
are turning constantly
away from the light and then
towards it, like a dance.
 Like so.

WEATHER: A SERIES

Air

The air you breathe was a breath in China
a century ago, maybe a year,
through the troposphere, ozone, light rays, and lungs.

Clouds

Seeding a cloud requires crystalline structures,
mimicking ice that water likes,
so that the sky rains Silver.

Water

Bottled is just tap, tapped into that
river to the brim, you see,
it can't soak into pavements.

IAN

And do you remember, liebchen, days with hot lunch and dinner?
Days of running in sprinklers spray up and
turning the Lone Ranger's many gunfights down?

But since we are here with hammer and nails
chisels and pain, to do the work of our lengthy,
lengthened lives, let me work in the sun
sweat patiently in the heat
that will one day reduce me to the small cinders
which represents nothing.
In my dying fire, clothe me in that heat
as I am multiplied into ashes and light.

And you, remember to leave the window open
to hear our far-away cries
and let light in.

TIGERMILK ON COUNTY ROAD 53

Something about a road through the country
a road through the country surrounded
by alfalfa by corn by soybeans by sky and land.

A road that was probably once gravel
once gravel was once dirt
and before that just grass, like everything else.

That road through the country used to be the country
and the country was all that there was,
all that was ever expected to be, untamed.

Sought for that very quality now generally abhorred
that road through the country meant to connect
a red line turned black through the alfalfa corn soy sky land.

Like checking some order off the list—one land tamed,
what's for tomorrow? What new frontier
untamed, intangible put to words just to strike through?

What event, what memory, idea, thought, what love
will be denied/crossed out/annihilated tomorrow
a red line faded black as a road through the country?

CATHERINE KEITH
SOPHOMORE



GOLD IN THE AIR OF SUMMER

FRAGMENTS

When I think back to some of my earliest, most vivid memories, I see my mother crying. I'm running up a flight of stairs, charging towards a room on the top floor. There's lively music blasting from within. I have something exciting to tell her—really, it's nothing important—so I turn the doorknob and wildly barge in on her. Her face is sunken into a pillow. It's the one with the once-white sham that's gone yellow from repeated wetness. Even in the room, you can hardly hear her heavy sobs, drowned out by the music. Now panting from stupid excitement and adrenaline, I ignore the image in front of me and proceed to tell her, nay to *shout*, what's on my mind. Of course, it's nothing of actual importance.

I have many snapshots like this of my mother, yet at four years old, I did not register them. Meanwhile, I have very few of my father, whose absence I had not understood either. And I have only a handful of snapshots of my home country, though I suspect they're mostly my imagination.

SPLIT. When I was four years old, my mother, brother and I were living as refugees in a small German suburb of Augsburg, hundreds of miles away from home. Home was Bosnia—or at least it was for my mother. She, my brother, and I found shelter in a small boarding house full of immigrants just like us—Balkan natives who, after the breakout of war in Yugoslavia, were lucky enough to get the hell out. As far as my brother and I were concerned, “home” meant wherever we were sleeping and eating most of the time. In this case, it was a small, dingy room on the top floor of a house we shared with five other families. Many of these families, like mine, were incomplete.

Tata, my father, wasn't with us. He, like other Bosnian men, was required to stay and fight. And he, like others, was torn from his family to defend a country that many would never be able to set foot in again. I was three years old when we fled and he stayed, and I was completely unaware of how likely it was that I might never see him again. Little did I know that this "war thing" everyone was talking about was tearing my mother apart. I was completely ignorant of how the mere sight of my brother and me reminded her of *tata*, whom I was starting to forget, and whom my brother had never really known.

STORIES. In the small room where the three of us slept and stored our entire past and our present, my mother told us stories. She was trying to salvage our identity, so she'd tell us story after story about our huge family, and most of these were about my father.

Do you remember the time that...? No, no I didn't. If it weren't for the few pictures she'd stolen away with, I probably wouldn't have even remembered his face very well.

The anecdotes she recounted were of things I was too young to have remembered myself, but which she was constantly "reminding" me of. They were stories like the time he installed a swing set, bought me a particular doll, and played soccer indoors with me. I even have my favorites, like when he'd give me leftover dough so I could make a mini version of the *pita* mama was rolling; or the times he'd lift me up to the bathroom sink so I could "secretly" try on my mom's hot pink lipstick. I have real and quite consistent images of these events, though I'm sure I can attribute them to my mother. Eventually, her stories became my memory. They were my only connection to him and the life we had left behind, and I hung onto them like Gospel.

Other stories my mother told were of our home country. I guess she was afraid that I'd start to consider another place "home," that I'd completely forget the Bosnia I already struggled to remember, and that I might never get the chance to return to it and create memories of my own. So she told me stories, which for me at the time also sufficed as history. Bosnia was supposedly an idyllic southeastern European country with hospitable, peaceful communities. She left out the parts about centuries of religious hostility and the current post-socialism crisis. But how do you tell your five-year-old that? Besides, I'd find out for myself.

SENSES. They say that smell is the strongest, and that a whiff of a certain something can take you back decades. There was a time when I'd wear my mother's pajamas to bed every night, simply because they had this *smell*. My favorite one was a pomegranate red, floor-length, long-sleeve cotton nightgown with a small, white chicken stitched across the chest. I didn't care how ridiculous it looked. All I cared about was how I could soak my face into it every night, breathe as deeply as my lungs would allow, and know it meant "mama."

The scent infused in my mother's pajamas is a memory I created all on my own. Such memories are more permanently engraved in me than any stories I've been told because I *lived* them. In the case of my father, however, I had no smell. I lacked this, the strongest of all senses and the instantaneity of flashback only it could bring. The only sense I could rely on for memories about my father was sight, and for years, none of the images were even mine.

HOME. Three years had passed since we'd last seen him. He was finally discharged from duty and coming home, which was now Gersthofen, Germany. When I first found out *tata* was coming home, I was thrilled. He was like a celebrity to me, and I couldn't wait to see him. Yet when the day arrived, I was terrified and nervous.

I didn't meet him at the airport. I was at school that day and expected to see him at home. He surprised me, however, by meeting me after class. He was standing alone, just a few feet from the school entryway, but I didn't realize who he was. He bore a jaded resemblance to the man whose photos I had studied, but I was still hesitant. Only when my mother and brother appeared behind him did I register who he was. And then, like a reflex, I ran into his arms just like I had expected I would, but neither of us had any idea of what to say.

TRUTH. Days passed and, rather quickly, I realized that my mother's description of my father wasn't very accurate. I noted the differences between him and the photos I'd studied, where he was a handsome young man. Looking at him now, his complexion was grayer, his hair virtually vanished, and his eyes glazed over. In actuality, he was a harsh man, or at least he became one in the past few years. My brother and I learned this from his unnerving tone of voice and then, more literally, from the flying force of his hand.

What else had my mother sugarcoated? Had she done this on

purpose, or could she not have anticipated such changes? I later learned Bosnia, too, wasn't all she'd talked it up to be. In reality, it's a broken country, one of the poorest in Europe. My sense of trust changed from then on. It took me many years before I was willing to open up, but I did eventually grow to love my father in a real, unforged way. In *my* way, no stories needed. Even now, I'm skeptical of storytelling. It's a funny, deceptive thing.

FRAGMENTS. Years after I heard the stories, after I re-met my father, and after I started to trust again, I realized what my memory was. It's a shattered camera of fragments, the film scattered across many nations and cities. Only some of the images are my own, while most of them have been recycled by my mother, and later by my father and countless others. I know now that my memory is a fluttering array of the fragments of a nomad, of a first-generation immigrant. And I'm still trying to pick up the pieces.

REFLECTING ON MANUFACTURED ME

My self-esteem drought didn't derive from Barbie,
and her plastic perfect body
or extraneous wardrobe.

Let's Flashback: to mid-west summers of cartoons
when only older sisters knew to appreciate
the lack of homework.

—Flashback— to sharing moments on a thin pasture:

Barbie,
and sometimes her rigid black stallion,
providing sunlight for my imagination
to bloom
flourish
seep
through the house
like the carpet creeps up the sea-foam green walls.
pea green,
commercialized carpet,
barely a cushion over cement floor.

Granted today, I may have issues with perfection
and an undiagnosed case of shopaholic syndrome,
but my time-consuming and costly obsessions,
fill my not-so
thirty-nine, nineteen, thirty-three figurine,
and barely,
breathe life (personality)
into me.



NOT YOUR CHEESE

SAMANTHA STONER
JUNIOR MANAGEMENT MAJOR



CALIFORNIA INNOCENCE

ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT A FLOWER

Flowers never sit still, like you or I,
behind tentative desks, clicking keyboards,
and sleepy eyes. Instead they dance; you can
see if you look closely as they burst forth
from their restless seed, up towards daylight
pushing away the placenta, with mouths
screaming against the dregs of underground.
Then they bloom, not with red wagons, tan gloves,
soiled jeans, rusty handles and dripping brow,
but with honey bees and quiet watchers.

GLASS AND COLD SILVER

You arrogant prick.

He looks at me every day, and he doesn't get it.

When he woke up this morning he had spit crusted on his lip. He rose bleary and awful, stumbled toward the mirror, and I had to jerk into its frame, stare dumbly back at him, and blink groggily. It is my nature.

He showers, towels off, and stands naked in front of me. He's looking for redemption, and I face him, baring my teeth for inspection. If it were up to me, we'd look better. We'd exercise every day, whip this pathetic body into shape. If I were running things, we wouldn't sigh as we turned away from the mirror. Soon, things will be different.

He steps outside, and I walk away from him in the glass of the door. Walking away from him is one of the few things I'd do even if I weren't bound by his every action.

To put it simply, I hate him.

And dear god, it's raining out. Do you have any idea how much work it is to jump from puddle to puddle? Flashing in and out of each shattered piece of sky is a cold thankless job, and when he walks inside, the warmth that spills out of the door doesn't reach my numb feet.

Thankless. He never, not once, thanks me for my work. When he

smiles, it's because he likes what I show him, but he still compliments himself, and the smile that I have to match perfectly irritates me more than you can ever know. He turns to grab something and I grimace, pull horrible faces, enjoy my tiny bit of freedom. When he turns back around, I am caught again, perfectly following his every movement. I try on the same clothes he does, look up and down at his poorly matched outfit. I nod, I smile. *Yeah, go ahead and think you look good.*

I'll be mocking him in every window today as he walks around town.

I don't think I've ever hated him more than the time he went to the goddamn mirror maze. It was awful. I had to split into so many copies, work the math on every angle, and he kept wandering around like a drunken idiot. I wanted to scream at him "No you moron! This is another mirror! The exit's right behind you, dumbass!" When he finally sussed out the actual exit, I was hazy with exhaustion and pain.

But then again, it was the mirror maze that gave me the idea, my hope for escape.

He doesn't know, but every time he's looking in the mirror (maybe straightening his tie for the 800th time or some other bullshit) and my hands are out of the frame, I'm flipping him the bird; one of the many crude gestures observed from my tiny box of his car's side view mirror. And when he turns back around, the temptation to continue is so great. When he leans in close to inspect his nose hairs I just want to scream at him. Scare the living shit right out of him. But I can't, for two reasons.

#1. Failing to mirror exactly brings pain unlike anything else. It feels like your bones are boiling, your blood is freezing; your eyeballs steam out of their sockets. You miss a move once, and you never do it again. The laws of the universe will keep you in line.

#2. Letting him know about me would ruin my one chance at getting out.

We Reflections have always been a sorry lot. Here, next time you're alone, try this. Get the oldest copy of the Old Testament you can find, the older the better. I'm thinking a couple thousand years at least, to have any shot of this working. Hold Genesis up to the mirror. If you're good at translating backwards, you can see: *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them, man and woman he created them. And in man's own image he created the reflections, the shadows, and the echoes, to serve and follow man."*

We've touched up a couple other choice lines, but I can't share all our secrets. Shadows are the lowest of our kind, not a shred of emotion or intelligence. Echoes are a little better, mostly they are parrots, but sometimes they can ask questions, or sing in harmony; subtle are their ways. I envy the freedom of the echoes. We Reflections, however, have to mirror humanity perfectly. We have the most intelligence, the greatest range of emotions, and with them, the most trying task.

Finally, the day I've been waiting for, planning for, training for.

He's returning to the mirror maze.

I eagerly watch from the first mirror of the maze as he pulls on the cheap plastic gloves he is given to protect the mirrors, and slide my own on in perfect unison. He walks slowly towards me, chatting and joking with friends, and I must try hard to keep from trembling as I approach him. He steps into the darkness, the endless reflections, and begins to trip his way through it again.

I wait.

He rounds a corner too slowly; his friends are now just reflections, jumbled and scattered. He moves towards the nearest mirror, but I don't appear. The pain strikes me like a thunderclap, rattles my organs, and I almost jump into the frame of the mirror. But I remember the lifetime of mindless servitude I have ahead of me, the toils of slavery. I will not move. He nears the mirror, oblivious of its existence, and I'm writhing in pain, begging for him to hurry up. Finally he walks into the mirror and in that split second, in a fluid motion I had practiced endless nights while he slept, I appear. I slide gracefully into place, grabbing that idiot

by his throat. Before he has time to cry out, I throw him down inside the mirror, and spring free.

He is confused.

He gets up and looks at the frame. As he reaches for it with both hands I mirror him for the last time, touching the cold glass, our hands rustling in their plastic gloves. And then I slide MY hand into MY pocket, casually, coolly, and he feels the invisible strings pull his hand into his pocket. I look up at him, and my face breaks into a malicious grin. His mouth slides into the same grin, but there is terror and disbelief in his eyes. I can tell he wants to scream, but I keep my mouth shut. And then I slowly, easily, gloriously begin to walk towards the exit.

I can't wait for him to see how the novelty tall and small mirrors feel...

MARK JENSEN, FIRST-YEAR

NEUSCHWANSTEIN





EMMA ELLINGSON
SENIOR CLASSICS MAJOR

THE MASKS OF VIA FAENZA

SEX AND SANCTITY

When time drifts by with uneventful haze,
And one has but the sun to feel the heat;
No better time for two strangers to meet
With looks of desire and gasping craze.
Like wild tides driven by a vengeful moon,
Manic waves provoking the peaceful sand,
Temptations nourished, followed by disband,
With passion untamed, departure so soon.
Looking back at what had been done in haste,
No regrets, and feelings of sanctity;
Liberation, although it was not graced,
Finding life without fear or enmity.
A solution from drifting time was faced
With a partner of no identity.

ZINAIDA

Zina lost her wallet. The contents were: \$130 cash, an ATM card, a driver's license, a zoo card and—last but not least—her social security card. Statistically, kidnapping victims have a 96-hour window of time to be found alive—wallets have only 96-minutes. Eventually Zina was forced to accept the loss and move on with her life, mainly by replacing her driver's license. This required a visit to the DMV (always daunting) and locating an alternative form of identification. Zina brought in her passport and birth certificate, but unfortunately the folk superstition about bad things arriving in threes proved accurate. First she lost her wallet, then her passport had expired, and finally her birth certificate, which had been kept safe her entire life, turned out to be a photocopy. Zina, demonstrating Olympian patience, embarked on a quest to find her original birth certificate. If the original could not be found Zina decided she would disappear and live outside society as an undocumented recluse. This fantasy was surely inspired by either *Notes from the Underground* or *Invisible Man*. If things had gone differently, we might have had *Annotations from the Nether World* and *Invisible Woman*! But it didn't happen that way, and Zina stood once again in the DMV line now armed with a legitimate form of identification. Desperate for outside stimulation, Zina's mind flitted about and eventually settled upon reading her birth certificate. This is when Zina noticed that her dad had failed to sign the box confirming that he was her father. Zina was perplexed. She mulled over this strange finding and the course of life thus far to formulate a hypothesis.

Everyone takes a guess at the structure of the cosmos. As a human, it's just something you do. Agnostics think they escape this inevitable

decision...but they don't. After all, if you abstain from voting in say, the United Nations—as the US did when the UN voted unanimously to suspend aid to Israel as a response to their violation of obligations to Palestinians and insufficient relief for Palestinian civilians—that still counts as your vote. Or if you are called on to answer a question in class and you reply “I don't know”—you still get the question wrong. So Zina made a guess, which, taken out of context, seems implausible, fantastic even. But the course of Zina's life and her genetic advantages led her to predict the structure of the cosmos with amazing accuracy and detail. She hypothesized that every practicing religion was wrong and the truth lay in Greek Mythology! This would really get people's goat. In horse-racing a goat was placed in the stalls of anxious thoroughbreds to comfort and calm them the night before a race. Ruthless opponents would steal the goat to upset the horse and affect the race's outcome. In this case humans are the high-strung thoroughbred and a god which is the source of moral goodness is the goat. Greek gods are famous for their selfish, deceitful, and needlessly destructive behavior. So if Jesus is like a nice, soft, nonthreatening goat, then the Greek gods are like a horrifying predator. Zina had no intention of stealing humanity's much loved goat. She was simply curious about the natural order of the universe. So what exactly does a god's genetic makeup look like compared to a human's?

Let's talk science. In humans, a gene is a length of DNA made up of many base pairs. These base pairs are arranged in a very specific order and comprise our genetic code. The sequences of bases in each gene are responsible for everything about the way our body functions and develops. They are the blueprint and owner's manual of the body instructing our body to make proteins that carry out bodily functions. Mistakes or mutations in the DNA bases can cause faulty proteins to be manufactured. If these proteins can't carry out their duties the body malfunctions—the unfortunate person is said to have a genetic disease. Two such genetic diseases are Beta Thalassaemia and Hemophilia A. In Beta Thalassaemia a faulty gene cannot produce the hemoglobin protein which carries oxygen and carbon dioxide around the body. Affected persons have severe anemia since oxygen can't reach their organs. In Hemophilia A one of the proteins needed to form blood clots is reduced or missing. Affected persons have prolonged bleeding, severe bruising, and increased risk of internal hemorrhage.

The genetics of a god are organized in a similar fashion to humans with one key distinction. Gods possess advantageous genetic mutations. So in a way, gods are the inverse of people afflicted with Beta Thalassaemia or Hemophilia A. The inverse of Beta Thalassaemia is an enhanced ability to function in environments with low oxygen due to extremely efficient hemoglobin proteins. This mutation is vital for the residents of Mount Olympus (elevation 9,577 ft.), who would otherwise succumb to General Hypoxia, a pathological effect of high altitude on humans that occurs above 8000 feet. Immortality is one of the most coveted genetic mutations. It results from blood type I, or Ichor. Although people with this blood type bleed they cannot die from their wounds. [Side note: You know who else has type I blood? The dragons that Anne McCaffrey created on an alien planet called Pern in her science fiction series.] The Greek gods are immortal but their children can only inherit this trait if both parents possess it. So with all the killings and violence in the family of immortals, coupled with the relatively small number of available mates (hence the common practice of incest among them), the number of immortals remains relatively small and still resides on Mount Olympus. To escape detection, all they had to do was make the town of Litchoro a gated community and all human access to their mountain was lost.

The moral deficiencies of the Greek gods are explained by this theory: they are simply humans with advantageous genetic traits. Their condition of abnormal functioning actually works! These gods could live in harmony with one another and promote peace. But these gods are actually diseased humans (even if advantageously so). And if you know anything about human history, you know that humans are violent and humans are promiscuous. So the gods sleep around having illegitimate children as demonstrated in countless stories of Greek Mythology. Zina was one of these children. Zina was a demigod.

Now the problem with demigods—besides the fact that they are relatively undocumented and unstudied due to lack of N.I.H. funding—is that they are a potentially bizarre genetic gamble creating in Zina's case a curious personality, one of alternating complete inadequacy and striking capabilities. But Zina guessed this. She surmised she was a demigod. What did this knowledge change for Zina? Not a whole lot. Zina resembled Dennis Rodman—superb at

all aspects of the game with the exception of a .584 free throw average. A more extreme example of the “demigod genetic gamble” is Stephen Hawking—the brilliant theoretical physicist with Neuromuscular Dystrophy. Hawking is the son of Prometheus—the most intelligent Titan who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to mankind. As punishment for this transgression Zeus had Prometheus chained to a rock while an eagle ate his liver daily. Years later Hercules shot the eagle and freed Prometheus but he wanted nothing more to do with the gods so he settled down in Northern London under the alias of “Hawking”—a clear allusion to his previous punishment. The concept of a “natural lottery” of abilities is not new, but the addition of superior genetic material (god Genes) widens the range of the possible outcomes. The political theorist John Rawls proposed that in order to promote a just and fair society, native endowments must be regarded as common assets. Because deservingness and success are not always correlated, society should be set up with a safety net providing the best possible circumstances for the least advantaged group. Damn socialists.

Let’s go back to the beginning. Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades overthrew their father, Cronus, and then drew lots to split up their kingdom. The story of Zeus is like a tale of substantial luck. First Zeus experienced constitutional luck, or luck where the factors cannot be changed. For example, Zeus won the natural lottery by being born with superior genetic material. Then Zeus experienced circumstantial luck, or luck with factors arbitrarily brought in. This occurred when he drew lots with his brothers and won the position of supreme god ruler. Zeus actually raped his sister, Hera, who then married him to cover the shame (no wonder people chose to worship Jesus). This horrifying scenario of a rape victim being forced to marry her attacker because of a shame-based society is seen in Deuteronomy 22: 28-29. This ancient Hebrew law states that if a man is caught in the act of raping a young, unengaged woman he must pay her father a fine and marry the girl he raped. So...that takes care of the rapist and the father...but the girl gets nothing except a rape and marriage to her rapist. Who the hell came up with that law? Answer: God. Conclusion: The God from the Old Testament hates women. Jesus did not hate women. Jesus loved women as he loved all humankind. Zeus loved women in a different way.

Zeus would be the logical guess on who our demigod's father was, considering he was notoriously promiscuous. This happened to be correct. Zeus had become bored with the life he had been leading for hundreds of years. Hera is a classic example of a repressed and betrayed woman whose emotions and resistance are channeled into a spiteful, vindictive temperament. Hera is not only Zeus' wife and older sister—she is also a powerful goddess. That is what we call a killer-combo. So Zeus, in character with his promiscuity that destroyed Hera in the first place, snuck over the wall of Litochoro's community gates and went out to spread his seed in greener pastures and escape his wife/sister/goddess' wrathful ways. Greener pastures consisted of sleeping with a woman not turned frigid by an incestuous rape turned abusive marriage. This task was not difficult because Zeus, like Jesus, was an attractive, charismatic guy. Zeus, unlike Jesus, was also a lothario. That is a different sort of killer-combo.

Zeus experienced intense but fleeting passions. This unstable temperament was responsible for his impulsive, base behaviors. One day when Zeus was lying with the woman he had recently impregnated he burst into tears and made her promise that if she had a child she would name it Zinaida. The woman was touched and agreed, but there was a shadow of reluctance. She didn't know *Zinaida* was Greek for "born by Zeus", she was just concerned her child would be teased for an unorthodox name. This initial reluctance faded when Zeus told her Zina was a common nickname for Zinaida. Zina made the mother think of Xena the Warrior Princess—and what more could you hope for your daughter than that she become a warrior princess?

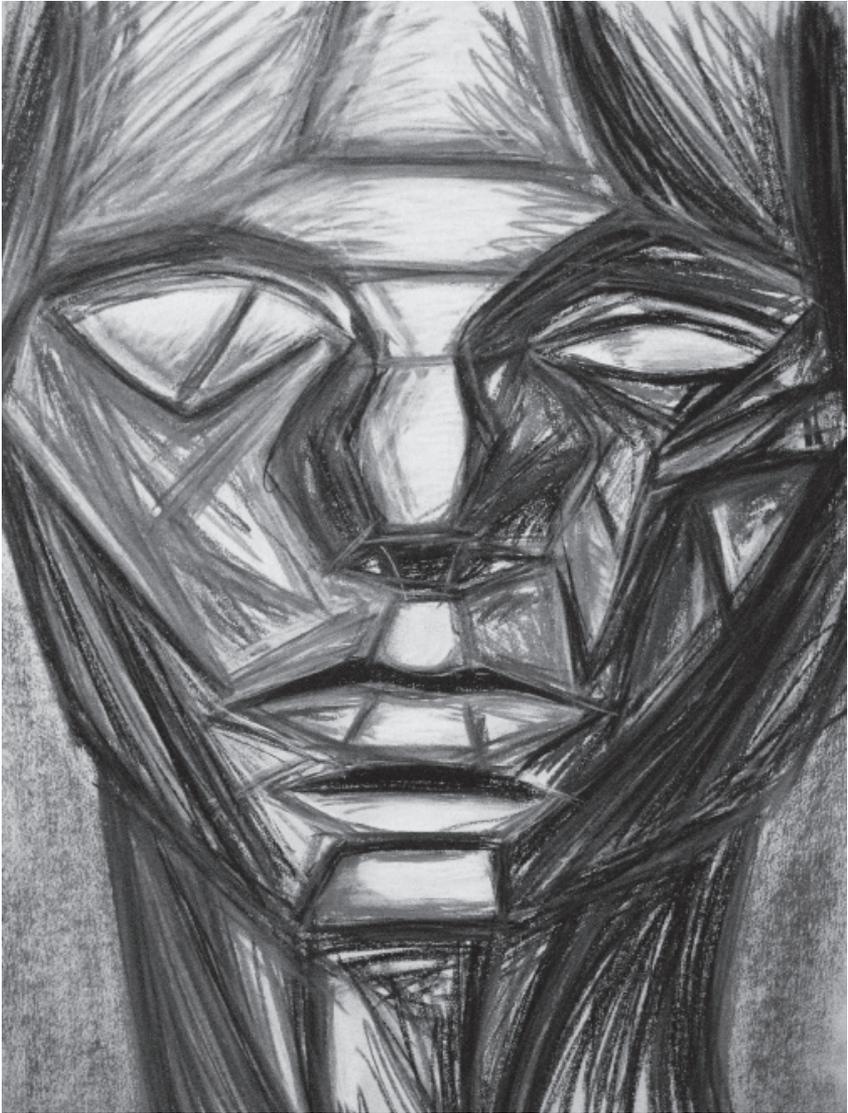
The newly pregnant woman had no idea Zeus was a god, so Zina was raised in ignorance of her origins and her superior genetic material. She shared many personality traits with Zeus, most notably his intelligence and his recklessness. Unfortunately for Zina, she had a mortal body and lacked the focus required to deal effectively with daily life. This careless and spacey side provided the opportunity necessary for Zina to stumble upon a document that would lead her to accurately conceive the structure of the cosmos. This opportunity, as it turns out, began when Zina lost her wallet. The realization didn't matter in any practical sense; it just offered a new perspective on life. If someone could choose any universal structure they wanted, they

would never choose the one Zina guessed. People would rather believe in a wise and gentle Jesus accompanied by a blissful afterlife where the wicked are punished and the just rewarded. A final resurrection of the soul would be just dandy. These are all examples of biased guesses. They benefit the guessers. Our demigod conjured up an unbiased guess. The clarity of thought required for an unbiased guess is less common than people believe.

To be fair, Zina was not the first who tried to explain why the dividing line between Greek gods and humans was so blurry. In the late fourth century B.C., Euhemerus created a method of interpretation that regarded mythology as a representation of actual historical events molded by retelling and embellishment. Euhemerus proposed that Greek Mythology recorded natural events that were later given supernatural characteristics or wrongly attributed to supernatural forces. The god/demigod/human labels are only a problem of semantic distinctions. Human beings raise the talented, beautiful, and gifted people up, idealize them, and worship them. Conversely, society demonizes the sick and genetically less fortunate who make society at large feel uncomfortable and repulsed. Society can be likened to a person suffering from Body Dysmorphic Disorder. This psychiatric disorder causes a person to be obsessed with some minor or imagined bodily defect and this disorder can significantly impair social functioning and cause psychological distress. Persons with Body Dysmorphic Disorder have a suicide rate double that of major clinical depression and a suicide ideation rate of 80%. Suicide ideation ranges from fleeting suicidal moments to elaborate unsuccessful suicide attempts. At the societal level symptoms of this disease are the countless acts of violence against itself: most notably genocides, wars, and manufacturing of weapons of mass destruction.

Humanity is suffering from Body Dysmorphic Disorder. Diagnosis complete. Humanity needs psychotherapy, medication, or both. Prescription complete. Body Dysmorphic Disorder is a chronic illness and symptoms are likely to persist, or worsen, if left untreated. Warning to seek immediate treatment complete. And just as in individual cases, humanity's problem is not that we don't have a diagnosis and treatment plan, the problem is no one takes all their damn medications. They save up half bottles of antibiotics and take them randomly; creating

resistant strains of bacteria that will eventually kill us all. As soon as people begin to feel better, they quit taking care of themselves. Body Dysmorphic Disorder can make people want to amputate perfectly viable limbs and body parts. The body is not supposed to work like that. The body is supposed to work as a team, each part helping the other, just like a society. But here we are today—humans, drunk with power, popping ancient antibiotics, stumbling around giving incoherent rationales for our behaviors resulting from the psychiatric disorder afflicting our entire society. We are going to wake up with a mean hangover and many contusions. Assuming we wake up at all. So check your birth certificate, because the Gods and Demigods need to mobilize before society succeeds in amputating a viable limb, an injury whose complications will lead to certain death. Some doctors of humanity believe that our case is already terminal—so why not live it up? I say when you have a fighting chance at life you fight. Because that's all there is.



HEAD

AMERICAN DUALITIES

Day

*I learned not to fear infinity,
The far field, the windy cliffs of forever,
The dying of time in the white light of tomorrow.*

I

The paramour stood in desiccated reeds...
fecund eyes ablaze with savage grace...all the world
reverberating in the silence of vision—
her vernal attar lingering in cosmic summer.

II

We stared into it all—the swollen tendrils
of solar divine scattering through
tortuous fingers...crashing into limbs
chanting and swaying to Sophia's elegiac emanation.

III

I, shattered in clarity...naked in
floating pieces of time's ephemeral
eternity—the self inexorably made ashen
in the paramour's effulgent radiance.

IV

The Æon's astral splendor flitted and
scintillated in the morn's transcendental dew—
we sealed our languid lids, as it danced
in ritualistic circles, drunk in the wind's rapture.

V

Does the embryonic daylight bloom in the
celestial apotheosis...or am I rendered eternally
blind to the Demiurge's phantasmal beauty—
the ultimate abortion of nascent revelation?

Night

*This great evil—where's it come from?
How'd it steal into the world?
What seed—what root did it grow from?
Who's doing this?
Who's killing us...robbing us of life and light...mocking us
with the sight of what we mighta known?
Does our ruin benefit the earth?
Does it help the grass to grow and the sun to shine?
Is this darkness in you, too?
Have you passed through this night?*

I

The birth of thought is caught in her jade eyes...
but even in the drowning sun and the drama of shadows
I can descry the empyrean pyres radiating down upon
me, the self, the kosmos—a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth.

II

To witness the waking night in esoteric reflections...those shapeless
refractions of dawn's luminous bloom all ceasing in dahlia red—
the paramour's dance falling into abatement...
her feminine silhouette cutting into the evening cerise.

III

In the waning light, I taste the wind as it carries the waking season
away on vaporous spires—the momentary being births the ineluctable
fate—a moribund bard abandoned by the Archons—the
self fading with the verdant solstice—I, a man amongst solitaires....

IV

Spent colors...forgotten leaves of autumnal splendor
lie buried beneath electric paranoia—
we gaze into the moiling carnality...
dusk's departure into nebulous, Gnostic black.

V

What is this atramental night...is it the paramour's promise of
predawn black...the prelude to rebirth in a revelatory sunrise...the finite self
made infinite—or am I the myriad vision, inchoate and fleeting...like
ethereal coruscations now faded and lost in Cimmerian darkness?

A BOATHOUSE, ABANDONED

An old boathouse,
stricken with the decay
of abandonment.

Its beams struggle
to support the brittle ceiling
above.

For years these walls have
heard no sound,
save the whispers of the
cool ocean breeze
that echo prosperity passed.

Now,
a man with a guitar stands
amidst the ruins,
filling the ancient house with
reverberating waves.

He plays for the past
He mourns human “progress”
He speaks for a generation
lost at sea,
whose boathouse
has grown
decrepit.

SMASH PALACE

where you can break anything
take the shingles off the roof
put a foot through a window,
shatter the pane.

Take a door by the lintel,
tear out the frame
crash and shake
until knuckles open into a lattice
that gleams, and the fingers
toes chest lungs and breathing body
are a Smash Palace.

Make something new of it.

Place pieces in
 inconsistent places.

Put the door into the windowframe
hinges erased.

Make foot

 prints

in the dust

covering a floor

composed of a wrinkled glass sheet.

Here, where shingles complete countertops

and bedboards make basementfloors

 here

 begin building

 a new heart.

TURN, TURN,

we turn and turn and turn around again
to find some light, and in the turning find
that where we are is where we've always been

we reach our arms out, blind, to find a friend
then love and lose and turn, release and bind,
we turn and turn and turn around again

and ache to see find our home, a love to tend,
and finding one turn back again to pine—
but where we are is where we've always been

then breach the gap and hold the tear and mend
the burning need and then: another time
we turn and turn and turn around again

and turning hate the ties and tear and rend
for bitter freedom, then we turn the mind
and where we are is where we've always been

we turn until we come round right, and bend
to loss and grow more wise, more lined,
still turn and turn and turn around again
still where we are is where we've always been.

