

An abstract painting featuring a central cup-like form. The cup is filled with a dark, rich purple liquid, while the rim and the upper part of the cup are a pale, creamy yellow. The cup itself is rendered in soft, blended shades of pink and purple. The background is a complex, textured composition of various colors including deep purples, blues, greens, and hints of orange and white, suggesting a still life with other objects like a bowl of fruit in the upper center. The overall style is painterly and expressive, with visible brushstrokes and a rich, layered color palette.

# **Crosscut**

***Literary Magazine***  
***volume 20***

# Crosscut

Fall 2012

Volume Twenty

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Megan Bishop

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### Cover Art

Matt Pifer: "Solitary Cup on Windowsill at Christmas"  
Acrylic on canvas board, 2011.

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## Cover Painting: Solitary Coffee Cup on the Windowsill at Christmas

Matt Pifer's painting was selected for the cover because it relates in a myriad of ways to the theme of meditation, a concept that underlies the various sections of this collection.

The image of the coffee cup first ties to "Poetics of Place," because the coffee cup can represent a muse to the writer. A coffee cup is a symbol many writers associate with the enjoyment they find in writing and reading literature. This symbol then represents the way in which writers begin their craft. They observe their environment and write.

The coffee cup then ties into "Considering the Turn" because it is a symbol of American life. Coffee has become the morning necessity in the lives of many, who are fixated on the act of "getting coffee" with friends, colleagues, lovers, and acquaintances. Out of this common societal thread, coffee weaves our lives into meaningful relationships.

Finally, the symbol of the coffee cup connects to "The Personal is always Political" because this image represents that inward reflection on experience. Psychologically, humans need time to reflect on decisions and experiences, and many people do such reflecting by silently sipping coffee. Coffee seems to bring self-awareness, moments of clarity, and comfort, thus acting as a tool for meditation. My hope is that this cover will carry on this tradition by influencing the reader to sit down to a cup of coffee while reading this collection.

—Megan Bishop

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# Introduction

While discussing how the concept of social justice defines any reasonable public policy, a friend claimed, unselfconsciously, that unfairness should be allowed, along with the logic underlying it, because “that’s just the way it is.”

This seemingly innocuous phrase is indicative of the abdication of one’s critical faculties in favor of numbing cynicism that has become ubiquitous in contemporary American society. This cynicism is reiterated by the disingenuous opinions popularized by media outlets such as Fox News, where facts are spurned, fairness ridiculed, and reason ignored. In the rhetoric of such punditry poverty is the poor’s problem; decent health care is an inalienable right of the rich; and company loyalty is passé. Those spouting these opinions might be well served by rereading Thucydides (a Greek historian whose works were once required reading for school children):

Men take it upon themselves to begin the process of repealing those general laws of humanity which are there to give a hope of salvation to all who are in distress, instead of . . . remembering that there may come a time when they, too, will be in danger and will need their protection.

(III. 82-4)

Stunned at the mean spiritedness and incoherence of my friend’s argument, I realized that this thinking, among other reasons, is why art and collections such as *Crosscut* will remain important. Engaging the imagination can help us formulate counter-narratives, or, in other words, different ways of perceiving our experiences and what in them matters.

***Counter-narratives  
allow us to assess  
our experiences  
differently,  
avoiding the  
limitations of those  
stories that  
promote ignorance  
or enforce social  
conformity.***

Through the imagination, and the use of our critical faculties, we realize that nothing is “just the way it is.” Truth, and knowledge located somewhere within it, is constructed, a product of myriad social interactions, and these interactions can be framed to lead to more just behavior. Of course it takes intelligence and a genuine spirit to fairly define what justice might mean—such as our an unerring commitment to pursuing the public good.

The works we have collected in this edition of *Crosscut* do not suggest that “nothing is knowable; therefore, nothing matters,” as an academic Skeptic or cynical layperson might claim, if pressed to define knowledge. Rather these works suggest that knowledge is a product of our experiences and that those experiences speak in complex ways to our foundational perceptions. Consider, for example, Leah Bilyk’s “My Apparatus,” Megan Bishop’s “Meditations of a Barista,” or Valerie Lovelace’s “Little Sister.” These pieces hint at the mechanisms that shape how we process experiences, making meaning, or knowledge, out of them. Therefore, read these works for the enjoyment of doing so, of course, but also for the subtle truths toward which they gesture, and do so because you should because you should care.

—The Editors



## Poetics of Place

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### Cathleen Goebel

Maine's forsythia  
Yellow against the gray sky  
Harbinger of spring.

∞

### Kathleen Wall

“Bluebird on a Birdbath”



# Megan Bishop

## Meditations of a Barista

Glancing at the clock, she dreams  
for her daughter. A green apron  
ties around her white tee that hides  
the scar, five and a half inches.  
It reminds her of the red  
curls and those eyes that laugh  
at Seinfeld jokes  
that no three-year-old  
can understand.

From the soy latte to the chai tea,  
she wonders how many “why” questions  
filled the preschool,  
ones she’ll never get to answer.  
How many stories another woman read and  
how many lines couldn’t keep color in.

The woman who answers phones  
decides on a decaf dark roast.  
Anecdotes of stumbling words  
are nothing but unwanted coffee grounds.  
Cellphone in hand, too busy to listen to a child’s  
“I fink so” and “Dokie-dokie” mistakes.

. . .

Glancing at the clock, she dreams  
for her daughter. She knows  
the minutes are passing, but so  
are the days, the tears, and candle flames.  
Handing me the lemon ice tea, she checks  
her wristwatch from Target—it ticks loudly  
and reminds her to question,  
“Will she sing my songs  
and cook pancakes like I do?  
Will she think that I’m a good mother?”  
Her watch is too pretty for the pain that it brings.

∞

# Gretchen Veevaert

## My Date With the Moon

If I could touch the moon,  
I could catch it  
and pull it down into my backyard.  
I'd hang it on a tree branch,  
tie a rope to it, and swing back and forth.  
I'd tie it to my wrist  
and take it for a walk downtown.  
No need for street lamps  
when I have my giant moon flashlight.  
I'd take it down to the lake  
and cast its reflection on the water.  
I'd walk to the department store  
and buy the moon a hat,  
a black fedora...for a jazzy moon.  
We would sit on the corner of 4th and Main  
watching the yellow cabs drive by.  
And I'd hold the moon under my arm  
like a jumbo blow-up beach ball.  
I'd take a marker and write my name  
on the surface of the moon.  
And the moon would laugh  
because the marker tickled.  
Then me and the moon would walk home together...  
the long way.  
I'd hold it up real high  
and the moon would shine ahead.

∞

# Terri Baker

## Anchor

Falling up –  
I search for  
A word or rite  
To weigh me  
Between the days.  
If I float,  
There are  
No hands or arms  
To grab upon.

Falling up –  
There is no why,  
Only the reminder  
Of what was  
And what will be  
To anchor,  
To hold my place  
When I cannot  
Hold myself.

∞

## Greg Winston

### Reliable, Runs Good, Needs TLC

“When old cars get retired, they go to Maine.”—Philip Booth, “Maine”

There’s a chain of small department stores that anyone who lives in Maine knows well. Its name is Reny’s, and Reny’s slogan proclaims it “The Ultimate Maine Experience.” But in truth the ultimate Maine experience, one that everyone who lives here should have at least once, is shopping for a plow truck. Not a brand-new pickup or shiny SUV, fresh from Detroit or Yokohama, gleaming on a dealer’s lot in Portland or Bangor. No, a proven workhorse, a yard truck that, perhaps despite appearances, has life in it yet: a vehicle with potential few can see and that only one will unleash. It will probably cost a little money but lots of time and sweat.

You’ve decided not to rely on the guy from down the road who plowed for you the last couple of winters and managed to back into your taillight not once but twice for good measure; who always complained you needed to cut back the branches on the apple tree; who always left your driveway for last, especially after the biggest blizzards of the winter. No, you’ve decided to go it alone, to blaze your own trail, to clear your own driveway. At forty yards long, you’ve also decided it’s too big for a snowblower; it demands a plow truck.

The search begins with a trip to the local gas station or corner store for the Uncle Henry’s classifieds. Go on a Thursday, when the new issue arrives, for as soon as it does, everyone from Kittery to Calais, and even some over in New Hampshire, will be on their mark, get set, go. If it’s in there on Thursday and worth anything to anyone, you probably won’t have a chance at it when Saturday or Sunday roll around. Nowadays, many people have switched to Craig’s list, and Uncle Henry’s has gone online, too, but the printed copy still has its advantages and its charm. You can dog-ear the pages and scribble notes in the margins about every call you make and each truck you see. You can toss it on the front seat next to that peanut- butter whoopee pie that has to tide you over at least to the other side of Augusta and back home again. I’ve had creative writing students at the college where I teach use Uncle Henry’s for a found poetry exercise. Opening the booklet at random, or else following a systematic pattern (say, seven pages in, seven entries down,

seven words over), they compose experimental verse born of rural Maine lifeways and fashioned from the radical aesthetic of the Dadaism movement. One sample poem found this way read:

great 4 bolt  
inch Chevy  
wormed hood.

(Some might turn out better than others, but the results are never boring.)

Hands down, my favorite Uncle Henry's category is "Free for the Taking." The edition I am holding has several treasures in that area: A Hammond electric organ in the town of Addison; free horse manure in Augusta [true fertilizer, not a sarcastic jeer at the governor or legislature]; a black lab mix over in Buckfield; sheet rock down in Castine; and, up in Corinth, "3 red sex links, 1 Rhode Island Red, 3 barred rock laying hens, 2 ½ years old. Still laying, very friendly." Why look any further?

On this October weekend, however, I am focused on the section headed "Trucks Light Duty/Sport Utility." After a few Friday night phone calls, I've got several promising candidates. The first two look to be more trouble than they're worth. One is just a couple miles up the road from me, so I start there. I hear a woman's voice call out as I cross the dooryard, and a few minutes later an old man on crutches emerges from the farmhouse. He points out the truck, the oldest in a row of three. It's a Ford F250, brown and beige, with the name "T.J." (in scare quotes) stenciled in a font that would have appeared stylish a couple of decades ago. I wonder if that was the name of the truck or one of its past owners.

The old man looks away from the trucks and down at his crutches: "I'm crippled, so I can't keep after these like I used to." I help him by unclamping the trickle charger from the battery and rolling it out of the way. Pointing downhill, the owner warns me the brakes are shot and that the guy from Belfast who tried it last slid to a stop against the apple trees in the orchard below. The engine grinds and then slowly turns over, eventually catching. I opt to keep it idling in park, revving it a few times while testing the plow. Not bad for a yard truck but more of a project than I am looking for. I picture it rolling through the snow drifts and skidding into my front steps and decide to pass. I wheel the trickle charger back into the barn for the man and talk a little with him about how rough a winter we can expect, then head on my way.

I drive a few towns west and reach the next place, just a few turns

off the interstate, past the cement plant and down the end of the Bog Road (nearly every town in Maine has a Bog Road.). Around the turn, the woods yield once more to fields and houses. A hand-painted sign at the base of the second driveway announces C&S Used Cars.

A small farmhouse and attached barn perch atop the small hill, half a football field from the road. Six or seven used cars and one truck stretch along the driveway. The truck is a white Chevy Cheyenne. It runs pretty rough and is missing the passenger side window. As a result, there's water on the frontseat and floorboards, which soon soaks through the seat of my jeans. This, too, needs more time and work than I am prepared to give. After a test-run in the driveway, I am on my way.

Ten miles south, halfway to the next stop, I spot a plow truck on the side of Route 27. This one wasn't in Craigslist or Uncle Henry's. It's a late 80s Ford F150, with a fresh coat of red paint that seems bright in the waning daylight. It looks to be in great shape. The hood is unlatched, so I lift it and peer in at the enormous six-cylinder engine. Hydraulic fluid coats one of the pump hoses that power the plow, but otherwise, it appears well-cared for. I take down the number written on the For Sale sign; when I call, the voicemail box is too full to accept messages. Apparently, a few others are interested, too.

The sun is going down as I make my way to the next truck on the list. I pass the Masonic Hall the man on the phone had told me to look for, saying it would be just up the road from his place, on the opposite side. I'm going a bit too fast and miss it, so I turn around in the parking lot of a storage unit business a few hundred yards up the road. When I pass a second time, a man peers out the door of a double-wide and into the half-light. His pulsing flashlight makes a kind of Morse code through the storm-door glass, so I know this is the right place. He reaches out into the night and waves me in as though I'm an aircraft taxiing over from the ramp.

Inside the house, there is an overwhelming stench of urine that triggers a gag reflex I do my best to suppress. The powerful odor is slightly checked by the more pleasant smell of soup or potatoes simmering on the stove. The man gives me a tight, friendly handshake and a warm smile. His wife sits in an easy chair watching a t.v. talent show where viewers call or text in their votes for the winner. She smiles over at me as well. The volume is turned up high, so I feel like we're in the studio audience right in front of the speakers. A young female singer reaches the crescendo of her song, applause crackles loudly then fades, and the announcer comes on: "American Idol shall return."



The man tells me the truck is around the side of the garage and to go have a look. He hands me his flashlight. A trickle charger is propped under the hood, linked by an extension cord through the garage window. I detach the calipers from the battery: Die Hard, its label shouts boldly in the gathering darkness. A bell pings and cab lights come on when I open the truck door. The dashboard lights up when I turn the key but there's just a light click from under the hood. This might be a dead battery, or possibly a burned-out starter.

Back inside the man tells me I'm welcome to come back in the daylight to get a better look. "She'll probably start again tomorrow. Come any time. I'll be here." He gives a sales pitch that echoes the words of his ad in Uncle Henry's: "It's been very reliable. Runs good. Needs a little TLC." He is ninety-two, he says, and a World War II veteran. "Disabled," he adds, lightly slapping his right elbow with his left hand, though the disability is nothing visible nor does he explain it any further. He stares out past me and across the kitchen for a moment, at nothing in particular that I can see.

Then he gets up from the table, putting a hand on my shoulder for a boost, and gestures for me to cross into the carpeted living room. His wife still sits in her chair. A group of gospel singers is now taking their turn in the song contest, belting out what sounds like an old hymn, but not one I quite recognize. The wife nods and smiles again. The man, with his flashlight in hand, points above the doorway to a black-and-white photograph in a gold frame. The photo shows four young men in uniforms staring stone-faced at the camera. Two hold large military rifles. The flashlight beam rests on one of the soldiers. "That you?" I ask. He nods. "1944. And them two are Russian." On closer look, I notice the different shade of the uniforms. Then I notice a fourth man among them that I didn't see at first, his arms either held or tied behind his back. The flashlight settles upon him and forms a small corona around his head. "He was a German. A prisoner." The light lingers a moment longer, then he shuts it off. The singers reach a crescendo on the program, then applause fills the room. The man's attention seems far away, fixed somewhere back across the decades on a long-ago day in a devastated landscape, as victorious and uneasy allies walk their captors through the streets of a village whose name will be forgotten. I nod and smile, as he shows me to the door. "Come back any time you want to see that truck. I'll be here. Still runs good. Needs a little TLC."

It's completely dark when I come back outside. A light rain is falling again. When I get back in the car, the Patriots game is on the radio. They are playing, appropriately, the San Diego Chargers, and the announcer's voice sounds electrified when Brady connects with Hernandez for six just before time runs out.

∞

# Terri Baker

## Our Wings

We beat  
beat  
beat  
our wings  
against  
the tides  
tides  
tides  
of time;  
sure our lives  
last for eternity.

But this  
this  
this  
the eternal –  
this moment;  
this moment,  
this moment –  
as we hold  
against  
the press  
press  
press  
of time.

∞

**Kathleen Wall**

**“Lady Flicker”**



## Emily Hanna

### Twins

Twenty tiny fingers  
Twenty tiny toes  
Two pounds difference  
Each a different nose

Two tiny bodies  
Two tiny boys  
Baby powder smell  
Soft baby noise

∞

## David Haskins

### “Grasses along the Kenduskeag River”





### Zephyr Toth

#### “Butterflies”



### Kristen Card

#### Lavender

Infused memories rendered stoic over the passage of time.  
Dewy aromatic sweetness encompasses the sticky night air,  
While shadows render unified figures unrecognizable.  
Sudden lunar shifts illuminate the evening seascape.  
Hushed ripples collide amongst the jagged intruding shoreline.  
A salty, reconciling wind intrudes upon the mind's reel of sharp, captured  
Time altered snapshots of idyllic youthful moments.  
Retreating memories preserved among the shifting tidal pools  
And the infinitely stark ever encompassing sea.  
A shimmering soft, silent breeze carries with it the supple, tingling  
Wetness of a lost lingering kiss.  
Moments forfeited.  
Youth captured.  
Fate concealed.  
Uncertainty's embrace.  
You.

# Valerie Lovelace

## As For Me

I will go softly  
Easily slipping into her sensual something  
Moving, breathing,  
Whispering warmly into her tender underbelly.  
Yes.  
Stirring hunger and Magic Soul.

And when velvet darkness whorls, envelops,  
And there go I, blind,  
Heart hammering ~  
Urge to reach, refind She Who Sings My Name  
The Eddy of Me.  
Steadfast; courageous.

Oh then ~  
And then and then I will go unafraid  
As I fold my hand into the Hand of Me  
And my heart into the Heart of Me;  
Embrace.

I will go softly  
To her home the Other Side of Me;  
Who laughs, loves, feels.  
Warm grass, sky,  
Leaf and feather,  
Misty rain smelling curiously of chocolate and strawberry,  
Step into Her river and bathe.

∞

**Matt Pifer**  
*Poems from Through*

**Reading Robinson Crusoe**

My father had bent each page  
with callused thumb and dirty nail  
A tattered rat's ear listing toward sense  
as he mumbled his impressions—  
time carried away on Friday's footprints  
into wreckage and leaf and tangle  
where the broad worm digests centuries and soil  
and the cuckoo chatters the hour—  
“You,” my father said when I was eleven, “are as lonely as this”  
counting the seconds on his fingers  
and “time is short, isn't it,” snap and snap  
as the shadows in the garage extend  
from dark corners where I once tortured grasshoppers in oil  
and sought my sister as she hid, counting dust bunnies and rusted nails  
from behind discarded couches and chairs  
“This has no end,” my father said, “at least it feels endless”  
like life turning to sand and spilling across dunes  
that catch frayed rope and torn canvas,  
marking each heel to toe, each scuff and twist  
leading from one languid stride to the next  
from one furtive sip  
stacking papers in neat piles  
to adding ice and diming the desk light.

∞



## Sunday Morning

Grandma plods lock-kneed from church  
stops, raising large hands to hug me  
thin this far ahead of mothered years.

I was two when Grandpa died.

She squints into the sunlight  
below the large, red crucifix.  
She adjusts her blue jacket,  
laughing at her awkward fingers.  
She pulls her jacket tight around her neck                      and steps  
into my father's shadow--  
where my heritage ends  
because I can't ask her  
    how it feels to be old  
    to know hope fades  
because I can't ask her  
    how it feels to lose her husband  
    to lose innocence and become a woman  
because I can't ask her  
    how it feels to hold a dying son  
    to watch caring fail  
because I can't ask her  
    how it feels to see this town change  
    to wake up alone each morning  
because I can't ask her  
    to remember the taste of old tears.

∞

# Gretchen Veevaert

## Proud

I'm proud to be a woman

To do my makeup every morning,  
To shove my feet in five inch heels,  
To lug my purse around all day,  
To cook my family all three meals.

I'm proud to be a woman

To watch my weight and exercise,  
To clean the bathrooms in my house,  
To take the kitty to the vet,  
To iron every shirt and blouse.

I'm proud to be a woman

To wake up early and get home late,  
To dye my roots three times a year,  
To crave fudge brownies once a month,  
To manage a husband, kids, and career.

I'm proud to be a woman.

∞

## The Collection

Dark diamond doves  
Share the ride  
Before  
The pearl white window,

Before  
diluted glass  
In the Atlantic kitchen  
Crumbles in the spring.

Before  
a beautiful blue  
Upright piano  
Shapes the knight  
One family owned,  
A collector's item.

∞

## Kathleen Wall “Sparrow”



# Adam Crowley

## Abigail Plodder

—An Excerpt from *The Hinterlectuals*

After her cousin Diane Jamie was laid to rest, Abigail Plodder started to collect every spare can she could find. She removed the bread bags from her moonboots and filled them with discarded Coke, Pepsi, Mr. Pip, and – once – a bullet-riddled six-pack of Lord Santo Morando Baby Bourbon Rum. When she couldn't carry any more, she went home and dumped her findings into her dresser, where her mother never went.

At night, lying on her sawdust mattress under a broken fire alarm, she would imagine that the cans were talking to her. She didn't have much of an imagination, so mostly the cans just said things like, "Dresser, dresser, dresser, dresser," or "Cans. Cans in here. Dresser full of cans. I'm Abigail Plodder." Because she never bothered to wash her treasure, an army of flies hovered there in the darkness between them, a gently moving cloud that sometimes came up into her face – but most of the time it was more interested in the garbage-strewn hallway her mother never cleaned. Sometimes the cloud looked like a great big bunny, and other times it looked like the face of a screaming dog, and that would make Abigail holler. But no one ever came to check up on her when this happened. Her mom wasn't there usually, and the people next door tended to watch TV with the sound turned all the way up.

One day when she came home from school with both bread bags and a Hannaford's-For-Freshness meat sack topped off with slightly crushed Moxie cans, Abigail discovered the Witch in her bedroom, sitting backwards up high in a corner all by herself with no one around but the flies. "Hello, Abigail," the Witch said, only she said it like this: "HELLO, ABIGAIL!" Then, walking down the wall on her hands, the Witch asked Abigail if she would mind sitting down, mind not screaming with her face all twisted up and her fists all clenched and her eyes screwed so tight like that.

So, Abigail did.

The Witch plopped onto the dresser and began opening drawers and tossing cans full of flies and baby flies all over the place. Then she stopped.

“Abigail, there are sixteen cans on the floor now. Each can is worth six cents. How much are all the cans worth together?”

Abigail began to count on trembling fingers.

“Stop that!” the Witch commanded.

So, Abigail did.

“Now, what if I take away these six cans. Ten cans. How much are these worth together?”

Abigail began to work it out in her head.

“Are you imagining fingers in there?” the Witch asked.

Abigail nodded.

“STOP THAT!” the Witch said, then leapt to the broken fire alarm, toppling the dresser, spilling its contents every which way. Upside down now, like a spider, she glared at Abigail until the child collapsed from fear. Then, descending on a silken thread, the Witch placed a post-it note with the number 60 written in big black ink on her forehead, ate 6 X 15 flies, and left, knowing that there would be at least one question on the test tomorrow that Abigail would get absolutely correct.

Teaching is hard work.

∞

# The Personal is Always Political

---

**Leah Bilyk**

## **What is my Apparatus**

Giorgio Agamben, an Italian philosopher, defines an apparatus as “...anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourse of living beings” (2009). The apparatus of individual selves has an unending complexity that is hard to narrow down. Perhaps we are not meant to. As I explore my own apparatus, I am clearly aware of the fact that it is impossible for me to fully comprehend all of that which sustains me. But the simple act of exploration deepens the connection and appreciation I have for my life and all the lives before me. Like a drop of water surrounded by other droplets to create a sea, I would not be held in this world, in the form that I am, without my apparatus.

When I first examined my apparatus, I pictured my blood. Millions of cells containing nuclei, mitochondria, and cytoplasm, contribute to my every movement. Each cell has a purpose and depends on other microscopic elements that are crucial to my existence. Blood moves through my body as if it were an orchestra responding to a seasoned conductor. I cannot consciously control how my blood clots or how quickly it reacts to an attack of outside force. But my blood secures me, each cell nourishing the next. One may say that I am simply a bundle of cells, shaped and formed into what we, in society, define as a 25 year old female. But this microscopic piece of my apparatus is only the beginning.

Physiology is one aspect of how I move through this world. Included in my apparatus is also scar tissue, bones, muscle, and fascia. My fingers across the keyboard require seemingly small movements but would not be possible without continuous nerve impulses and the response of my muscles and tendons to hit the “H” key or the space bar. It takes many infinitesimal movements to create every moment I experience, and my perception of these moments is determined by my brain. Oh, the brain!

Spongy and magical, the brain may be the essence of me. As I look at my computer screen, the rods and cones of my retinas begin to transform the light and send signals into my brain that help me recognize what is before me. Neurotransmitters run rampant, and the electrical currents propel my thoughts and actions in many directions. My peripheral nervous system receives the tactile information from my fingertips and sends them into my brain, telling me that what I am touching is plastic, smooth, and warm. My perception is what drives me and is a valued and treasured part of my apparatus.

Lineage is another piece of my ever-evolving self. My heart expanded in my mother's womb, and the breath that fueled her body is the same breath living in me now. Every piece of her was necessary in the creation of me; therefore, my existence would never be had she never existed. When thinking of my lineage, I picture the moving train that my grandfather leapt out of during WWII and how this action solidified his living through this difficult part of the world's history. I think of the moment he met my grandmother and their brave trip overseas to safety. Even the boat they took is part of my apparatus, as well as the sea which carried them. The underbelly of the boat and the manpower it required are all part of what sustains me. One cannot think of history this way and ignore the passage of time we cannot escape.

Where would I be without space and time? These two things hold me in every moment. The existence of time provides structure to the life I lead. Each minute and second carefully positioning me in the construct of my apparatus. As the earth moves, sunlight bathes the vegetation that coats its surface. As time moves, bodies grow and develop. My life depends on the oxygen that plants provide, and plants depend on the movement of earth. As sunlight is the cause, photosynthesis is the effect. Clouds cover the landscape with rain, enriching the soil with important plant food. These same plants give breath to my body, while ingesting these greens gives me nutrients. I inhabit the earth as earth inhabits me.

The written word is also a vital piece of my apparatus. It allows me to recognize my limitations and free will. Poetry is magic to me. Poets would not exist without the beauty of nature and the human spirit. Weaving intricate webs of detail, poignant poems can highlight the ups

and downs that are essential to our existence. A poet also requires the ability to craft language, and it is this ability that contributes to my knowledge and intellectual growth.

An unobvious but integral part of my apparatus is the presence of infrastructure. Dirt roads, city roads and highways all help me reach my destination. The world opens up to me because of the accessibility roads provide. The time it took to plan these cement rivers and the work necessary to create them is hard to imagine. Pathways were started early on by men and women on foot. It is their clearing of trails that helped create the roads I drive on every day. Even the trees that were cut down, the animals uprooted, and great man-power it required, all contributed to the groundwork I take for granted. The loving support of families, as individuals were sent out to work on railways and roads, is another aspect of my apparatus. This creative spirit and drive to work these hard jobs would not exist without love.

This love hasn't changed over time. Transportation of all kinds allows love to take on different forms and be expressed in concrete ways. Every week I receive a letter from my grandmother. The saliva she used to seal the envelope can be held directly in my hands, while she is miles away. Without the hard work of many people, and the sacrifices made across the years, this type of quick mail-carrying would not be possible, and I would not be able to feel this long-distance expression of love so frequently.

It is undeniably hard for me to describe all the elements of my apparatus. But if I picture myself in a web, as the spider in its intricately built home, I recognize how quickly things can change. Nothing is stagnant. Unlike a spider, I have not created my web. But like the spider, I am completely vulnerable and dependent on this web for my survival. To take even one piece for granted would distance me from my goal of being fully present in my life. By appreciating the very small, almost unintelligible parts, I am paying homage to the power of the apparatus in which I find myself. To answer Mary Oliver's question in her poem "The Summer Day," "...what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" (2008) I answer: know it.



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# Valerie Lovelace

## Little Sister, 1959 – 2009

“The Man in the Moon is really a Woman,” I said,  
And she smiled knowingly, sharing my secret.  
Then she read to me from her Magic Book:  
“There’s a blue fish.”  
“And there’s a red fish.”  
And I wept them into the river - she always did love Dr. Seuss.  
I marveled with her through that last day as she reviewed her life and memories  
“It’s coming in bits and pieces, but I need more time; I’m not ready.”  
“I’m not afraid to die, just afraid of the journey to get there.”  
  
“Don’t be afraid, Baby Duck,” I whispered, kissing her head.  
“You’ll know when you’re ready, just in time and not too soon.”  
“Okay, thank you.” Nodding, a little girl again, believing me.  
Then in little bits and pieces she shared her precious life with me again.  
Emotions flickering over her face on fast forward – too fast for me.  
Whispers, insights, sorting, shaking out, cleansing one by one.  
I watched her check off each; an internal list, the final pages of her Magic Book.  
“Okay, sissie, it’s time. Can you put my jeans on me?” Breathily, gasping.  
I asked her if she was going to travel and she nodded again,  
Wiggling her feet, whispering, “I want to wear my jeans.”  
I pulled magic jeans over her frail legs, asking if she liked them.  
And she smiled. The world is a great place when you wear magic jeans.  
They must be like Superman underwear – they make you stronger, more able.  
Holding her, reassuring, encouraging her to fly away,  
I blew purple butterflies into her heart and then she was gone.

∞

# Susmita Chatterjee

## *Translating Tagore*

That Cowherd boy from a faraway land  
Played the whole day under the  
shade of my Bunyan tree.  
What music he played he only knew  
Tell me if you could get a whisper of it.  
When I asked him, "what can I give you?"  
He only said "Nothing at all except the garland around your neck"  
If I give it, what price will he pay,  
Pondering , I spent the whole day—  
When I came back I found he had left his flute behind .

∞

## Kathleen Wall

### “Beech Forest”



# Terri Baker

## The Sin We All Dance With

I waltz with the Sin,  
The Sin we all dance with  
Peeling me back  
Layer by layer,  
The darkness to discover.

Can you smell the scent,  
The perfume of Lust,  
My desire untried;  
The scent that clings  
Just below the skin?

Strong hands that press  
At the dips and divots...  
Hands that lead me by  
The collar, bind the wrists  
And shackle the ankles.

The Sin we all dance with  
Discovers the darkness,  
The need we all try to hide.  
Layer by layer;  
The naked uncovered.

∞

# Meghan Clark

## Impatience: A Series of Poems

Saturday  
Beautiful black dresses  
Handsome black suits  
I'm too impatient for my  
Housewarming Party

Pay Day—This Friday  
Super Stoked for  
Food in my Fridge  
I'm too impatient

I never measure ingredients  
I'm too impatient  
Butter  
Milk  
Cheese  
I load it up with pepper

Love  
Cooking  
Delicious  
Pasta  
But  
I'm too impatient

Long day ahead at work  
Cranky kids  
Cranky providers  
Comfy bed at home  
I'm too impatient  
It's too far away

I'm too impatient  
I get that from Daddy  
I miss him terribly  
7 years

∞

# Emily Hanna

## White Bread

Two young girls played in a garden behind an old white house. The older girl sat on a bench watching the younger one pick raspberries from overflowing bushes. Red juice stained the little girls face and hands and tears slipped from her eyes. Both girls were fair and blonde with eyes that changed color with the sky. Today the sky was dim and overcast, the forecast called for rain. They were not sisters, although their features were similar. In fact, they were the same.

The older girl, a teenager, was lost in thought as she sat on the garden bench. At first, the doctors thought her grandfather was going to die. It had sure seemed like he was going to die. His heart was giving out; “just a matter of time,” they said. For days the girl had gone to the hospital with her mother and sat by his bed. In the dark, smelly room she was quiet, watching him talk to her mother from the hospital bed. She was sad for her mother, sad to be sitting in a gloomy hospital, sad because she was supposed to be sad: he was her grandfather.

“Grandfather...hmpf,” the girl sniffed at her own thoughts. He really wasn’t much of a grandfather. He’d never been around when she was growing up, until suddenly one day he was. He’d left the girl’s grandmother when her mother was only two months old. He disappeared for thirty years without so much as an explanation. Now he was sick and alone, except for his daughter and granddaughter.

He smelt like urine and compost. The whole house smelt like a barn now that he’d come to live with them. He was awkward. He had nothing interesting to talk about. How could he make conversation? He didn’t even know them! The girl could feel the temperature of her blood rising. She thought of how she’d slip from the room as quickly as possible whenever he entered. She thought of how aggravating it was to have to run to the grocery store for his damn white bread, buying food for someone she didn’t know. He complained about everything her mom made anyway. Then, he took over the entire basement with his broken motors and tattered science magazines and insisted on watching craft

shows on TV in the morning when they usually watched Today. Honestly, what was he to her but an old inconvenience? Someone who made her mother work harder than necessary, a selfish miserable old man. On a good day, all she felt for him was indifference. “On a bad day,” she thought, “I think it might have been better if he’d just died.”

Her distaste for him wasn’t just about the white bread. It was about the way he called both of them “young lady” and told her mom to “get some sleep” when she got home from work in the morning. He acted like he’d been there all along. He hadn’t; she could remember just a few months back when he wasn’t there at all. He couldn’t make up for lost time.

The girl jolted back to the moment. She was in her room, in her bed under the white down comforter. She had been caught in that place between dreams and awareness, watching herself in a moment from the past. “That is how you are supposed to act when you lose a grandfather,” she thought, “like I acted when I was little.” Her paternal grandfather had died suddenly when she was five. He was a man who slipped chocolates into her pocket and whisked her away for ice-cream behind her father’s back, and she had loved him. She had loved his big, calloused working-man hands. She had cried that day when she was a little girl, when her mother came out to the garden where she was picking raspberries to tell her that he was dead. She hadn’t known what a heart attack was, but she’d understood the consequences: there would be no more fun-filled days with Grampy. She burrowed her head in the soft mounds of white blankets and clenched her eyes shut. She didn’t want to get up. Why couldn’t she feel what she was supposed to feel for this other man who was just as much her flesh and blood? She urged herself to feel love and sorrow, but all she felt was guilt over her indifference.

∞

## Reflections on Fatherhood

Every Sunday,  
my kids come to visit  
At least one of them does,  
and for a time,  
the house feels normal again,  
like a family lives here  
not just one man.

They don't stay long.  
Maybe an hour.  
After they leave,  
I sit in the armchair,  
the lonely one by the window,  
observing the sparsely furnished rooms:  
a red, patchy upholstered chair here,  
a veneered desk there.  
Mostly things that have been left behind.

The lamp by my chair is dim;  
it casts shadows on the bay windows,  
lively shadows that mock me,  
like the ever-growing stack  
of unopened bills on the otherwise bare table.

The room at the end of the hall  
was my daughters:  
purple in the middle school years,  
loud with pop music during high school  
all abandoned save a few Abercrombie posters.  
There aren't any bedrooms in this house now  
Just the couch and a sleeping bag.

. . .

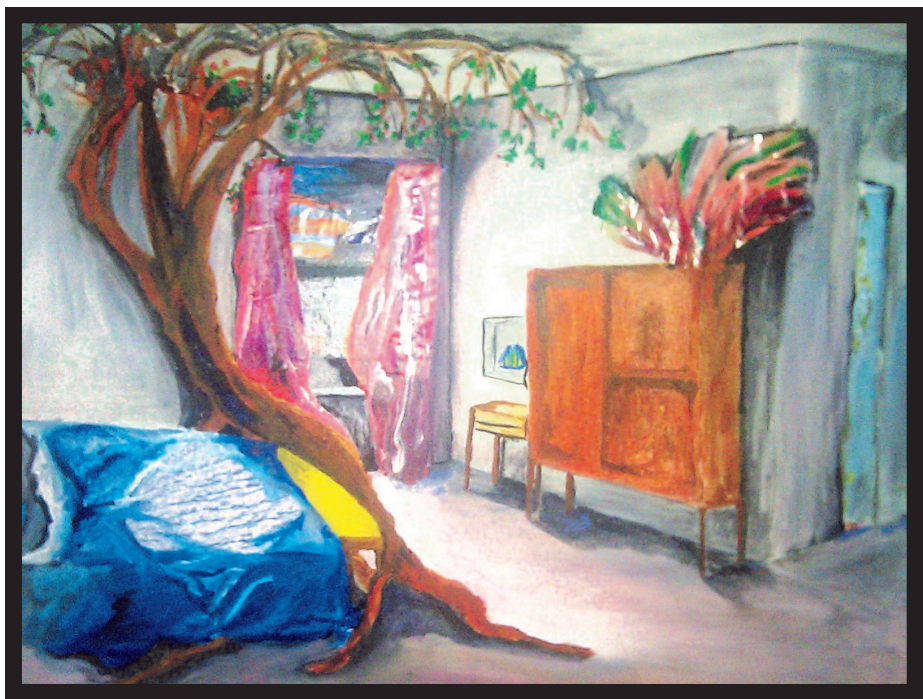


If I'd been a better –  
What?  
Husband, father?  
There might still be life in this house  
food in the fridge,  
money in my checking account.  
At least they still come.  
At least I'm a better father.

∞

## Matt Pifer

### “The Room”



# Megan Bishop

## A Weak Mind

In my white skirt, I sit unaware of my guilt. The balding man passes from the portable whiteboard, with the word “modesty” written in red, to the tall plywood stand where his notes are restrained under the weight of a faded leather watch. “God created men as visual beings.” I watch him, questioning where he is going with his statements. He is a smiling man with a new wife from Phoenix. He continues, “What are you when you leave these church doors? What do you wear?” His wife nods along, staring at the floor.

The red haired girl beside me gazes at the whiteboard, eyes round and empty. A foreign exchange student from Germany watches his feet with a crease between her brows. A room full of young women—staring. As I try to understand his message, I look at his teeth, the stalactites and stalagmites that form the echoing cavern of his mouth. “Women have an important responsibility, the most important responsibility in this world. As future wives and mothers, you are mandated with an important purpose and have a responsibility to your future family. Modesty is the key to staying true to that purpose. As visual creatures, men have a tendency to look at women ...” his head turns to his notes in a search, “... inappropriately. As women, you have a power to dress in a way that will either hinder men or help them follow God without causing distractions. When you hear of a marriage that was severed by a man’s infidelity, think about what the mistress could have been wearing.”

Applause erupts from his wife in the wings, and we follow her example tentatively. I look at my skirt that almost appears a pink shade because of the sinking sun by the window. My legs grow warm as I look away from the youth pastor, the only man in the room. His knives of blame slice a desire he has never known.

∞

## The Only Thing I Ever Gave You

Your touch of nails rips  
through my flesh too. You lie  
about the deep scars on your neck.  
The scars hidden by  
that royal blue scarf  
that I bought you.

I've spoken of Judas  
and his selfish act  
that strung him on a tree—a warning  
against your potential fate.  
You listen with your eyes.

“Go get some sun,” I advise,  
“It will do some good.” In the warm,  
dense breeze, your scarf hugs those angry  
marks as you take the long walk  
down Mt. Hope Road.

Blinded, I don't see your diary entries—  
the ones about the ignorant  
clichés, “This too shall pass.”  
That scarf from Macy's  
knew more than I ever did.

∞

# Ron Sands

## Companion

We can say things, you and I  
can we not, we have come

to this hollow place where  
accidents happened and

dreams half remembered,  
but mostly forgotten, are

all the same  
bitter thought

we can mumble our incantations  
against spirits in the night

defend our pejoration  
real or imagined with magic

or prevarication  
to soften the edges

blur the maculations  
the intimately designed

cicatrice stitched by choice,  
circumstance, and time

we can argue the fine,  
but still end with the question

will life be enough  
to forgive who we've been

∞

## Darkness and the Distance Between

who will remember  
how a loose button  
at a graduation  
provided work for hands  
and mind alike,  
to feel and see and hear  
an evening's passing like  
no one else was there

illumination travels at the speed of light  
a mindless distance to the stars,  
the thread unravels  
where truth, revealed by night  
is passed from a million years  
becomes a speck in the infinite eye  
close enough, but not  
close enough to live by

metastasis and orbits change  
subjects abruptly rearranged,  
yet the small things  
in this world still  
go round and round  
though nothing else  
remain the same,  
a tattered cap, a worn gown

∞