

THE LAMPLIGHT

Liberty University's Fine Arts and Literary Magazine

“Your word is a lamp
to my feet and a light
for my path.”

Psalms 119:105

Table of Contents

Cover <i>by Josh Ashton</i>	
Lantern Light <i>by Melinda Laut</i>	4
Danville Christmas <i>by Justin Ty Rossbacher</i>	4
Easter Soiree <i>by Elizabeth Johnson</i>	4
This Shade of Blue: A Sestina <i>by Beth Ridenoure</i> Best Poem	5
I Became Acquainted with the Night <i>by Derek Bennion</i>	5
Audrey <i>by Charity Givens</i>	6
The Cherry Wagon <i>by Rebecca Annan</i>	6
“O”de to “O”dysseus <i>by Travis Holt</i>	7
Box of Wonder <i>by Johnny Blanding</i>	7
One Christmas Story <i>by Michelle Schimpf</i>	8
Love’s Patience <i>by Amy Almazar</i>	9
Powerlines <i>by Josh Ashton</i>	10
Accepting the Long Walk Home <i>by Heather Shelton</i>	10
Witless Tom <i>by Chine Odugwu</i>	10
Curling Up <i>by Laura Large</i>	11
Blue Elvis and the Golden Tuna <i>by Stephen McClary Keith</i>	11
Tabloid Religion and Pop Culture Vultures <i>by Justin Morgan</i>	12
Trashcan TV <i>by Mark Provencher</i>	12
My Only Skirmish with C. S. Lewis <i>by Ryan Knight</i>	13
#43 with a Bullet <i>by Daniel Shifflett</i>	13
Dusk: A Paining by Claude Monet <i>by Chelsea Kramer</i>	14
Lovers on a Swing <i>by Kelley Knapp</i>	14
Glimpses <i>by Justin Ty Rossenbacher</i>	14
In Their Memory <i>by Melanie Zeleny</i>	15
Wall of Masks <i>by Huong Nyugen</i>	15
Halloween <i>by Erin Sinnwell</i>	15
Alone <i>by Samantha Smith</i>	16
Alone <i>by Justin Ty Rossenbacher</i>	16
The Duel <i>by Rebecca Waltmann</i>	17
The Hunt <i>by Danielle Adams</i>	17
Morning Magic <i>by Karalyn Seifert</i>	18
Huston Street <i>by Kris Shepherd</i>	18
Daddy’s Hands <i>by Jill Walker</i>	19
Give Us Clean Hands <i>by Heather Richichi</i>	19
My Father’s House <i>by Justin Ty Rossenbacher</i>	19
Sitting in J.F.K. Listening to Charlie Parker <i>by Marcelo Quarantotto</i>	20
Sound of Music <i>by Amee Brothers</i>	20
Shipwreck Songs <i>by Danielle Viera</i>	21
The Edge of Maine <i>by Justin Ty Rossenbacher</i>	21
The Cascades <i>by Jose Merit</i>	21
Haiku <i>by Tara Hedrick</i>	21
Coffeshop Dreams <i>by Chasity L. Hinken</i> Best Prose	22
Self-portrait <i>by Josh Ashton</i>	22

Old City Musicians <i>by Huong Nyugen</i>	23
Gotta Serve Somebody <i>by Richard North</i>	24
Untitled <i>by Olga Chitina</i> Best Art	25
She Sees Flowers in These Weeds <i>by Daniel Lunde</i>	25
How Could It Be? <i>by Doug Townshend</i>	26
Toaster Man <i>by Huong Nyugen</i>	26
Fish in a Bowl <i>by Huong Nyugen</i>	27
700 Acres <i>by Heather Spear</i>	28
Barn <i>by Greg Yates</i>	28

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Lantern Light

Melinda Laut

Lantern light shining through the window to my soul
You fill my hollow spheres with
s t a c c a t o

bursts
of
love

Struck by the beauty of surprising whiteness

Your startling clarity

You appeared suddenly as a ghost

Descending a stony hillside

The road lined in pine, chestnut, juniper

You are a limestone cave

A sheltering gorge

The voice of your eyes is generous rain

The world sits quietly

Melted into shadow

To discover galleries of curious color

Lantern light shining through the window of my soul



Danville Christmas *Justin Ty Rossbacher*

The Easter Soiree

Elizabeth Johnson

All dressed up in pink petticoats
they remind me of tulips or cotton candy—
layers deep, but consisting of very little real substance.
My petticoat is violet,
it reminds me of the color of raindrops at twilight—
thin and hollow, as if drawing to a very near close.
We mill about— a myriad of Easter colors
reminding God of a pastel kaleidoscope.
Separately broken pieces of colored glass
but together, a rainbow of luminous, united existence.
This mad soiree—grey, short, and ending in a
colorless fog.
Death wears no petticoat.

This Shade of Blue: A Sestina

Beth Ridenoure

BEST POEM

She lingers at the precipice of living.
She shakes out, examines, and fingers memories,
finding affirmations mingled with regrets—
blurred together after so many decades—
rolled and tucked away, a single bolt of cloth
finely embroidered with threads of Tahoe blue.

Like antique cobalt bottles, that shade of blue—
shelved, glinting bottles that seem almost living
beings that should be polished with a soft cloth,
cherished and prized for their cargo of memories.
Like the bottles, she has been shelved by decades.
Slow years have milled fine her joys and her regrets.

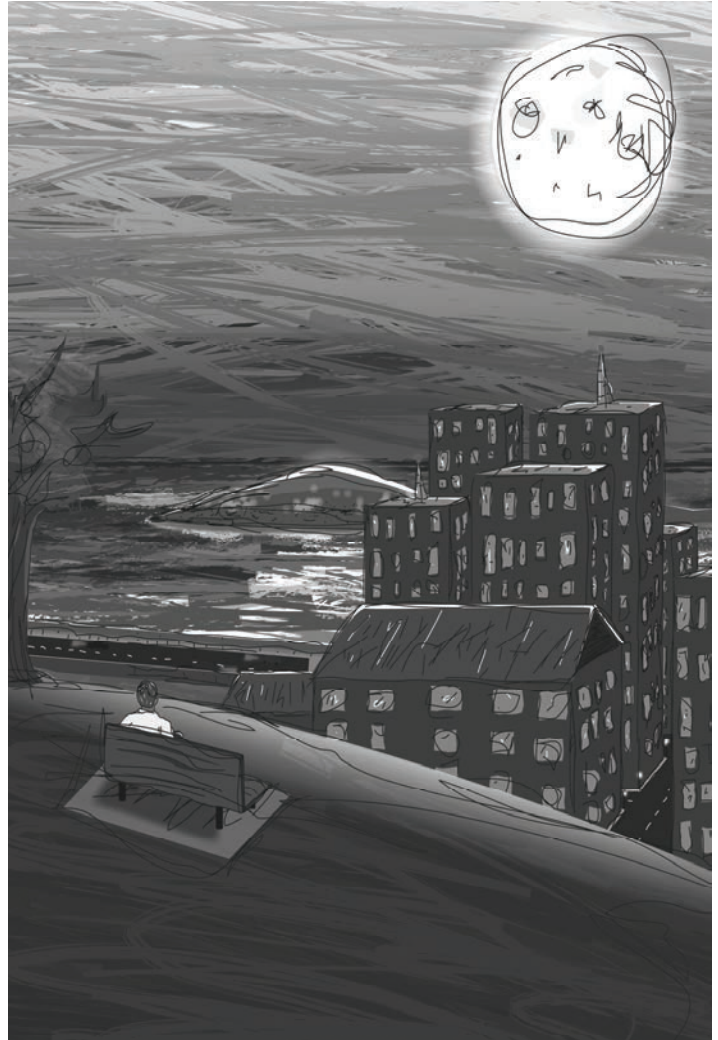
A wraith on a hospital bed, she regrets
Time's capricious power. Her watery blue
eyes plead for resolution of decades
in which she was counted one of the living.
Or, do they plead for something else? Should memories
—life—be ripped up, soiled, thrown out like a dust cloth?

A square of sky framed by pink vinyl curtain cloth
is called a window, but she knows and regrets
the lack of truth behind a name, for memories
belie the toothpick bones and knotted veins-blue,
pulsing paths of life, threads that keep her living.
Must dignity dwindle too, sapped by decades?

Time has drawn the blinds on successive decades,
and in the dimness has removed the drop cloth
covers from mental remnants of her living.
She prefers to remember joys, not regrets
and thinks of her husband's eyes. Lake Tahoe blue,
she had always said, the color of memories.

Fifty-seven years they collected memories—
perused together Time's book-chapter decades
Now, Time's only divisions are squares of blue
outside the window, folded away like cloth
as dusk comes. She wonders if the sun regrets
his brilliant role—the metronome of living.

Veiled beneath sheer cloth skin the decades spun,
Blood and memories keep Time, pulsing slow and blue.
These and regrets conspire to keep her living.



I Became Acquainted With The Night *Derek Bennion*

Audrey

Charity Givens

My fair lady, Miss Eliza,
What did you think of the dirt-on-your-face-to-Beauty-Queen Transformation?
Was that 'Enry 'Iggins too much for you,
Or did you douse his fire
With your dry humor?

Was breakfast at Tiffany's
Worth the rave review,
Or was it just a normal helping of
Toast, eggs, and diamonds...
From a rich buyer?

That Roman holiday,
Were you really tired of travel?
Did you just want to get away from it all?
Or did you want to conquer another,
As did the ancient Romans?

And Sabrina,
The young girl who changed
Into a beautiful woman,
Was the transformation
Bewitching?

Your funny face everyone loved,
Everyone admired...
No one needed to empathize with you,
But did you need someone to
Empathize, too?

You taught us how to steal a million,
And followed your advice well.
You stole the hearts of millions
Never intending to
With that gorgeous face and lovely voice.

Wait until dark, Miss Audrey.
You'll never be the unforgiven.

The Cherry Wagon

Rebecca Annan

Those warm summer evenings
You could smell the candy in the air
Dad would force our shoes onto our dusty feet
And off we would go in that little cherry wagon
My sisters and I
Our hair now behind us
Nothing ahead of us more important than that store
And as we glanced behind
Mom was standing on the porch waving

So excited we were to reach those tracks
The tracks that were more than just tracks
But a piercing alarm that we were close
To that place of jubilee
That camel-coated building with a shingled roof
Filled inside with flavors galore
Once across the jarring finish line
Our eyes gazed only on that object
My dad cheering our anticipation
Until we came to a stop

When we were inside, endless options awaited us
And we chose the sugars that perfected the moment
Carrying our trophies back to the now unnoticed wagon
Now we were ready for the journey home
Enjoyed with sweets
And we thanked our daddy
With sticky smiles
For he knew the key to happiness for little girls.

“O”de to “O”dysseus

Travis Holt

Odysseus

The great and mighty king

How the gods favor you and blessings they bring

The magnetic force

of Penelope’s love

Pulls you to her

from superhuman distances

Your epic journey home

cannot be hindered at any cost

By Cyclops, Sirens, suitors

or even distempered Poseidon

Your strength is matched by no man

nor is the power of your heart

A camel through the eye of a needle

unheard of by mere mortals

But you, O great Odysseus

guide your arrows through axe handles

The wise goddess arranges to give you the guise of an old man, weak and feeble

But you, O great Odysseus are wiser and stronger than all others

Brains, brawn, and beauty

The great and mighty

Odysseus



Box of Wonder *Johnny Blanding*

One Christmas Story

Michelle Schimpf

The crisp winter air stung my face as I hurried down the crowded sidewalk. Though I was bundled tightly in a trench coat and scarf, my cheeks and nose throbbed in the cold. I could see my breath billowing out in short puffs of steam with every step I took. New York City was noisy and cheerful with the holiday spirit and, as it was every Christmas, the sidewalks were lined with beggars, eagerly looking to benefit from the wealth that overflowed this time of the year. I dropped a few dollars into a blind man's mug. The old gentleman and I had something in common. He must have felt helpless sitting there in the cold, waiting for fate to decide whether he would eat that day or not. I wished there was more that I could do.

After walking a few more blocks, I reached a quieter avenue, which was my favorite place during the holidays. The small, privately owned shops lining the street were decorated with all of the personal care that could be mustered in this dark, asphalt-gilded city. Windows glowed with frost and colorful lights while strings of bells rang with every opening door. Christmas trees warmed display windows. Snow hung on the windowsills. I stood outside of my favorite little book store, my breath fogging the window. There had to be something here for him.

Brushing the snow off of my shoulders, I entered the store. There were a few people browsing inside. The owner was a kind old lady who waved to me from behind a large oak counter. "Merry Christmas!" she called to me. I returned the sentiment and slowly worked my way to the back of the store. The antique books here were almost untouched, coated with a thin layer of neglectful dust. I knew he didn't have the strength now to read often, but it had always been his favorite pastime. I reflected on the long hours we had once been able to lounge on the couch with a fire blazing in the fireplace. He had his Shakespeare, I had my Dickens, and we would sit in comfortable silence, feeding our minds and enjoying the closeness we shared. I blinked back a tear and struggled to see the titles on the shelf. There had to be something here that I could share with him, something that would make him forget his pain, even if only for a few moments.

I ran my fingers along the weathered spines of the old books. Thoreau. Hemmingway, Twain. Nothing quite right. My eyes moved over the blue and green leather of the old classics: "A Christmas Carol," *Tom Sawyer*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Oh, he would love them as he always had, but this Christmas called for something special—something he had not seen before. I turned to leave, disappointed at having to face him empty handed, when my eye suddenly caught a thin, red leather volume in the high corner of the shelf. It was fragile and its pages were slightly yellow with age. I brushed my fingers over the cover, which was emblazoned with a simple, golden title, love. My heart began to flutter as I turned the first battered pages—Shakespearean

Emily Dickinson, thoughts on love by Aristotle—my mind eagerly raced over the contents of each carefully printed page.

I purchased the tiny book and tucked it safely under my coat. The snow flurried around me as I stepped from the cozy shop into the blustery cold. My scarf blew up around my face, so I quickly tucked it into my coat. Glad to have found the perfect gift, I set off down the street now with happier steps, for I longed to see the expression on his face when he first touched the soft leather and read the first lines. But then I felt my feet grow heavier and heavier as I made my way toward the massive gray building that hovered ominously at the end of the street. The smell of disinfectant and harsh fluorescent lights flooded my senses as I entered the sliding doors, a sharp contrast from the flowery, pleasant shop I had left moments earlier.

"Good evening." One of the nurses smiled from behind the counter. I smiled back and nodded as I slowly untied my scarf and passed her on my way to the elevator.

The ride was slow and crowded. A middle aged bald man sniffled next to me, absently pushing the button for the fourth floor over and over again. His physique reminded me of someone who had been a star athlete in his youth. But the years had taken their toll on him, and his mass had gradually shifted from lean muscle to a round belly.

After a moment he caught my glance and his cheeks flushed as he dropped his hand from the elevator button to his side. I smiled at him, and he forced a sad smile back. The doors slid open. My gaze followed him as he slowly shuffled off of the elevator, IV pole rolling along behind him. I said a silent prayer that he would have somebody to spend the holidays with him. The elevator continued its journey, eventually reaching the ninth floor.

The hallway was familiar to me now. I had walked it hundreds of times. Straight down the hall, then left at the nurses' station, and another left at the fire extinguisher. The door to his room was open a crack, and I peeked in to make sure he was alone before pushing it open. He was sitting up in bed, pale and thin, but his eyes sparkled as I approached. "Hello...." He smiled the same beautiful, somewhat lopsided smile he had had since the moment I met him nearly ten years ago. It had lost none of its glimmer in the months of his illness.

"Hello sweetheart," I managed to say while leaning down to gently touch my lips to his. How I longed to crawl into bed with him and have him wrap his strong arms around me and hold me tight from the cold. But he was too weak and tired now. I pulled a chair up next to his bedside and removed my coat before sitting down. He looked at me and his eyebrows raised expectantly, as if he knew I had something important to say.

My cheeks flushed slightly. There didn't seem to be any room for small talk today. I felt a lump rise in my throat. "I got you a gift today. For Christmas."

He looked distressed. "I'm sorry.... I couldn't leave to get you anything." He tugged at his IV.

I gently touched his hand. "I didn't want you to. I just wanted you to have something. I....I hope you like it...your gift." I reached into my coat and removed the book. He took it from me in a shaky hand and affectionately ran his fingers over the cover. His bulky fingers clumsily flipped through the yellowed pages. I thought I noticed the tiniest hint of moisture forming in his eyes.

"Thank you." His voice was almost a whisper. "I...." He looked pleadingly at me, a mixture of frustration and embarrassment in his eyes. "I...the drugs they have me on...I can't read the words...." I tenderly took the book from his hands. His thin arms wrapped around my waist as he pulled me down beside him. I curled up, my head resting on his shoulder and slowly flipped through the pages, quickly skimming the words. "Will you read to me?" he asked quietly.

I nodded and moistened my lips. "I like this one...." I started to read. "What is love? An end to suffering? No, for suffering is one with this world and we are all bound by it." I glanced up at him and smiled. "No, love is not an end to suffering, but God's gift to man that he may endure suffering, that he may survive and be contented though he must suffer."

"Perfect," he sighed, holding me even tighter. "Who said that?"

"The author is unknown." Before closing the book, I also noticed that its cover had water marks on it. Were they someone's tears? How worn it looked as if it had been caressed a hundred times.

His eyelids were already heavy with exhaustion. "You are tired." He nodded and the sides of his mouth turned upward into a weak smile. "But, are you feeling all right today?"

"Better than usual," he murmured. He was already drifting off.

"I love you," I whispered, as his eyes closed.

"I love you too," he managed before I lost him to sleep. I kissed his cheek and snuggled deeper into his arms. Out of all the Christmases we had shared together since we'd been married, I had never been more grateful than I was on this night. Tonight he was still with me, and we were together. I watched the snow fall outside of his window and thanked God every minute that we had made it through this long and painful year. The suffering had been endured. By God's grace alone it had been endured. And even if this was our last Christmas together, I was thankful for the opportunity to sleep one more night in his arms.



Love's Patience *Amy Almazar*

Accepting the Long Walk Home

Heather Shelton



Powerlines *Josh Ashton*

Sitting cross-legged on
the sidewalk,
torn skirt and cheap plastic
dollar store shoes,
dust enveloping her nostrils,
like an obnoxious fly that won't "shoo fly, shoo"
She waits patiently
to hear the rumbling
of her daddy's pick-up truck.
She waits hour by hour
learning to give in to the dust
taking over her lungs,
but Daddy is
sitting with his "business" folk
guzzling down
cheap beer,
and she once again accepts
her long walk home.

Witless Tom

Chine Odugwu

This is the dream of foolish Tom, a lad so deprived of common sense
that those who know him cannot help but call him witless Tom.
Oh, foolish knave that skips about the shiny edge of sunset,
oh, watery sprite that dares the ruling, rushing ocean waves,
imagining the cool boldness of the salt water. Tom blinks
and wakes to hunger's dancing pangs and rumbling growls.
Creaking into action goes his brain, directing his mechanical movements,
on the brink of tossing in the pungent laundry
and adding the sweet scent of vanilla to the soapy water,
his mother's shrill voice comes.
Let the waves of the mini-ocean maker whoosh,
rocking the corduroys, the satins, and the stains of coffee
from the Empire State Building in its lumbering motion.

Over on crowded Liberty Mountain you can hear his mother's wail:
"Did I not tell you never to add pink shirts to your whites?
Now maybe you'll listen. When creeping around, you notice the laughter
trickling down the sidewalk and see that everyone's looking at you,
my bright, flowery boy.
I always knew it was your father in you.
Like tree bark from his block of wood, that's what you are,
the two of you a right sour pair.
The fixture's in, but the light bulb's not there."

Curling Up

Laura Large

When I was little,
I lay on your stomach
and fell asleep,
a plump resting place for my
busy 2-year old body on your 60-year old vibrant one.
You wouldn't spank me
in turn for those sweetest of times of shared
slumber,
gentle combination of old and young, unlikely and beautiful.
Those were the days when we
lived the stories instead of just

telling them.

Your resting place has shrunk,
for the first time in years,
a denial of your life of living well.
Leukemia does that.
We can no longer eat blackberries
and sugar in the back of the old
delivery van,
your strong arms cannot harness the wind
in your kites anymore.
The garden you've grown for years, I remember sun kissed
redness, lies fallow
because no one has the time
for gardens when there are doctor's visits
and blood counts,
and you can no longer kiss Mom-Mom's lips
as you have for fifty years,
but you can kiss her hand.
And you enjoy sour blackberries,
or so you pretend.
Life is curled up,
Drowsy on your weary resting place.
But you love it,
as if it were 2 years old.

Blue Elvis and the Golden Tuna

Stephen McClary Keith

I wanted a new bike
When I was seven.
The kind with fat, black, deep tread, knobby tires.
The kind that came with a red pad
Across the chrome handlebars,
With another on the frame,
Both with a big white "HUFFY" on it.

I wanted to tie my fishing pole
Across those shiny handlebars
And ride, like a one-eyed pirate,
All the way to the Atlantic Ocean.
I wanted to fish for great, golden tuna.

I wanted to grow
My sideburns long,
Put on some large, dark, mirrored sunglasses
And tell all the other runaway fishermen

"My name is Elvis...."

Tabloid Religion and Pop Culture Vultures

Justin Morgan

As you stand in the Wal-Mart check-out line, you find yourself bombarded and blinded by a rack full of colorful, glossy magazine covers gleaming of poppycock headlines. The eyes of a dozen celebrities, models, and movie stars glare at you from each cover; some wearing plastic smiles while others carrying their heartbroken frowns. Their sparkling faces grace the front of each issue with headlines telling the world the news of who's divorcing who, who's marrying who, and who's cheating on who. The beans are spilled for all the pop culture vultures of public America to eat and choke on. The teenage girl in front of you flips through the pages of the latest issue, commenting to her girlfriend of all the breakup gossip and shocking celebrity perversions. Who is this girl that cares so much about the personal lives of people she does not even know on a personal level? She is just one of the million that are obsessed with pop culture personalities. It is true; this world spends not just too much time, but time in whatever length at all, following and worshiping the latest tabloid buzz. And this reality is rather appalling.

There is an excessive amount of time and money spent focused on celebrities and any personality involved in the world of entertainment. Dozens of prime time T.V. shows fill their programs with the latest "red carpet" extravaganzas, while millions across the globe sit in front of their T.V. sets observing their favorite actor or actress' outlandish ensemble.

The media sucks the general public into their programs, giving them the inside scoop of which celebrity is cheating on their spouse. And in many cases, it's their third spouse. It's become more than the paparazzi that stalks; it has become everyone from teenage teeny boppers to soccer moms. Every age group follows the romantic life of celebrities. It's everywhere. It's on the news, the tabloids, the radio, the T.V. shows, the magazine racks. Millions of households subscribe to prints like *People Magazine*, *Us*, *Starz*, *Seventeen*, and dozens more. It is an obsession. People talk about it in their everyday conversations. They think about it, read about it, watch it, dwell on it, and even to the point that it affects their own attitudes and approaches to life. They study a certain actor or actress and try and mirror his or her image and look, and sometimes mirror their lifestyles and actions. The influence of Hollywood and those that hog the spotlight help shape and mold the culture and tell others what it tolerates.

The power of these magazines and media tells us what is acceptable and where our culture's values are going. We are no longer merely entertained by the pop culture celebrities, but have found ourselves as idolaters to these famous people, worshiping and following them with dedication.

You leave the check-out line and walk out to your car. Inside your bag are three shiny magazines.



Trashcan TV *Mark Provencher*

My Only Skirmish with C.S. Lewis

Ryan Knight

Along with many of my poorly versed peers, I, too,
Though significantly more experienced than they,
Reply with the name "C.S. Lewis, certainly" when asked
That inevitable, chiseling question,
A stereotypical tool to break the ice,
To ease me from my internal anxiety as I tiptoe across
A small distance, cognizant of my relativity to
The vast expanse of the celestial cosmos.

My philosophy of timidity was slightly outweighed as
I walked through America's door-of-choice it selected
When pressed with the dilemma of which side of the two
Possibilities were ordained as the solution to
The "Method to the madness of movement."

Soon I saw her, inhaling the words of her
Rectangular-shaped biology textbook. She looked up,
Eyes registering a new figure as I frugally consumed
A part of the tiled floor of the literary family's gathering hall
For authors of all ages, religions, ideals, and bindings.

"It's like Christmas!" I exclaimed, bearing my cardboard boxes
With three long-awaited books and one compact disc tucked inside.
She chuckled as I, feeling like a holiday elf, handed her
A box to open in conjunction with our hastened holiday.

The tape divided as my car key, my Mosaic equivalent
Of a staff, bypassed the roadblock to those boxed joys.
I flocked to *The Trouble with Poetry* while she blitzed
To sample *Narrative Poems* by a literary mentor of mine,
Even if he is deceased, to hear a poetic tale he recalled,
Transmitting it to her receptive, welcoming ears.

It began impersonally, Lewis reading his version of history retold.
The words to "You, Reader" by Billy Collins did not allow for
My attention to center on any other voices performing from
The podium of an instrumental set of pages.

Lewis' intentions became suspicious as she cleared the library
With each glance toward an audible disturbance:
Chairs screeching cacophonies, overzealous chuckles erupting
From the volcanic crater of an enamored girl across the room.

She leaned in, and Lewis continued with his confident voice.
Now feeling threatened, I tapped the left shoulder of his burly figure,
Fingers poking at the green and charcoal-checked tweed jacket
He wore. By this point, I pardoned myself from "Eastern Standard Time"
And warned Lewis, "Dear friend, you are married and I am not;
Do not interject yourself between this young lady and myself."

He, my faithful mentor of years, said nothing in reply,
Unless you consider the present lines with a scent like
Alabaster, unhindered by my rebuke, to substitute
As his unaffected, indifferent rebuttal. I relented, taking
My seat once again until her prior obligation
To the reading led her elsewhere.

Packing my book sack as Lewis stepped from the platform,
I took a long look at him; surely my eyes conveyed the
Disappointment of an offended disciple. Yet I thanked him
By stretching my hand for a respectful shake as
I lifted his *Poems* into my messenger bag, colored as the
Atlantic's salty body when under the tarp of midnight.

She and I walked to her class, giggling and happily
Enjoying one another as I recalled a laughable story.
The U-shaped stance of her rosy lips assured me
Of the resemblance between Lewis and myself;
That I, too, have a story to enact, curling us together
By eye contact rather than an oily thumb and a tower of words
Tap dancing across the literary chamber of our progenitors.



#43 With A Bullet Daniel Shiftlett

Dusk: A Painting by Claude Monet

Chelsea Kramer

At first glance, a distant sunset that warms the soul,
a picture that welcomes the eye.
But take a step back and see a faraway country
Forbidden, hidden, special.
Ripples reflect across the water,
Reflecting this country
appearing so near to the eye,
yet so far to the soul.
The pallet of colors creating the evening sky
settles on this faraway place
as if to say “goodnight.”

Monet, what did you mean by this painting?
What were you trying to say?
Is this place a holiday spot,
or simply a castle blanketed
by a beautiful summer evening?
Or a timeless mystery?

I will always see a faraway land,
A summer sun,
a sky,
and a reflection of the wind
on the waters of the west.



Glimpses *Justin Ty Rossenbacher*

Lovers on a Swing

Kelly Knapp

(reflective)

When I remember the February mornings,
Drinking coffee on the front porch swing,
Wrapped warm in fleece blankets...
I remember the joy of sitting close to you.

(critical)

You always slurped your black coffee
In the quiet of the early morning,
Ruining my solitude as we swung together...
Two grumpy lovers.

(satiric)

Was it the swing, or my adoration for you,
That swung up and down, back and forth?
We sat together in the faint daylight,
Held together by the motion of the swing.

(comic)

You swing, I swing,
And so the time flies.
“Hold on, my Dear!”
A morning rollercoaster ride.

In Their Memory

Melanie Zeleny

Lying in a hammock in the middle of a yard covered in
Clovers and flowers and onions,
The combined aromas of clean, dried laundry and slow roasting lamb
Crawl from the kitchen window
Down the whitewashed walls
And further down the steep cement steps
Until the salty, sweet smell reached my swaying being.

Children laugh while pushing one another on the tree swing at the bot-
tom of the yard
As they try to avoid the tree's gooey sap oozing from inside.
From inside the house a language not like my own is running fifty-two
miles an hour
From my grandmother's lips as she tends to her feast on the stove.
Upon a red bench at a red picnic table next to a red porch
Under a leafy giant, my grandfather sits with his radio
Enjoying
Commanding
Lovingly watching his grandchildren.

Halloween

Erin Sinnwell



Wall of Masks *Huong Nyugen*

One day a year angels and devils
mingle in the streets.
Villains and superheroes dance in the moon
to the cackle and screams at each white door.
When ghosts and goblins,
witches and wolves,
clowns and queens
parade the paths hand in hand.
Pumpkins' fiery faces glow in the night
while skeletons creak to life.
Bare trees wave in the chilly weather,
reaching out to snatch the treats
from the orange leaves blowing by.
Howls of laughter haunt the empty windows of houses.
Death reigns in the life of the night.

Alone

Samantha Smith

At dusk you can't see any other people
You know they are there
But they are muddled and muted
At first by the color
That burns your eyes with its beauty
And you stand alone looking at a stunning landscape
So real it looks like a painting
You ache inside to capture every color
Every thought those colors imply
To remember the beauty that encompassed your world at that moment
This raging show of lights to shadows
That leaves you breathless
Alone with the masterpiece
These pulsating reds and shades
Placed there for a reason
And if you are the only one to see it
Then you are the reason
When the colors fade
People still escape the scene
Swallowed by shadows
Leaving only the question of their presence
In the flat, mushy world without lines
Only gray
You are still alone
With the painter
Who never leaves his masterpiece
He carries it with him



Alone *Justin Ty Rossenbacher*

The Duel

Rebecca Waltmann

Run. Fast. She whipped through the trees. She could hear him gaining on her. She felt something whiz past her ear. Sharp turn left, dodge right. Had she lost him? She paused to listen. The sunlight filtered through the leaves of the forest, scattering deep, dark shadows everywhere. Perfect for hiding. She heard nothing out of the ordinary. Just birds, bugs, and now, shallow breathing. She heard something tear in the brambles. Without hesitation she took off running again, trying not to make any noise.

He saw her pause to listen, watched her eyes glance in his direction. Did she see him? No, or else she would have shot him. He saw her gun, casually held in her right hand, hanging at her side, but he wasn't about to doubt that she could shoot as fast as he could blink. Suddenly she took off. Had she heard him? He started after her.

She wondered how long he had been watching. Hadn't she lost him? No, he was better than that. They were evenly matched. She couldn't lose him that easy. What was that noise? The creek. Would she be able to cross it? Maybe, but not if the water was too high. She veered to her left. A log made a convenient bridge across the narrow part of the bend. She glanced over her shoulder. Nobody. He couldn't be too far behind, though. She quickened her pace. If she was careful, she might be able to cross without being shot.

He heard the creek and could almost hear her thoughts. Would she be able to cross? Probably. He knew the land better than she did and remembered the log that lay across the creek. He sped up. If he caught her while she was crossing, he would have a clear shot, but if she made it across, he would have a hard time finding her trail and catching up again.

She was halfway across the log when she heard the twigs snap behind her. She started to rush, then felt herself slipping. She caught her balance just before falling. But it had cost her precious time. He had caught up.

He raised his gun, ready to fire.

"Drop your gun!" he yelled, "and turn around with your hands in the air."

She turned around.

"Now walk towards me. Slowly. I don't want you falling in the river. The current's strong and you would be half-a-mile away before I could reach the river.

She placed one foot in front of the other, her thoughts racing. If she didn't think of something soon, it would all be over.

"Now walk over to that tree over there, the one with the broken branch. When you get there, stop, and keep your back facing me."

She cautiously went to the tree, her mind refusing to admit there was no way out.

"On the count of three, I'm gonna fire, and it's game over for you."

An idea came to her. Though he had told her to, he had

not made her drop her gun.

"One...."

She gripped her gun tightly.

"Two...."

Her finger now rested on the trigger.

"Three!"

As soon as he started on three, she was already turning and raising her weapon. A gun fired. He looked down. His face had lost its look of calm with his mouth now gaping open and his eyes wide with shock. An orange splat stood out against the black of the shirt covering his chest.

He looked up.

She stood there, five feet away from him, her paintball gun casually hanging at her side. Her face wore a cocky smile as her eyes danced in victory.

"I win."

The Hunt

Danielle Adams

Creeping in the mountains
as the sky turns pink from the sunrise,
the conqueror ascends the tree
as the bark rubs against his clothes.

The icy air nips at his face.

Nothing seems to matter
when his hands grace the satin bowstring.

Sitting in the tree,
this conqueror listens to the trickle of the stream,
the chatter of the squirrels,
and suddenly the rustling of the leaves.

Brown fur, white prongs

Zip! Smack!

The conqueror claims his victory.

Huston Street

Kris Shepherd

Twenty-two years old, he steps on the mound
“But how can one have confidence in a kid twenty-two years old?”
He comes into the game and doesn’t hear a sound
Focused, focused on the task at hand
“Winning is doing your best, no matter what your age”

He comes into the game
His name Huston Street
Well regarded as one of the toughest closers to beat
Already at such a very young age
Ice flowing through his veins
He takes the ball in his hand
Knowing that he has to come through in the clutch
One out is all he needs
In order to nail down the victory
“Strike one!”
The crowd starts to feel the excitement
“Strike two!”
The crowd rises to its feet
Huston Street, a shark smelling blood,
Goes in for the kill
He reaches back
The crowd stands still
“Strike three!”
The crowd roars
Huston Street
Victory, oh so sweet!

Morning Magic

Karalyn Seifert

Snuggled against Mom’s warm, worn, cotton nightgown,
Fuzzy blankets swallowing me up,
My curious eyes poke through the covers.
Dad is performing his morning rite,
His magic show,
Tying his tie.

Pop!
His collar pops up.
Anticipation builds.
Like a snake, the tie lies lifelessly on his shoulders.
The magician’s hands fearlessly grasp the snake around the
throat,
Demanding its obedience.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Whip.
Under, through, around,
Turned, twisted;
Suddenly the snake disappears.
Walla!
The long, thin mouth of an alligator takes its place,
Eating up the buttons on Daddy’s shirt.

Bravo, Daddy! Bravo!

The crowd of his three-year old daughter goes wild.
He takes a bow
And requests a goodbye kiss
As payment for my amazement.
I eagerly agree because Daddy
Is my favorite magician.

Daddy's Hands

Jill Walker

Late November
Not quite a decade old
Staring out through the transparent wall
Longing to destroy the flawless piles of frozen rain
Permission granted.

Three pairs of old socks
Two pairs of the thickest pants
Three long-sleeved shirts
One pair of color changing boots
One oversized coat
And finally...
One hood fastened by Daddy's hands

Hands that had corrected my bad behavior
Hands that kept the fridge full
Hands that kept the cars running
Hands that kept me safe

The sound of love
Scratched my shoulder length blonde hair into my hood
Security fastened around my neck
The fun could now begin
Because I was safe in Daddy's hands.



Give Us Clean Hands *Heather Richichi*



My Father's House *Justin Ty Rossenbacher*

Sitting in JFK Airport Listening to Charlie Parker

Marcelo Quarantotto

Smooth sweet music swinging swiftly, but softly.
The entire experience is climactic in its demeanor:
Crashing, cruising, climbing and cool—
The most sophisticated and ageless of them all.
I rock back and forth in a maniacal fashion,
Grooving to the beat of the bass and the lush sound of steel brushes on the snare.

The pace quickens,
And I'm
Bobbing.
Like.
Mad.

My eyes close, and
A sense of euphoria and intelligence sweep over,
And all the while I feel like nothing.

(It's-easy-to-fall-in-love-with-the-beauty-of-it-all)

Unique from all other music in that jazz doesn't want
Fast cars or fancy clothes;
The jazz musician lives for the jam,
And to hear the encouraging "Go! Go!" From the intent enthusiast.

To the first-time listener
(it may seem to be)
Too jumbled. Too chaotic.
Once that individual steps beyond the conformed
Verse-Chorus-Verse-Chorus,
He or she finds a new world:
Both awe-inspiring and filled with pleasure.

Sound of Music

Amee Brothers

Imagine waking up to a job of creativity,
coming up with something fresh or original.
Meet Bach.
Everyday began like
a swarm of bees buzzing on a hot summer day,
a dagger puncturing the flesh,
an acrobat falling from the tightrope,
the sound of fingernails scraping the board,
a knot that would never come loose,
a key that would no longer fit the keyhole,
a captor holding you captive with no piano or light,
a gun being held to your head,
a sycamore tree that has lost its sap,
a bird that falls from the sky,
foam coming from a dog's mouth,
a shield that is no longer strong.

Until suddenly, he strikes a chord—
that begins destiny, which leads to history.

Shipwreck Songs

Danielle Viera

Bathed in sun, we rest on the deck. In a moment
The sun is blocked by shadows,
Now painting the sky yellow, blue, and gray.

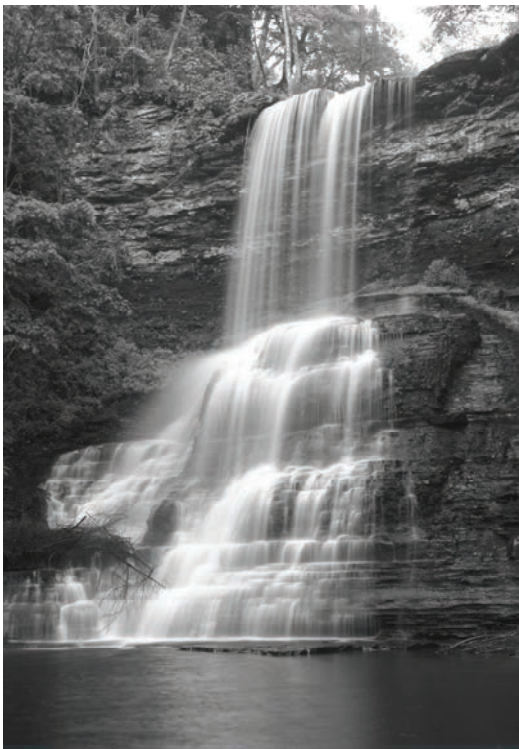
Up ahead, a single flag engrossed by ocean,
Waves farewell to its partisans.

We thrust forward and collide—
Waves crash and plow
Unrelenting motion, sirens;

Anxious sailors line the deck,
Fearful eyes gaze into the depth of the
Black water below,
As we descend.



The Edge of Maine *Justin Ty Rossenbacher*



The Cascades *Jose Merit*

Haiku

Tara Hedrick

Immanent Sky

Artificial stars
Mesmerize the lovers' eyes
Until cars drive by

Costumes

Stubborn ice, packed tight—
Water in mid-winter's guise
Undressed by the sun

Humility

Trees tower above shrubs—
One is naked, one is clothed
Humble, modest shrub

Coffeeshop Dreams

Chastity L. Hinken

I have heard people who have closely encountered death say they had flashbacks of their life, bright light drawing them upward, and instantaneous peace. I am not physically dying, but I am experiencing all of these things. A slight pause in breath, heart skipping a beat, and with each blink, scenes rapidly flash in intricate detail, one quick scene after another. I'm scraping my stomach as I fail to climb a tree, standing in front of a classroom of my prepubescent peers, reciting "I'm Nobody" by Emily Dickinson, my first kiss, my first love, and this my current heartache. To ease my thoughts, calm my nerves, and soothe my aching emotions, I melt away in my vat of coffee that sits before me.

I sit alone at a small, round, cast-iron table in the far corner of a coffee shop, watching java fanatics anticipate the savory delectable upon their taste buds. In an effort to escape my own thoughts, I allow my imagination to run away with me. I get lost in imagining the coffee patrons' lives and thoughts. One lady in particular has caught my attention. She leans, with her whole body, upon the espresso bar watching the barista carefully creating the espresso masterpiece. Her double shot, soy, vanilla, no-whip latte is made to perfection, but she demands more vanilla and not so much cream. Her voice is cold, impersonal, and critical. My disgust at the manner in which she has chosen to treat the barista is evident in my facial expression in the mirror; furrowed brow, wrinkles in forehead, and lips pursed. I begin to imagine the cold lady in her home with servants at her beck and call, chauffeur opening her Bentley, and cocktail parties with guests of equal societal status.

My daydream is interrupted by the continuous beeping of the alarm behind the counter. At first my imagination created the timer as a part of the on-going scene, but after a few moments of the annoying sound, I've snapped back to reality. I glance up from my hazed stare to see the coffee shop crawling with newcomers. I wonder if anyone thinks as I do—imagining what the others are thinking or doing in the shop. What are they trying to get away from? Who is waiting or not waiting for them at home? I wonder if any of the other legally addicted patrons are thinking such things about me, the tiny girl alone in a shadowy corner. I'm not sure I would catch my own attention. I tend to blend into a crowd, mesh with my surroundings, camouflaged by mediocre appearance. Looking at me and the items on my table, one may think me to be somewhat of a bookworm (the three books, a journal, and a highlighter on my table may give anyone that impression). What character would I play within their minds? A mystery, perhaps? A loner? At least they couldn't think me to be a hermit or else I wouldn't be out here with the herd and our lattes. I took comfort in this thought. Then I began to question what I would want people to think when they see me alone in a dim corner of a

well-frequented coffee shop. Within my imagination I create a new me...a me that someone else has created in their coffee shop daydreams.

She's a frail, thin, sickly looking girl caught in between what she is and what she desires to become. Books line the rooms within her home, and their characters line the walls within her mind. She has strolled down Swann's Way with Proust, explored Avonlea with Anne, written stories with Joe March, and fashioned her own blue castle with Valancy. Fictional characters are as alive to her as the person sitting next to her on the train, for they each represent an entity within her, tales of secret passions, hidden strengths, and unfortold fears. She is held captive within her mind, almost a willing prisoner, who is set free only by the jumbled thoughts expressed with black ink on a blank piece of parchment. Words blended together in a stream of thoughts provoke its reader to paint, with vivid detail, the scene captured with words. She is a Mona Lisa novelist engaging her readers with minutes and subtleties that leave them desiring more. I stop in my recreation of self to realize this is not how someone else would see me, but rather how I envision myself. That is who I am, lost in a sea of fictional characters and willingly locked away within the halls of imagination.



Self-portrait *Josh Ashton*

The espresso machine behind me is whistling as it works to create a perfect caffeine boost for the mustached man intently reading the *Wall Street Journal* over his wire-rimmed glasses. I notice he stops reading about the stock decline to glance at his gold wedding band. Perhaps he sees his reflection within the circle. He is taken back to his wedding day as his beautiful bride saunters down the rose covered isle. I chuckle to myself, thinking my imagination and hopeless romanticism have run away with me. I convince myself that instead of seeing his wedding day, he is thinking he has forgotten, once again, his anniversary. Figures. An amused smirk slides across my face just as he looks up and makes direct eye contact with me. We both pause in our thoughts to stare. "DOUBLE AMERICANA," shouts the barista, which slaps us both back to our present states. With his paper tucked under the arm of his business coat, he walks confidently out the door, ringing the bell with the tip of his hand—as if to leave his mark behind.

Miles Davis plays lightly above me, and I begin to hum along. Picking up my coffee cup and resting it upon my lower lip, the rich aroma hits my nostrils and takes me to a place and time when coffee wasn't my lonely companion. The aroma of the shop and the moody music brings stinging tears of remembrance to my eyes and a lump in my throat which I am unable to swallow.

I'm back to the spinning room, heart palpitations, and quick flashing scenes. Blink. Tender smiles. Blink. Sweet kisses. Blink. Tears you caused. Blink. Empty apology. Blink. Time separation. Blink. All that's left. Blink. Bittersweet memories. Blink. Of what I had. Blink. And what I lost. Blink.

I know my hands are shaking and lips quivering. I gather my things from the wobbly corner table. I glance up to see you paused within the doorway as if to question whether or not you should enter our once favorite conversation spot. Our eyes stay fixed upon each other. My memories play in fast forward. My thoughts question yours. You nod your head, glance down and up again, your hair blows with the incoming wind, and I am unable to move. One foot in front of the other, you walk my way maintaining eye contact. I dare not blink for fear this is all a figment of my imagination. You before me. I before you. You say hello and a half smile. My heart melts, and the tears that were paused in my eyes moments before are now gently gliding down my reddened cheek. I return both the greeting and the smile. Afraid the moment will spin from peaceful encounter to dreadful regret, I stand to my feet, glance back at you, and walk out the door contented. I look through the frosted glass door, and we are fixed on each other. I look away and blink.



Old City Musicians *Huong Nyugen*

Gotta Serve Somebody

Richard North

Mr. Dylan,
You were born a Jew, and you will die a Jew,
Shabtai Zisel ben Avraham.
The ancient tongue proclaims your name.

In the early days you heard Woody Guthrie sing about Jesus Christ,
And the Dixie Hummingbirds present their gospel sound,
“I’ll Fly Away” was your first professional recording.
Did your heart ever stir?

The Bible always found a place in your songs
And a place in your home,
But what about your mind?
Was it there too?

1964—“If there’s a God, the river’s Him.”
1965—“I don’t believe in anything.”
1966—motorcycle accident
1967—“Each time you’re dancing, you’re waltzing with sin.”

Jump forward 12 years....

In 1979 you accepted Christ and got baptized.
Later that year came your slow train.
By 1980 all knew you were saved.
In ‘81 you gave a shot of love.

Reciting the Lord’s Prayer before every show?
This shows a great faith!
Critics hounded you.
Audiences heckled too.

But, since then, have you become an infidel?
Rumors have it that you renounced your Christian faith
And re-embraced Judaism.
What do you say to this charge?
If only we could hear your words and not those of malicious gossipers.

What it all comes down to, Mr. Dylan, is who you pledge your allegiance to.
In your own words, everybody’s “gotta serve somebody,”
And the Bible says you can only serve one master,
So who will it be... God or mammon?

BEST ART



Untitled *Oligia Chitin*



She Sees Flowers In These Weeds *Daniel Lunde*

How Could It Be?

Doug Townshend

How could it be? We were free, finally. After being in bondage for so long, one would think that we would rejoice and celebrate the fact that the years of brutality and humiliation were behind us. The Oppressors were either scattered or on the plains, rotting in the sun. Their leader, Seren, was buried under the fallen ramparts of their fortress, both king and city destroyed by the One.

The One. The One who freed us, who brought retribution against the Oppressors, whose body is yet to be found and is probably lying beside the remains of Seren under the burning ruins of the fortress.

That fortress was a symbol of the power that the Oppressors had over the people. The unnatural architecture was symbolic of the origins of the Oppressors who came from another place entirely. This raises the question: Where did the One come from? He was comparable to the Oppressors, but it was as if they were merely attempts to mimic His own natural attributes.

The Oppressors' leader, Seren, shared many similarities with the One. It seemed as if they were cousins who grew up together, if either one actually grew up. No one seemed to know where either one came from or who they really were. All the Oppressors were a mystery to us, but the One worked in the camps with us, toiling beside us in the filth, sharing our humiliation, and then we lost our chance to ever find out His origins.

And Seren. I said that he shared many similarities with the One, and yet he also displayed the most blatant differences. Seren hated us with a passion, even though we didn't know why. Our guards told us that when one of the slaves was taken inside, it was Seren who performed the tortures and that he enjoyed them. Actually, the guards said that he reveled in them.

Now we had no idea what to do. We all thought the One would lead us, could lead us in a revolt against Seren and the Oppressors. But without His leadership, we had no vision for the future. Even His closest friends were distraught at the loss and sat by themselves, maybe deciding what to do next. Who is to be our next leader? Why didn't he tell his friends who was to succeed Him?

The One first appeared in the camp nearly ten years ago. At first we thought that he was simply one of us who had been hiding in the mountains for all those years. But it was soon apparent that he was by no means one of us. His knowledge far surpassed ours. Even the seers seemed to be laymen next to him.

It was not long until a sect formed, following him and wanting to make him our leader. It was almost a cult. He chose several of its members and they became his closest friends and lieutenants. The rest of the sect wanted to make the One our leader, replacing the seers.

He had no fear of the seers or of the Oppressors. He

challenged the authority of the seers and suffered for it. He never faltered in the presence of the Oppressors. Yet the seers and the Oppressors both hated him. The seers captured him and turned him over to the Oppressors, framing him with charges of inciting rebellion among the crowds. Much to their pleasure it was decided to take the One inside the fortress.

Those who entered the fortress never returned. We knew we had seen the last of him. But soon the sounds of torture became the sounds of a battle tearing apart the inside of the fortress. The guards outside rushed in, never to return. Then the fortress itself started imploding. Shouts of rage came from the interior, screams in the distinctive voice of the Oppressor chieftain. The One's lieutenants came to us and shared a final message with us from him, saying that he would return, no matter what. We were supposed to be ready to revolt against the Oppressors.

And then the fortress crumbled, the horrendous gates crashing to the ground. The walls collapsed, and the guard towers toppled on top of the growing ruins. All of us, even the lieutenants, became depressed, downcast, beaten. Where was our new leader, the One?

We did nothing for days. The Oppressors were gone, so we did no work. The lieutenants had no advice, no instructions. The seers were isolated and cut off from the rest of the camp.



Toaster Man *Huong Nyugen*

Then we heard the rumbling. The rubble of the fortress moved, pushed from below. The people scattered, certain that Seren was returning, bringing more Oppressors, returning to put us back in chains. Some, too shocked and scared to move, stayed. The ruins tumbled off one spot, to reveal, not Seren, but a man. But not a man, the One. He had returned, as he said, redeeming us from the slavery in which we had been ensnared. The lieutenants ran to wait upon their master, while others ran to gather our scattered people who were hiding.

Once we were together, he spoke, "The Oppressors are destroyed. You are now free, but we cannot remain here. I will return to my home, leading any who are brave enough to follow. Some of you will wish to remain here where you have been. You are brave enough to follow. Some of you will wish to remain here where you have been. You will not suffer the hardships of the journey, but eventually, the Oppressors will return, and I will as well. But in those days, I will not give you another chance to follow me away. I will utterly annihilate the Oppressors in a way that they will return nevermore. Those who stay here will suffer the same fate. This valley will be filled with fire and agony. Those who wish to escape this fate must follow me. Any who attempt to come later will not make it. Only I know the way over the mountains. Those who attempt it on their own will suffer a worse fate than those who remain."

Not all of us accepted his offer, despite our redemption from the Oppressors. Many of the people wished to stay in the only place they knew, all they had ever known, despite the evil memories and worse warnings. Those who followed

the One, the all-too few of us, started out the next morning with him in the lead. We climbed steadily higher up the mountain, with him teaching us about his ruler who sent him to save us. He told us that once we had been citizens of his land. Because we had left the city, we became easy prey for the Oppressors. Then they captured and enslaved us, sacking our entire group. The ruler of the city we had left could not immediately send for our rescue but had to wait for the right timing.

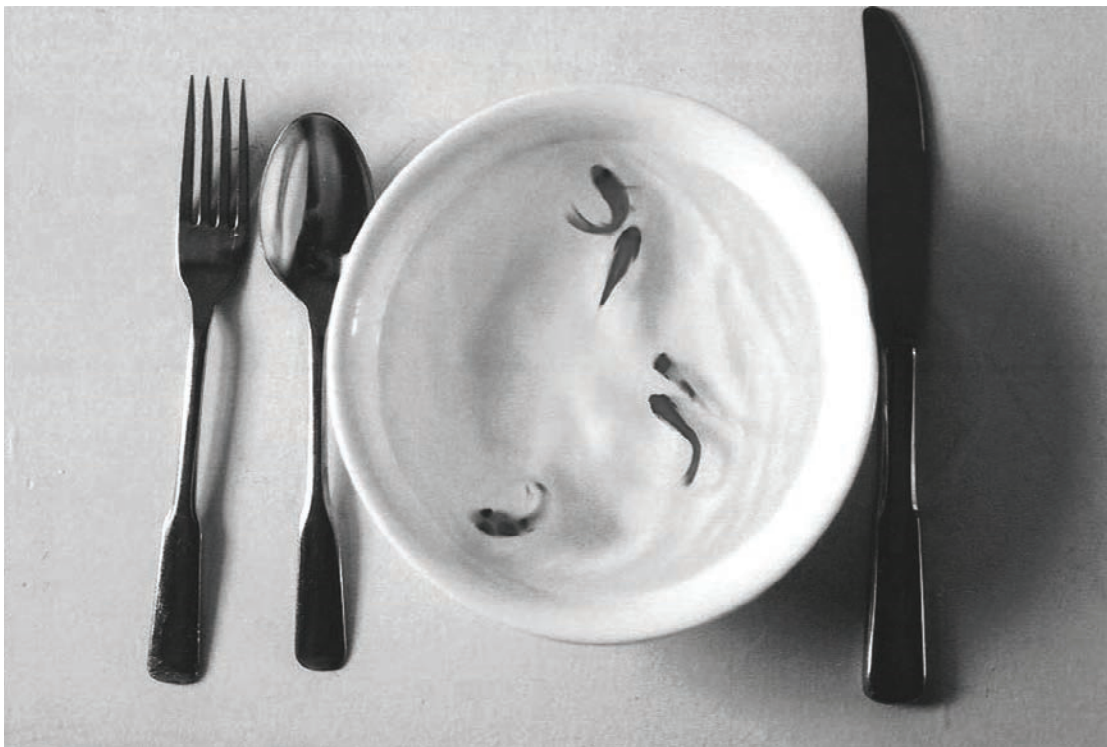
When we got to the top of the mountain, we found a watchtower manned by sentries from the city of the One. We stopped here for the night. Towers such as this one guarded

All the peaks surrounding the entire valley, overseeing the Oppressor camp. They had seen the One captured and taken into the fortress. The guards told us that there had been an entire army in the next valley, just waiting to storm the encampment, but they never did. The One had forbidden it.

The One gave us one final opportunity to return to the encampment, one last chance to decide for ourselves if we really wanted to brave the arduous journey over the mountain ranges. It would not be easy in our condition, he said, but he would help us. We were to camp there for the night, but the next morning a final decision would need to be made. If we returned, we would be spared the hard road but not the future judgments.

What am I to do? I have no proof of the city at the end of the road besides the One's word, but the desolate valley hardly provides any hope either.

What am I to do?



Fish in a Bowl *Huong Nyugen*

700 Acres

Heather Spear

Where was I? I don't remember.
Who told me? I don't remember.
Words. Words are what I remember.
To this day I still remember the words.
Moving. My grandparents were moving.

Moving.

It sounded so empty. Empty like their house would soon be.
All my memories—at least half my memories—had happened in that house.

One old white farmhouse with green shutters.

A cracked linoleum laundry-room floor.

A big off-white flowered couch—I can still feel the texture.

A big bay window where I had watched the deer with my grandpa.

A dark, dingy, musty, scary, cold basement where my grandma stored her canned fruits
and vegetables.

The country air, the smell of that lilac tree, the sound of my grandfather's tractor,
The sound of the pebble gravel crunching as someone drove up the mile-long,
windy, twisty dirt road driveway.

Infinite games of hide-and-go-seek had been played on that 700 acre plot of land.
Jumping on calf hutches to the tune of "The ants go marching."

Sliding down mounds of slippery, golden hay.

Walking to the milking parlor to get my grandfather and my uncles to come to dinner.

The big, brown oval dinner table where countless dinner blessings had been said,

Not to mention innumerable laughs.

Moving. My grandparents were moving,
leaving behind an old, white, empty farmhouse,
a lilac tree, a two-person swing set,
a kickball field, a playground, a stage—
700 acres of memories.



Barn *Greg Yates*