Salamander Staff 2006

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Acknowledgements...

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To all of the students who submitted their work – thank you! The literary magazine would be non-existent without you...

~ Salamander Staff 2006 ~
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Everything was the same, yet I recognized none of it – the closer I looked. I walked the cobblestone streets, passed the sad death sneers. The candy man with no face was spinning the sickly smells of sugary confections, to give to the children who were unwilling to accept. The neon butterfly fluttered onto my shoulder, as the policeman with the serpent nightstick shouted in tongues for everyone to leave. A candy cane strutted by, its sharp teeth clenched with peppermint, pasty red stripes dripping blood onto the pavement, blending with the crimson tears of crying children. The emerald green jay – that didn’t know it was supposed to be blue – was oblivious to it all. Echoes spun around the air, reverberating in my head, as interjections were offered to the people for the small sum of five dollars. The clock tower struck twelve, and a melancholy voice – high in the tower – announced that everyone should stop crying, it would all be over soon. Everything Downtown will be like it was before.

- Ryan Arsenault
Wishing Winter Away

when
the snow
hits
flake
by
flake,
you smile,
and casually
flick
a cigarette
aside,
also throwing
a twig –
in the hot stove –
of twigs –
that burns
in the cold
stony earth
of harvard.
i still wonder
what’s in the back
of your mind,
as you flash
a mouth full
of brightly lit
teeth –
again.

when
the snow
hits
flake
by
flake,
you smile,
and casually
flick
a cigarette
aside,
also throwing
a twig –
in the hot stove –
of twigs –
that burns
in the cold
stony earth
of harvard.
i still wonder
what’s in the back
of your mind,
as you flash
a mouth full
of brightly lit
teeth –
again.

a deer ambles
past,
head hung low,
and he trots along,
the crunch of
powder under his
hoofs.
you are
relaxed –
while overhead,
like a giant interstellar open book across the sky
the moon is
sprawling
on a blanket
I imagine you
up there
adjusting
your bikini top –
you smile
at Mark,
who is standing,
on the moon’s shores,
maniacally laughing
at a fat kid
who just got stuck
in an inner-tube.
a fiery streak of red across the sky, the sun is
rising.

- Ryan Arsenault
Lost in a Dream

Lost and alone
I am running
Clock hands spinning,
a violent chase.

Mother reads softly
it fades.
Bonjour, the City of Lights
moves from my reach.

I am picking up
my petticoat,
a man tips his hat
to the clicking of a carriage.

My pen falls
nothing comes
not today
not tomorrow
the ink runs dry.

Confusion
and
disorder,
bound
forever
a sea of
red.

I fall back
eyes open
to a
nightmare
and a
dream.

– Tisha Dunstan

Snow Globe

Looking glass, I’m spinning
swirls of white –
nothing can touch me,
here.

Snow melts and drops like rain
tiny specks of sand,
Earth cleansed with white,
mouth open wide, a child –
singing,
innocent and reborn.

Like eyeglasses magnifying
I see a world that’s free.
Night falls and I am safe in
a blanket of snow.

Let go, it’s a bubble –
It’s safe to see what’s real.
A glass dome turned upside down
while the Heavens shake and watch
Fate play out.

– Tisha Dunstan
The Playground

“Light as a feather, thick as a board.”
The air held a crisp cold,
our jackets, small and outdated now;
rustled along with the vividly colored
trees as we moved along with them.

“Light as a feather, thick as a board.”
The gazebo was wooden – it was before
the PTA worried about splinters,
before plastic colored framework
painted over our existence.

“Light as a feather, thick as a board.”
Twenty kids to a class,
my classmates, my friends,
I knew their last names, birthdays,
parents’ occupation.

“Light as a feather, thick as a board.”
This was the new game –
Hide and Go Seek, Truth or Dare and Skip It
had exhausted themselves.
The Craft had made its impression,
dangerous and exciting, we were,
only in the fifth grade.

“Light as a feather, thick as a board.”
Jessika, I think her name was –
memories have begun to fade,
as someone else’s laughter now
echoes in the wind.

“Light as a feather, thick as a board.”
We believed the unexplained,
we believed in ourselves,
we believed like I have never believed since.

– Tisha Dunstan
Mirrors

She was on a train from nowhere, to nowhere. Her head gently propped itself against the window, the rhythmic motion of the train car felt like, she supposed, being soothingly rocked to sleep by a parent. Daringly with her glistened eyes, she saw, reflected off the darken night, a young girl, no older then herself, laying her head on the shoulder of a young man. Meanwhile, two children, one boy and one girl, ran up the aisle smiling, their mother barely able to keep up. The observer looked closer in to the glass, two brilliant blue eyes, as brilliant as the river that flowed smoothly by, stared back at her. There was something unsettling about that face, about those eyes—they were absent, barely it seemed, in this world. It took just a moment to realize whose eyes they were – and it scared her.

- Tisha Dunstan
For the grieving...

“To all of us who have lost someone”

Another life is lost
But at what cost
More heartbreak is born
And more spirits torn.

Unbearable grief
Or so now it seems
Where go we from here
After shedding of tears.

Once again now the torch
Of another has passed
To those left behind
To fulfill the task,

Of furthering life
As each morning breaks
To press beyond sorrow
And breathe a new day.

To go ‘bout the business
Of bettering lives
Not those of our own
But those by our side.

To be counted among
All the brave and ambitious
And touch yet another
Precious life that’s still with us.

In loving memory of my cousin and childhood friend,
John Donaghey

- Karen J. Durfee

Love...

The staying power
When trials dare
To crush the hour
And strip you bare
Of all you’ve held
So dearly there.

The solid ground
When flooding waves
Threaten to drown
What’s built to stay.
Strength undeterred
Refusing decay.

The driving force
Behind the wheel
Of so much more
Than surface appeal.

Intangible pull
No moment can steal.

The compelling motion
Of forward progression.
Relentless devotion
Not bitter recession.
Friend of the heart
No foe dare to question.

- Karen J. Durfee
Mom's Sauce

She hovers over the large cooking pot
One steam-pressed strand of russet hair rebelling
Across her dewy forehead
She dashes it away

Dashes the pot
Oregano, a sprig of rosemary
Some thyme
The savory aromas instilled by summer days
In the sprinkler-fed herb garden
Baking there near the red-clay markers
Then plucked, dried, and hung away on the cellar door
Now crushed over the cooking pot
Their scents released
One final stand against the encroaching cool of autumn

She churns the weathered wooden spoon
Drawing deep and strong against the thick red current
Sees her own mother's sinewy arms
Burnished olive like hers
Pull and churn, pull and churn

Somewhere the kids are on their way from school
Trudging beneath book-laden backpacks
She lifts the spoon, samples one pleasantly searing drop
At the window a saffron leaf crunches
Caught briefly
Between the pliant screen and the white, hardwood pane.

- Nina Fedrizzi

Eyelashes

I leave eyelashes everywhere:
Stuck to shower walls,
Strewn
On movie theatre floors,
And once, quietly, in a boy's hair
While he slept.

I've found them
Pressed neatly
Between tissue folds in a wallet,
Stuck in wine rings
On the counter,
Scattered among bills
On the big oak desk.

And on rare occasions,
When providence fails,
I've been known to pluck a few
In secret
To rob them of their tender bushels,
Send them off from finger tip,
Into the gusty unknown.

- Nina Fedrizzi
What Would William Wallace Say?

William Wallace (1270-1305) is a Scottish national hero who fought and died to liberate Scotland from English rule at the end of the thirteenth century. In 1995 he was the inspiration for "Braveheart," a major motion picture based on his life in which Wallace was played by Mel Gibson. In 1869 the Wallace Monument was built in Stirling, Scotland to commemorate the hero, and in more recent years, a small pine statue of "Wallace" was erected at the foot of the monument to attract tourists. Unfortunately, the statue bore a resemblance far closer to Mel Gibson than reported descriptions of Wallace himself, and for this reason, Stirling locals vandalized the statue with spray paint.

What would William Wallace say
When they donned his tartan
Making he and Gibson heroes on five continents;
Australia, a long and undiscovered way
From the spiny nest of Ayrshire nettles
From which he sprung.

The silver screen glinted, meticulously,
At the premiere; light years away from the man
Who killed his wife;
Whom Wallace tortured
And salted
Then hilted his broad sword
With strips of flesh
(The lights still catch on it at Stirling).

What W ould William Wallace Say?

Would he scoff, I wonder, to see
His piney image
At the foot of his own monument
Small and sinewy, like Gibson himself?
For a while
It impressed the tourists,
Till exuberant Scottish rabble
Painted it with their own pallets,
Misted it red, blue, and gold.

They've got it cleaned now, and caged,
Like the man, himself, once was;
At the foot of the Wallace monument
In Stirling
Where the tourists poke camera lenses
Between the iron bars
And the rabble waits to free him,
Graffiti cans in hand.

-Nina Fedrizzi

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The Salamander
Driving the other day. I suddenly found myself wondering, when exactly did the signal go out of style? These days, it seems, signal-use has become optional, a fly-by-night pastime as likely to be neglected as it is utilized. There is no clear pattern among offenders: men, women, old and young; signal neglect is the newest trend in the catwalk of modern life, and there’s no identifying who will be the next perpetrator. In an automated world where we are all an email, text message, or a blinker away, why is person-to-person communication so impossible?

You know the feeling. You’re following that gold suburban down a quiet side street; it may be rush hour, but right now it’s just you and them on the road. There’s a couple of right hand turns up ahead that almost everyone driving on this road, at this time of day, intends on taking; the main route out of suburbia and to everywhere else. You both reach the first stop sign, you’re both going right. The odds of either one of you going left, or straight, or backwards, is almost impossible, and yet, this is where the break down occurs. Is it so hard, just to err on the side of caution—or maybe just that nice gold paint job—to make sure that everyone is on the same page?

Yet perhaps I over dramatize. Perhaps, instead, it’s a Sunday, and you’re returning from church, and the gold suburban is now a light blue Buick. Peering through the windshield you face the realization (accompanied by a rather acute bout of concern) that you don’t see a head over the steering column, just a brown tweed cap, and right then you realize that that car’s projected course, rate of speed, or likeliness of imminent collision is really anybody’s best guess. In these cases, signal usage of any sort, be they correct, unintentional, or simply left on for seven consecutive blocks, should be thoroughly appreciated.

Senior discounts aside, though, I think society’s breakdown in signal awareness is an important issue, and worthy of some further analysis. It is my belief that this breakdown has several distinct origins. I would not even exclude the possibility of greater good in the scenario; it is possible that there is a subtle social agenda being pushed that I’m just not aware of. The feminists will burn their bras and PETA has yet to find a fur coat they couldn’t douse with paint: perhaps the lack-of-signal is the newest trend on the catwalk of modern life, and there’s no identifying who will be the next perpetrator. In an automated world where we are all an email, text message, or a blinker away, why is person-to-person communication so impossible?

What Ever Happened to the Signal?

Now throw in the added burden of having to actually indicate the direction you plan on turning at any one of these signs when, clearly, you’re already irritated with having to stop five times just to get a few blocks from home, and it’s quite possible your day is well on its way to being ruined. The baseball game you’ve been so excited for is now just a hassle, the take-out you’re about to pick up seems a little less appealing; hell, does the kid really need to be picked up from practice now? I’m not advocating that signal boycotting is the way to go, but I can see how with all that stopping and starting and signaling, somebody needs to draw the line.

There are, of course, less honorable reasons for signal withholding. I believe these behaviors are most commonly exhibited on the highway, at fast speeds, and by young people. In these cases, it is not just the shame of being passed as if you’re standing still (you were already pushing the limits at 70), nor the considerable offence at being blatantly cut off as the offender careens into the passing lane. Oh no. In these cases, it’s the lack of signal that really gets under the skin. At what point did living dangerously and common courtesy become mutually exclusive? It might be true that lack of signaling tweaks the danger factor just a little bit more, increases the odds of imminent collision, extends the adrenaline rush, etc. Yet it is entirely possible that with some minor changes, hot-dogging can co-exist peacefully with basic civility. If you want to hit the guard rail at +85 mph, for instance, that’s your prerogative, and who am I to disagree? Yet I would appreciate the briefest indication, by way of a blinking signal, to let me know in advance which particular guardrail you plan on colliding with. Never underestimate the value of forewarning. Things will run smoother, accidents will be avoided, and feelings will be spared. After all, road rage doesn’t happen because a guy got cut off, it happens because he feels unappreciated, devalued, and dehumanized; and he hasn’t even gotten to work yet.

People with have their excuses, of course. I have not neglected the possibility that perhaps people have become too lazy, or perhaps they have merely forgotten. Forgetting is fine; forget you left the meatloaf in the oven, forget your anniversary, forget it’s Secretary Appreciation day. Don’t forget to signal. Social reform aside, the signal is more than just a mere ornament, a burdensome device, or worse, irrelevant. Signals are the way that we, as drivers, show we care; because, lets face it, we’re not all alone out there on the dusty road.

- Nina Fedrizzi
The Armoire

Modeled after Daniel Tobin’s poem, “Hope Chest”

Hard to know how I could belittle this so, day after day the smooth cedar chipped away where I’d throw all the garments to rest their piece of space and dishonest hopefulness. Difficult to understand, though I had created the hardship, what has been done would remain living in there – ancient sweaters, love notes, pictures piled high like a pyramid, concisely stacked shelves that overflow with belts at the touch of an unsteady hand. I look at the mess sprawled over my youthfulness the innocent version of me, wrapped with my sibling in a quilt’s fringe or at the microphone pretending to sing. In several, I am in my clover colored 4-H ensemble, prideful with a smile, my hand over my heart; pledging at the nursing home of River Drive, permed hair, overflowing with egotism. The waves of cynicism rush in, day by day, a life is formed.

What did my grandmother feel the morning she signed the document to release her daughter deny her guardianship? And what did her mother feel tearing open the official sealed envelope that kept the secret hidden? Faded Polaroids of an unknown home, a binder that weeps from every page – could be symbolic of a split second. And so the man and woman cheek to cheek smiling, thirty years less than I am today, are unrecognizable, lacking the features of mommy and daddy who go though life bleakly. Like a volcano exploding, her once white dress grasping for air in this wooden hole, the silk a blithering mess with strange togetherness, the hair piece lingers like the odor of a musty cellar, or a day ago that flies out of my sight. I wrap myself in its infinity, and allow my lungs to pull in air.

- Nathalie Fonda
I believe a fire creates
More than it destroys
Even when what’s destroyed
Is a family farm
Twenty-two cows
Four cats
Fourteen heifers
Twelve calves,
Including one named Delilah.
The litter of kittens
Miraculously survived
As did the hope for the son on the farm
To keep the farm’s future alive.
I believe in the beauty of cow’s udder
And that when lightning strikes a cow
A dry cow’s maternal instinct is induced
So that it may care for this orphaned calf.
I believe that a newborn calf’s coat
Is a sign of hope,
And that the sound of a rooster crowing
At 5 am is a comfort.
I believe in singing alone,
Never intentionally creating rhyme,
Using metaphors,
And calling Mom every night.
I believe in laughing at jokes
That aren’t funny
And that dogs smile
And understand happiness.
I believe that the government’s response
To Katrina was lackadaisical
I believe a homeless man
Should be nominated for president
I believe that eating squid
And being fashionable
Aren’t necessary actions
For being cultured.
I believe in the word yay
And how some British people
Use it so freely.

- Natalie Fonda
…A Thousand Words

Perhaps even these things, one day, will be pleasing to remember... –Virgil

It was poetic really, us
standing side-by-side
cheek-to-cheek
you in the familiar cordial black and I
in blue garbs of celebration with our
pretentious facades and red hair glistening
in the summer sun as the camera tells us to step back,
hoping to catch a moment of the glimmering sunlight.

Now I find myself staring back into your aged eyes
the novels that remind me of your stories and the late nights
when I heard of a mother robin feeding her young
hiding quietly in your backyard while she
wrapped her children in her wing span with
a solemn promise of eternal protection –
you took that voluntary vow, yet somehow
while finding my own path among the Northern winds
I managed to clip the flight wings that always
brought me back
down
to temporary insanity.

---

Petas

The petals fall to the ground
This once beautiful rose is ruined
Its beauty taken from it
I slowly gather the petals
Looking at them as I do so
It’s sad
How easily its beauty was ruined
I try to save the petals
But they slowly wither away

- Sarah Heukrath
Late nights, 
raindrops pelting 
the soft crispness of familiarity among 
muted toned leaves of yesterday’s presence, 
They fall 
one gently, 
ever-so-gently, from the bough of my memory 
absorbing the harsh sensations of burnt firewood 
while the smell of mother’s perfume lingers - 

Scents of Breathe 
softly release fumes of amber and myrrh from my sweater 
a similar aroma but still unequivocal 
to Aliage 
her concoction of fermented fruit and Fall’s evening flowers 
clinging to the droplets 
enveloping my senses as I close my mind and remember 
earlier times when everything made scents…

remembering the butterfly angel from our lakeside excursion, us 
sitting on shore, together 
watching the sun echo 
the delicate balance of sun rays and water waves; 
smelling the simple cup of coffee, us 
wrapped in a blanket of fresh ground beans, together 
laughing at life’s absurdities in 
college roommates and early retirement; 
humming that single measure of stress relief, us 
singing along, together 
two-part harmonies and percussion beats 
later resurrected in conga lines and nostalgic conversations…

Now I find myself staring deeper past the refined tendencies 
the concealed pretense that remind me of the conversations 
your voice diluted by the intoxicating solace of Chardonnay 
when I heard your mixed signals of distance and embrace 
instability and constancy 
as we recollected fragmented memories of our history, yet somehow 
while finding my own diversions I remember 
the apple doesn’t ever fall far from the tree 
even if it is grown from separate seeds 
and I managed to abandon my sobering ambitions realizing 
reality tastes so much better on the rocks.

It was poetic really, us 
standing side-by-side 
cheek-to-cheek 
as the camera tells us to step back, 
hoping to catch a moment of the glimmering sunlight; 
you stop at just the right angle but I 
I move back further and further and further 
wanting only the shadows of our past yet 
for a second 
a single click of the shutter 
we are captured together in the lens of time – 
together again but dehydrated.

- Olivia Martin
The Sky is Falling

I saw it with my eyes, I heard it with my ears...

I hear characterized woes of
broken hearts and long lost lovers;
the be-all-end-all suicide attempts over
too much traffic and hitting red lights
all the way down
to the morning coffee house where
you bitch because they gave you a latte
instead of your usual espresso.

Whatever happened to demonstrating for human rights
voices and bright signs blaring of inhumane treatment
rallying to protest for the anti-war cause
always seen as anarchist but yet the fight continued as the news
poured in from around the world that bombs were dropping
and thousands upon thousands
were killed because of the possibility we might find
weapons of mass destruction while targeting a dictator
who had nothing to do with our buildings of disintegrated democracy.

I watch as children slip through the cracks of television screens, the new black holes
captivated by idols with bodies spewing of overindulgence
pop stars
porn stars
rock stars
starving for individuality and importance while the Communal Hand
feeds them nothing but eye candy saturated
with nothing but a noxious scent of reality too strong to refuse.

- Olivia Martin
Whatever happened to the small protected microcosms where character was created with a strong sense of purpose and inspiration was modeled through teachers, lawyers, doctors devoted to preparing tomorrow's leaders while youthful entertainment was defined by the stories of Lamb Chop and New Kids on The Block – our versions of innocence with innovation.

I listen to the nightly news and breaking headlines where another victim speaks out against spiritual exploitation, our Leaders sacrificing little boys offering innocent boys forcing alter boys to submit to sexual manipulation as a penance for deadly sins making sacraments of redemption while destroying a purity unable to be salvaged by the saving graces of God.

Whatever happened to the days when piety was paid with prayer Papal indulgence was merely a tithing or two obtained from the poor man's pocket when the church was a golden emblem embossed with morality, dignity, spirituality and salvation was paving the path to eternal paradise.

but now We're too late... No sense in telling the King... Nothing to do now but go Home.

- Olivia Martin

---

Orange, red, and vermillion

Foot strike after foot strike soles pound pavement.

Deep breaths

in

out.

Don't look back, every time a tick tock – there goes a tenth. Is that a sunset? No, those are fireballs falling from the sky: orange, red, and vermillion.

- Shaun O'Donnell
A Real Boy

Sitting in the defendant’s chair, hands clinched, sweat glistening from his forehead, dripping from puffed mustache, Geppetto no longer pulls the strings.

Pinocchio’s rolled shirt-sleeves show blue-gray limbs, warped and split, to testament to poorly ventilated quarters, water torture, rapid drying.

The judge’s sentence, echoes throughout the courtroom, Geppetto moves into his new cell and Pinocchio returns home.

- Shaun O’Donnell

Smoke

Caffeine deprived coffee drinkers stare: their Starbucks replaced by salty tears, smoke and ash.

- Shaun O’Donnell
Diagnosing James

Clear incubator walls expose

stubby pink fingers
curled 'round intravenous tubing, and an
egg-shaped head,
blanketed by
black hair.

James' parents pace,
as Chicago pediatricians
pierce and prick his skin.
New blood flows through
his veins.
hematology
specialists continue to
test bilirubin levels.

Eyes shut, he
sleeps, his
developing feet
dance
reflexively.

- Shaun O’Donnell

Scom

Past the snail shell folds
and the palid green
petals they lie
unnoticed,
ready to pierce and prick.

Short, sharp,
seeking solace from wind,
burrowing into skin.

We notice them now,
light and dark shades of
green and brown,entrenched in our
fingertips.

Do
we applaud
their protectiveness?
No, we bleed; scorn
the thorn's
abrasiveness.

- Shaun O’Donnell
Dearest world,

I'm sick of this everyday second guessing,
where I can't understand you and you don't get me.
I want a fucking plain salad with Italian dressing,
you want crumbly cheese and another topping that I can't comprehend let alone see.

Nevertheless were living in the same transparent salad bowl,
while fate holds the tongs tossing us all around.

I find myself digging the same ole' hole,
while time keeps ticking away until I'm eight feet underground.

Nero's lyre strikes up and we all dig in,
but I'm a carnivore in quest of that symbolic meat.

Hey, but forget about it let's just lie to one another and sin,
while swinging to that construed drum beat.

I see your faces with closed eyes,
and supposedly you all say you understand mine.
I just want an understanding prize,
Where everyone else needs a nickel or a dime.

The money will bring you happiness and glee,
so sell your soul to the capitalistic game.
Meanwhile, I'll sit in a simplistic world created solely by me,
pulling petals waiting to see you go insane.

I'm done with my bitching and I'm taking the open road,
in quest of a future paved in creation.
I'll pack my plain ice cream while you order a la mode,
and bask in what you believe to be that financial salvation…

Sincerely,

Jeremy Perrone

Climbing the Stereotype Stairs

Pretty Women,
Easy Living,
Lackluster blues.

Stole my heart
She tore me apart
It is her I choose.

Sharpen the knife,
Call her my wife,
I'm living the American Dream.

Life is Intriguing,
My eyes are deceiving,
Can you dig this scene?

Sex was great,
Her personality I hate,
I can tell she is the one.

We've parted ways,
And so are the days,
Life is a loaded gun

.......... Bang!

- Jeremy Perrone

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where I can't understand you and you don't get me.
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you want crumbly cheese and another topping that I can't comprehend let alone see.

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I'm done with my bitching and I'm taking the open road,
in quest of a future paved in creation.
I'll pack my plain ice cream while you order a la mode,
and bask in what you believe to be that financial salvation…

Sincerely,

Jeremy Perrone

Dearest world,

I'm sick of this everyday second guessing,
where I can't understand you and you don't get me.
I want a fucking plain salad with Italian dressing,
you want crumbly cheese and another topping that I can't comprehend let alone see.

Nevertheless were living in the same transparent salad bowl,
while fate holds the tongs tossing us all around.
I find myself digging the same ole' hole,
while time keeps ticking away until I'm eight feet underground.

Nero's lyre strikes up and we all dig in,
but I'm a carnivore in quest of that symbolic meat.
Hey, but forget about it let's just lie to one another and sin,
while swinging to that construed drum beat.

I see your faces with closed eyes,
and supposedly you all say you understand mine.
I just want an understanding prize,
Where everyone else needs a nickel or a dime.

The money will bring you happiness and glee,
so sell your soul to the capitalistic game.
Meanwhile, I'll sit in a simplistic world created solely by me,
pulling petals waiting to see you go insane.

I'm done with my bitching and I'm taking the open road,
in quest of a future paved in creation.
I'll pack my plain ice cream while you order a la mode,
and bask in what you believe to be that financial salvation…

Sincerely,

Jeremy Perrone
It's the same old world but nothing looks the same

Red Chablis,
Midnight Tears,
Full moon out tonight.

Loss of faith,
Fear for hope,
Life's a shade too bright.

Broken black sunglasses,
Boiling sultry sand,
Pockets filled with sin.

Seared soul,
Trickled blood,
A game I cannot win.

Endless travel,
Broken paths,
Following a star for fate.

Trivial clock,
Shattered stop watch,
And so I'll sit and wait.

- Jeremy Perrone

The Streetlight is crying a story

Tear jerker,
Morning perker,
Daddies got the blues.

Less light,
Eliminate sight,
He can't handle this ruse.

Silver bullet,
He's "gonna" pull it,
Tommy cover your eyes!

Enfant screams,
Shattered dreams,
Severed family ties.

Food stamps,
Broken Lamps
Mommy likes the sauce.

Switch blade,
Lights fade,
Yet another loss.

Ten years old
Bitter cold,
There's no place like home.

Bone dry tears,
Internal fears,
Looks like I'm dying all alone....

- Jeremy Perrone
The Man from Maita

Just at the other end of the market a man strolls between the tables, casually eyeing artichokes, pemmican and cactus candies. He is dressed very nicely; shiny boots, pressed pants, and clean shirt.

I have tracked this man for three years and have been following him all day. I just came across him in this village. For three days now I have trailed him. Today, this man will die and I will be his executioner. For I have made a solemn oath before my mother and the people of my village that I would track this man and kill him for what he did.

The man lives out on the mesa in a whitewashed adobe. The house is large. Cedar logs from up north serve as joists and rafters. Log tips jutted out from the tops of the adobe walls on all sides. Some of the adobe is died bright orange and there are stucco soffits on the sides of the house, which have Hopi cross designs in relief.

He has a wife who lives there with him. She is heavy with child, but that does not matter to me. She is an innocent little flower, just as my sister, too, was innocent.

I thought of sneaking into their house at night and poisoning some food in the house with yucca root. But there were too many factors and I did not want to kill his wife nor did I want her to see me kill him. She looks too much like my sister.

I slept atop a plateau for the last two nights. I could watch the house from up there without being noticed. I have eaten only four prickly pears, a lizard and fire ants for the last three days. But I am used to hunger. It no longer bothers me.

I followed him in the morning back into the village. He has a light walk, completely carefree. It makes me smirk. He shows no signs of intuition. He does not know what's coming.
He fell to the ground with an empty thud. He was not dead yet. He moaned and writhed on the ground with dark, crimson blood leaking from the corners of his mouth.

"Everyone believes you killed her, amigo. I promised my dear mother that I would hunt you down and kill you. Marissa was my sister. Your name is cursed in Maita." I spit on the prostrate man for emphasis.

The man began to cry as he died in the dirt.

"I did not kill her," he moaned feebly.

"I have tracked you for a good three years, my friend. I have envisioned this day many a time. Always I dreamed of killing you at a fiesta. That's where I always imagined you dying. Sometimes I would strangle you from behind, like my sister died. Other times I would slit your throat or hack you up with my machete. Oh, a million ways you have died to me."

"I did not kill her," he moaned pathetically.

"Yes, my friend, this has been a long time coming. My mother will rejoice when I tell her of you whimpering death. She prays for your death every day, before the holy altar of the village church."

"The village itself donated many pesos for my traveling expenses. Even your own mother donated, herself eager for justice. I have envisioned this day many a time. Always I dreamed of killing you at a fiesta. That's where I always imagined you dying. Sometimes I would strangle you from behind, like my sister died. Other times I would slit your throat or hack you up with my machete. Oh, a million ways you have died to me."

"I did not kill her," he moaned pathetically.

"Yes, my friend, this has been a long time coming. My mother will rejoice when I tell her of you whimpering death. She prays for your death every day, before the holy altar of the village church."

"The village itself donated many pesos for my traveling expenses. Even your own mother donated, herself eager for justice. Yes, my friend, this has been a long time coming. I always knew it would end this way. I mean, I always knew that I would kill you."

"I did not kill Marissa," he said once again, this time with the sudden strength of conviction.

I shot him once more – in the center of his forehead and walked on, all the way back to Maita.

“Hey there, don’t I know you?”
He gazes back at me, unsure.
“Ahh, I swear I know you from somewhere?”
I had played this moment over in my head countless times; the hot, sultry day, the puzzled look on his face, the utter politeness.
“Do you not come from Maita. You lived there, didn’t you.”
The man replied, as I knew he would, in the affirmative.
“Ahh, I thought so. I lived there as well. Your name is Jerome, is it not?”
He fidgeted in his fancy clothes. His polite smile and handshake were underlain with a subtle grimace.

He looked at me with large eyes. He knew why I was here. His mouth opened slightly in stupor.

“You are her brother, no?” His soft voice quivered with a slight falsetto.
“You are here to kill me.” It was a certainty; there was no inquiry in his voice.
“Come, walk a little ways with me.” I extended my hand out towards the plateaus in the west and nodded my head with friendly intention. He followed as docile as a fatalist.

I lead him coyly to a secluded area behind a large plateau that I had found earlier. We walked in complete, abject silence. He followed, meek as a lamb.

When we arrived at my intended location we stared at each other for one eternal moment.

“I loved your Marissa very much. I did not kill her.”

I shot him right then, as soon as he mentioned my sister’s name – shot him in the gut as quick and easy as I would crack a knuckle.
Second Sight

The Orange couch,
Covered with quilted blankets
And cat hair,
Reminds me of tomorrow –
Of past days to come.

The Orange is vibrant
And leaves my ears smarting,
Screaming like heat itself.
It gives me no comfort
But chaffs like
A cow's tongue.

Wires around me entwined
A labyrinth of coated copper
A humming web
Of amps and ohms.

Pale blue light, intoned,
Informed,
Authorized by Habit's
Dull thud.

Like the Coyote's skin
Stretched upon my door
With empty eyes,
I am found, crushed
Lifeless, beside the road
A husk for casual Observation.
The daredevil's risk
Is identity corruption:
The desperate demands of entropy.
His gain is sight
Limitless, free of
The spectrum's barrios
And fractured spawn.

Sight becomes the all!
Sound and Touch are phantoms
Of the tangible and the transient.
Smell and taste are memories –
Luxuries of petty attachment.
Only sight lets you see.

- Jacob M. Pousson
Zeitgeist

Why this fascination with
Libertine domestics?
With incest and parricide?
The Romantics do not
Follow nature;
Theirs is narcissism
Disproportionate
With the scope of
Their ideals –
With the hopes of revolution.

Apollo is the American god!
The bacchai
Are all underground,
Drunk on fear,
Worn from dancing,
The frenzy perpetuated
By desperate exhaustion
Will possess them
Like finger puppets.

Where lies the heart
Of this movement/
The Zeitgeist crawls
Upon the southern winds,
Caressing the minds
Of the meek and forgotten.

- Jacob M. Pousson

Wordsworth’s Dilemma

I remember days of freedom –
Time stretched before me
Hungry – Insatiable.
I remember – the beat blood,
L.s.d. aftershock,
A newly hit dog whimpering for death,
Sunrise on the big-toy,
Sharp stones on the Pennsylvania Interstate,
Hacking black Pine smoke,
Callused hands from forced labor.

Damn be linear motion,
Damn be time’s demand for change,
For obedience and age,
For all loss and heartache,
For Nina’s somber beauty.

And in the end
Even your memory is denied
Rubbed out like a pencil sketch
And you’re left with nothing but
A strict diet
And medical prescriptions.

- Jacob M. Pousson
**Pina Coladas**

It was a dark night on Humbert Lane in Palatine Bridge.
John Leffert threw off
His faded green sweatshirt.
The well lit living room
Held
My father’s eyes as they stared at the *Courier Standard*.
It was Wednesday.
"Uptown Girl" played on our radio.
John said in a relaxed tone:
“Let me be your backstreet guy.”
I fell back –
On the wrinkled couch my tongue stuck.

He had never been in our house before,
But he knew exactly where
To find the blender.

- *Kristen Post*

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**breakfast**

at 5, toast, with cinnamon and sugar and chocolate milk, lukewarm.
I plead for her not to go to work.

at 8, oatmeal with a dab of brown sugar, chocolate milk, lukewarm.
I plead for the cereal with the toy in it

at 11, eggs and pancakes on Saturday and syrup sticking to the tips of my fingers.
I plead to go to Denny’s.

at 13, hard boiled egg, minute maid orange juice and a paper towel.
I plead for blueberry pancakes, like Uncle Bill made that one day.

at 15, fruit, nuts, a cheese stick.
I plead for her not to talk to me in the morning.

at 18, Slimfast.
I plead for it to work.

at 21, out to the Eggplant on Sunday mornings.
I plead for them to never end.

at 22, coffee, banana, toast.
I plead for her not to be lukewarm, to go to Denny’s
and remember how much we liked pancakes.

- *Liz Schylinski*
My choice.

I am supposed to be blessed
to be happy
And I, you say, will never think about how
I robbed the world,
Robbed everyone from something
But this something
This choice
Keeps me in faith
That in case I don’t say good bye to
Sam Adams when I should…
There is hope that I could still be me.

- Liz Schylinski
today i was sitting, drinking coffee, reading Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway.

an old man was sitting to the table to my right.

he was flipping through something. Fine Gardening maybe.
as he was bending over to retrieve the cardboard insert that had fallen from the mag,
his wife returned with a huge chocolate chip cookie.
as she left to get her coffee, presumably stopping to put a shot of cream and 1 sugar in it,
our eyes met.
silently we shrieked at the sight of the cookie,
and with a nod and giggle we united over the moment,
combining my 22 and his 67 for that minute
and i thought of you.

- Liz Schylinski
Frog Stomp

We are lying on the soft, blue blanket as we have done all summer. The clouds are whispering past us in a breath of fresh air; Guess what we are. Guess what we are. Gavin points and his eyes are dancing as he says, “That’s a monkey, daddy.”

I agreed and not just for my son’s affinity for monkeys, it truly did resemble something simian, something almost human maybe. He clutched his stuffed monkey close to him, his gaze focused on the monkeys flying overhead. I am not as intent on the sky as I am on my little boy. Today was a good day; he was calm and laughing, happy. His tiny hands fidgeted against the fluff of his stuffed companion, he was getting restless as little boys tend to do.

“Time for baseball,” He announced as he stood on mini tree trunk legs.

Baseball was another part of our summer ritual. Inevitably the sky could hold only so much amusement for a three year old and he turned to something more physical. He held the brown plastic bat close to his chest, left hand on top of right. I rearrange his hands, placing the right hand on top so he doesn’t cross himself up as he swings.

His legs are close together and slanted at a forty-five degree angle. I quickly shuffle his legs and feet, shoulder length apart and parallel to his body. My fatherly obligations are finished and he is ready to hit the ball. I flash the plastic white ball in front of him, letting him see the ball as it is released from my hand.

“Daddy?” He asks still in his batter’s stance. “When are you and Momma gonna be married again.”

I paused with the ball just about to be released into the air. “We aren’t baby.”

He drops the bat and walks, head down, towards the house. He isn’t crying yet. He turns and sits on the steps of the back porch, head in his hands. I wrap my arm around his shoulders and pull him close to me. His chest is heaving and the tears are coming, just past the horizon of his eyes. I kiss his hair, his cheeks and hold him still.

“It’s alright baby.” We are rocking and he seems to settle down a little bit. “I love you,” I tell him.

Two frogs jump past us, leaping in intervals, first one and then the other. I remember catching frogs when I was younger. Capturing them beneath a pail and leaving them there to fate. I would come back the next day and they would be gone; either tunneling out, dissolving into a cloud of magical smoke or set free by my mother after I turned in for the night. Tunneling out doesn’t seem so plausible anymore, there was never a whole or a little frog sized spoon to carve with left behind.

Gavin was watching them, stooped over and inching his face closer to the action.

One frog was clearly bigger than the other, this one fascinated Gavin the most. He followed them along until they reached the edge of the porch.

“Is it a daddy and a baby frog?” I asked.

“Yes, I think so,” He shouted back focused on the jumpers.

He stood over the daddy frog, watching him edge closer to the end of our porch, with curious eyes. The smaller, baby, frog was catching up but Gavin didn’t seem to notice. Gavin’s tiny hands were balled into fists as he raised one little boy foot and stomped death onto the daddy frog. There was a sound, like a mess of squishing and breaking bones, soft and barely audible.

I was frozen. Gavin was too. He slowly removed his foot from the victim. The frog was still there, twitching and dying. Baby frog had disappeared, seemingly into a cloud of magical smoke. Gavin looked at me, confused, I looked at him horrified. He had killed the daddy frog.

“Is he gonna be okay?” he whispered.

“Yes, I think so,” He shouted back focused on the jumpers.

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“Is he gonna be okay?” he whispered.

“Yes, I think so,” I shrieked.

“I… I don’t know… Is he gonna die?” The look on his face said he already knew the answer. A tear trickled down his cheek as he ran into the house.

Only the larger frog and I remained on the porch. He twitched and I shook with a fear and a sadness that I couldn’t reason with. I retrieved the forgotten plastic bat and walked over to the frog to end his suffering. As I slammed the barrel home, ending daddy frog’s life, I wondered if he too had walked out on baby frog’s momma and if frog stomping was the revenge of all little baby frogs.

- Mitchell Wilsey
Miscarriage

two years ago you lost
your mind,
swallowed
in cotton sheets, the
stains of embryo.
silent
screams ran rampant,
ripping
through the wool of your identity.
cold sweat fears gripped steering wheels and
futures
all the way to the hospital.
after a three hour wait in the E.R.
a nurse recited, "it was
unavoidable," and
"it happens more often than you think."
she offered a percent, way too muddled to
remember through two years of your
chemical
imbalance.
manipulating thoughts of your
could have beens and all the doctors'
explanations, prescriptions and
"everything will be okay" 's
I figured you a head case from
Kiss one.

- Mitchell Wilsey

I passed her in the hallway and this is what happened

Every time you exhale my name
I shudder in time with promised
lies.

That hint of whisper in your voice,
The swish-swish you wish sway of your hips.

An ever present follow me
If you dare
Hunger in your eyes.

that blank space in my mind
where passion used to reside.

A filler with all
thrills and a sense for truth.

A reason to push the pen across paper
like dancers along the night time sky.

I need a muse with no excuse to
pass lips like notes in biology class.

- Mitchell Wilsey

- Mitchell Wilsey
One breath

One breath comes like
whispered
wind in the ear
of a lover

heavy but soft and trickling down to the core;
the heart, the loins or
the brain, somewhere
south of
reason.

words in form of promise
gasping for
truth
echoes of a refusal.

one breath like the kiss of
the last lover

a memory
a moonlit
room, an open window,
the cool summer breeze
like those nights on Long Island
where we

fell
in and
out.

- Mitchell Wilsey