labyrinth
2009
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*denotes recipients of the Editors’ Choice Awards
A polite conversation

Steve Castro

I once saw a turtle stealing a car
Well, it really wasn’t a turtle and
He wasn’t committing grand theft auto but
If they awarded an O. Henry award
For being turtle-like then the short old man
With the bald head, the hump back,
The green checkered flannel and
The prescription glasses
That were so thick
They might just be bullet proof,
Would have gotten my vote.
He walked towards me and
After making his way to
The driver’s side door of my Volkswagen
He very politely tapped
On the window with his pistol and
Informed me that he would be taking my car.
I looked at his 357 magnum and
I got out and handed him the keys.
He then started to laugh—
It was a joke,
He was a retired police detective,
He showed me his badge.
He then very slowly but surely
Walked away from the vehicle and
I knew right then and there that he
Would definitely win the race.
The Line That Makes a Dichotomy
Justin Tyler Chandler

There is a point somewhere
between
blaming and absolving the victim
where
the rational being called
man
must pick himself up from where he
lies
to insure that no matter what his shortcomings
and
barriers he may push forward through
the
maze that is existence ever aware of the
truth
which screams that he alone
is
the maker of his
destiny

Wisconsin
Virginia Hosler

Wisconsin sits in clover grounds and tastes
of cantaloupe and circumstance except
the many birdbaths filled with tiny wastes,
but here our most defamed love can be kept.
Art
Justin Tyler Chandler

I think I don’t think enough
about what I want to say
rather than devote the time and energy (read: space)
that true, honest, sincere art deserves I just
wing it
and I am becoming increasingly aware that
this is my greatest weakness.
Perhaps my second would be my desire
to say SOMETHING
rather than say what I mean. I
hope you understand me

post script: I hope it’s not who I know and what I don’t

Rabbit
Virginia Hosler

When I was twelve, she told me the world was going to hell.
She held her head up in those days;
she laughed and cooked and wasn’t dying.
Her hands did what she told them.

She held her head up in those days,
and her eyes were bright with teaching.
Her hands did what she told them
and she told them to hold me tightly.

Her eyes were bright with teaching
me how to cook the dead rabbit we found in the yard.
She told me to hold it tightly
away from me so the blood would not stain.

We ate the dead rabbit we found in the yard.
She laughed and cooked and wasn’t dying-
there wasn’t any blood to stain.
When I was twelve, she told me the world was going to hell.
Laundry
Taylor Rickett

Brown and flowered wallpaper flashes white as her sharp, paper doll frame pushes past my doorway with an armful of ancient plaids. She hums a tune; a warm, soft buzz that I can’t find it in me to tune out of my head. I want badly to lean out and help her fold our morning costumes, but I fear that doorway.

A quick step past my old, rotten, splintered doorway revives her hushed mumbles. The taste of a fresh tune slowly fades with the steady patter of her feet. Outside the doorway her tune goes silent, dead like brown flowers.

i dream you
Jessalyn Trimble

woke up stuck in the crack between my bed and wall
the leftovers of last night’s dream bubbling around
cherry pie filling from a can squeezing out between the crusty creases of my eyelids, drool puddle up against cheek and white scratchy brick hang on hang on coax that sun back below the horizon piggy bank coin slot and lunch money quarters down down into that crack in the ground if I could just keep you tucked there so when I’m old I can pull you out from behind my wrinkles
Eventually Bubbles Break
Chelsea Dynes

Knuckles white and trembling she holds it all in. That seems to be the only way these days. Weighing her down and pulling her under; A torrential storm of hate and anguish Pushes and tugs until there is no Longer up or down nor right and left. Cold darkness compresses her tightly Into the fetal position, a last Glimpse of innocence.

Slowly, her precious façade and Sculptured world deflate, giving way To a dangerous reality. And everything she once knew Now trickles out; Unceremoniously dirtying the floor.
The way she asks it, not looking at me, as if she doesn’t care what I choose, it’s an act. Complete bullshit.

“Want to come in?” she asks me, looking down, but she’s shaking so much she drops her keys.

“Yeah,” I answer without thinking much. I always say “yeah” when she offers. It’s that knee-jerk result after striking the patellar tendon. She is just testing my reflexes. I’m thinking I’ll be able to pick up my stuff now, and how I should’ve thought to bring her stuff over here to drop off.

She finally gets the door open, walks into the dorm without looking at me. She doesn’t hold onto the handle and watch me enter. “I don’t care if you follow me in,” she is telling me. We must be real friends now.

I don’t need to look to know where she threw her jacket. She doesn’t need to look to know I sit down on the bed, on the edge, next to the top corner post. We don’t need to, and we don’t.

The cork board above her desk is blank now. Directly below it, a manila envelope and a pile of tacks lay on the desk. All the pictures. They are down, but they aren’t far away.

She sits at her desk, opens her laptop. She is looking to see if anyone uploaded pictures of the party tonight. That party was supposed to be my first night out, as single.

“Look at this,” she says, excited, sort of. I get up and look over her shoulder at the screen. It’s her and I, posed and smiling, like a couple. You can barely see the other people we were there with—our friends.

I did this to be free, but I go out and I’m still hers.

“Hm,” I say. “Hm,” and I make sure to smile. She starts to save the picture, but I feel her look at me in the corner of her peripheral. She cancels the picture and closes the window.

“You must have enjoyed being single tonight,” she says. I might have, I want to say. “There was a lot of cute girls there tonight. Did you talk to any?” I feel like I should claim to have.
“A little. A few.”
“Like who?” she wants to know. My mind races, settling on a girl I noticed on my way to refill my drink.
“That one thin one, she had dark hair, it was really long.”
She shrugs. “Well what did she look like?” I can’t make out her features in my memory. It was just a glance. “Or do you at least remember what she was wearing?” I don’t want to tell her that it was her shirt that I first noticed about her.
“A Sonic Youth tee, the Dirty album cover,” I tell her, and her small hands fall into her lap. She is remembering the same things I remembered when I saw the girl. The mushrooms, the candle, Theresa’s Sound World playing, making the flame dance.
“You mean that hipster chick?” she asks me. I look at the manila envelope. “When did you talk to her?” I want to pick it up and go through the pictures I know are inside. I shrug. “Well, what did you talk about?”
“I don’t know… Nothing really.”
“Jesus. Alright, well, what was her name?”
“I don’t know.” She cracks an evil grin, her body contracts with the laughter she is holding in.
“You’re serious? You didn’t get her name?” I’m not sure what to tell her. “You didn’t get her name?” she asks again. I don’t know what she wants. She nods her head, reveling in my inability to branch out, to leave her behind. “Well, if you want I could get her name. I see her around, I could talk to a friend of hers for you. I’d do that for you. Or I’ll just ask her. Yeah…” She is mocking me now. I don’t know what the fuck she wants.
“What about you?”
“What about me?”
“Did you talk to any guys?”
“No. I was around you the whole time.”
“Well why should I stop you?” Those small hands. She lays them back on the desk.
“I’m not the one who wanted… I don’t want to talk about those things…” she says slowly, and I’m very confused now. I don’t know what to ask about, though, so I remain still, looming over her shoulder, while her scent falls into my head.
I depended on her. Nothing was mine.

I can hear the tiny noises she can’t help but make when she is talking to herself. It sounds like someone little inside of her is saying something that her big mouth doesn’t want to repeat. The tiny voice stops abruptly when she picks up her laptop and goes and sits on the bed with it resting in her lap.

In a month I will be nineteen. I can’t stay eighteen with her.

“Watch some videos with me,” she says. I can’t do this. I walk over and sit down and I slide next to her to see the screen, the Brakhage videos she’s already shown me. I can’t do this.

I depend on her, nothing is mine.

Shapes and colors come at us, and they show me the lake I saw her by last fall. I could see her green bikini through her tank top. The campus looked gigantic, and I was reading *Nausea* alone. She introduced herself and her friends to me. I didn’t have friends here, yet.

Those are our friends, now.

The videos don’t last long and she takes a long time to pick new ones to watch and in a week I can leave for spring break. I can be alone again.

She hadn’t declared a major yet. She had a copy of *The Stranger* with her. We stayed at the beach until dark, and she forgot her book. This semester she decided to major in history.

She tilts the computer over slightly and I have to lean towards her to see the screen and I can’t do this and her thigh moves closer to mine and I put my hand on it and she’s striking that tendon again, testing my reflexes, and I can’t do this.

The audio silence and visual movement of Brakhage’s videos blur our own movements into each other while amplifying our breath and she says my name and it takes me a second to remember that it’s mine and our faces are close now and her face is burning hot.

Love stops being special when you don’t have a choice. Like a god who won’t die, because he can’t.
Moving Forward—leaving a trail of flames behind me:

Ross Stuckey

I’m an achiever, but more importantly, I’m a believer
over eager to bring into being the dreams I reach for...
and make believers out of those who say I’m make believing
How can this be when it’s as real as I am?
It’s the truth as recorded on a spy cam
I think, therefore I am, and I think “I Can”
My mentality’s instrument-al, I’m not a poet, I’m a live band
So hear me out, I’m just playing my hand
I’m the fish that adapted to dry land...
fins became legs, gills became a diaphragm
I can chart the evolution on a diagram
Just to make it clearer, hurry schedule an eye exam
My food for thought is not for those on a diet plan
Too saturated, no way they say they’re the greatest!
with cadence like a cicada, I place ‘em into hiatus
Surprise, I’ve arrived to hand them their demise
so they hide like animal skin to save their hide
Achieving high, believing I
am reaching skies, the reason why?
There’s no Indiana Colts or a Colt-45
but there’s a cult-like following when I perform live
Brook has ‘em hooked like his book’s a fishing line
that he casts in a brook everytime he spits a rhyme
Listen, my fork in the road’s a split decision
Still, I’m on a mission,
steered by ambition, driven like cars with internal combustion engines
built for the long haul, I’m ready to go the distance
And I measure my progress by four words...
Am I moving forward?
Seven Ways of Looking at Solitude
Caitlin Tess Zittkowski

I.
A button falling off her jacket, left to be buried in the snow until spring, when it will remain embedded in the fresh mud.

II.
A drag from a cigarette, smoke curling dulcetly around her face, a screen that smells sweet until it settles into her clothes and seeps into her skin.

III.
An acoustic guitar with the high string out of tune, as she plays the ballad she wrote Sunday afternoon.

IV.
The plummeting of her stomach as she slips on black ice, arms flailing in vain, legs crumpling in slow motion beneath the rest of her body.

V.
Sitting at a sidewalk café in France, she attempts to order lunch without knowing French.

VI.
The drip of the faucet in the bathroom down the hall, while she tosses and turns under the weight of the summer night.

VII.
Blue roses she plants in the shadows, roots crawling toward the sunlight so far from here.
Anavitrinella pampinaria
Jessica Glomb

“Common Gray Moth”—
Ha!
The name fits you like a sackcloth,
Miserably.
How did a human vanquish the authority
To impose language on lace and silver silk?
Now they rustle like old newspapers
Over a sheet of dust, where an arthritic
Nun now rummages about the space
On the floor where she kneels and
Stares with blind eyes toward a cob-webbed corner; and prays secretly
That some soul caught a glimpse
Of her quicksilver flicker in the
Middle of the night
As she ascended,
Drunk like Icarus,
To die for the light!

In a Time of Glass Canoes
Tessa Vierk

The car is fast.
My forearm is thrust out the window, stabbing the furiously cold air as we drive down the jaded road towards somewhere. I squint out the window casually scanning the darkness, but stuttering yellow lines are the only remarkable sight in the landscape of bleak, lumpy blackness. The bouncing robotic sounds of a pop song slide out the speakers, and I can’t help but wince. Leaning my head back, I wait for the car to become immersed in a fleeting blackness when we pass groves of trees or a telephone pole. Out here the nothing goes on forever with a natural apathy that could dampen anyone’s mood. I think about what the world would look like
without the shiny blue screens and blinking lights; if every television and lamp were to go to sleep. To think of the startled orbs of our faces: twitch, blink, frown. But what then? What new realization of light would we have when we looked up from the looming shadows of our machines and saw the moon? How beautiful it would seem.

You were talking to me.

I refold my skeleton and rewind my brain.

“But you know what I mean?”

“About what?”

“I’m just not happy you know? I feel like I don’t do anything. I fucking hate it here.”

“Yea.”

You seem satisfied with this answer, so I turn back to the window. That’s all you wanted anyways. An empty basin to pour your problems into. No need to consider the reflection of your face in them.

That’s okay.

You are driving fast because we are young, and we are bored, and that is what we do. The road is old, but it will go on far longer than we will. It is too cold to have the windows down, and you tell me so, but I brush off your complaints because I know that they have no force behind them.

I am relieved that you have abandoned your desire to talk as you stretch to adjust the volume. Another song pounds at the frame of the car, indistinguishable from the previous string of songs.

The sound of your scattered singing and the hissing wind grow distant in my ears. I close my eyes.

And it is then that I begin to feel the truth in the cold.

I open my eyes again and tell you to stop the car.

I lean down to close the door behind me and catch a glimpse of your puzzled face in the light of the back lit gauges. The sharp thud of the car door echoes across the field. Chilled remains of corn stalks and a few stubborn weeds are the only organisms besides me brave or stupid enough to be standing out here. I feel sorry for weeds. Who are we to categorize them as second-class plants?
A dandelion or a daisy; what’s the difference? Above me, there is more nothing. The moon and stars surely have more picturesque scenes to illuminate, and have no more desire than I do to be in this field. Wheezing, stunted clouds of a shade only slightly lighter than that of the bruised sky scuttle along as I childishly send out a mental message to any aliens who might happen to be in the astral vicinity, challenging them to abduct me now while I’m willing. It seems that they too are ignorant to this empty patch of soil.
I look around and try to imagine this skyline in a simpler time. What might these woods have looked like when Native Americans stalked through them? What trees kissed the sky before this network of asphalt asphyxiated this earth? As I watch my breath form clouds around my face, I revel in this complete emptiness. Here there is nobody. I do not matter. There is no “me” or “I”, but only a resounding silence and the overwhelming desire to run.
I can sense the car behind me. It is hot and thrumming, an animal of our time, it breathes and whines, reminding me why I’m here. Glancing in the window I can see that you are not even looking at me. The inhuman glow on your face tells me that your thoughts are occupied with those of others, being sent back and forth through the very air that swirls around my head.
I return my gaze to the landscape once more before picking my way back towards the car. The stupidity of the ugly field is almost laughable as I fight back a smirk. No. This is not my home. I return to the fabricated warmth of the car and smile my response to your inquiring eyes. My eyes are wide and young. My mind is ductile and boundless. My heart is empty, but hopeful. I am filled with a new energy that comes from the frozen core of the moon. It pulls me up and far away.
A Helping Hand
Andrea Rae Wolf

The buzzing of the bees,
the sweet talking trees,
all the world’s a please,
when you have eyes like me.

We break beneath
Taylor Rickett

Awake, we broken men beheld the bloom of moon along the tree’s unkempt elbows; an extra navel, ripe to pluck. Our room, disguised in shadow, watched from well-below the gleam of citrus trickles washed in light. He thumbed the skin and traced each ripple across the fruit, unscathed by any bites. My grandpop cut the peel from end’s nipple and whistled with an open eye to morn. I wonder how he might have cut this breeze tonight, if rhythm shook his hips in storms, if orange buds be just as prone to freeze as man, we brittle men. Fall disappears and we break beneath winter’s cold veneer.
Breakfast
Robyn Brush

The syrup I pour on my pancakes
does not try to hide
its ridiculous amount of calories.
The egg yolk doesn’t attempt
to conceal its grams of fat,

and although the coffee
tells a white lie
about how awake we are
at this early hour,
we do not deny,
as we sit in this diner booth downtown,
the fact that you are leaving again
and I will not see you for a month.

Breakfast is the meal for the stouthearted
who wake up in someone’s bed,
animal smelling, tossed hair,
from a night of
uncensored, anonymous sex
and are ready to face the truth
over strong black coffee:
So, you’re a car salesman, are you?

Breakfast is the meal for the honest man
before he goes to work
with his tie and his briefcase in hand
to the job he hates
but can’t afford to lose.

Because at eight a.m.
there isn’t much to lie about,
breakfast is our tradition.
It’s our last meal
before we go our separate ways.
We sit side by side,  
the bench opposite us unoccupied  
aside from our coats,  
accepting each other’s flaws,  
which are just as blunt  
and lovable  
as this dish of butter.

frequent flyer  
emily mcgowan

suitcase packed full of useless memories  
gloves for when there are no hands to hold  
and the lines of poetry that never found the paper;  
zipped up tight so airline attendants can’t read  
so nobody can read  
wrapped in polka dots I pass security  
my words are not weapons

I am tagged with a return address  
to which I may or may not return  
but these red eyes are worth it  
so long as there are no tears  
I will carry on

I’ll get lost in luggage claim or picked up by a stranger  
so I can see the world  
be there, do that, say that I did  
terminals with foreign faces, I sleep soundly  
anywhere my little wheels and zippered dreams will land
I want a blue bungalow in Irvington—on Audubon Road, down near the circle drive that goes around the Methodist church my great uncle sermonized in. I want a blue bungalow with a bonnet roof and shuttered windows and a small yard with a dogwood. The door would open to my living room and the crown molding would be lacquered and black to go against the ginger stained hardwood. But I’d lay a rug down for comfort. And I’d pepper the white washed walls with pictures, framed but not glassed. The kitchen would be in the very center and I would bake rum cake and press tamales there. And the warm breath of summer would come through the sheer kitchen curtains and carry the smells of spice and rum to every crook of the house, like blood carrying oxygen. And at 6 p.m. we would return home with our friends from our jobs at T.C. Howe and put Donny and Roberta on the stereo and invite the neighbors over too. And we would dance and sing along. Mothers would stand amalgamated with tittle-tattle under the bonnet roof and watch their children play outside. And I would long for a son of my own. And some men would crowd in the orange glow of the kitchen and smoke cigars under a Guernica print in the corner. The neighbor kids would collect posies of grass and dandelions and corn flowers and we’d water and sugar them in porcelain vases on the cracked and oaken table, of which a paper lantern hangs above. Then we’d sit, elbows on table, and eat and talk. And after the bowl of clementines was emptied I’d walk down over to Jockamos and bring back some garlic bread and hummus. And in the kitchen, through a cloud of smoke and filtered lighting, we’d sit playing euchre and drinking the chai and assam that Carina would always bring. Down through the frame door we could see Amanda teach some girls to sew buttons onto my dilapidated blue cardigan. And then she’d put her needle and thread back into the Cuban box she keeps them in. And at 9 p.m. when there’s no tea to drink or buttons to mend or songs to sing or cigars to smoke, we’d stand next to the mums under the bonnet roof and say goodbye, sending some of the neighbors
home with rum cake on paper plates. And when everyone was
gone and it was just the two of us, we’d walk down Audubon Road
in the summer firefly lighted twilight, stopping momentarily to
let some kids ride bikes on past, and stopping longer to look at a
jerkwater town so dyed in the wool that time doesn’t vary. And
I would look at him and he would look at me and we would walk
home.

I want a blue bungalow in Irvington with the bedroom in
the back, bordered by a gray tiled bathroom where two young
men could stand proudly together and laugh and hoax and tell
stories and brush their teeth. And then through a six panel door
they could enter their dark and humid bedroom.

Under the hot August breeze, four naked feet wrapped in
linen.
When I Could Not Have You

*Tyler Adelsperger*

Never have I loved myself
As when I could not have you
In those times alone
A little death
Poured fuel on the fire
This scrap I have
Lies wrinkled, ruined
Stained with my desires
Those desires
Purged in
Seconds
Only to
Come back
Nearly as
Fast

innocence

*Jessalyn Trimble*

the world outside
fills up with waves
drywall peeling yellow paint
drips of salt and mud and wet
stain the carpet
at wooden feet
and I wonder if I
should give up now
give my thirsty room relief
and use this chair
to break the glass
but I can’t swim
so I stay in my seat
and watch with desperate eyes
as my neighbors float by
She’d always hated math
_Isabelle Tharp-Taylor_

In the store, she stares at the shelf full of pre-packaged desserts. She picks one up, her favorite, and turns it over to see the label: Calories, carbs, sugar, fat. She thinks,
It’s just a number, right?

In the fitting room, she pulls out a dress, the perfect color. She tries one after another until she finds one that can zip all the way up. As she slips it off, she glances at the tag and sees the size. She thinks, It’s just a number, right?

In the doctor’s office, she stands patiently, waiting to be called back. The nurse with kind eyes has her step on the scale. The bar slides farther and farther to the right. She thinks, It’s just a number, right?

In the den, she opens the top drawer of her desk. She gets out a calendar, one her sister gave her, and finds today’s date. She counts the days it’s been since she last felt good about herself. She thinks, It’s just a number, right?

And in the bathroom, she takes a glass of water and places each pill on her tongue:
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. She closes her eyes and swallows, and she thinks, There’s no such thing as just a number.
“Let me introduce Erin Wilson performing Pendet, an Indonesian Dance.”

I
She steps
onto the stage,
light glinting off her skirt
which wraps yellow-straight
like wallpaper around her hips.
Purple squares encrust her top,
and a gold strap folds over her shoulder, wide
as the watchband of the boy sitting next to me.

Gold and purple balls wreath
the empty oval of her face,
her eyes moon craters
in the paleness.

II
As the applause
dims,
the bells begin.

ringing pinging drip
ping from the ceiling

stalactites form

slowly, too
quick, a clock before it
strikes

fingers

drumming on a t-table

in the middle

of a speech, like

Chinese water
torture or

the pulse of a nervous heart--

I brush my fingers
over my ear,

unable to crush my head in my hands

in public.
Her dance is a hieroglyphic come to life. Each foot elevated, then lowered, her head rotating, sliding on the ball bearing of her neck. Only her fingers twitch, touching and parting like a Vulcan clanging imaginary cymbals.

Watching her, I feel myself floating on top of an ocean. She is the moon.

I take a sip of my water glass, splashing, (better drowning than death in a vacuum) but I still see her distorted kaleidoscopically by the crystal.

Like the glass, I mirror her enthralled, expressionless face; our eyes widened by kohl and centuries of expansion. Time ticking away like bells, she waits for me. What could possibly keep me from this goddess, eater of souls?

My eyes skip wildly around the hall --curtained windows, electric chandeliers and diamond earrings shining like stars, the empty black of my boyfriend’s suit jacket-- Light and shadows echoing like purple and gold, purple and gold . . .

My program, pink with the words: ACC 10th Anniversary Banquet October 3, 2008 and empty space

Perhaps I can barter with her: My body for a portrait, immortal?

(cont.)
Don’t be offended at my inattention, Erin. Don’t be angry with the petite Asian women who rolled pens into the T-shirts they gave us at the door. I would have written this with salt and pepper on my plate and fought like an Indonesian warrior with anyone who tried to take it from me, even the gods.

Grandpa Went to Heaven on Saturday
Rachel Dobbs

I was nine.

He left the scooter—his robin-egg blue scooter. The one with the chrome rims and shiny handlebars.

The one he used to ride around on in the campgrounds of state parks, the one I rode on with him.

He used to tie me in front of him with a piece of yellow straw rope, just to make sure I wouldn’t fall off.

He’d kick the pedal, the engine would roar. We’d ride the roads, and my Grandpa’s t-shirt would flap behind him in the wind like a white sheet breaking free from a clothesline.
And it was no longer just his scooter—it was our scooter.

And now it’s just a scooter.

A robin-egg blue frame wrapped in plastic, is sitting on our patio, waiting for me to find the courage to ride it again.

I was nine.

I had heard about heaven, but I couldn’t grasp why heaven was better for Grandpa. I figured God must have been angry with us.

I remember staring at the stripes in the fabric. Reds and Blues and Greens All in straight rows. I remember tracing them with one finger while Mother cried softly above me.

The couch made sense to me.
Leader of Men
Benjamin St. John

I got a bit of sick
Lying in the pit
Of my stomach
And it’s fed by a slit
In the back of my head
Where the maggots breed
And spread like disease
Into worms that feed
Off stinking rotting flesh
Like wingless locusts.

From the mouths of those last sighed
And on the outside of unblinking eyes
Blood specks dried
And stacks and stacks of television screens
Broadcast live screams
From overseas
Muted by apathy.

You’re something special to me
The leader of men
You’ve got an army behind you
And nothing in your way.
Ramparts on your pedestal
A chest covered in medals
No blood

Spit
Piss
Shit

On your boots.
Shined black leather
Reflections of soldiers’ skulls popping out
Like a loose wet eye in the mud
You leader of men
Proprietor of sin

28
Second class
Georgia Auteri
Mosaic  
Rachel Dobbs

There was the time you fell  
Asleep next to me  
On the couch in my living room.  
That night,  
The room held your breaths.  
I tried to catch them in the pores  
Of my skin—wanting to absorb you  
One molecule at a time.  
The heat of you next to me  
Was almost unbearable.

And when your Grandpa died  
I held you—  
I watched you shatter.  
The sharpest traces of you pierced my skin,  
You ricocheted off the couch,  
You scattered across the cream-colored carpet,  
And I understood that my dustpan would never  
Be able to pick up all your pieces.

The vacuum cleaner  
Would have done a better job,  
But your memory would have been lost  
Among the loose threads and  
Odds and ends—  
Sucked up into its harsh bristles  
To mingle with the dust bunnies  
And spider webs  
Before mating with  
The main chamber.

So instead I swept you up,  
Piece by piece  
Into my dustpan.

30
I grabbed the Gorilla glue
Out of the back hall closet,
And tried to put you back together again.

For hours I labored to reconstruct your face,
But in my frustration,
Only succeeded in discovering
That my memory of you was not as good
As it used to be.

I could have sworn
The curve of your mouth
Was once as smooth as
The swirly tip on an ice cream cone,
But it’s just a series
Of jagged lines.

And your eyes,
Once soft as melted chocolate,
Glare accusingly out of fractured glass.

When I added your body,
The pieces of the puzzle just didn’t quite fit.
In the center of your mosaic frame,
was a hole instead of a heart.

So I did the only thing I could—
I gave you mine.
A Logical Paradox

Nina Kovalenko

I stuffed my face with hunger
dried my eyes with tears
quenched my thirst with sand
achieved bravery by hiding from my fears

I ignored your call because I wanted to talk
confused myself with lucid answers
loved you with my spitefulness
rid myself of excesses by searching for cancers

I ran away to stay still
received messages no one sends
warmed myself with ice cubes
finished something that never ends

I asserted myself with passivity
saw truth where truth was hazy
killed myself with life
stayed sane by going crazy

I’m stupid but I think I’m smart
I’m naive but I think I’m wise
I’m insecure but I’m arrogant
I wake up too early to watch the sunrise

I always succeed but I also fail miserably
I never lose but I always miss
Have I lost you yet with my nonsense?
Anguish is the road to bliss.
Contributors’ Notes

Tyler Adelsperger
I am an Indiana native and a freshman English major who owes much to many people. I would like to thank everyone for everything (you know who you are). This poem is about frustration on multiple levels and hopes to support that in word and form.

Georgia Auteri
This sketch is of an “untouchable” in the Indian caste system. The red dot was actually an accident—I was painting something else and the brush dripped—but it was a perfect finishing touch.

Robyn Brush
Robyn Brush is a freshman majoring in psychology who does not think that a person can be properly described in three sentences. However, she enjoys knitting, sleeping, eating tomato soup, and searching for metaphors in life. She would like to dedicate her poem “Breakfast” to her boyfriend Alex, who will be going to school in Boston next year.

Steve Castro
Keen on exploratory research, the poet has walked on 4 continents: Africa, Asia, Europe & the Americas. The former Los Angeles Dodgers Youth Marketing intern is an avid sports fan & an undergraduate student in The College of Arts and Sciences.

Justin Tyler Chandler
Justin Tyler Chandler was born and raised in Indiana. He is majoring in philosophy. He is the lead vocalist for the band Ashes to December.
Steven Conrad
I've grown up on the east side of Indianapolis. Everything I do and write is inspired by that—the people, the energy, the problems, the beauty, and the neighborhoods. Irvington is one of those neighborhoods.

Rachel Dobbs
Rachel Dobbs is a sophomore at Indiana University majoring in secondary English/language arts education. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time in the outdoors, reading, writing, and fencing sabre. Poetry is her passion, though she does occasionally indulge in writing fantasy fiction trilogies and creative nonfiction. During the school year, she can often be found whitewater rafting down rivers, climbing rocks, crawling through caves, skiing down slopes, and curled up in a tent reading a good book. Her poems were inspired by her boyfriend, Joe Tonte, and her late grandpa, Paul D. Stroud.

Chelsea Dynes
Chelsea Dynes is currently a freshman studying marketing, but will be switching to a major in biology next year. She is an active member of the Women’s Student Association and tries to find time to write between homework and classes. She thanks her friends for supporting her endeavors.

Jessica Glomb
I am a junior at Indiana University, and I am double majoring in psychology and French. Writing is not therapeutic for me; to me it is a compulsion. When the world and the people around me are so delightfully absurd and hilarious, I feel that I can barely control my laughter and the need to write my perceptions down. In my mind every person that I see is a character, every moment is the now, and every memory is a story that I am continuously writing.
Marcie Grimard
Marcie is a junior from New Hampshire studying dietetics, with minors in biology and Spanish. She has always had an interest in all types of art, especially photography.

Virginia Hosler
I’m currently a junior at IU and working toward my bachelor’s degree in English with a concentration in creative writing. “Rabbit” is an example of how I really enjoy taking real-life experiences and warping them into something new. It’s great to see where certain occurrences can take you.

Nina Kovalenko
I am a freshman from Noblesville, IN majoring in history. I have been writing poetry for many years now for enjoyment, as well as to help sort out my thoughts.

Carlin Ma
“Hundreds of crows blanketed the leafless tree canopies during one of my night strolls. With a sharp cry that pierced the night, they simultaneously rushed forth, creating a frighteningly fantastical rush of wind. It was as if this unearthly experience was stolen directly from a horror story.”
Carlin studies piano performance as a junior in the school of music with Mr. Menahem Pressler and pursues photography on the side.

Emma McClure
Yes, this poem is autobiographical. I really did scramble around for a pen and paper to protect myself against the scary bell noises trying to infiltrate my consciousness. Strangely enough, other people don’t remember seeing a goddess eater of souls, which I take to mean that my poem succeeded. I also know it succeeded because my creative writing class liked it last semester, and they are some talented people (to whom I owe a great deal).
emily mcgowan

emily mcgowan is a freshman studying english (for now). she likes to run, write and bake cookies while dancing to rap music. she prefers pink and typewriters and always enjoys a good cup of coffee.

Jacob Nyenhuis

... is a sophomore majoring in comparative literature. He started writing in high school, and he thinks that it is a very gay old time. He prefers to write fiction prose, but his work can also be observed at “All Sorts of Trouble for the Boy in the Bubble” comedy shows. He hopes that you enjoy his story, and may lend him money one day after college.

Taylor Rickett

Taylor Rickett is a senior at Indiana University finishing his degree in English with a concentration in creative writing. His previous publications include several poems in the Indiana University Union Board’s Canvas, fiore, and online in The Fine Print. Upon completion of his undergraduate degree program, Taylor hopes to pursue his MFA in poetry.

Melissa Roth

My name is Melissa Roth and I do freelance photography for fun (melissa3michelle@gmail.com). I’m graduating this August in Anthropology and Biology and I also like using my photography to help improve the explanation and interpretation in both of my fields. “Spotshadowed Spirit” is a long exposure (15 Seconds) taken this past fall on the IUB campus between the Chemistry and the Union building. I hit the shutter that was propped up on a flower bed, and had to quickly run into the shot. The ‘spirit’ is actually me as a self portrait. “Wealth and Poverty” is a partial silhouette shot taken on a country road somewhere between Bloomington and Greenwood Indiana.
Darian Stahl

My name is Darian Stahl and I am currently a sophomore at Indiana University Bloomington. I was recently accepted into the BFA printmaking program and I am very involved on campus, including the ACE program and IUSA. In the future, I would like to be an art professor.

Benjamin St. John

Benjamin St. John is a sophomore majoring in telecommunication and communication & culture. He does not deserve to have his poetry published.

Ross Stuckey

I am a senior majoring in finance at the Kelley School of Business. I am from Cincinnati, Ohio. I have been writing poetry since I was eleven years old. Unfortunately, I haven’t written a piece since 2006 after my life’s work was stolen along with the travel bag it came in. I look forward to the day my poetic spark returns.

Isabelle Tharp-Taylor

Isabelle is a freshman psychology student and will minor in French and sociology.

Jessalyn Trimble

I am a studio art major at Indiana University. This is my sophomore year. Creative writing has always been a passion of mine as well as music and art. I hope to pursue poetry more seriously in the near future.

Tessa Vierk

I am a freshman studying Spanish and French, although literature and the English language are very near to my heart. Finding the right words to communicate a feeling can be a daunting and formidable task sometimes. In this piece I tried my best to explain a particularly overwhelming feeling I often get with the stash of words I am acquainted with.
Andrea Rae Wolf

Andrea Rae Wolf is a freshman from New Albany, Ohio and couldn’t be happier here at IU. This is her first published work, and she is eager to continue to explore art in all of its forms. Andrea is majoring in Human Biology along with studying entrepreneurship and chemistry. She enjoys listening to thunderstorms, taking long runs out to Griffy Lake, and dinning at the ambrosial Tudor Room buffets.

Caitlin Tess Zittkowski

Caitlin Tess Zittkowski is a senior at Indiana University majoring in English and Germanic studies and minoring in music, West European studies and apparel merchandising. She is also working towards a certificate in journalism. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, she loves reading, singing and listening to music (especially Elvis Presley, Queen, Frank Zappa and the Red Hot Chili Peppers).
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Special thanks to the Hutton Honors College for supporting this publication and to all of the contributors.

Confessions of a Co-facilitator:

“I just wanted to thank everyone who helped in the whole process that made Labyrinth possible this year. Through the consistent rainy meetings and “Twilight” fantasies we all loved so much, we made it happen. Great work everyone, and thank you again.”

-Adam

“Thank you to our incredible dedicated staff members this year (you know who you are)! Stephen, this year would have been a lot less successful without you as our design guru. I hope that all of the contributors and contributor-hopefuls will submit again in the future and that our wonderful staff members will return next year.”

-Haley

Submit your work or join the editorial staff by emailing laby@indiana.edu.

Labyrinth publishes poetry, short fiction, and visual art submitted by Indiana University-Bloomington undergraduates.

* “a little something extra”
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Darian Stahl

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