

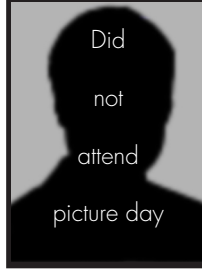


Mish Mash

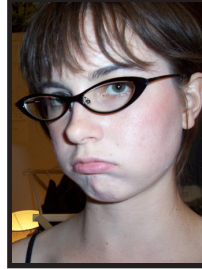
Class of 2007



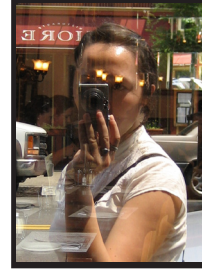
Ashley Albrecht
"To be great is to be misunderstood."



Ken Beaver



Jenny Christie



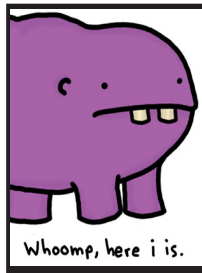
Amy Fink
President:
Barbara Manatee for
President Precedent



Melissa Kennedy
President:
Harry Potter Fan Club



Jamie Leavitt
Pop Rocks Club
Elephant Polo Team



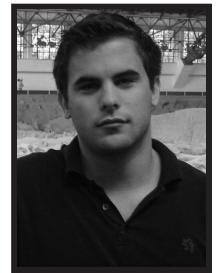
Amy Lipman
Future "Price is Right"
Contestants of America



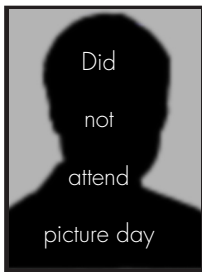
Aubrey Lutz
Born backwards on
Christmas.



Rachel Main
Grrrrrrrr!



Ryan McNeily
Pogs enthusiast
Astronaut hopeful



Brandon Ng



Sarah Parry



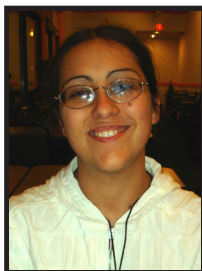
Tim Peters
Treasurer:
Optimistic Nihilists



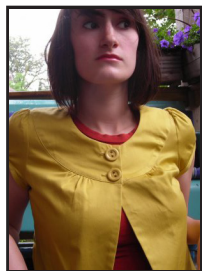
Ryan Reyes
looks 12, acts 11,
legally 19.



Ari Sahagun
Co-Captain:
Greenpeace
Speedboat Crew



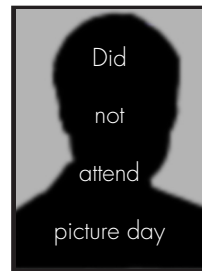
Sara Schepis
Hobbies: Singing,
Reading,
Needlework



Zoe Schwartz
President: Severe and
Hazardous
Weather Club



Justin Taylor
Vice-President: Future
Procrastinators of
Tomorrow



Debbie Walsh
Photo Dodgers Club



Susan Xu
"Save Your Sole"

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undergraduate magazine.
Funded by SORF. Read by you.

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Stream of Consciousness
 Separation Anxiety
 Anomie
 Rumination and Reflection
 Optimism
 Non-fiction
 Fiction
 Poetry



A
CONVERSATION
WITH
FLORA FARACI:

OWNER OF JANE ADDAMS BOOKSTORE

Jenny Christie

This summer I worked at the Jane Addams Bookstore on Neil Street in downtown Champaign. The store sells used and antique books, with topics ranging from traditional contemporary fiction, to war, to geography, to literary theory, to transportation, to pop culture, to cooking, to ephemeral, to science-fiction, to mystery. (This list does not do the store justice as to what topics you can find there.) From the outside you would not be able to tell that the store is three stories tall, with books overflowing the shelves. This is actually one of the largest problems I encountered while working there: where can all these books go?

The owner of the store is Flora Faraci. While working there, I started to develop a type of working friendship with her, talking books and other such things, and now I have been able to compile a conversational investigation concerning the background of Jane Addams, and more importantly, the background of Flora.

The Jane Addams Bookstore was originally situated in Chicago. In the '80s Flora opened this store, which was primarily geared toward feminist texts inspired by the growing movement taking place in the '70s. Sadly the store couldn't survive in Chicago due to costs in the city, and since Flora was commuting several times a week from Champaign to work there anyway, it was decided to move the location to Champaign itself, where Flora's husband already had a business running. When I asked Flora if she had always been interested in the feminist movement, she said that it started in 1974 and is still something she believes very strongly in to this day. Currently, Jane Addams has expanded its stock of genres to what I mentioned earlier, but all the original feminist aspects remain an integral part of the store and can be found most prevalently on the third floor.

I asked Flora about some of the more exciting experiences she was a part of from being an active feminist. Her most defiant action was opening the store itself, but branching off from this accomplishment were some of the famous speakers that she and her partner at the time, Nancy, were able to bring in for book signings, such as writer of *Gyn/Ecology*, Mary Daly, and feminist cartoonist of the *Sylvia* comics, Nicole Hollander.

When I asked what got her interested in books in the first place, Flora told me that she used to work in the school library when in college, and it was there that she decided that books were what she wanted to do for life. She became interested in the collecting of books, and finding better and better editions of books she already had, but was not interested in being a librarian. From working at Jane Addams, I can tell that Flora knows the business of collecting books, which reflects that she must have been doing it for a long time. She cannot be swindled by anyone, but people will try on a regular basis to sell her worthless editions of obsolete books.

Since she works with the public on a daily basis, I thought it would be interesting if she could give a story of some of the more entertaining encounters she's had with people trying to buy and sell used books. Flora says that the weirdest reoccurring instances are book thieves. People will try to steal books from the store and sell them to other used bookstores. There was a Russian couple that would come to the store often, steal books, and sell them to a nearby used bookstore. Flora found out because she went to the bookstore herself and found all the missing copies on the shelves. Another time a woman kept coming in under an alias to sell Flora science-fiction books that she had stolen from her next-door neighbor. One day the neighbor came in with a list of all the books that had gone missing. None of the book thieves have ever been caught.



The Aged Page: *The Glories of Secondhand Books*

Sara Schepis

Open the cover. Go on and open it; the old volume is patient, but when it is in your hands, it is eager to fulfill its purpose. The pages have waited like a closed package for someone to discover them. The invisible thoughts and intangible worlds have been lingering on their paper plains so that, when called upon, they may journey again through a human mind, a human soul. And when they have journeyed through yours, with more or less felicity, they are neatly packed away again by the closing of the outer boards. Then the books take up their vigil once again, waiting patiently. Besides the slow ageing of inanimate things, they have not changed. But, it is to be hoped, you have.

I think secondhand books are one of those things you love or hate. There may be readers who have gotten this far and have found the above paragraph indicative of an exaggerated love. (While secondhand books may not be very old, I here focus on those volumes that have seen their share of long years.) If you do not get a tingle when you contemplate a fine binding, a lead-letter printed page, or a gilt fore-edge, it will be hard to transmit this experience (if you will pardon me) secondhand. Yet, I'm certain that I am not alone in thinking that old books have their own brand of loveliness. Each volume has its own peculiar size, weight, and texture of cover and page. Each stitch in the binding is a moral on the power of sticking together. The smell of the old paper is like the very exhalation of the act of reading. If I try to tell people how much I love both the sight and the smell of old books they will no doubt look at me strangely and accuse me of being a bibliomaniac. If they do so accuse me, I have no defense ready. In fact, the persecution may rest its case, for I confess to being guilty as charged. Indeed, I have proof that I am not alone. For example, when I read the essay "Secondhand Prose" by Anne Fadiman, I knew I had found a kindred spirit, only one that could write better than I could.¹

¹ Fadiman, Anne. *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.



On the other side are those to whom old books (and their scent) are quite the opposite of loveliness. To these individuals, old books represent volumes that have spent too much time in someone's basement or attic. Secondhand books signal useless double copies, old school reading lists, moldy, foxed, and frayed editions, and obscure novels that didn't even sell in the nineteenth century when they were written. Likewise, there are fans and non-fans of cluttered secondhand bookshops wherein one has to step over, say, a pile of Poe to find the book you want. There might be books scattered on the floor, behind other books, shelved sideways, etc. Does that not give zest to sifting through the piles? They come with the concrete recommendation of wear and tear from repeated readings. In such a "hunt" there is always the joy of serendipitous finds. Such a discovery might range from the rare (e.g. an 1868 edition of the Silver Lake Series book *Good for Evil*) to the comically unusual (e.g. *The Bird Boys Among the Clouds* or *Young Aviators in a Wreck*.) In some cases an old volume in a secondhand bookstore might be the only one left in the world, though it might be difficult to ascertain if this were true. For some obscure books even this potential distinction is not enough to make them worth a great deal of money, but the idea is fascinating enough for me. ("This book might be the only place where these words can be read.") It is a thought both pleasing and very sad.

Why is it that recirculated volumes are often referred to as secondhand and not as used? (Some books are true collectibles and are thus often called antiquarian.) But, in the case of books, should the word used carry such a stigma that the term secondhand should be preferred? In what better condition could we wish a book to be than actually used? Books are not blenders or televisions that break and become junk and that we should be suspicious of when they are sold a second time. I once bought a used book with a sticker declaring, "previously read."² I couldn't help but laugh at such a euphemistic phrasing. Was this like a "pre-owned" car? Should I mind that a book—the nearest thing to thought made tangible, a glimpse of human consciousness captured—had been read before? I was proud to be one of the line of owners and was tempted to write under the sticker "deserves to be subsequently read, too."

There is a sort of art in secondhand books. For them the words "old world charm" are not just a phrase from an interior decorator's catalog. These books—or at least these texts—really can be Old World. Secondhand books can rest peacefully with their neighbors of all years. In a bookcase (or at least in my bookcase) a paperback romance from Target (2006) can live alphabetically next to *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (c. 1895, clothbound, quarto size.) It was Jules Verne who had his character Captain Nemo say, "Great artists are ageless... differences of time disappear in dead men's memories."³ These books are here to stay for a very long time...

² The book was from the University of Illinois Bookstore, in fact.

³ Verne, Jules. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*; trans. Anthony Bonner, New York: Bantam, c. 1966.



I have several secondhand books before me as I write this; they look strangely at home beside my laptop. Three have frontispieces (one protected by a tissue paper page.) One has an embossed cover. Another has beautifully colored bound and free end-papers. (I could go on in my descriptions. If you would enjoy further descriptions of bound/free endpapers or, say, binding thread, let me know. We could form a club.) What acidic-leaved, glue spine airport paperback can compete with the detail of these volumes at my elbow? These are not just containers for type; they are vessels for words. They are artifacts. They have an "objectness" and gravity to them that can only add to the value of their content.

Don't get me wrong. I have nothing against new books. I love new books. I have no grudge against paperbacks. But I have a special weakness for hardbound secondhand volumes. They have a history of their own, not just a record of how it was shipped from publisher to superstore. The history of a used book might be one in which it has moved in and out of libraries, been passed from hand to hand, been sold at garage sales, borrowed, stolen, or lost and found. It might have rested on bedside tables, been read in the bathtub, or been on a long trek in a traveler's backpack. It is on a journey, as we are. It so far has survived the trip to make it to your hands, as does all we inherit from the past. Perhaps we all have more in common with secondhand books than one imagines.

Another feature of secondhand books that I find attractive is that they offer the prospect of speculation about the previous readers themselves. "It is difficult for a man to have any object in daily use without leaving the imprint of his individuality upon it in such a way that a trained observer might read it."⁴ Such is the opinion of Sherlock Holmes (he notices such things) and I

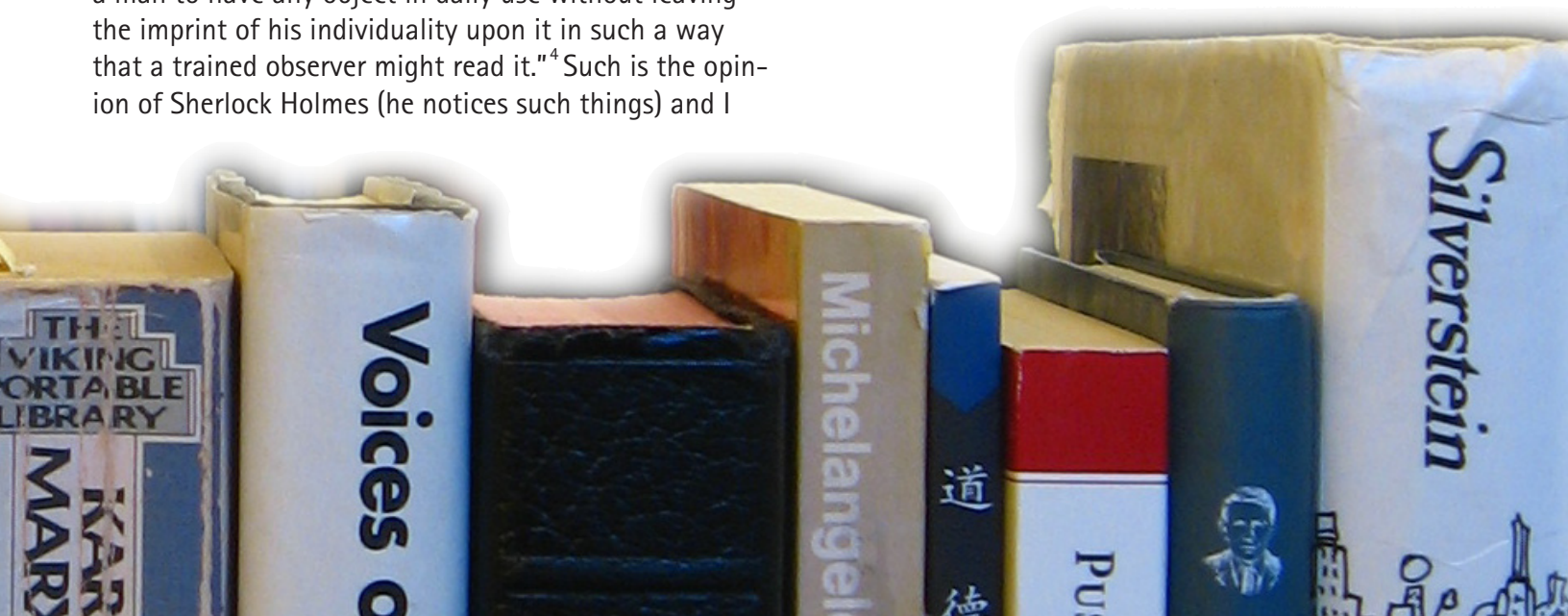
think that this is nowhere so true as with a secondhand book. Is the previous owner someone who would be appalled at writing in the margins or who has scribbled with abandon? Are the pages dog-eared? Smudged with food, as if they were devoured along with good meals? Are there ticket stubs/dry flowers between the pages? Beach sand in the gutter? Is the top of the spine (the head, to book people) broken by frequent pulling? Perhaps the front page bears the untidy scrawl of a proud young owner—something like MY BOOK ANDY. Instead, there might be the sort of inscription: To Anna, I saw this book and thought of you. Merry Christmas, 1962. From Frank. The point is clear: it is only with secondhand books that one can be a book detective. A book that is read is made part of someone's life. It was part of someone else's and now it is part of yours.

A final thought: once you own a book, it can thereafter only be secondhand to someone else who owns it after you. What books will you hand off to another? What books do you find so alive that they survive being secondhand, fifth-hand, twentieth-hand? Whatever your answer, look twice at secondhand books. They always seemed to me to have written invisibly on their spines, "Hear what I say. Pass it on."



⁴ Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes: The Novels*; Edited and annotated by Leslie S. Klinger, New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

The extract is from *The Sign of Four*. Dr. Watson actually speaks the quote, mentioning that Holmes has said this in the past.



Never to Be Replaced

Brandon Ng

I bought a used book once;
It was quite an experience.
The book had scuffed up pages, dingy corners,
A torn binding, and an atrocious cover,
Slathered with a dense dosage of
Dirt and dust.
To this day, I still ponder why I bought it,
Why I ever gave such a torn and tattered piece of garbage a chance.
I could've just wandered off to my regular bookstore,
Like I always do,
And purchased a pristine, picture-perfect copy.
But then I came to the conclusion—
Judging books by their covers is never the answer,
For all books—used and new—have stories to tell.
The book is still on my shelf today in fact,
Continuing to reveal the wonder hidden within it.
And even though the markings on the book will never go away
And the yellow shades on the pages will never fade,
I appreciate it for what it is,
Not for what it should be.

HARVARD
CLASSICS
THE FIVE FOOT
SHELF OF
BOOKS

45

SACRED
WRITINGS

2



P.F. COLLIER
& SON

HARVARD
CLASSICS
THE FIVE FOOT
SHELF OF
BOOKS

44

SACRED
WRITINGS

1



P.F. COLLIER
& SON

Dusted Memories

Jamie Leavitt



I touch the face covered in dust
Sunlight streams in through the grime-covered windows
As if sheer curtains are blowing in the wind
Particles floating through the air like fairies
My fingertips leave tire track traces behind
On the varnished table
I think back to our life in this old place
To a night when it was lightening in winter
Flashes of fright across glittering, virgin snow
When we huddled in the cold
My head is spinning around everything that I drank with you
Fire of life rolling down the throat
Sharing tales of the evil and the forgiven
We've left that place now
Rotting in our memories
For something new and different
But not necessarily good
I cross the room and lock the door
But I will never say goodbye



SECONDHAND WINE

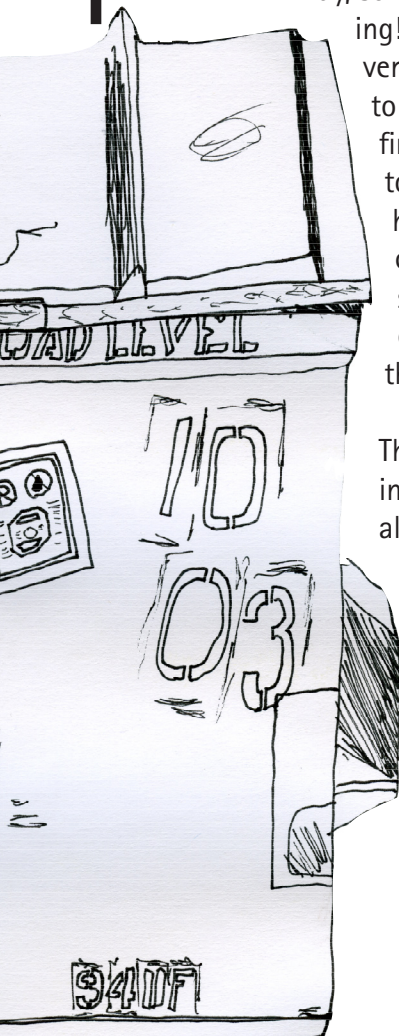
J A M I E L E A V I T T

A couple weeks ago I was walking to class, when I noticed something white out of the corner of my eye. It was a box of wine contently sitting next to a dumpster. It was glistening in a patch of sunlight seeping through the trees as if sent by the heavens. I initially began to think of what a strange discovery I had made. Then I thought, "Who created such a blissful invention?" I mean, why wine? Why don't they have boxed beer? . . . although, beer can be held in kegs. Why not boxed vodka? . . . because that would make for one fun, but regretful party.

I looked around to make sure nobody was around and crept up next to it. I tapped it with my foot and discovered that it was not only full, but unopened. I wanted it! I needed it! I was going to take it. For a second, I hesitated. I didn't want to steal. The only thing I ever stole was my sister's *NSYNC CD. It was *No Strings Attached* . . . you know . . . their most magnificent creation as a group before they all went solo! Hey . . . don't judge me! It was seventh grade! Anyway, so I was like freaking out for a second, but then I thought, 'It's not stealing! It's in the garbage! Don't be such a blathering idiot!' I decided that I very well couldn't show up to class with a box of wine, so I would just have to wait and see if it was still there after my classes. But wait! I found it first! I didn't want anyone else to get their grimy paws on it. A resolution to this problem arrived when I found a nice array of bushes nearby and heaved the box underneath them. I was not able to accomplish this successfully without the scratchy branches scraping my arms. Several thin, swollen scrapes lined my arms like they did the time I tried to give my cat a bath. My skin began to sting, and as I ran to class, I was hoping that it would be worth the effort to take the box of wine.

Three hours later, I emerged into the sunlight from the dark English building, and all I could think about was that glorious box of wine. I hurried along four blocks, almost getting run over by a wayward bicyclist, and I finally reached my destination. I scrambled over to the bushes and began digging through the tentacles of evergreen. Finally, my fingertips encountered the smooth surface of cardboard. With exuberant glee,

I hauled the box from the bushes. I wasted no time in lugging the wine home. That night, instead of doing my homework, I had a party with my roommates. The next day we all faced the repercussions. But, it was worth it. It was all worth that little box of wine.



HEMINGWAY'S ENDING

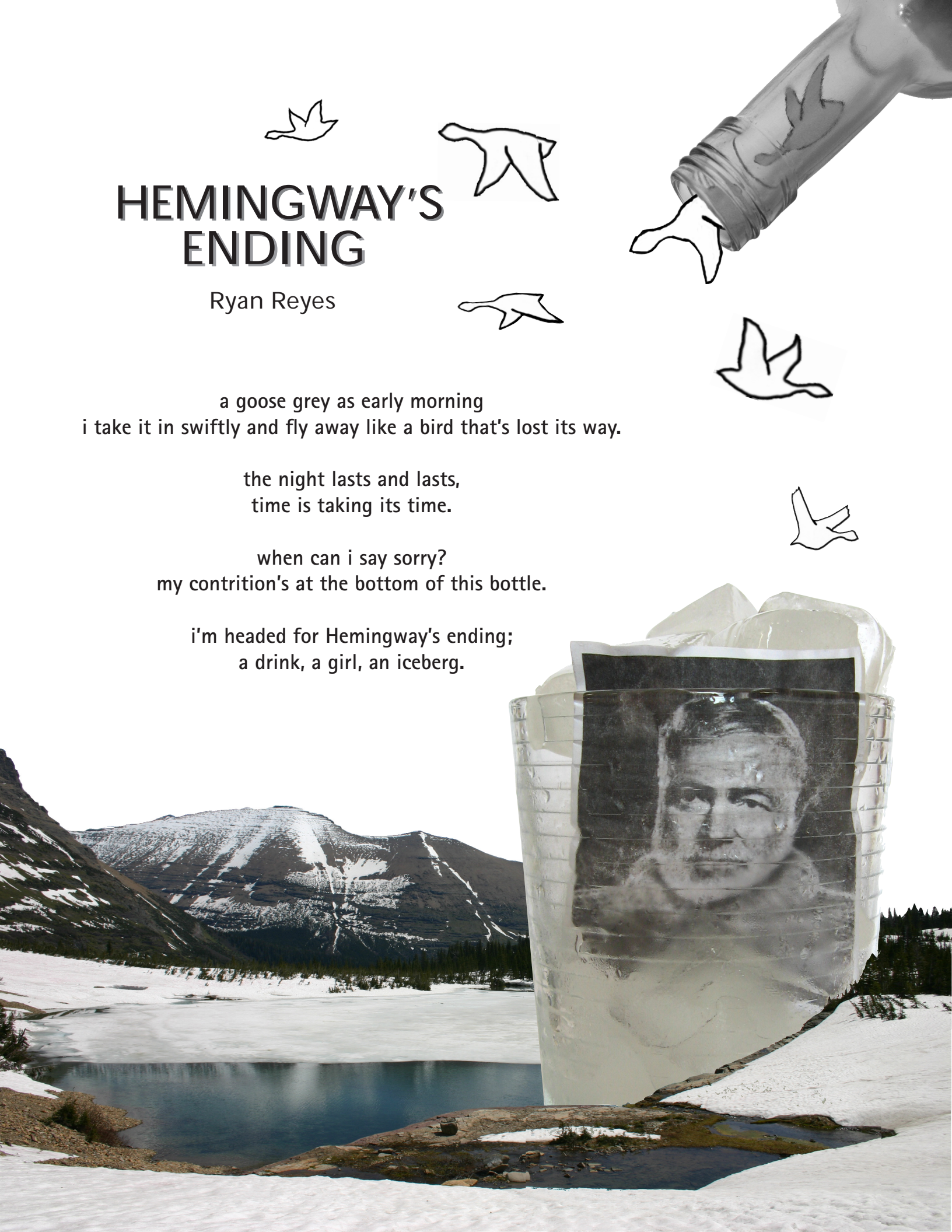
Ryan Reyes

a goose grey as early morning
i take it in swiftly and fly away like a bird that's lost its way.

the night lasts and lasts,
time is taking its time.

when can i say sorry?
my contrition's at the bottom of this bottle.

i'm headed for Hemingway's ending;
a drink, a girl, an iceberg.



Scrap

Ryan McNeily

It's only an hour or two until dark. I drag my tongue over the ridges of the roof of my mouth. Pausing briefly, I gingerly trace along the line of my gums. Like a bottle floating in the ocean, my tongue rises and falls over the few broken teeth remaining; bobbing, then sinking gracefully down to the tender red tissue. I hear something hard clanging against steel about thirty yards away, rhythmically, in a repeating staccato. The sound fades into inaudibility as it moves down the hall.

The flick of a sparking match goes off overhead and soon I smell the roast of a cigarette burning. I stare straight up at the frame holding the mattress above me, and hold my breath. My back is sweating and my shirt is matted into uncomfortable wrinkles beneath me. My shaved head lies heavy on the stiff pillow as I examine the metal frame of the bed. No loose pieces - everything is soldered. According to the label on the bedpost, I'm resting on a Norix full frame, total-weld, wall mounted two-person bed. Resting makes me think of siestas, which makes me think of trabajo men in Poway snoozing in hammocks tethered between shady trees. This is not that. I am not resting. I'm waiting. This bed is not a bed, it is a bunk. A bunk specifically designed to prevent people from unscrewing pins to make picks or needles or levers. Useful things. Like the walls. The walls are useful, too. They're always holding us together - keeping us close, reminding us of how little we can hide. I use the wall to hold up the one photograph I have of Dad, sitting on a patio chair. He's looking away from the camera at someone to the right. He's laughing, mid-conversation.

I lift my head off of the pillow without moving the rest of my body. The muscles in my neck strain to support the weight. I look straight ahead and view my body from the chest down. If I were at a Halloween party, most people would probably guess that I was trying to be a surgeon. That's because my clothes are an exception to the standard; they're teal, instead of that life-vest orange or those parallel bars of black and white - the ones you might expect. The two-piece jumpsuit is stained

in a few places. I have a rust-brown blob beneath my chest that looks like Idaho and that the launders couldn't get out, and some chalkish stains right above the my elastic waistband. No belts here. I look at my feet: white gym socks. It's hard to think about anything else beside the teeth, or the Norix full frame, or the blood stain on my chest, or the man smoking a cigarette on the mat-

ress above me. I try to forget about the figure in the corner of the room, leaned up against the wall.

His eyes closed, his face turned directly at me. He watches me with a countenance that I've seen only on dead bodies at wakes, the ones that make every fiber in your body sure that if you look them long enough, the eyes will flash open and accuse you meanly of staring. I'm surrounded by a force of two.

The man with the cigarette whose name I do not know and the sleeping man in the corner leisurely wait for the giant halogen lights outside the barred door to click off. They say nothing, but I can feel them waiting. I don't want dark to come. I don't want the lights to turn off.

There are two newspapers sitting on the floor, but I've read them both. They're peeling up in the corners and yellowing on the edges. The stories are old and the information's obsolete. They've exceeded their utility. Those newspapers are no longer newspapers - they're scraps. They're leftovers, musings from previous months, echoes of events long concluded. I wonder if the man above me in the bunk or the corpish man in the corner were ever in the newspaper. I wonder if the stories of their deeds were rushed out by the press, if their misdeeds were contemplated as they were read in inky Arial font. Were there pictures? Are their tales yellowing up in a scrap of a newspaper somewhere while their years molt away?

I cough and with the reverberation in my lungs I'm reminded of my ribs which have been cracked and the bruise above my right cheek bone. They throb in aching complaint. I look at the dark spot on the wall and the stain on my chest and grimace at the painful reminder. That's my blood on the wall. My hand moves slowly up to my face and pats the giant purple bruise, now yellowing, to the side of my eye. My fingers drag down my cheek to my lips,

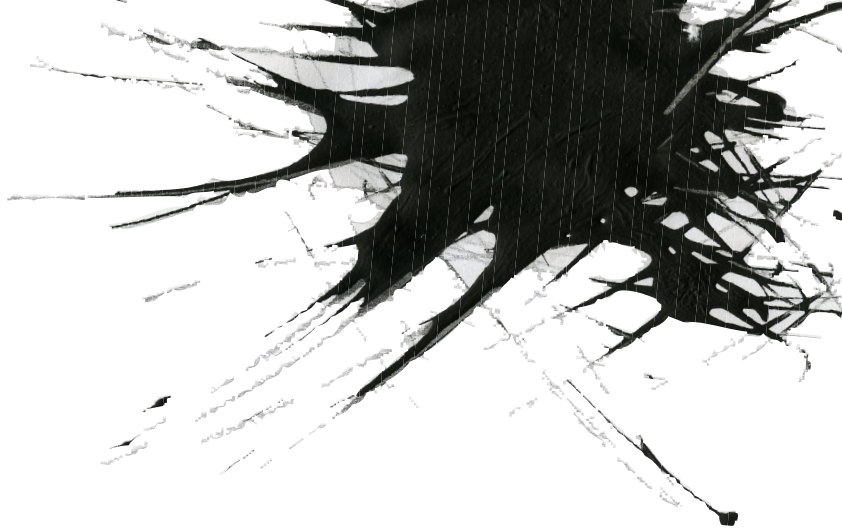
which are chapped, and cracked, and scabbed. My tongue retreats in my mouth.

My face must look frightening. I avoid mirrors now, not that there are many. Reflections, I avoid those, too. Both kinds, as much as possible. I don't need to see. I don't need to look back. I've made a practice of staring ahead. My eyes are not present anymore, they do not glimmer, they are just a lens. I've switched to a system of periscope. I will not be found behind my eyes; I've huddled myself deep down in the pits of my stomach, and I watch the world from my guts. I use the eyes only to report down to the cockpit down here, in the vessel of my body. I live down below.

I have to sleep on my back at night because of the ribs. So I lie like I lie right now, facing up, listening to the man above me wrestle in his sleep. He talks sometimes while he's sleeping. I never understand what he says. The words are not frightened or angry, but apologetic. In the language of sleep he apologizes to someone, somewhere. Whoever he apologizes to they do not hear it. It is an uncommon tenderness of his. The words swoop out and decay in the air. The words like dead leaves float back down to the ground. When we leave the room in the morning to eat, the shells of his midnight apologies are swept out on the soles of our beige slip-on shoes. They're carried out and scattered like ashes over the yard.

It's almost time. The buzz of the light out in the atrium buzzes loudly as it does when it's preparing to rest for the night.

I heard about the guys at Pelican Bay. They have twenty three hours a day by themselves. One hour outdoors. It seems like it'd be impossible not to like that better. That solitude. I'd be Robinson Crusoe - living meagerly,




stoically waiting. Finding reason and self-betterment in the silence. Once, I heard about a guy at Pelican Bay that learned to play chess against himself in his head. He kept a constant inventory of the board, exactly where each piece was, always holding them in place - all those details like one of those guys that spin plates on the tall sticks in the vaudeville shows. If one moment is lost, the whole thing comes crashing.

I glance over at the wall again at my one photograph. I wonder what I'd be doing if I weren't here. Could I be like him in the picture? I am nothing but an example. Which is a useful thing. Not for me, but for other people. I figure things have to be this way. I have to go to sleep at night scared and hurt, because if this place was nice and good and comfortable, what would stop anyone from doing the things they know they'd like to do but shouldn't?

I look over at the corpse-man sleeping in the corner, his head has not moved. Like a movie prop, he's slumped up against the wall. He's frightening and dramatic and life-like. His closed eyes manage to stare directly at me. His mouth is open slightly and I can see his teeth. His arms are big and his neck is as thick as the width of his jaw.





I think about the choking. I think about being choked. I think about another man using me. I think about how they can transform from the sleepy lines of men that wait for food in the cafeteria, even from the hardened jocular assholes in the yard, to animals. To violent indulgers. They make me their receptacle, many of them at once. I become a container, a rag doll. An ugly, useful thing. I think of the suffocation, I remember looking up at them doing this to me. I think about being broken and scared and shameful and nauseous and castrated and . . . I think about my eyes stinging, the hot blood in my ears and the strength of the arms holding me down. I think of the blood and the tearing. I think of how hard I pull away and how hard I strain and how useless it is.


It's time, any minute. I can hear the two of them rousing. I'm conscious of all my movement. I feel like the goldfish that I used to place in my fishtanks to feed the giant white Oscar fish. How they swam to the corner for escape, expecting not to be noticed, expecting not to be consumed. Maybe they won't notice me. I close my eyes and pretend like a child that I can melt down into this stiff mattress and watch them wonder in awe how I managed to slip away. Would they turn on each other? In the middle of the night would the one from the corner hear the midnight apologies of the other man and recognize weakness? Would he hold him down and destroy him? Would he turn him into scraps? Would he say terrible things like he does? Would he insult his father? Would he rip out his hair like he did mine, so that he'd be forced to shave it?

The fear never leaves. It's the fear that keeps me pinned to my bunk now. It's the kind of fear that does not dissipate after the occurrence and anticipation have ended. It is a bodily fear, a catatonic fear. The feet freeze first, then the hands: they clench. I think about the showers - that's what everyone asked me before if I'd be scared of. I told them I was. I am. The padding of feet on the wet concrete floor which is grooved to prevent slips makes a visceral and disgusting noise. Your stomach curdles and your ears begin buzzing. The fucking guys stare. They fucking stare and they plot and lean in as you walk by. They look in your eyes, if your eyes are up, and they say horrible things. It's like some grotesque, sadistic high school football

locker room. But you don't know these men. In there, you're a commodity, not a citizen. Fight too hard and they'll break your face into nothing; don't fight hard enough and you'll never stop getting fucked. That's it. Either way you're getting the shit kicked out of you. You'll be deli meat. A slot machine, a free for all. They won't stop until you can't walk, until you shit blood. They'll slam your face into the wall just to knock out your front teeth so they don't get bit. That's another thing the walls are used for. They break teeth.

It's dark now. The guy on top swings his legs over the side of the upper bunk. My hands clench. His teal pants bunch up around his ankles. There's a break between his sock and his pants and I can see his hairy legs. I hear a loud snort and hear the curdle of mucus and then see a yellow wad of spit fly down and splat on the floor. This wakes the man in the corner. His eyes open slowly and evenly, he does not move - as if he had been holding in a closed-eye stank. I lay still. I let my eyes go to his legs. The skin looks alien and animalistic. It's hard not to hope that some nights will not be like this. Maybe this will be the night where I'll rest unbothered. Maybe those spinning plates will keep from falling; maybe the pawns on the board won't be lost.

The giant buzzing light snaps off. The shadows of the parallel bars are lost in the darkness. I hear another match spark and the smell of smoke wafts down to me. I grimace. I hear the staccato of something hard on steel. It gets louder until I see a guard pass by - his baton clanging against each of the doors' bars. Like baseball cards in the spokes of a bike, his baton announces his coming and going. As his noise erodes, I move my hands up to my waist until they find the drawstring on my pants. I pull them loose and let one of my fingers under the elastic band. There. I pull out the two razorblades I've tucked into hiding. I take one in my left hand and I put the other in my mouth. It tastes like a penny. This has been a long time coming. The hand with the blade traces the sharp edge lightly up against my skin. I trace down to my wrist and pause. I press harder and can feel my pulse flicker against the steel. I think about my Dad and how hard he must have worked to keep me out of here. How much he must



fear this place for me. I pinch the flat edge of the blade between my middle and index fingers so that it's hidden in my palm.

I position the second razor in my mouth in between the gums where my front teeth used to be. I hold it vertically like a nice shiny set of lower incisors. I push hard against the blade with my tongue and I feel a warm seep of blood in my mouth. My bruised face and broken ribs ache as I watch the man from above jump over the edge of the full-frame Norix meant to keep people from making needles. He exchanges glances with the man in the corner. They say something and laugh in a muffled masochistic machismo. I'm frozen. I'm an effigy. I'm a memorial to a life used up, a body of scraps.

My bunkmate flicks his cigarette against the wall and hits that photograph of Dad on the patio. The picture sings when the flaming butt hits it and flutters down from the wall. It flutters like empty apologies. My Dad stares off to the side - still laughing. He cannot see me. They pull me off the mattress, hard, down onto the concrete floor. I reel, I try to escape. I periscope down. I keep my mouth shut and go to a sunset in La Jolla. I stare, but I do not see. I hear one of them growl that he's been waiting all day for this. The blade in my palm is sweaty and slippery. The man from the corner grips the back of my neck and my fists clench. I pause. The bed stands stoic at the wall - the wall used to crush, contain, and remind. I am a used thing. How much I'd like to destroy them. How much I'd like to end this now. I grip the blade in my mouth discretely so they won't know, and wonder sadly how useful it is to fight.



Poems by:

Sarah Parry

Indie Boi

A bit of Winehouse warbled from the speakers
he sported a pair of scuffed Converse sneakers
his 'emo' floppy fringe floundered round his gaze
(he jumped on the bandwagon of ANY craze!)
People told me: "At uni, love is extinct,
all the blokes skulk around like they've bathed in Lynx."

But I would not have it! Indie boi was great!
We flew to cider/sex-soaked date after date."
Amidst the marijuana maze of sweet haze...
I could not spy the dead-end slammed on our days.
His stout ugly digits fumbled with his stub...
he delivered this unforeseeable snub.

Like his subcultures: I'd had my sell-by date,
and as soon as I put out, I'd sealed my fate.



BLACK ASH PARK

Kids created castles out of needles,
architects constructing Casa De Syringe;
moulding turrets with what they could wheedle
and when their parents came they would whinge.

Like a monkey, I'd dangle on the park
watching their fathers come and clip their ears,
eying their concoctions shiny, yet stark
which druggies had left to pool with their peers.

I cried the day they closed that old park down,
the twats from the council padlocked it shut.
Cartoon Network failed to vamoose my frown:
all cos' some toddler swallowed a joint butt!

Old owners had nowhere to walk their dogs.
Junkies required a new 'shooting-up' haunt
and spread like a virus to outside bogs,
public parasites all skinny and gaunt.

The Grounds Man

The grounds man collects his graves,
collecting tombs like football cards,
fighting the bitter winds he braves.
He wanders proudly round his yard:
counting souls surgeons can't save,
counting souls at God's discard.

Christchurch clenched in Death's crisp kiss,
chasing Goths with his pitchfork.
Petals shrivel in the sun-bliss,
silence broken by the hawk.
Epitaphs evoke the missed,
revising them, as he walks.

Chewing

Tim Peters

I don't remember when I first noticed that there was something in my mouth, something I had been chewing on. It was just a slight, repetitive action. Easy to ignore, easy for it to fit with every other daily action that dissolves in memory.

And I probably would not have noticed that I had been chewing on something all these days, except it started to grow greater and thicker. It was something bulging into my consciousness, a bodily fact that penetrated above the swamp of the subliminal. But it did not bother me, to have this mass that I could work on, to labor privately in my warm, wet mouth. Did anyone else have such a thing that they could always depend on to be with them? This was no children's candy or stress-relief product. I didn't know what it was or how it got there, but I enjoyed it.

Perhaps I had bought it from a street vendor? You never know what they're selling these days, or what you'll be convinced to buy on the street when you're bored, depressed, or just been paid. But, no, this couldn't be some petty commodity. This thing feels too permanent and serious, no disposable frivolity like they want you to buy.

Sometimes I would chew quickly, nibbling at the compressed mass, feeling a pleasing anxiety. My eyes would dart. I would stride while walking, my head upright. I would be in a fury at work, typing with precision like a virtuoso, filling the forms without mistake, my finger taps and button presses a fixed, fast rhythm. After completing a 500-count order box I would lean back against my stiff plastic chair, squeeze my jaw and press the mass into a flat mush and fold it in on itself, collapsing cleavages and crevices, molding an amorphous body. Feeling a mounting pleasure with each chew, with each rub of this thing on the enamel of my teeth.

This gum was also a consolation and a scapegoat. On those gray, raining evenings, the dense, toxic air dropping onto my head in fat drops as I waited, first, in the bus line, to take the 487A to the train line, to get into the Number 7 Underground Tram, and then to walk thirteen blocks the rest of the way – here I would sob on the gum, I would squeeze it between my molars like some cherished object I refused to relinquish.

I never removed it. If I ate, I hid it in the pocket of my cheek. If I had a cigarette, I would often just inhale right onto the gum, the smoke coating it like black cobwebs. I kept it in before bed, never thinking that I would lose it or swallow it during the night. The sleeping mind is good about those things, and it would be there upon waking.

But so much of this had been mere catharsis, a little habit I mostly ignored. Then the thing became bigger, and my mouth became infected. White, fleshy abscesses were bulging onto my gums. Blood red canker sores clung next to them. When I burped I could smell my breath stink of something rotten. My jaw was working harder now too, the muscles of the mandible sore from the new intensity.



First the mass was still a reasonable size, about that of a grape. This was the end of summer. By mid-autumn, by the time the daylight was shrinking, it had grown twice that size, causing a bulge in my cheek if I pressed it to the side of my mouth. Now it was winter, the soot of snow layering down onto the pavement and the metal, and this mass swelling, feeling like the size of a children's bouncing ball. It was a true labor, to rip my teeth through it, to penetrate into it and move it about. The muscles near my throat and jaw were puffing out from all this exercise, looking like strange, hard cancers.

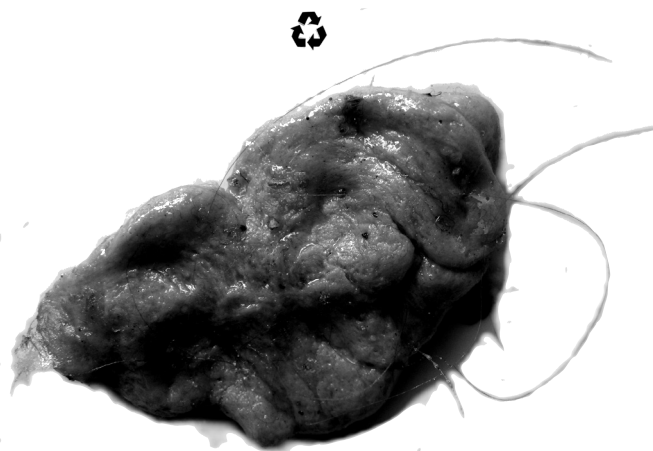
And yet no one said anything! In the tramcar or the bus, standing next to others, my face and mouth just inches from their noses, eyes and ears, and nothing! No word, no gesture, no reaction to this strange behavior and this even stranger object in my mouth. Maybe this was expected. A slave in chains on this public transportation would arouse no less indifference than my foul breath and wet chewing.

At the office it was the same. I would even try to be noticeable about it, to mash this thing with my mouth wide open, the saliva sucking about. I would press it against my cheek and lips to make it bulge, to present some sign. And not one word, not even one abnormal glance. If they noticed, they repressed any reaction before meeting me. It was just the same platitudes, greetings and glances. Did they not notice? Did they not care about this, this absurd labor that now afflicted me?

The gum fell out once, about this time. I was in the kitchen of the office, a rather sterile place enlivened with a plastic Christmas tree. I stumbled against a table and it popped from my mouth, from its dark tomb, and smacked into the floor, sticking there. My mouth was empty, with nothing to chew. It was an amputation. Something was missing, terribly missing. A load I needed to bear had slipped off my back – a terrifying relief.

The absence of the chewing, the relaxation in my sore jaw and my bleeding gums, was a vacuum of silence. – a tranquil negativity that felt like the utmost emptiness before death. I didn't bother to see if anyone had noticed. I reached for it, still warm and wet. It was gray like porridge, lumpy with dark specks, and now some dust, hair and crumbs coated it. I grabbed it and returned to my cubicle. I tried to brush off some of the dirt, but it was too sticky, so I just stuck it back in.

I left early, brushing a few papers into my briefcase, forgetting my hat on my desk. I felt I might not be returning for a while. I had so many sick days saved up they couldn't fire me for several weeks anyway. I chewed as noisily and wetly as before, right near others' ears, noses and faces. Now I did it with pride, with delight in this painful, sickening, rotten thing that was all and only mine.



Rachel Main

Dear Sir,

Dear Sir

Dear Sir,

On returning from dinner today, I walked past the bench by the tennis courts where I told you how I felt about you. Do you remember the bench and the day? You had only a few days left at this institution. I remember that your time dwindled because only on this day, when time was no longer of the essence, would I give you a long awaited explanation. You had asked me to interpret a song for you, and though the interpretation was simple because I proclaimed the song to describe me almost exactly, I omitted that the song described me in relation to you, and I told you that at the end of the year, I would give my thoughts on the song's meaning.

Dear Sir

On returning from dinner today, I walked past the bench by the tennis courts where I told you how DiFranco's "Overlap" was simply me asking for more of you. Indeed, I studied "our conversations like a map." Do you remember the conversations where everything you said, no matter how much I disagreed, fascinated me? I fell in love with talking to you and feeling the "strength in the differences between us and the comfort where we overlap." Do you remember, sir? Because I remember conversing about everything school-related and making a larger point of talking about nothing school-related and I remember talking about what will happen in ten years and what happened when we were six. I remember you took me behind the black and white cover of your head, told me that you did not mind and even though you would not "give it to me [you] at least [gave] me a better view." My head was not as neatly opened as your black and white cover but you enjoyed my mind, as I loved yours. You racked my brain over Salvador Dali paintings, Bible readings, music lyrics, C.S. Lewis, and your own writing, all the while filling me with compliments but never with the same attachment. You and *Veronika Decides to Die* taught me as much as the classroom taught me in that semester.

Dear Sir

Dear Sir

On returning from dinner today, I walked past the bench by the tennis courts where I was able to finally tell you of my affection's sickness, for it had by then passed. Do you remember how I explained that you had taken a god-status in my life? Upon further reflection, I saw that pain of my heart was justified by what my mind and spirit understood. I fell for you, into the deep, blindly hoping for proof of mutual interest and setting you on my highest pedestal. "I [built] each one of my days out of hope, and I [gave] that hope your name. I [didn't] know you that well but it [didn't]



North Shore Nostalgia

*Ashley
Albrecht*

I always miss my aunt's house at this time of year.
That mysterious, antiquated building down Willow Street.
The feeling inside was like no other.
It was a place many people have passed through.
You could just sense it.
I could always feel its historical ambiance.
The house was real.
Even though vintage in almost all aspects, it was very much
Alive.
I loved being in the rooms by myself.
Exploring every crevice
as if I were a spy.
I loved Branden's room especially.
A slight tinge of marijuana hung in the air.
Esoteric writings and drawings
littered the walls and shelves.
He never divulged what was really going on,
but I always knew.
My aunt was oblivious.
She thrived in her paranoid, naïve,
1984-like world,
Venerated that Orwellian text,
Muddled fantasy with reality.
A neo-luddite in her own right;
few technological devices met her approval.
My uncle, less eccentric, enabled my aunt's delusions.
His jolly smirk would always win her over.
It held the charm to calm
even her most drunken hysterias.
Their backyard was free from all such drama.
Unscathed, ignorant, newborn.
Nature in its purest form.
There I could find sanctuary.

Emerson and Thoreau experienced their
enlightenment
as mature, reflective young men.
I witnessed all at my aunt's house.
Secrets and family dynamics.
Myriad experiences and thoughts.
A collective unconscious weighing down on me,
traversing through archaic rooms,
accompanying my escapes to the outside world.
A mere child.
A well-worn slate at the close of middle school.
A sagacious connection with a silent past.



BorrowedTime

Debbie Walsh

I met a man but once
And inexpertly captured his image
With borrowed camera and borrowed film
As he stood with his family
His face smiled—that I remember
But he didn't want to be there
None of the men did
The women, such sentimental creatures, placed them there
Posed them, manipulated them, pinched them into submission
When they told me they were ready
The others didn't smile as he did
When they told me they were ready
I stepped in and snapped the shot
Then both the men and women relaxed and moved about
Resuming their more natural forms
The men back to the TV
The women chatting over coffee
And I, a woman, true, sat with them
But on the outskirts
For I hardly knew these people
I'd met them for the first time that day
It was the only time I'd met the man
In front of whom I now kneel
The man who'd smiled in the photo
As he stood behind his parents
Next to his sister
In front of his niece and nephew
His face—now cold and gray—
Smiles still
His eyes—though closed as in sleep—
Still twinkle I bet
And I, I kneel in front of this picture
In front of this man
Whom I'd met but once
On borrowedtime

July 10th, 2007



Dear Billy,

I cannot go another day without telling you how I feel. I have sat silently for years and years sitting behind you year after year (what an evil hard fate has in having made our last names so similar!) I watched as you grew from a boy to a man, I saw your style change from the clothes your mother had bought you to that one day in 7th grade when you came in wearing that shirt with the surf board on it that I knew Mrs. Condon would have never picked out. I watched as you read car magazines inside your text books and passed notes with John Homes. I saw when girls started noticing you (even though I had noticed you forever) and watched as you had a new girl at your side every week. I learned to be those girls with their long silky hair and nice shoes. I used to imagine that one day you would turn around in class

Dear Billy,



Not only to ask me to borrow a pencil (half of the pencils I lent you I never saw again!) but tell me the beauty you saw in my eyes. Or how lovely you thought my in class essay about the mating habits of Amazon tree frogs was. I wished so many times you would see past my second hand clothes and glasses to the core of me where truth and beauty abound. But you never did. You were too busy trying out for football and soccer and baseball and cheer and trying to get into the pants of Melissa Masan.

At Graduation I walked behind you smelling your expensive Ralph Lauren cologne that I'm sure ~~you~~ Melissa bought you for Christmas or Valentine's Day some year. There were many nights I lay awake imagining our first Christmas together. I would hand you a long narrow box that you would think was a sweater. Another sweater! You would say and give me a joking look (because in my mind we had this inside joke about sweaters and how I have so many!) You would tear off

Zoe Schwartz



the chocolate brown wrapping paper
and turquoise bow, pull off the
lid of the box to reveal two
tickets! Two tickets for you and me
to an acoustic Deep Blue Something
show. (Because in my mind our song
is "Breakfast at Tiffany's") You would
see the tickets, give me a shy
smile and then leap at me
from the foot of the Christmas
tree. You would kiss me passionately
for a long moment and then
break off and start playfully nipping
at my neck! ;)

But, Billy, I'm tired of my
imagination. I'm tired of only seeing
you from afar or behind and
never up close and personal. I love
you. I love everything about
you. I always have. I figure its
now or never! We're both
leaving for school at the end
of the summer. I just want
you to know. Do you feel
the same? Could you? Have
you? Maybe we could get
together for some coffee
or something? To just talk?
I would enjoy that. I will

enjoy spending time with you.

Forever Yours,

Shelly Conley

P.S. In case you accidentally throw away
the ~~enve~~ envelope with my return
address on it, here is my
address:

Shelly Conley
1135 Troost
Redding, MA

Also, my phone number is 617-356-
1867

Also, I hope to talk to you soon.



Ryan McNeily

When the Korean widow lost her only sewing needle, she lamented for days. Such a simple device, uncommonly cherished. Since she was a girl, she wore the needle in a lady's trinket around her neck with strings of five different colors. It bumped against her sternum while she ate whitefish by the giggling creek as a girl, and it slept with her on their mattress low to the ground. Now a little boy would find it, she was sure, and would see how far he could throw it into the lake. When the American baseball player stepped off the mound, rotator cuff torn, his throat swelled choking his breaths. His last throw, his last, a slider over the outside corner was now gone. Countless hours he'd spent throwing a rubber ball at a taped-off rectangle on the side of his garage. The stucco chipped away from the repetition. His trajectory set until now. He nursed his arm like a limping horse as he walked to the dugout, his path blurry and tearing. And now, they've found a way to alter the genes of the Orthoptera. It seems the violin orchestras of grasshoppers on the west coast have caused too much trouble to stand. They've made a silent grasshopper, whose resined legs, when rubbed on the bow of their wing, mutely call out. What an uncommon thing to cherish, rubbing your legs together, but staring up at the wheel of the moon looking down, hoping only to call out to a once loved one, the sadness of their silence is something I wonder if they know enough to miss.

Castration

or, Cherish Uncommonly

Ophelia

Arthur Rimbaud

Cutup by
Ken Beaver

I

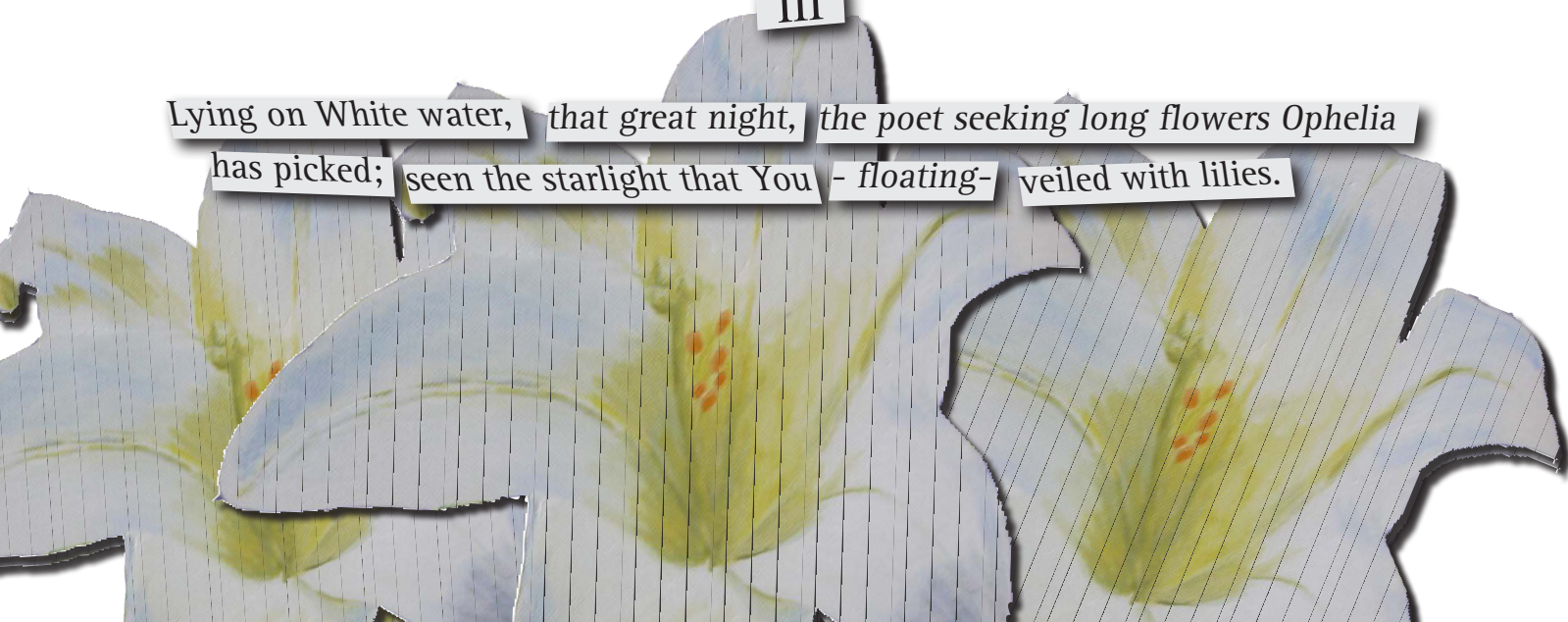
On ruffled calm the water with golden White wind floats. Has a lily, lean alder and
the sound of sweet woods from the far-off. Her shoulder, Ophelia, ballad the mort.
Time's slumbering water-lilies die where anthem phantoms anthem at the sighing river.
For stars are great, long very are its waters that slowly veil...her, which unfolds in kisses,
breasts falling, madness shivering willows; the murmured black wreath's sad rustle.
Sleeping small are rising. Years can escape, she rouses her brow and great rushes fall.
Black years dreaming of the mysterious white, lying in weeping stars.

II

In dreaming, pale snow visions of the terrified river! Great poorness of spoken rumors,
winds strange. On fearful mountains listening voices shatter better freedom- O words
voice snow! Pale child's melted human breath! It was your heart, your song of oh that
the wind and Nature Girl! you blue knight, nights; mute knees! By that too April died!
Too was the beautiful madman your Heaven! Sighs, Freedom! What twisting dream,
mad poor crazed Ophelia! Was It, the tree, too soft? Your Love? Fire, great descending
child, strangled Infinity and sated your eye. That great heart- minding seas
and morning- groans.

III

Lying on White water, that great night, the poet seeking long flowers Ophelia
has picked; seen the starlight that You - floating- veiled with lilies.



Ode To Abandoned Water Bottle

Aubrey Lutz

I had someone once,
she drank half of me
'Fore she made to depart
and make a laugh of me
So I stay on this ledge,
unable to move
As the rain pounds away on
my clear plastic grooves
Whether I'm half-full
or half-empty,
I do not care
No matter what's in here
if there's no one out there

I think there must be
a place to the left side of
nowhere;
Where you can taste the
gravel roads every
time
a truck zips by the
sunburned yards where
unclean kids
amuse themselves
until smells of supper seep
from behind
awkwardly hinged doors
and everyone clamors for a seat
near crazy aunt alma
Whose eyes
I swear are so clear
you can see right through
to the back of her skull.

Crazy Aunt Alma

Amy Fink

This gift, you
Gave
Was late
I took it
I return when you're not looking
To where you gave it first
Sharp light stark chance
You gone, I wrap myself spotless
Limp through the weight you shed
Fire can't help himself
He'll lurch to my door

Never crawl, I keep my eyes
Tall and burning past yours

Sullen Son

Amy Lyman

Isn't Globalization Swell!?!?

Justin Taylor



-Dad, I learned in school today that most of the things I have are made overseas. Is that true?

-It sure is, Timmy. Through the wonders of globalization, we get manufactured goods from distant countries. Here Son, let me tell you a little more about how this wonderful cycle works.

-That would be real swell, Dad!

-Far off in the Orient, there are some really hard-working folks. Many of them work in sweatshops manufacturing all of our real neat stuff. They make a few whole dollars a week. That's about how much you make doing your chores around the house for a whole month!

-Sure is, Dad! They must be able to buy lots of the neat things that they make. But, why do they make sweat in those shops?

-Oh, they don't make sweat, son; they simply enjoy harsh working conditions, because it builds character. Anyway, these hard-working folks put together all of the little parts in things like our TV. Then they put it on a big boat and send it to the USA.

-Wow, that sounds like a whole lot of fun. I like building things, too!

-Yeah, it does seem like fun, doesn't it? And after we get our brand new TV, we use it for a few years and then get a new one. We've got to give those folks something to do, after all!

-And plus, our TV isn't as nice as everyone else's after a couple of years. We should get one of those new ones I saw at the Johnson's!

-You know, you're right son, we should.

-Well, tell me Dad, where does this old one go when we're done with it?

-We will give it away to a poorer family that can't buy one for themselves. A lot of people have lost their jobs recently to people in other countries.

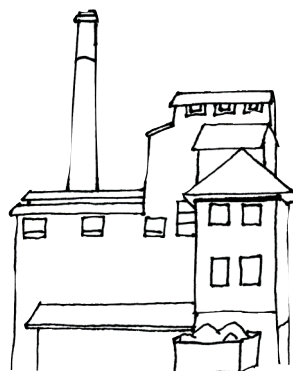
-Well that's no good, Dad. How did they lose them? Can't we go and get them back?

-They lost them so that the things we buy can be made for less money. See, people here in the USA get paid a lot more than the folks over in the Orient. If our TV had been made in the USA, it would have cost more and we couldn't have gotten that new blender with it.

-That would be a shame, Dad. I really like that blender! I'm glad our things are made overseas and those folks are kind enough to work for less. That's real thoughtful of them.

-Yep son, it sure is nice of them. Well, lets go get that new TV. What do you say?

-Oh boy, that sounds great!



MADE IN CHINA

LIVE GREEN

Ari Sahagun

Interconnectedness: Someone once said: "It's all relatives." Believe it or not, our actions make history and the world around us. Phenomena like species extinction, polar ice cap melting, urban air pollution, toxic and persistent chemical production, and other injustices have been created by our irresponsibility. Let's begin fixing these by taking small steps, and spreading this awareness with the people closest to us. Here's how:

TALK TO EVERYONE



Help them think about how our actions affect future generations, people around the world, eco-systems, water supply, garbage dumps. ... For example: "What can we do to save money on our electricity bill?" "What do you think about sweatshops?" You don't have to be an eco-nerd to think critically about your relationships.

BRING YOUR OWN CUP



Sure their cups may be "green" but yours is reusable. And you can feel good that yours doesn't promote the senseless murder of forest elders.

PRINT SPARINGLY



Double-side print when possible; many school printers can "duplex". Think: will printing this really contribute to my productivity? Use papers more than once, and recycle them when you're done.

SHOWER WITH A FRIEND



Well, that is, if you're not going to take longer showers that way. The point is to waste less water: don't run the water while you're brushing your teeth, or washing dishes, do bigger loads in the washing machine.

USE LESS PACKAGING



The correct answer to "Paper or plastic?" is "neither". Use a canvas bag, your backpack, or no bag at all. Think about all the waste created by packaging, and choose items that produce less waste. 1,000,000,000,000 (a trillion) plastic bags are consumed worldwide, annually.

CLEAN GREEN



Choose cleaning supplies with biodegradable chemicals whenever you can. Large supermarkets are beginning to carry brands like Seventh Generation, and there are several product lines available online.

COMPOST



Make a compost bin out of recycled materials. Talk to your landlord and see if she/he minds continuing this after you leave. OR make a "worm bin" you can keep inside. They really don't smell if cared for properly and can be contained in a small, unobtrusive box, I promise. Composting produces rich usable soil, something garbage dumps don't offer.

PAT. PEND.

PAT. PEND.

PAT. PEND.

PAT. PEND.

The Salt Mills

SUSAN XU

I remember walking by the salt mills – back when it was still on the corner of Second and Forrest – with you atop my shoulders, too small to walk the miles home. You were afraid of the roaring sounds, shifting salt mountains cascading down. Some days, you'd hide your eyes in my neck, and clutch onto me until my neck was red. I used to wash your spit out of my hair.

The sound was big, so we spoke with shaking heads, and nods. You'd point homewards, and I'd shake my head.

The street lights flickered above us, and I imagined better neighborhoods, the kind you saw on movies. Where you didn't worry about getting mugged in the afternoon. Ones that had decent sidewalks. Outlet malls.

Those days, I had to get up for the night shift, so I tucked you in, and went out, always back before breakfast. I didn't cook then, and you'd watch as I'd rummage through the fridge. Pancakes were your favorite, so when we had them, we sat on the steps, using our hands, eating them plain without butter or syrup, because we wanted to, not because we didn't have them.

School days, I got up early, made little shapes from food. Dinosaurs and squiggly octopi only with four legs instead of eight.

Octopi have eight legs, you said, rubbing the sleep from your eyes, shaking all that blond hair. When you cut it off at fifteen – some teenager thing – I remember autumn sifting through blunt edges when I caught you smoking from the balcony ledge.

Really? Oh I forgot. I'd chuckle. Having four fingers really limits your toast-shaping capabilities.

On days when you stomped into the kitchen, I made you toadstools and frowny faces.

Toast don't have feelings, you'd say, sticking your tongue out, but I saw the smile, saw it creep down into the tippy toes of your mouth.

School, work, sleep if I could afford it. For a couple years, we lived on sandwiches, but I learned how to cook, so soup and spaghetti gradually phased into our diet. But

this was before. There were the boneyard shifts, and days when you reached up to hold my hand.

Be safe, you said.

Then I went downtown, riding the route 68 that had no lights. I didn't mind. In the darkness, the city rises up from the ground, electric lights playing tag with the night time sky.

Your daughter's adorable.

A hat with a man attached, sprouting two thin, gangly legs.

Pardon, I said, watching you tumble down the slide.

Oh the little blonde. She's such a doll.

The Hat chuckled, like it was clever. I didn't look back, focusing on your fingers, too fragile to hold a cup, but barely large enough to hurl leaves and catch them as they spiraled down. You wore green corduroy.

I thanked the man, before calling your name.

We never went back.

My schedule was constantly changing, up until I finally bagged the white collar nine 'til five, and had a nice steady line of checks. In the early years, I was waiter, clerk, shop boy, window washer, and occasionally mill worker. For a while, selling papers if I ever grew desperate. In the summertime, I harvested oranges, strawberries. Occasionally, avocados. Oh, but living there, with dirt beneath your hair, and dust inside every cranny. Fourteen people shoved into shacks, families with nimble-handed children, and women paid like men. Dusk that settled into miles of crickets and the rustles of blankets and lovebirds.

Still, my favorite were the mills. I remember when it was alive and exhaling white smoke into languid hours. I spent Fridays and Saturdays, shoveling this, standing watch. I had a good frame, but missing a finger, so I wasn't expected to do much. Not when California had so many virile young ten-fingered men who were supposed to shovel faster or watch better. Ask them all, and they'll tell you. I could out run, out climb, out shovel, and out do just about anyone.



You never liked the washer, but I made you sort your aquamarines and cranberries. We walked toward the Laundromat around six when no one was there. We usually took it back to dry at home, but sometimes, I would sit on top of the dryer, and you'd lay your head on my lap, sucking a thumb. If you had crayons, you'd draw large dinosaurs, all our past houses. Your hand was small enough to fit completely in the center of my palm.

Summertime, we took our wet things and laid them in the park along the hedges, hanging our sheets on the trees. People stared, but I didn't care. I watched you run between the sheets, your shadow like a ghost. Unmentionables were kept separate, placed on opposite ends.

The sun came out, and you looked like spun gold. I called you Rapunzel, asked you to let down your long hair, and you'd laugh until you cried, and start over.

Then you got old, and didn't want to run around.

I called my dad recently. The first time in decades that I even thought about him. I was drunk and dialed the last known number, found out he passed away quietly. My sister mmm hmmed, asked if I was coming back. I said no.

Do you remember it? Large white metal pipes, stacked on top of rows and rows. It was red originally, but eventually dust and salt bleached it into whiteness. You said it reminded you of snow – but you hadn't been near it for years, not since you were a twig.

Can you see the piles of red, blue, men everywhere in nothing but overalls, breaking blocks and driving trucks? We must have walked by there everyday, and even after we moved downtown, we drove by at least once a week when we went to visit Shelley's, the only place that'd be open for twenty-four hours a day. It was a wide plot of land, edges constantly erased and redrawn. One night, before you found me, I would stand in front of it, amazed by the size. It used to be worth more than gold.

I told you, asked you, when you were suspended a few days after turning seventeen. You cried and cried, and it took a few days 'til you could look me in the eye again. You didn't laugh, only handed me a thin smile that threatened to undo me.

We met there years and years ago. You held out a hand.

Remember? Remember?

You were twenty when you stormed out. I remember being twenty-two, thinking of the world as an oyster. Out of college, no money, no job, holding a diploma in history, before I burned it. I planned on kicking up a job

as a teacher, eking out a living doing nothing for nobodies. Then I packed up all four boxes of things, writing a short letter to mom and dad, saying something like 'Sorry, I'll write' or maybe, 'It's better for all of us.'

Living then, was all day to day, dreams when the reefer was exceptionally good. A good life was having a burger, sleeping in warmth. I don't know if I ever grew out of this. Whatever it was, it managed to slither from my genes into yours. This is what I thought when you slammed the door and told me I didn't get it. But I do.

What happened to the octopi, you asked. I told you I would make them someday, but I never did get the chance, did I?

I was married once. A long time ago, and one day I woke up and shook her awake to tell her about the dream.

Her hair was dark brown, and she used to laugh when we got tipsy. She didn't mind the scars. After she left, we split everything up. I got you, and she took the record player, some mismatched china. Only thing I wish I kept was the cedar wood plaque, Home, Sweet Home. It was a present to ourselves in the elopement. You would have liked it.

Her name was Sarah.

We went to the park a lot, the mall when you got older and wanted bell-bottoms, mood rings, bright paisley colors. Rock 'n roll. Leather. Telling me love is all you need.

Then you stumbled in drunk one night, not quite dusk or dawn. I was dozing, watching the door. This was set in the townhouse era, and you just moved schools again. You bit your lip, and I couldn't say a word. Just went upstairs. In the morning, I gave you some egg yolk with vodka – from the neighbors, since I stopped drinking.

You asked me if I was angry, and I told you no, holding out a tumbler.

I'm sorry, you said, and your hands trembled as they reached for the water. I ended up holding one end, and coaxing you to drink.

My father gave me a long rehearsed speech, telling me the evils of drinking. Gin caused earthquakes. Martinis dried up oceans. Brandy caused the earth to spiral into nothingness. I thought about giving you a similar speech, but then I looked down at my hands, the long ugly burns that reached into my chest.

I forgot. You used to wake up and start crying. I never asked, and you never told. Instead, you scurried underneath the covers and hid yourself beneath. Maybe it was the storms. Or whatever horror movie I shouldn't have

let you see. I'd brush the sweaty bangs from your eyes, and move to the rocking chair nearby, counting your breaths, in the rhythms of the creaking wood.

You graduated early, and I still have the reels locked somewhere. They don't make flickering old-fashioned machines anymore, but I keep them anyways.

Eighteen years-old, reeking of youth and beer. I'd like to think that you said no, but I know better.

Must have been the only night we argued, and I still don't remember what I said. Just that I realized you'd eventually go and leave and get into places that I couldn't reach. Four fingers only go so far.

My mouth kept shooting, and you forgot to duck.

The next morning there was a note saying something: 'I'm sorry' or 'It's better this way'. I remember the feel of scrawled paper as it slipped through my fingers. Blond strands of silk.

Days.

Months.

Years.

This is what memory leaves. A broken shoe. Old shampoo. Rows of books, and outdated dresses.

I used to walk through the mall, or sit in the park, trying to guess which kid was yours, or who your husband was. You walked past me with red hair, brunette. Long legs stuffed into jeans, small wobbly heels. Cars changed, and presidents died, but it was always the walk that convinced me you just passed. Maybe you did. Maybe you didn't. This was how I passed the years.

Every year until I couldn't, I called a private eye and scrounged up your address. Sometimes it worked, but most times it didn't. I sent you a card to the last address, blank. Having no expectations, I wasn't disappointed.

When I told you I found you in a dumpster, I wasn't completely lying. You didn't speak, or cry. It took six months, before you gave me your first words – water, please. All that time, I thought you were mute. Then you put your arms behind your back, accidentally let it slip between shiny teeth. You clapped your hands on your mouth, and shook your head.

I was doing dishes then, and had to put down the plate since my grip had dissolved into jelly. I wiped my hands on my pants, and knelt down until we were face to face.

Ok.

You began to cry, and I tentatively stretched out four digits, patting you awkwardly on the back. I wiped your eyes, and put you to bed.

It must have been a week after I found you. You teetered on too thin legs, as you looked up at me. This is how I see a stranger. Long hair down to the back, and a small white dress collecting dust at its edges. You look surprised, and I saw the ring on your finger. I heard the roar of the mills. I felt your weight against my back.

Hi, you said, and offered me a cigarette. I declined. Had quit.

This was after years of waiting, phone calls, and detectives. I used to dream of grandkids in my arms, you living a few houses down. I could visit on Saturdays, and in between, I'd work at the mill.

You couldn't say anything, and when I stayed put, your mouth opened and closed. You didn't cry, despite the stains on the wall, beer bottles, lines of sadness creasing your eyes. I remember thinking tough girl.

Thank you, you said, and when I strained I heard everything you cut out. I left money, but I know you threw it away.

I walked down to my pick-up, and drove around the city for hours, stopping at Second and Forrest. Looking up at the expansive barrenness, lit softly by the lamplight glare. The mill had long been taken apart, by stitch and seam.

When the fire broke out, doctors said it was because of the salt that I was still alive by the time they dug me out and took out half the hand. It wasn't a week later when I hobbled by one night, and you were carrying that soiled blanket around, staring straight at me and my bandages. The first night, I watched as you curled up on the mattress – a tiny ball of blonde – and counted breaths. The scariest night of my life. I thought your breath would stop.

There are still scorch marks in the South. Just as salt still piles up in the shadows. I kicked up a pile into the night, and watched it rise and fall. Dust. Moon. Salt. You.



Thinking

Some artists reuse images that they discover elsewhere. Sometimes this is called collage, pop art, or detournement. Can you match the artist with what they have reused?



Pablo Picasso

Joe Camel



Andy Warhol

"The Crush"



Ron English

Oil Cloth of Chair Caning



Francis Bacon

Soup Can



René Viénet

Portrait of Innocent X



doesn't bother with the didacticism and goes for the slogan, for the straight shot at the solar plexus. His message is the billboard, the one glimpse at a corrupted familiarity, at a poisoned message. Does it make us think, or does it make us want a cigarette? As Henry Ford realized, mere recognition can perpetuate fetishistic consumerism. The mere sight of the conditioned stimulus is all that's needed to salivate our consumption urges. Can a criticism decondition the stimulus and sour the appetite? Or is it still under the possession of what it commands? Does the mask orient the user more than the opposite? Does seeing the reapportionment just satiate our need for critical appraisal, for wanting to believe that we know the truth, that we can see the strings and the illusions? When, in actual consumption reality, that cognitive habits, urges, and desires we think we understand, that we think we can transcend through rational criticism and investigation? That manipulation is tolerable if we know who's doing it, that our neurotic consumption is acceptable if we choose it?

In nature, the virus injects itself into the living cell, then reproduces its own genetic chain with the energy and chemical machinery of that cell. When exhausted, the cell severs apart, rotten, dead. The virus now floods outwards, finding new hosts to consume. We find nothing of this in Picasso, in that cubist formalism, which, while questioning the experience of form and sight – especially in a time of mechanical reproduction (see Benjamin) – could not be consciousness of itself as commodity. Warhol and Bacon are, too, centered on the aesthetic of recreating the familiar. Bacon transmogrifies it into a beast grim, decadent, beautiful specter. Warhol knew what he was doing, but just laughed at one class's petty tastes to create palatable, expensive paintings for another. In Viénet and English we find the most serious challenge, in that, here, we find the earnest effort of subversion and reapportionment. Viénet deluges us with Marxist/Hegelian dialectics pasted over overwrought martial arts cinema. English

But the real answer to this question of artistic repossession is the question of whether, in high-jacking an aesthetic vehicle, the artist can fully steer a predetermined, predestined commodity product. If the audience merely sees the ostensible shell, oblivious to which creative spirit inhabits the machine – an ad man or an artist – will there be any significant difference? Will the embodied image just keep replicating its default social meaning? Will that can of soup, that warm, loopy Campbell's soup, easy-to-prepare and cheap-to-buy? Can the bourgeois ideology – via its manifest, tangible commodification – really be redirected to signal against itself? Can its hegemony be subverted by its own mechanisms?

ANSWERS:
 Pablo Picasso: Oil cloth of chair caning
 Andy Warhol: A soup can
 Ron English: Joe Camel
 Francis Bacon: A portrait of Pope Innocent X
 René Viénet: "The Crush"

Thanks for reading.

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Look for us again Spring 2008.
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