



plum creek  
review

*spring 2016*

**the plum creek review**

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## table of contents

13	<b>Seascape #4</b>	<i>Michelle Fikrig</i>
14-15	<b>What day is it?</b>	<i>Benjamin Vock</i>
16	<b>Blue skies/ Family ties</b>	<i>Soren Carlson-Donohoe</i>
17	<b>Girlhoods in Pittsburgh</b>	<i>Louise Edwards</i>
18	<b>Spaces in NYC, Crown Hts, Kingston Ave Station</b>	<i>Alice Shockey</i>
19	<b>Anwar Congo Watches his Grandchildren Feed the Ducks</b>	<i>Zachariah Claypole-White</i>
20	<b>Broken Fishing Post</b>	<i>Mia-Silvan Grau</i>
21	<b>Shoreline</b>	<i>Margaret Kijinski</i>
22	<b>Bad terrain</b>	<i>Soren Carlson-Donohoe</i>
23-28	<b>Stages of Grief</b>	<i>Casey Redcay</i>

29	<b>Genesis</b>	<i>Grace Tobin</i>	45	<b>Wilder</b>	<i>Matias Berretta</i>
30	<b>Home</b>	<i>Mia Silvan-Grau</i>	46	<b>Street Shows</b>	<i>Bryan Rubin</i>
31	<b>honesty to the body</b>	<i>Rachel Maclean</i>	47-56	<b>I'll Be Right Back</b>	<i>Slade Gottlieb</i>
32	<b>Woman in Sorrow</b>	<i>Mia Silvan-Grau</i>	57	<b>open until shut</b>	<i>Margaret Middleton</i>
33	<b>Death Mask</b>	<i>Margaret Middleton</i>	58	<b>Carnatic Fiddle</b>	<i>Mohit Dubey</i>
34-35	<b>Poem for my Tongue</b>	<i>Casey Redcay</i>	59	<b>Triptych</b>	<i>Jacob Roos</i>
36-39	<b>reclaiming space</b>	<i>Alice Shockey</i>	60	<b>To the Tune of Rachmaninoff in C Minor</b>	<i>Ally Fulton</i>
40	<b>Tides</b>	<i>Vida Weisblum</i>	61	<b>Rock 1</b>	<i>Celia Keim</i>
41	<b>Bee Produce</b>	<i>Grace Tobin</i>	62	<b>ethereal filtered</b>	<i>Margaret Middleton</i>
42-43	<b>Whitman in Chem</b>	<i>Talia Rodwin</i>	63-65	<b>I Have Cancer</b>	<i>Helen Kramer</i>
44	<b>Hair from Hillary</b>	<i>Celia Keim</i>	66	<b>Framework</b>	<i>Grace Tobin</i>
			67	<b>And so</b>	<i>Matias Berretta</i>

68	<b>woman watching water</b>	<i>Mia Silvan-Grau</i>	85	<b>Coney Island</b>	<i>Laura Feyer</i>
69-70	<b>and suddenly, Jesus sandals</b>	<i>Victoria Albecete</i>	Front Cover:	<b>Topography of Fatigue</b> ( <i>ballpoint pen on paper</i> )	<i>Peyton Boughton</i>
71	<b>Cut Through</b>	<i>Soren Carlson-Donohoe</i>	Back Cover:	<b>Untitled</b> ( <i>digital photography</i> )	<i>Gabriel Hawes</i>
72	<b>Higgs Boson</b>	<i>Mohit Dubey</i>			
73	<b>Fragments</b>	<i>Grace Tobin</i>			
74-75	<b>Daffodil</b>	<i>Vida Weisblum</i>			
76	<b>Psychedelic Coffee &amp; Number 15</b>	<i>Bryan Rubin</i>			
77-78	<b>Chaotic Sloppy Unhygenic Evil</b>	<i>Camille Pass</i>			
79-81	<b>Boys Will Be Boys</b>	<i>Benjamin Vock</i>			
82	<b>Hazard</b>	<i>Celia Keim</i>			
83-84	<b>To Market</b>	<i>Zoe Ginsberg</i>			

**Seascape #4**  
*Michelle Fikrig*



*linocut*

## What day is it?

*Benjamin Vock*

I walk down the street  
and the flowers swoon to the nectar of my stride  
and it is a monday  
and I haven't felt the need to mention yet  
that it is a monday

It could have been the first day in genesis  
And god said  
let there be Ben walking down the street  
looking good as fuck

This is how I carry myself sometimes  
and I learn to hold my qualifiers like an alter  
I treat my becoming as a bottomless wine glass  
and I'm not looking for you to talk about whether is half full or  
half empty  
That's not why i invited you over for drinks

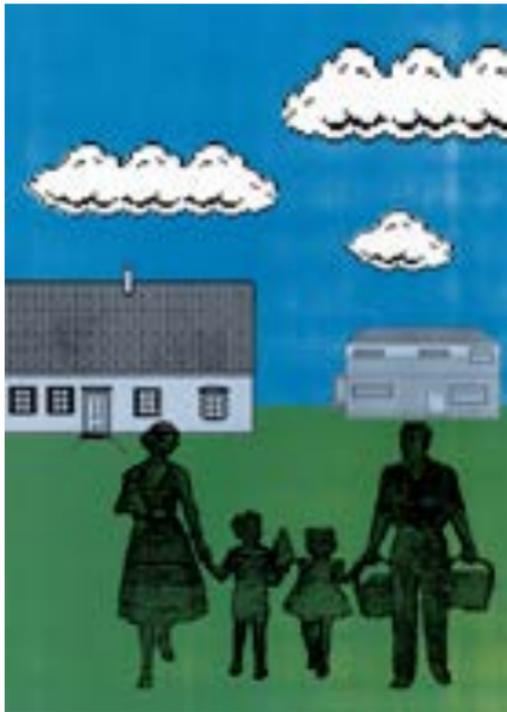
We're here to party  
I put on the freshest color  
of my friends lipstick for this  
I put on glitter and each sparkle represents  
a bit of myself i'm reclaiming  
After years of not being enough of a man  
I can finally say  
HA! Good riddance!

So let's dance and spin  
the way we spin our umbrellas in the rain  
to shake off all that burden  
if only for a moment

I learn to hold my qualifiers like an alter  
I am proud at the right time  
I am happy enough  
I love myself in this poem  
I come clean when possible  
I shimmy like I mean it mostly  
I forget to mention it's monday on some mondays

## Blue Skies/ Family Ties

Soren Carlson-Donohoe



## Girlhoods in Pittsburgh

Louise Edwards

*for the McDonald sisters*

The sisters came from the woods within Steel City. They came from picking blackberries and bramble scratches and fingers turned a brilliant fuchsia. They came from finding turtles in the fallen leaves. One of them they named Tammy and painted her name with bright red nail polish on her shell. When spring came, they always knew Tammy from the chipping red flecks.

The sisters came from Papa and Lovey. They came from the bridges Papa built spanning roads and rivers and the stain glass he pieced together into panels of dancing light. They came from the things Lovey knew – how to write a thesis and drive a car. She was the only woman on the street who knew how.

They came from imagining:

When Larry the Lion was dropped in the mud on the way home from school, they imagined a haircut might improve the stuffed lion's mane. It'll grow back.

When they told stories about the Catholic school nuns at the dinner table, they learned to embellish to make their parents laugh. Sister Ursula is as mean as a wicked witch!

And at Aunt Mill's house they guessed what color the caboose would be on the rumbling trains – green, no blue, brown, yellow, red. They imagined what color the future would be.

## Spaces in NYC, Crown Hts, Kingston Ave Station

Alice Shockey



*litho print and graphite pencil on paper*

## Anwar Congo Watches his Grandchildren Feed the Ducks

Zachariah Claypole-White

In the dead morning  
we walk to the shed  
and feed crumbs to the ducks.

We pick them up  
like a child first holding a rifle.

Johan is too young for his hands  
they belong to a man  
and they snap a duck's leg  
like the Musi River snaps trees  
when the rains push her  
over her bank.

I tell him  
apologize  
pet her gently,  
carefully—  
the way you pick a Melati flower  
between thumb and forefinger,  
the way you blow out a dying candle,  
the way you wrap wire  
around a man's neck—

it's the easiest way to kill him  
we learned that quickly enough  
tie one end to a pole  
another to piece of wood  
then pull  
like you are breaking stale bread  
for the ducks—

they watch you, you know,  
after the bread is gone  
with eyes as unblinking  
as the communists  
when we piled their bodies  
on to the first of the trucks.

Oh God, why did we never close their eyes?

## Broken Fishing Post

*Mia Silvan-Grau*



*35mm photography*

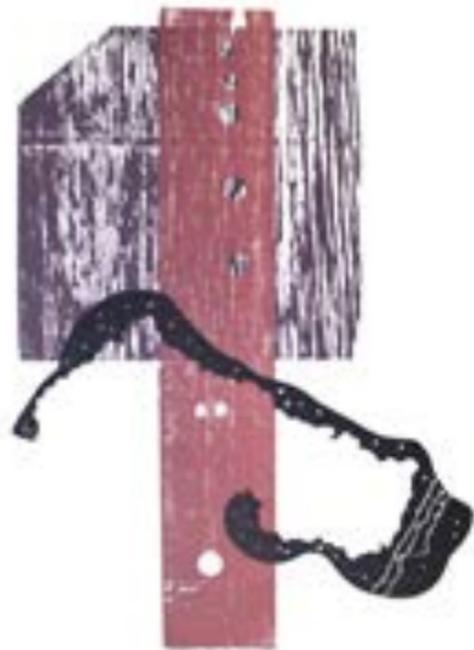
## Shoreline

*Margaret Kijinski*

that summer, the days were oceans  
we bought corn on the side of the road  
stopped to watch the bugs droning  
like the plane that took Marion away  
we played badminton in the backyard  
let music seep through the screen  
the boy who wouldn't be seen  
again slept on the floor  
in the empty room  
which later we filled with sand  
stolen from the midwestern beach

## Bad Terrain

Soren Carlson-Donohoe



*found wood print*

## Stages of Grief

Casey Redcay

*content warning: sexual violence*

### Reflection

My mother sits me down on the couch when I get home from school, and she tells me to never let a man take my voice. I am confused about what she means but I can hear her voice shake under her words. I know it is important.

### Denial

Now, I can breathe. We are alone, as sisters, we left men sleeping on couches inside. The car is warming up, and I will take us home, though my hands are shaking, and the road is frozen. "I think something bad happened" I said. Shakeshakeshake.

### Reflection

I used to have nightmares about bears. In frozen air I would climb my favorite tree, but I was not safe in my yard, I was somewhere else. The location didn't matter, just that I was not home, that I was confused. I woke before I knew if I had been climbing fast enough.

**Denial**

In the frozen car, I told her a watered-down version of what happened. It was all I could say, I felt on the verge of collapse. She told me I had made her uncomfortable. She told me not to tell anyone else about it. "Sorry" I said, turning on the radio.

**Reflection**

The gender of the bear was irrelevant. My nightmares didn't need to be assigned a sex. Now it is clear that the bear is male. Now, it is clear the bear isn't a bear at all.

**Denial**

I got home and tried to write about it like I wrote about anything else. Pretend it was like any other party. The entry sounds like a description of a bad dream. All confusion and guessing. You can see how my hand shook as I wrote, like the earth was shaking around me.

**Reflection**

Mother grizzly bears do not even trust the fathers of their cubs. They are too dangerous. For the years that she is raising her children, she will avoid them.

**Denial**

When it started I thought I was still dreaming. I told myself it was just another nightmare. There were no bears, and I hadn't had a nightmare in years, but surely this couldn't be happening. Even when I knew it was real, I pretended to be asleep.

**Reflection**

I remember, when I was still very young, while waiting at the check-out of the grocery with my mother, I found a book interpreting symbols in dreams. Immediately, I looked for bear attacks: "you are feeling or dealing with anger at yourself or another"

**Anger**

I remember it in basements, when the cool tile floors feel like ice. I remember the heat of his hands. I remember time passing in a dream-like freeze, every second an eternity, as I hoped helplessly for an end. I remember it every night in my dreams.

**Reflection**

My mother told me something else that day. She told me she was raped when she was young. I don't remember if she said anything else, the conversation has taken up the haziness of a dream.

**Anger**

People often describe me as quiet. I never minded much. My silence was deliberate. It was a choice. Silence was soft, comfortable, mine. It was never an infliction or a threat. You chose not to speak. You let this happen.

**Reflection**

When I was young, my mother taught me that words were heavy. So I chose what I said wisely. But I have known no weight like that of the words unsaid.

**Anger**

I wake up, burning red, gasping for air, shaking. I saw it all happen, saw myself lying there, frozen. I am full of rage, but not at him. You could have prevented it. You let this happen.

**Reflection**

My mother told me to trust my instinct. Don't doubt how you feel. If you think something is wrong, believe it. Hold on to your voice. It is all you have.

**Bargaining**

Your sister said this only matters if you make it matter. So just forget it. Don't tell anyone. If you don't think about it, it can be like nothing ever happened.

**Depression**

I am back in the frozen air, shrouded by my tree, silent, hidden. The bear is below me. He doesn't come after me. He lights the tree on fire. The flames climb up to me. I can not cry for help. The unspoken words are seared upon my lips. Your silence will stay with you forever.

**Acceptance**

It's like an earthquake. At first, everything is shaken, all you can do is hope for an end. There is so much destruction that even the idea of rebuilding seems impossible. Where could you possibly start? From the ash and rubble of what once stood, you will rebuild.

**Reflection**

My mother and I were in an earthquake once. I was eight, and we were at the movies. Our chairs began to shake. With an instant, instinctive recognition, she pulled me to the ground, sheltering me. On the radio, they said that though there was destruction, there were no fatalities.

**Acceptance**

After an earthquake, every city comes to the same conclusion. All that grief and rage is channeled into building themselves back up, stronger than before. We are cities that refuse to collapse.

**Genesis***Grace Tobin**medium???????*

## Home

*Mia Silvan-Grau*

Home smells like garlic at night  
Sounds like sizzling and chopping and broken Catalan

Home smells like my dog  
Smells like his medicated shampoo  
because his hair falls out  
Sounds like him barking likes he's big  
Even though he only comes up 3 inches off the floor

Home smells like Hazelnut coffee in the morning  
Sounds like Arvo part and the crinkling of newspaper

Home feels like my too hard mattress  
Looks orange  
With the big poppies that line my walls

## honesty to the body

*Rachel Maclean*

lately God I've been wondering about  
you and how from clay you made me honest  
it's been a while now since I last prayed  
at all God at the kitchen counter I've  
been holding my body and thinking how  
did I end up in one like this when I  
dress in the morning it feels more like a  
sacrifice and less like a ritual  
you had something to do with this they say  
they at church I used to go and some bits  
stuck like the body to the soul they said  
of those things meant to last that most of all  
God I've been wondering if they're right or  
can the body be wrong by your design?

**Woman in Sorrow**

*Mia Silvan-Grau*



32

*35mm photography*

**Death mask**

*Margaret Middleton*



*screen print*

33

## Poem for my Tongue

*Casey Redcay*

Resilient muscle  
bitten back  
locked up  
in a closed-lip smile  
tormented  
by the unspoken words  
tortured  
with the taste of your own blood—  
how do you put up with me?

I am the worst,  
burning you  
with the taste of cheap vodka  
and cups of coffee  
forced down hastily  
slipping you into unfamiliar mouths  
forgetting to think  
before I make you form words  
I don't mean.

I don't mean it.  
I don't mean to forget  
that although it shines,  
this smile  
is still your cage.

Someday,  
years from now  
when you  
and the rest of the muscles  
have slowed down,  
when I will have learned  
to speak deliberately,  
when I have become  
a different kind of careless,  
the two of us will sit  
for a glass of wine—  
the expensive kind  
that makes every word  
warm and sweet,  
and we will reminisce  
about being young,  
when I behaved  
something like a forest fire,  
nothing but destruction and light,  
and we will have to laugh  
at that taste we can barely remember.  
Youth comes so achingly sweet,  
it leaves you numb.

Today,  
forgive me.  
How I burn you.

**reclaiming space**

*Alice Shockey*

*Children in Theresienstadt Ghetto photographed by Red Cross June 23, 1944*  
*photo and polyester lithography*

And in the clutter  
You did not see  
That the ghetto was beautiful

## Tides

*Vida Weisblum*

Sometimes you are  
difficult to navigate;  
You are unstill. Sometimes  
calm water  
in a vast ocean—  
and then a swarm of eddies,  
dancing in frantic circles,  
snatching leaves... And I am  
always adrift without  
A compass. Some days  
I drop my anchor and lay in  
the sand, waiting for  
nothing in particular.  
I remember tracing your  
face with three fingertips  
one night when it was  
cold in the house. You  
called it a map. And I found  
pleasure in locating the  
corners of your smile,  
and finding only you  
Curled beside me.

## Bee Produce

*Grace Tobin*



## Whitman in Chem

Talia Rodwin

Just another student,  
Walt's got his feet up on the table,  
arms stretched wide,  
letting his musk drift down our row –  
I see a girl wrinkle her nose.  
No notes – he takes it all in with  
a quizzical air,  
brow furrowing and straightening  
like the topography of a nation.

This man is a nation!  
and imagines himself a King.  
The King of Chemistry.

He loves the idea of sizes.  
He sees his face in every molecule and atom,  
sees every molecule, too, in himself.  
He examines the white of his beard,  
searching for its secrets.  
No notes – he stores all of this information

in himself, tucking it away into his scraggly beard.  
He consumes knowledge, becomes it.  
He knows his Carbon and  
Hydrogen and Hydrogen and Hydrogen.

He knows, as a poet knows,  
the secrets of decay and bonds  
and states of being,  
but Chemistry fascinates him all the same.  
Chemistry has a new formula and a new language,  
long words twisting on his tongue –  
ethylene, sulfate, tetrahedrane.  
This universe of tininess  
bursts its seams,  
spills over boundaries  
becomes anew the pattern of the world.

**Hair from Hillary**

*Celia Keim*



*Acrylic paint, hair, and resin on wooden panel*

**Wilder**

*Matias Berretta*

There, turning red, then applying  
itself by right of wayward fraction  
the sunbeam latticed through the trees  
levers the eye in the head on the body  
forward along the bus buzzing the spine  
to sleep, if and then, the truck cuts off the view

tree line thinning to a lake  
hand of cloud smothering the sun

for a streamlined orange haze  
haven, heaven, strata laid bare  
the face of a rock looking outward  
fording the blue

## Street Shows

*Bryan Rubin*



46

*digital photography*

## I'll Be Right Back

*Slade Gottlieb*

It didn't happen at all like you imagined it. You've been having trouble trying to picture your mother, all swollen. You're trying to sleep, and you can't stop thinking about it. You close your eyes and your mind finds its way to her with her skin stretched so tight it shines, like a wet watermelon. You open then close your eyes again and again and you always think of it. She changes shape a little, grows and shrinks but always shines, she is always a melon. You even wake up with her and that belly on your mind.

You want to remember it so badly, being in there and then coming into the world, being born. You wonder if the light was like the red you see when you press a flashlight to your fingertips. God, you needed to know.

It's a Saturday, so your father takes you and your little brother out to breakfast, gives you some time away from the mother you see everyday and more time with the mother that has been on your mind. He takes you guys to Waffle House, as usual. It's a lovely little place that reminds you of home. You always want to sit at the bar on the spinning stool with the glossy black seat. It looks like a softer and more skin-like version of the black marble counters in your kitchen.

47

You and your little brother get quarters from your father and go to the Jukebox to pick a song. It's the kind with the flaps that flip when you press down on one of the arrows. You flip to the right and love the lag between the press of the button and the actual flip on the song list. You look at your bother and you ask him about the day he was born. He says what? He says you should know more than he does, because you were there. You tell him you were only just two years old, how is that even possible. You're facing him now but he doesn't look at you, he's flipping the song lists and reading the names of albums out loud. They are all from around the time you were born, back in 1993, and you don't know any of their names. He says, *Guns N' Roses*, and you both lean in closer to read the song lists. You've never heard of this band before, you're only eleven and haven't figured out what makes music so great. But you like the name of the band, and think of a gun made of the stems of flowers, and instead of bullets, a rose just blooms from the barrel when you pull the trigger.

You're little brother says, *Civil War*, how about that song? You ask him what a civil war is and he doesn't know. He's only nine now, and still afraid to order anything extra with his hash browns. But your father is calling you both back to the bar, with the spinning stools made of the black skin, like the sparkling marble.

At the bar you order a grilled cheese sandwich with plain hash browns, and ask for no pickles. The woman smiles at you and says sure thing sugar and looks to your father but he's looking at you and asks you, *You sure, you get that every time, Kiddo*. You tell him you don't know, but you're sure. The woman looks at you and smiles. She has a used up face, the skin is

wrinkles and looks like its been stretched wide and snapped back onto her face. So it's loose. And her jaw is so thin the tops of her cheekbones make the cheek skin hang like a curtain over her teeth. Her eyes shine in a way that make her loose face look honest, like everything she's been through was necessary and well worth it. She asks you if the usual is what you're sticking with and you nod at her then look at your father, who is reading the menu. He orders the same thing he orders every Saturday but you don't say anything about it. The waitress takes the menus and shouts out your orders in diner-code and your father opens the paper and puts his reading glasses on.

Your hash browns are *naked*. Your little brother leans over and looks at you across the front of your father and his newspaper. He says your hash browns need to put some frickin clothes on. Your dad says watch your mouth without looking up. You tell your brother his hash browns should mind their dang business and then your bother slaps your father's arm and shouts *HE SAID DAMN!* Your father jumps and has to grab the bar with both hands to keep from falling off his spinny stool. He says, *God damn it, Jesse*, and looks at your brother over the top of his tiny glasses. He doesn't shout, your father never shouts in public. When he really gets worked up, he'll grab you by the shoulder and lean over so he's close. He'll do the thing where he looks towards you but never right at you, then he'll yell in a whisper. This time he just folds his paper and says god damn it, Jesse and looks towards the waitress who has the plates in her hands.

You and your brother finish your food without speaking and then ask if you can go wait outside. Your father says to stay out of the street and you both get up and run out the door. You guys cross the parking lot to go sit on the little grass hill that separates the Waffle House lot and the street. You both sit on the hill facing the Waffle House and your brother pulls his legs up to his chest while you start tearing tufts of grass out of the ground and dropping it. You pretend like you are testing the direction of the wind for some meaningful reason. You say, *That's a strong southern wind we've got today, huh Jesse?* Your little brother stands up and says it's the gulf, there must be a storm approaching. Hurricane Katrina was about two months ago and Georgia got a bit of the back end of the storm; so you and your neighborhood friends have been using storms as intense plotlines in your pretend games. You look up at the sky and shield your eyes from the sun. The sky is as blue as it could be, save some clouds way far off near the horizon made of pine-tree tops. You say oh man, you're right. Just look at this sky we've got here. Jesse looks up and has to shield his eyes, too. He says the sky could open up any second, he says the clouds are so full of storm water that they look blue as empty sky! You thought you had him, you like to play pretend like a competition. Whoever can pretend until the other person runs out of ideas, wins. But Jesse came back quick with this one and you think he might be a genius.

Your father comes out of the Waffle House and walks straight to the car. He watches you two stare at the sky and doesn't interrupt until the beep sound from the car doors unlocking. You turn and tap Jesse and you both head for the car. You sit in the front

seat and Jesse sits in back. Your father starts the car and the radio comes on. He has been on a reggae stint for some time now, and it doesn't make much sense to anybody. When you ask him about it he just says its good music and it helps him relax. He talks to your mother about taking a vacation to Jamaica soon and she usually just laughs and says okay and that's it. You open the window and rest your head on your hand so that the air passing the car only hits your hair and nothing else. You look out at the trees and imagine yourself out there running alongside the car with a huge sword. A huge sword so sharp it can cut through the trunk of a tree like a stick of butter left in the sun on your black kitchen counter. You imagine yourself running thirty-five miles an hour along side the car chopping big trees like butter and then your father slams on the brakes. Jesse shouts what the hell but your father doesn't say anything. You look forward and there is an ambulance in a driveway and two cop cars with their lights flashing but no siren sounds. The roads around here dip and curve and have speed limits that nobody really obeys, there are no streetlights and everything is all big yards and little ranch houses.

The driveway with the ambulance belongs to your mother's parents. They moved out here from Texas about a year ago and decided the closer to your home the better. You look and there are no cars in the driveway. Your mother's parents are probably out at breakfast with some friends from church, but there is a car wrapped around a tree in the front yard. It's a small black coup. Your father pulls over and gets out of the car. Jesse is so close to the window in the back seat that you can see a little spot appear and disappear with his

breathing. He asks you what happened without looking away from the window, he asks you if grandma and grandpa are okay. You tell him they are and you look over at your father talking to a police officer. The officer takes his hat off and scratches his head with the same hand while he talks. He points to the car around the tree with his hat-hand, both him and your father are still for a little bit, looking at the car. Then your father turns and comes back. He opens the door and sits down, starts the car and checks over his shoulder before pulling out onto the street. After a couple of minutes he says, *Fuckin drunk kids.*

At home you and Jesse get out of the car and leave your father in the driver's seat with his cell phone in his hands. The hallway with both of your bedrooms is immediately to the right once you enter through the front door. When you guys are inside you both take your shoes off and race down the hall in your socks. At about halfway you jump and slide on the hardwood floor and have to hit the wall pretty hard because you can't stop in time. You bump your knee a bit but it isn't anything that distracts you from the fact that you made it to the wall at the end of the hall before your little brother. You turn to shout at him about it but he just shoves you into the wall and takes the left into his bedroom and when you get a hold of your balance you follow him in. His room is a lot bigger than yours. It was your parents' room before the renovations, so it has its own bathroom, a semi walk in closet, and a little screen porch with an old rocking chair and glass table. There is also a wind chime out there that is so loud you can hear it with the window closed. He also has an old TV. It's newer than your TV, but you wouldn't give up your TV. Like your room, your parents asked you if you

wanted their room before they offered it to your bother, but you said no. You have a hard time letting go of things. Your mother always says she loves how sentimental you are. You just tell her you would feel bad getting rid of the things you have. You just think about it all as if everything is made up of bits of you, and you cant let things like get hurt or left behind. Like your small twin bed, the one your father slept in when he was a kid. When you lay down in that bed and the wooden frame creaks like it's aching you stop moving because you don't need to lie on your left side.

Jesse asks you if you wanna play video games but you hear the groaning from the front door opening and your mother is home from the gym so you say yeah sure hold on and run down the hall towards the front door and kitchen. Your mother is leaning and dripping sweat onto the counter. You smell her and wonder why her sweat never smells like sweat. It makes you feel safe in a way you don't understand but that's okay because you never try to. She looks at you and smiles and asks you about Waffle House. You tell her you had a grilled cheese with plain hash browns and no pickles and she says the usual and you smile and nod. She stands and looks and reaches towards the ceiling to stretch and says okay sweetest momma's gotta shower. You say okay and she turns to walk away but then you remember the car at her parents' house and ask her to wait you have something to say. She turns and says *Oh* like she does, and smiles. You tell her about the ambulance and the police outside the house but its okay because their car wasn't there and there was another little black car all wrapped around a tree. She looks, for a moment, like she might be worried about this but when she realizes it wasn't her parents she relaxes.

Then her worrying about her parents makes you think about how she was once a kid like you, and even a baby, once. And then for some reason you remember this morning, how you were thinking about being born and suddenly you want to know all about it again so you ask her about the day you were born.

*Oh Oh Momma wait!* You laugh a little while she sighs real heavy like she is irritated but you know she is pretending like she does. She turns around and is smiling that smile, the one that flattens her forehead and narrows her eyes like she just woke up from a nap. You ask her about being a baby, about how you looked as soon as you were born. She laughs and asks you why and you say because of a dream and grandma and grandpa and you don't know.

*You were such a small thing, my brand new baby boy,* she says. You were a little premature. That's why they had to have her on a table with her stomach bare, with the nurse dotting a line from her navel to the top of the pelvic bone.

*They cut you open?!* You ask. She says, yep, but she couldn't see any of it. The nurse was nice enough to pull a blue curtain over all of the cutting and digging around looking for you.

*And with the medicine, it was like my lower half was dipped in some warm water, the bluest water.* You say it all sounds so calm but she says, *Oh you should have seen your father!* He was yelling a whole lot, especially in the beginning, while things were being organized and put into place. He was looking her in the eye and shouting about breathing right *OUT OUT INNNN OUT OUT INNNN* and you laugh at this. Because your father isn't that kind of man anymore. He doesn't do a lot of looking people in the eye, at least not around the house. But you like the image of

him holding your swollen mother's hand, squeezing it hard and screaming in her face. You picture her shocked look, her wide eyes and wrinkly forehead. In your mind the stillness in her lower half leaks a little into her chest and diaphragm. It slows her breathing and even when she tries for more her breath only escapes a little at a time. Like bits of wind through a window, her voice the flutter of the curtain. She'll smile at him and say something softly, like, *Shh, sweetest, its okay.* Or, *oh you don't have to yell so loud, dear,* the way she'll eventually speak to you and your little brother. She remembers him leaving, or being asked to leave, and then something like tugging for some time. A feeling like when you would kick and little bumps would show your feet on the underside of her belly, but the opposite, a gentle pulling.

You imagine the inside of her stomach. The glow of the light coming through her stretched skin. You can hear your father shouting at your mother, all muffled and far away. The doctor puts a blade to your mother's belly. Now the skin that kept you safe spreads and opens and everything is suddenly blinding. Two gloved hands, white creatures, the strangest things you'll ever see in your entire life, come in and wrap themselves around you. You're pulled out into the world and things pass through you at impossible speeds. You wish you could remember what it was like.

Your mother takes your hand and wraps it around her pinky. She says after you were out and the cord was cut they stitched her back up. They took down the curtain, the hospital gown lay along her flattened belly. Your father came back in or was finally let back in and sat on the edge of the table. She had you in her arms and he had his arm around her like you see in television shows.

*Then you just, screamed, she says. She tells you that you just shut your eyes tight and wailed. It was a sound she had never heard before. It scared her and your father and the nurses and the doctor and then everyone was laughing and you just screamed. She says, We had to leave you there, because you were so new, in the nursery with the other babies. But you wouldn't be quiet. You just screamed and cried and cried and nobody could get you to stop.*

She tells you about how her and your father got a call from the hospital two days later, and when the lady on the other end said who it was they were suddenly so worried. But she said it was okay, that it was just that no one could get their son to quiet down. And usually they didn't do this with premature babies but they really needed him to be picked up. Because he was keeping everybody awake.

When your mother is finishes talking she just looks at you. You start to feel a little uncomfortable because you think she might cry, and you have only seen her cry once before, in the car. You think about how your father called her stupid for not being able to read a god damn map and she said she was just trying to help then started breathing like your little brother does when he cries, except softer. When she looked back at Jesse, who was sleeping, you waved to catch her eyes. You remember how shiny they were, the blue went from something solid to something overflowing and you just mouthed *it's okay*.

She says, *I love you, Jack*. You hear Jesse yelling your name from his bedroom, where you left him. You tell your mother you'll be right back.



*lithographic print*

## Carnatic Fiddle

*Mohit Dubey*

and who of you  
knew the pressure  
of scroll against cheek  
of peg between lips  
of crease between pages  
unwilling to lie flat  
compressing the world  
under a calloused fingertip

## Triptych

*Jacob Roosa*



*found art collage*

## To the Tune of Rachmaninoff in C Minor

*Ally Fulton*

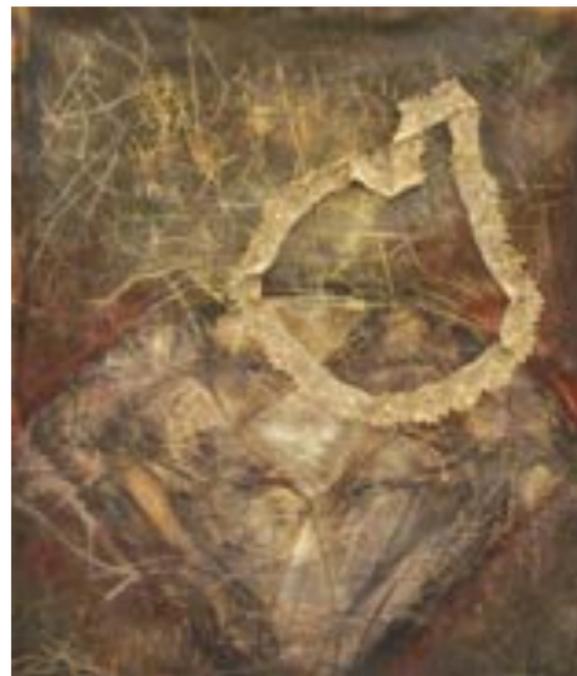
The piano part held you transfixed, too heavy to move  
Because notes get drenched when they soak in their own black ink.  
But it was the violins that sent our eyes spinning  
Ripples of rime ice sending shakes  
Down the mahogany road of my spine.

The lonely echo of a French horn  
Tilted us standing there  
The only two in the parking lot  
On either side of the car each  
With a hand cupped under the handle.  
It was as if a raindrop caught on a branch  
Took the world in its grasp and flipped it  
So that you and the sidewalk ended up in the sky.

It was the strings that sung you back to earth, I think,  
Where the high pitch of tension faded  
Like wallpaper that spends too much time in the sun.  
Still whenever I see you, I can't help but feel the moment  
Your fingers fluttered across the keys and  
I sat wishing I knew how to speak  
A black and white language  
So I could ask you to please  
Come a little closer.

## Rock I

*Celia Keim*



*acrylic paint, charcoal, and lace on canvas*

**ethereal filtered**  
*Margaret Middleton*



*lithographic print*

**I Have Cancer**  
*Helen Kramer*

"Watch Zayde! I can hold my breath like a whale does!"  
Warm water feels so good. Holding my nose,  
Aren't I tricky, breathing in and out inside my mouth!  
"I thought you had drowned!" he says slowly, eyes wide. I giggle.

Mommy parts my hair down the middle after bath time.  
She says I look so pretty! I am pretty.  
My shampoo bottle reminds me of Rainbowfish.  
It was my turn to get the purple towel! Sisters suck.

Bonnie isn't a tomboy like Mommy. She paints my nails.  
She says I need conditioner too, to detangle my hair.  
There's one that matches my shampoo!  
A crown over my soft curls makes me look like a princess!

Mom shrieked at me today. Boy was she pissed  
When I came home with straight hair.  
I told her it'll wash out in the shower.  
I look so good with my hair parted on the side.

Yesterday Sarika told me that some Hindu women  
Sacrifice their hair to the gods. Sarika never shaved hers,  
But she cut some off when she was younger.  
I wish my hair were long and smooth, like Sarika's.

No one will know my hair is actually a friztastrophe  
If I straighten it every day of High School.  
I'm going to do it. I only look pretty when it's straight,  
But Caroline says I'll never balance grades and hair.

People often tell me that religious hair covering is sexist,  
But my Hebrew teacher told me a story  
About a woman who covered her own hair after she was raped.  
I understand why my cousins cover their hair.

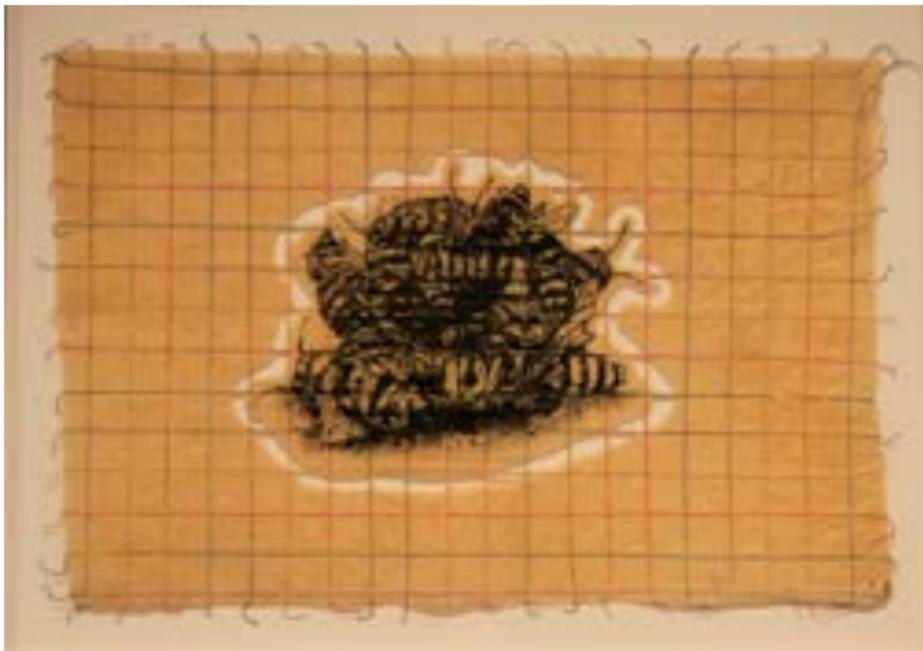
I read that you can measure your stress level over years by the cortisol in your hair.  
I never thought about how long each strand stays with me.  
My hair is waist length! How long is the calendar  
Growing out of the top of my head?

I bought It's A 10 Miracle Leave-in Product.  
Ten dollars for two ounces, and worth the price  
To care for my beautifully quirky, curly hair.  
Which came first? Loving my curls, or feeling beautiful?

Massaging my scalp in a dorm-room shower,  
I realize I'm conditioning someone else's hair.  
The diagnosis didn't even hit me until they said I'd lose it.  
I guess the cortisol belongs to me.

## Framework

Grace Tobin



66

???????

## And so

Matias Berretta

it was your father's honesty made you buckle  
and plunge forward  
reining in what you could from the web  
conditions spun, spin, are spinning

gelded goat of imitation  
you thought yourself domestic  
fool of a foreigner you  
fell for a farce and kept walking

there was nowhere else to go  
except home and that was too scary  
given your narrative arch, slanting already  
no return scheduled as of yet

the flight in June was just a placeholder  
airplane planning, posthumous at best  
it's not the days you come toward  
it's the days that come toward you

and so you trundled the date backwards  
rattling over the slats and sandbags of expensive delays  
much like that pink beach house by the ocean  
you haven't seen in years

67

**woman watching water**

*Mia Silvan-Grau*



68

*35mm photography*

**and suddenly: Jesus sandals**

*Victoria Albecete*

We got on the same bus,  
    one stacked double-decker bus,  
crawling for eight hours  
    from the biggest metropolis on the coast  
to the smallest village in the mountains,  
    like a giant squirming caterpillar  
creeping on the dirt roads.

    I guess that's all you needed  
to start a conversation;  
    twenty-six, a thesis student,  
almost finished — you're cute enough,  
    I guess,  
so when you ask to kiss me  
    — hey, consent is sexy —  
I say yes.

    When your mouth swallows mine  
I wonder  
    if this is what it would be like  
to be kissed by a sea lion,  
    but that would be more whiskery  
I think. Probably.

    I don't close my eyes because  
if I did, I'd see a sea lion,

69

so I look down and suddenly:  
Jesus sandals.  
When you let my face go,  
I have to wipe my mouth  
and my cheeks and my chin.  
I wonder how you've turned twenty-six  
and no one has told you  
you're an awful kisser.  
But then again:  
Jesus sandals.  
When you kiss my face again,  
I close my eyes and  
all I can see is a sea lion wearing  
Jesus sandals.  
And when I fall asleep an hour later,  
All I dream about is a sea lion wearing  
Jesus sandals.  
At the absurd hour of six a.m.  
I climb over you to get off the bus,  
and you wake up and  
look like you want to kiss  
— okay, suck — my face goodbye;  
I shoulder my backpack, look down, and:  
Jesus sandals.  
"You should know —  
you're a shitty kisser."

**Cut Through**  
Soren Carlson-Donohoe



*screenprint, found wood print, and digital plotter*

## Higgs Boson

*Mohit Dubey*

Build me a temple  
of empty space  
with holy water  
quantum foam.

You cannot know me  
only that I decay into  
many manifestations  
two points of light  
oculi.

I am spinless, chargeless, colorless  
without emotion

without identity

without name

but I am at the vertex of your heart  
of all particles  
of all hearts

from which lion's breath spills forth  
in warm confidence

and tingles every atom  
into existence.

I am the ripple in the vacuum  
from which all faith is born.

## Fragments

*Grace Tobin*



## Daffodil

Vida Weisblum

*They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.*

-William Wordsworth

I.

I once watched a boy I feared to love  
prey upon his own reflection, and  
dream of the many lovers he hoped would  
someday chase it too. He tucked the idea of me,  
a quiet suggestion of a warm body,  
into the back of his mind, and at night he'd  
draw me slowly from the crevices of his brain,  
from which I would emerge like a thin feather  
drawn from a pillowcase. Night after night  
I crept back into his bed like a strange dream,  
and with each mutter of false affection,  
became an echo.

II.

Now I find my soft spots couched in your  
honey touch, and, caught in your gaze, I  
return to myself. We stir a fuss to find resolve in  
kisses, and cling faster to one another in sharing faults.  
I have found in you a mirror, and in it, many truths.  
Legend says one Greek hunter drowned in his  
own reflection, but in knowing you, I've come to learn  
that honest adoration does not float on water.  
Where Narcissus fell, infatuated with a fantasy,  
a yellow flower rose resiliently from the dirt.

## Psychedelic Coffee & Number 15

*Bryan Rubin*



76

*digital photography*

## Chaotic Sloppy/Unhygienic Evil

*Camille Pass*

bath tub water running    naked

on a bed of crumbs

pasta sauce in both mouth corners

“Hope the mess doesn’t bother you”

you never exfoliate

every single cup there’s mold

sexy hair flip,    keep your shoes on

close your eyes

how- did our mouths- get so dry-

*just how she is :P*

77

**Boys Will Be Boys**  
*Benjamin Vock*

palms clammy I  
relax them on the counter  
(more crumbs)  
the fuck is that in the corner  
it's nothing "I get so crazy- sometimes" :P  
the kind of crazy that kills fish ?  
the kind of crazy that goes down on you in a public bathroom ?  
the kind of crazy that-  
no chairs in this apartment  
"just a bed, baby"

Boys will be charming  
Boys will be slick  
Boys will be handsome  
Boys will be too much Axe deodorant  
Boys will be picking the sports teams  
Boys will be picking on the last boy chosen  
the last boy chosen will be  
the boy called pussy  
The last boy will be not good enough  
  
Boys will be six packs  
Boys will be six packs of beer  
Boys will be binge drinking  
Boys will be after cheerleader asses  
Boys will be black eyes and mouths full of blood  
Boys will be dangerous  
Boys will be "the nice guy"  
Boys will be confused in the locker room  
as to which one they are  
or why they cannot be anything else

Boys will not be lipstick  
Boys will not be pretty in that dress  
Boys will not be pretty  
Boys will be predatory

Boys will be seasoned and war torn  
Boys will be tickets to the gun show  
Boys will bite bullets for their country  
Boys will not bite their country for turning them into bullets  
Boys will be dead  
Boys will be heros  
Boys will not cry at each other's funerals

Boys will be slam poets complaining about how awful boys are  
Boys will be called pussies and won't be sure whether to feel liberated or imprisoned  
Boys should be sick of using their gender as an excuse for violence  
Boys will be stubble  
Boys will be five o'clock shadow  
Boys will be shadow  
Boys will be knife point  
Boys will be not asking tonight  
Boys should be sick of using their gender as an excuse for violence

Boys will be fathers  
this is not an excuse  
Fathers will be whiskey on weekends  
Daughters will come home crying  
when poor boys  
poor wore torn boys  
won't think of collateral damage  
when the whole world says she was asking for it  
boys will say  
well,

*Boys will be boys*

**Hazard**  
Celia Keim



acrylic paint, plaster, charcoal, tacks, and graphite on canvas

**To Market**  
Zoe Ginsberg

She is one of many, hawking guavas and *fresas* and avocado. The stall next to her sells juice drinks for 1 euro. I pick coconut and ponder fresh mangos. She busies herself organizing her fruit. Sweat soaks her pale pink shirt and her fleshy arms dimple as she lifts crates. She moves to the dull throb of the crowd: first to hip, then to chest, then to display. She pulls a towel from her apron and dabs at her forehead.

*¿Tú quieres?*

*No, solo estoy mirando. Lo siento.*

She nods without looking up and begins inspecting bunches of grapes.

Sophia purchases slices of *jamón ibérico*, which she eats with her fingers. With oily hands, she offers me a slice and gestures for me to follow. I sip on my coconut drink and walk with her to another meat counter. She points.

“What do you think they are?”

I look. My Spanish isn't that good and I don't know how to read the sign.

*Lo siento, ¿cómo se dice 'criadillas' en inglés?*

The man pauses for a moment—he doesn't speak English. He cups his hands next to each other.

*De los toros, ¿sí?*

I nod.

## Coney Island

Laura Feyer

There is a man selling flowers. He calls to *las chiquititas bonitas*, handing out roses then asking for coins. His half-buttoned white shirt is plastered to his sunburned chest. A gold cross sparkles around his neck.

He comes toward us.

*No gracias.*

He winks, still coming. We walk quickly.

At the back, there are men with fish. These are the *mariscos* men, men in in torn tank tops and rain boots, men with shears and twine and machetes.

I have finished my coconut drink.

They call to each other: for ice, for rubber bands, for those goddamn *mejillones* that should have been here hours ago. It is afternoon and the ice is melting. What has not sold will not sell. The men light cigarettes. The ground sparkles with a crust of salt, scales, and blood.

An old woman throws up her hands because los *calamares* are 8 euros a pound. Yesterday, it was less.



digital photography

