Crosscurrents: Fall 2016

Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound

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CROSSCURRENTS

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I struggle with words when I try to sum up the past year. 2016 has been a year of hope. It has been a year of hate and division, but it has also been a year of love and solidarity. Media can push us off of the edge, and it can pull us from the drop. Most importantly, the media can pit us against one another when we need support. At times like these, it is important to look around and help others in any way you can. This year has taught me that when it gets rough, many of us turn to art. In *Crosscurrents*, University of Puget Sound students come together to create something new. They bring their stories and words; their brush strokes and their sketches. I look to these mediums for comfort and understanding, and I hope you do, too.

As Editor-in-Chief, I had many ambitions for this magazine. Many were drastic and perhaps unattainable—I now understand that the most important part of this magazine is the community it represents. The *Crosscurrents* staff comes together every week to discuss, review, and critique the work of our peers. Included in this publication are many stories from students of color, different orientations, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds. When reading your peers’ work, I encourage you to immerse yourself fully in what imaginative literature and art has to offer—the insight into experience beyond your own. More than anything, I am in awe of the talented students I see each and everyday and I am honored to be a part of such a special magazine. Remember to read, reflect, and repeat.

With thanks,

Emily Rostek, Editor-in-Chief
Michael Haeflinger was a visiting professor at the University of Puget Sound in 2015-2016. Haeflinger earned a BA in Religion from Wright State University and an MFA in Creative Writing from Rutgers University.

Haeflinger is passionate about spoken word, textile art, and written poetry. He is engaged in the Tacoma community and teaches kids of all ages the importance of poetry. He is a committed poet and has been published numerous times. Most recently, he was published the second volume of Lantern Lit series by Dog on a Chain Press. In October 2016, Haeflinger produced a spoken word album titled “Let’s Don’t Be Crazy.”

“Love Poem for the Everyday” comes from Love Poem for the Everyday (Dog on a Chain Press, 2011)

“Trash Day” comes from The Days Before (Dog on a Chain Press, 2013)

I love you mixed with lemon juice and basil. I love you on fire in the sink. I love you made of plastic or small triangular pellets or standing on a coast somewhere staring off in the distance singing quietly to yourself.

I love you with your hair pulled back and your eyes facing upwards like that painting of dogs playing poker. I love you when you change your name to Lucy and shoot paper wads from straws.

I love you when you don’t do that, too.

I love you like I used to love you, before I stopped loving you, because we tend to drift apart, but we tend to drift back together again, too. I love you in the heat of the pennant drive, coated in mustard, wafting your divinity across right field. I love you brewed into my brain, electric, set apart. I love you left behind as an artifact and already talk about you as though you are dead. I love both sides of your brain, weigh them separately then weigh them together and then check the math. I love the smooth rich columns of your promenade and I love the chipped sidewalks of your memories. I love the sound of your key in the lock, your made-up words and own two feet. I love scanning the ends of movie credits for your name. I love your name and I say it every morning when the blooming pussy willows yawn through the open window.
CCR: Do you ever do visual art? We’ve seen from your website that you are into collage.

MH: I used to do a lot of visual art. I started by collaging the covers of my writing books, which turned into making stand alone collages. In 2011, I did a whole series involving skateboarders, and another with Norman Rockwell paintings. Lately, though, I’ve not been doing much visual art and have instead been recording a lot. I did release a spoken word album called Let’s Don’t Be Crazy in October 2016, which came with an accompanying liner note book that features some of my collages.

CCR: Who or what has impacted/influenced you the most? How does that come through in your poetry?

MH: In terms of poets, I’d have to say there are too many to list. I recently got a copy of Frank O’Hara’s collected poems and have been working my way through it. It’s cool because it’s arranged chronologically by when the poems were written, so you can see how he grows as a poet as he matures. He has one of he more distinctive voices in U.S. American poetry, and I like watching that come about. But I am also impacted and influenced by other arts besides poetry. For instance, I really love music and lyricists. Michael Stipe (R.E.M.) and David Lowery (Camper Van Beethoven & Cracker) are two people whose lyrics I’ve poured over. But even the music. I think some of the best poems I’ve ever heard are J. Mascis solos on Dinosaur Jr. songs.

CCR: How do you generate most of your work? Where? What usually sparks the poem?

MH: I take my book with me and when something hits me, I write it down.
CCR: What are you working on right now?

MH: I’ve just finished the album and am thinking of the next album. I’ve been listening to a lot of Kraftwerk, and I might do an album of electro-synth robot poetry. This last album was supposed to be about alien abduction, but it turned out to be about something else. I’ve also been writing a lot of flash fiction, which has been fun. I like writing fiction because I am not very good at it.

CCR: When do you know your process is complete?

MH: With poems, it’s hard to say. I change them a lot. Even stuff that’s been published, or stuff I wrote a long time ago: they sometimes get tweaked down the road. I tend to write more impactful work when I don’t overthink it, too. So sometimes the most labored poems are the not the best. Be able to find the moment is the whole thing for me.

CCR: You work a lot in the community with young people. How has this influenced your work?

MH: It forces me to write for one. I do all the exercises I ask students in my workshops to do. I also value the opportunity to hear what’s motivating younger folks and hearing about what they are engaging with in terms of art and culture.

CCR: What advice do you have for young writers and poets?

MH: Keep making art. Even if you earn your money doing other things or if no one ever sees it, keep making it. It’s better for everyone if you do.
Rainfall, a broken piece of floor, linoleum, recycling to the rim with beer cans, two neighbor girls off to school, someplace behind the pull of sky, a line of buildings dark all day.

Birds leave wings packed, find treasures spring deposits in the yard: a basketball hoop crooked as a vulture, a shopping cart full of dry leaves, the names of her sons who’ll never see parole spray painted on the stucco.

Still, she takes her trash out every Monday, even when the sun refuses her, her leftovers a precious fortress on the sloped sidewalk, the sons of other mothers rumbling towards her in great combustible wombs to take it all away.
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SHEEP

A u s t i n S c h m a l z

Make it a fad to hate sheep
And the vast scummy slough of Humankind
Will drive the last of the bleating animals off cliffs within two weeks
The violinist looked like a ghost through my astigmatism. Her head and that wooden moaner were the only parts my eyes chose not to blur into nonexistence.

Let me reframe.

That woman held an anchor to her chin with the composure of a tightrope walker, not even a twitch as she lunged her bow like an arrow letting go.

She would follow those little black bird tracks until the bow breaks or the strings clap back to curls. In that pure white light reflecting off my glasses, sawdust would gather at her toes.
It is to take flesh in your mouth,
and feel the city’s cascade
under the bone linoleum –

To jettison regret in a landslide
opposing the slimmer of winter’s silver
towards the thunderstorm’s ochre afterglow –

To feel the snake in your atoms
and leave the den of witnesses
and walk into arcane fire –

To wear a sock around your slit wrist,
carpals grinding, veins unwinding
in praise of the sanguine braille.
she turned off the lamp and told me that my head looks like an egg

I told her eggs are an important ingredient she liked her toast plain.

her grip tightened as she moved the knife in my direction

she chose raspberry and applied gracefully to sourdough.
I’m standing between two kids in the backyard of a house in Mid-City. Gena, 19, NYU, is beside me in an orange Vetements windbreaker and black Acne Studios jeans. She is smoking a Parliament. The backyard is crowded and the porch has been converted into a stage. I look down at my shoes, wince and look up again. The Edison rope lights that bisect the yard turn everything yellow. I turn my head and almost fall over. Where were we before the Uber dropped us off here? I vaguely recall drinking a whiskey sour beneath a huge mural of Karl Marx somewhere in West Hollywood. I remember Gena whispering in my ear “that’s Michael Jackson’s son playing beer pong over there” as we walked through an ivy covered wooden gate above a driveway. I pull a cigarette from my breast pocket and ask a blonde kid in Common Project sneakers (the gold numbering nearly glitters against the rope lights) and grey joggers for a light. I inhale and look around again. Eve is talking to Gena and they’re both standing in front of me. Four kids, maybe 18 or 19, show up on the porch. One of them is holding a Les Paul. I take another drag. I recognize the kid with the Les Paul as the recent star of the movie *Palo Alto*. There’s a boy to my right wearing a fur coat and no shirt. He takes a vial and shakes it on the back of his hand, brings his hand up to his beautiful upturned nose and inhales.

Gena and Eve turn around to me, tap their noses and giggle. I think I feel Gena grabbing my hand and pulling me inside when I nearly trip on a patch of brown grass. Gena and Eve disappear inside. I can’t tell if my phone is ringing but I pull it out of my pocket anyway. Chloe is calling from Madrid.

“Ryder, Ryder are you there?”

“Chloe, hey,”

“I’m in the bathroom of Ojalá…”

Chloe is crying, but I can barely hear over this kid talking on the mic.

“Hang on.”

I walk down the driveway—past two girls leaned against a Jaguar smoking a joint—and onto the street where I can hear the hum of the long distance line. The driveway is framed by a wooden arch overgrown with flowers. The street is wide and open and guarded by dark 1920s houses.

“Ryder, I, I—”

“Hey Chloe, L.A. is great I’m seeing this band that Gena knows and I…”

“I’d really like to talk to you,”

“It’s fabulous to hear from you, it must be late there?”

“I slept with this journalism major from Bard.”

“What?” I ask, not sure what I heard her say.

“I fucked somebody. Some kid from Rhode Island in the bathroom of Ojalá.”

“Well,” I say.

Chloe is crying and breathing hard over the phone. There’s music but I can’t tell if it’s coming from the house or the phone.

“Well,” I laugh, “was he cute?”

Chloe hangs up.

“Wait Bard, I think I know this girl that goes to Bard…or maybe it was Bennington?”

I notice the hum has stopped and look at my iPhone and realize that Chloe is no longer on the line. I stumble back into the yard. One of the girls from the Jaguar asks me if I go to Parsons and if that’s where she knows me from. I lie and say yes I do go there and when she asks for my name I tell her it’s John McIlvane. She’s looking at me with this.
coat paired with a skin tight black sundress and Doc-Martens. I’m still half thinking about Chloe when the Buckley girl hands me the rest of her joint and I hit it and decide to walk back into the din. I take one last look at her perfect body becoming flush with the F-Type’s fender as I walk away. Eve appears suddenly out of the noise.

“Come on, I want you to meet this girl Scarlett. She was just on the Brandy Melville Instagram.” Eve grabs my hand. A tunnel of people opens forming a path to the French doors. My shoes crush the fine dust between the patches of dry grass.

There is a Safeway club card lying atop a hardcover copy of *The Fountainhead* on the floor, the edges of silver plastic caked in a fine white powder. The basement room of the pre-war six bedroom bungalow is freezing in the winter and window frost shows under the pink lighting of a salt lamp. A Madonna record is playing from a bluetooth speaker across the room. Chloe is asleep next to me, naked. She’s lying on her side. The smoothness of her tanned back looks straight out of a Roxy ad; I imagine her as a Hollister model gazing from an image of Newport Beach straight down the corridor of some Midwestern shopping mall, and myself, a kid staring back at her completely dazed. I keep one hand on the small of her back as I lean over and look at her clothes laid across the low pile carpeting. Madonna is singing “when you call my name, it’s like a little prayer.” I sit up and blow out the two St. Christopher candles burning on the ledge above the bed. Now in the total pinkness I throw a comforter over both of us and whisper her name. Chloe. Chloe. A prayer. I wish I could sleep.

Inside a large, blinding white upstairs bedroom, the band stops playing and a Diiv record comes on over the PA. The sound comes in through an open window. There are more yellow rope lights hanging from the ceiling. The carpet is white and has a very high pile—almost plush. I run my fingers through it as if it were a person’s hair while seated on a low couch. There are couches, egg chairs and beanbags across the room. The bed is a California king with a massive white duvet cover. This girl that looks like Tavi Gevinson is sitting across from me and I wonder if it really is Tavi Gevinson. Then she is given a line off an iPhone 6 Plus with a rolled up two dollar bill and I figure it probably isn’t Tavi Gevinson after all. Scarlett is the exact embodiment of the Brandy Melville IG, wearing high-waisted light-wash denim shorts and a white cotton tank top. Her hair is the color of a Phuket beach. She’s lying across the bed with her shoes off surrounded by several girls that look like her. Some of them are attempting to cuddle with her as she sits up against the headboard staring blankly at the wall. There is a classical bust in one corner of the bedroom. I turn and gaze at it for a few seconds while I continue to massage the carpet. Eve and I are next to each other as Gena talks to one of the Scarlett-fans.

“Supposedly the song ‘Love Yourself’ is about her,” Eve whispers to me.

I hear Gena say something about getting chin implants. One of the Scarlett fangirls looks like Chloe with a slightly more abrasive haircut. The turquoise stud in her septum piercing shines off of the low incandescent lighting. Her head is laid across Scarlett’s golden colored ankle.

“I love your septum,” I say to her. The girl winces and flairs her nose slightly at me.

“Who are you?” she asks then rolls her eyes. Scarlett glances at me, I notice that I’m beginning to sweat and can’t keep my feet from tapping.

“My name is,” I pause, “John McIlvane. John McIlvane from Dartmouth.”

I feel Eve staring at me.

“What are you talking about?” Gena says, the whole room looking on me, “you’re not even from here, I picked you up from LAX two days ago.”

“Get out of here,” Scarlett says in perfect Vallyespeak without
Chloe is sitting across from me sipping a Vietnamese iced coffee under fluorescent lights as an FM top-40 station plays in the background. It’s dusk outside and her septum seems to glow under the harsh lighting. I’m waiting for some beef pho although I’m not sure she ordered anything. I run my finger around the rim of a plastic water glass and look straight into her soft, symmetrical face. “I’ve been reading a lot of thinkpieces lately,” I say. “Oh yeah?” she says. I never realized how small her mouth is. “Yeah. About the resurgence of monogamy among later born millennials. There was this one article in Vulture—total click bait I know—but it said something about promiscuity reaching peak mass. Like finally people our age are yearning for the kinds of relationships their parents had.” Chloe reaches for the bended straw and pushes her knees against mine. I can feel the nylon of her American Apparel Disco Pants even through my jeans. The pho comes. After lunch we go to a townie bar and I tell her my favorite way to flirt is by throwing cocktail straws. Chloe takes the straw from my Dewars and soda and tosses it at my chest. She kisses me while 38 Special plays from the jukebox. For a second my world is only burnt peat moss, chapstick and St. Laurent.

Outside Sky Ferreira is repeating “everything is embarrassing,” as I stand by myself leaned against the mahogany door of a five car garage. I pull out my pack of cigarettes but I can’t grip one of them enough to pull it out. My hand keeps slipping. I pull out my phone—no notifications. I think about Gena in nothing but a bralette seated on the Persian rugs that cover the floor of my studio Airbnb Koreatown. I walk back inside through the sliding French door.

I meet Gena at the bottom of the stairs. She is with a boy. Tall, bleached hair, black skin tight jeans, black on black Vans, and a black
Thrasher hoodie barely hanging from his head.

“Have you met Michael?” Gena asks looking over me.

“Hey, I’m Ryder. Did I see you in a Weekend video on…”

“Hey man,” Michael says from the side of his mouth as he walks past me. He is holding Gena’s waist with one hand and a forty with the other. I try to follow them out the French door but trip on the stairs and eat shit in grass. I roll over on my back and stare up at the sky. It’s a mellow, smooth darkness with no stars or clouds. I touch my breast pocket and realize I’ve smashed my Warby Parker sunglasses. Someone walks over to me and says get him out of here as the Sky Ferreira song ends. I can hear Kendrick yelling “this dick ain’t free” several times. Suddenly I come to in the back of a Prius, reeking of polyurethane. The driver is heading down Wilshire, past Rodeo, with the featureless glass of the buildings reflecting their nighttime light into backseat. There is no traffic and the car seems to be gliding on air, gently flying even, way out over the canyons and the Valley up towards Santa Barbara with the ocean lighting up the coast with its darkness.

“I’m,” I pause and slur the words, “Howard Hughes?” I ask the driver.

“We’re just taking you to The Gaylord. That’s what they told me at your party.”

The doorman at The Gaylord has to help me upstairs. When he gets me to my door, I stumble and fall onto the bed with my shoes still on. I try to take off my belt but give up. I check my phone. There is a push notification from Wells Fargo that says I have less than twenty dollars in my checking account. I roll over with the iPhone still in my right hand and pass out.

“I don’t know. Is the thought such a radical idea?” I ask, laying on top of her. She’s wearing a matching white set of Calvin Klein underwear. She rolls over. “I guess it wouldn’t be the strangest thing. I think people are meant to be together. In the end. It makes sense.” Chloe stares from the ceiling into my eyes. “I just think it could be so grandiose. We could go down to Zihuatanejo for a few weeks and stay in Ethan’s beach house. It would be simple, easy even. We would be together and it would be easy. Simple and easy and direct. Isn’t that what adult life is trying to be? We could leave Seattle forever: Live in Leipzig or whatever. I’m sure my dad could put us up for a few months.” Chloe rolls on top of me and kisses both my cheeks with a manic seeming fervor. “I guess we are adults…” she whispers in my ear. There is the drone of soul music coming from the party upstairs. Chloe’s eyes are wide open, almost dilated when I look at them. “I guess this is what falling in love is,” I say. “It’s really easy,” she says back. I can smell weed and sandalwood.

I wake up to two texts:

Gena: “wtf”

Eve: “what was that shit you pulled with Scarlett?”

My shoes came off somehow in the night. I throw both feet over the double mattress and stare for a second at the framed kitsch cabaret poster hanging above the coffee station. I look at my watch. It’s half past noon. The California sunlight coming through the window reflects back from the picture and hits me in my face. I get up and look out the window at the infinity traffic of Wilshire.

I take a white, thinly rimmed, ceramic Ikea mug from the cupboard. I place it on the counter where the coffee tray is set up. I fill the electric kettle with tap water and switch it on. I place the pour over on top of the mug and line it with a filter. I take a half-empty bag of Caffe Umbria Arco Etrusco dark roast coffee and place the beans into the grinder, grinding them until coarse. I turn the grinder upside down and shake the grounds into the lid as the water is beginning to boil. I empty the grounds into the pour over cone and pack them down with a shot glass on the tray. I lift the boiling kettle and pour the water slowly over the grounds, watching the grounds become overwhelmed with water. The mix becomes thick and slow moving as it filters into the mug. The steam coming from the deluge clears my nose. I think about Chloe and Gena and Eve, and fresh avocados and sourdough toast probably being served for breakfast somewhere down the hall.
toast probably being served for breakfast somewhere down the hall. When the coffee is fully drained I remove the filter from the cone and throw it in the composting trash bin beside the counter. I hang the cone back up on its hook above the wash basin. With the coffee cooling on the counter, I run my tongue along my top teeth and feel the dryness coating them. There is a moment of paralysis as I stand before the wood and Formica outcropping. I pull out my phone and begin drafting an email to my father about buying flights to Madrid. I give up halfway and slide the phone back into my pocket. The Spanish sounds better here anyway, I think, as I walk to the bed and fall onto the mattress.
Feathered beneath holy holes, muskrats materializing extravagant
Fields twizzle exactly

Exactly

Cleansed friends there’um thoroughly
Tissue-box of community; rat-like.

But definitely enamored and blooming (swamped, oozing [out]) tail
wrapped, adapting voluptuously fostering intimately near pedestals
(dumbed down idiots sail continuously)

Savannas bleeding profusely from open hearts, forming chains of
entangled betwixt; bat-like.

This sometimes happens in manifestos
Pain
There is a sketch of a woman above my mother’s bed. She has a darkness beside her, untitled and cross-hatched. She is light reflected in its absence, sharp line and smudge, lover and loved.

I see her and I think of cramped hand and charcoal, of Picasso in a rented room in Barcelona drawing nude from memory.

I think of my nana sweating poems in the midwest heat, inheriting art from the aunt who raised her. I think of my mother sleeping lonely in a century old house, sharing space with this woman and the shadow of someone she used to know.

PICASSO’S WOMAN
Emily Harman

SERENDIPITOUS SERENITY
Anji Cunningham
10AM, Sunday morning, and iloveyou no spaces between elbow edge, heartbeat, cold feet silence broken by soft kisses, bleary grins, sleep crusted eyes flickering shut and let me drift off for a few more minutes. Sunlight casts white wall shadows through blinds and suddenly it’s nighttime.

We’re still talking, feet interlocked, not nighttime early morning, pre-sun, we’re hidden from open spaces. Closed doors, window-reflection smiles and we keep locking gazes between the silence. You succeed in making me laugh, letting minutes move conversation, wide-open crossed eyes, stretched-mouth, chapped lip smiles, with knotty-pine eyes staring back at us. I used to hate the nighttime alone, where thoughts settle in the minutes between closed-door spaces where silence and rain and fast-blinking eyes dance between open silence while everything slows down in nighttime whispers, unspoken words spoken, hiding spaces in worn wood, antique grandfather clock cataloguing minutes, finger tapping waist-line curve, counting hours, minutes, seconds before your alarm pushes us into day and blue sky sun disappears behind cloudy sky spaces while don’t blink don’t blink don’t blink your eyes loops itself until everything shifts. It’s nighttime again and you are Point B, even in silence.
Selected for their strength as works of art, both in craftsmanship and insight, the following pieces are explored by Puget Sound faculty to exhibit their depth and recognize their achievement.
Last May I woke up early
to find your body growing over mine,
spreading like ivy until your roots
wrapped around me and pulled me down
into the soil of the sheets.

You didn’t stop there:
your greedy fingers lengthened
and bound my limbs to the bedpost,
crawled up the white walls and probed
the room’s corners as if checking
to make sure we were alone.

I watched you flourish and fix your
self into the floorboards,
blot the window light
and barricade the door—

then you craned your petiole neck
to stare into my face and I
held your green gaze, steady
in my craving for the
suffocating pressure
of your hands.

I waited embalmed

for August,
for fleshy black berries to bloom
from your pores,
for dark sour juice to run
sticky on my skin,

ready to devour your seeds
intoxicated with sweet,
black venom.
English language poets have for centuries imagined love in its natural forms, mining metaphor in an attempt to describe what perhaps defies description. That age old vision of love as a rose reminds us that these poetic visions of love are often double-edged; for every poet who imagines love as floral, perfumed, and delicate, there is another who recognizes love’s spiny thorns, its suffocating twining, or its capacity to cut. Branch’s poem “English Ivy” reworks the classic image of love as a rose, depicting it instead as destructive English Ivy. Certainly we can admire the Pinterest images of ivy as it scales stately old English mansions, but only if we conveniently forget the way in which ivy can undermine foundations and tear down edifices we have built up brick by brick. Such ivy loves crevasses and fractures—searching relentlessly for any way in, so that it becomes virtually impossible to remove.

Branch’s vision of love is as both desire and destruction, mingled so closely together that they become inextricable from one another. The lover descends on the beloved, seemingly uninvited and yet not wholly unwelcome. The speaker, apparently aware of the lover’s “greedy fingers” and the jealous need to “blot the window light / and barricade the door--” nonetheless desires the “green gaze.” There is no fear here of the consuming ivy, but instead a “craving for the / suffocating pressure / of your hands.”

What then are we to make of Branch’s lovely, self-aware speaker who narrates his/her/their own increasing fascination with an all-consuming love? Branch offers a complicated idea of love in which power and control are at play, but also in which passivity, waiting, and watching can be forms of agency, as well. Such all-consuming love, in this poem, is only possible because the speaker allows it to be so. This agency becomes especially apparent in the last two stanzas, when the poem turns away from the ivy to focus on the speaker. It seems at first as though the poem will make room for the speaker’s retribution; the consuming ivy, which has hitherto blocked out nourishing light and strangled growth by spreading itself over everything, now gives rise to “fleshy black berries” upon which the speaker plans to feast. But such retribution becomes only an act of self-poisoning—yet another form of consumption, but this time enacted by the speaker and not the ivy. The ripe berries, full of “dark sour juice” only further intoxicate the speaker with their “sweet, black venom.” If this is love, it seems to be of an excitingly dangerous sort—a type of all consuming love that feeds only itself.
Gold thread, electrical cords, and a jagged toothed snake wind through the kaleidoscopic living room depicted in Olivia Sherman’s oil painting, Woman with a Snake. These elements animate the stage like space, creating a meandering, encircling sense of movement. Lines similarly enwrap and activate the eponymous woman’s form, defining planes and demarcating musculature. Sherman layers and combines a wide range of lines to interweave, delineate, and decorate forms in this vivid scene of domesticity and decadence.

The woman’s tense, massive form expresses a sense of foreboding rapture. Sherman invokes the emotional intensity and commanding physicality of Greek and Roman sculptural traditions. Color also provides a potent source of expressive content. Saturated hues glow, infusing the painting with a sensation of lurid luminosity. The warmth of the hearth’s firelight complements the dusky sky’s cool depth. Flame red lips, fingernails, a dangling earring, and areolae flash like mating plumage, visual indicators of desire. Blue veins and rosy hot spots where skin stretches around bone, cartilage, and muscle convey flesh teeming with life.

Blood seemingly courses through the heavy yet elegant woman, as do complicated and weighty emotions. Her flesh is assertively corporeal, unlike the smooth, porcelain skin of reclining nudes in many historically significant oil paintings. The figure’s placement in the picture plane’s foreground confronts the viewer with her forceful, physical presence, her passion and longing, and contorted yet powerful gesture.

There is a strange ethereality in Sherman’s painting that counters the weight and mass of the woman’s form. Sherman’s application of open, semi-transparent layers creates a sense of permeability between the interior and exterior spaces, positive form and negative space, as well as internal and external experiences. Sherman conjures a scene where everything breathes, the past bleeds into the present, the air pulsates like a membrane, and the walls are as sensate as snakes.
It’s really late. I am tired and really drunk. You know, like, too drunk to be interacting with anyone on any other level besides giggling in a crowded kitchen while horrible electronic music is playing in the next room. But I invited him over anyway. I remember thinking as he was walking up the front stairs that I loved him, but I know now that it was just the gin talking. I can tell he is really stoned but he looks so good I don’t even mind that his breath tastes like a stale blunt. I don’t even attempt to exchange pleasantries with him as we are walking up the stairs. The second the door to my room closes he kisses me. I begin fumbling with the buttons on his shirt. I love the way that his lips feel on mine. His nipples are pierced and at that point I am lost in a sea of unadulterated lust and passion and throw him on the bed. He doesn’t mind that in the three times he has come over this week I have been listening to this one song on repeat—there is something about it that makes my insides lurch, makes me question what I am doing here, and resent the complacency that I have so easily fallen into. The only way out is by feeling something absolutely amazing—and this is where he comes in. He doesn’t mind that he has heard this song probably a hundred times by now, and I love him for it. I love how warm he is, how he smells, how he holds me when I am on top of him, how he digs his nails into my back and slowly claws down my spine to my ass. I love how he kisses, so calculated yet so intrinsically natural and effortless. I ask him if I can have sex with him and he responds by fervently nodding his head yes and kissing me so hard that I can feel his teeth against mine—that is all the convincing I need. I fumble in the dark looking through my bag of condoms for the prettiest color. I settle on a dark purple. I slide in and he moans. I love the way he feels, I love how he moves, how his eyes roll into the back of his head, how he kisses me, the way he wraps his legs around me. He is perfect and I am so happy.

And then I finish.

The split second it is all over I am repulsed at his touch. I don’t want his lips on mine; I don’t want his naked, over-pungent body next to me in my bed. My entire body is sensitive to the touch and I cringe at his every move. What is wrong with me? Why am I literally insane that I can switch from complete adoration to utter repulsion in a matter of seconds? Rationally the next morning, I can attribute it to the fact that the gin made me think that I loved him and the influx of hormones after having sex must have had a weird reaction to make me switch feelings so quickly, but such is life.

He comes over a couple days later in the middle of the day. From the second he enters my house I can tell that something has shifted. He’s awkward, flighty, eyes darting back and forth. We walk up to my room and just stand there awkwardly for a few minutes making polite conversation but it is forced and unnatural. I walk over to him and take his shirt and sweater off at the same time, revealing his pierced nipples but it isn’t the same. We have sex but in the light of day everything that I do seems different and wrong. We finish and are lying side by side in my bed. He tells me that he isn’t coming back for spring semester. I tell him that I am sorry to hear that. There is a long awkward pause. I get up and get dressed and lie about having class soon. He leaves and I sit staring out my window at him walking away. This is the last time I see him—probably forever. It wasn’t meant to sound as dramatic as it does right now. It was awkward and shitty. That’s just how it happened.
Denise Despres

Like other decorous second-wave feminists, I’m awed by the audacity of my secret heroine, Lisbeth Salander. Her body is a lithe weapon of resistance. Her sexual pleasure is a declaration of independence from objectification, liberated from the self-doubt and shame that are an enduring penalty for sparking desire in a story of origins. I have spent most of my career excavating, interpreting, and teaching the stories medieval women wrote (even when illiterate and without access to writing materials) in response to the doctrine of fallen nature and female culpability for death. That death, as Renaissance poets admit, is always foreshadowed in orgasm. Sex and death, disillusionment and self-loathing, are inextricably bound in Western culture.

The protagonist of this piece is no Lisbeth, fabricated from the clichés of Third Wave Feminism. They cannot transcend the cultural legacy of conflicted desire. For them, sex is not Lisbeth’s physical gratification, satisfied and put aside guiltlessly. Our protagonist knows that the illusion of self-giving, mutuality, of a love necessary to pleasure, is insufficient. This writer poignantly charts the emotional consequences for a self-reflective person when pleasure and “happiness” part ways. Even when drunk, the narrator struggles with the ethics of auto-eroticism. And perhaps this is the problem: they are not truly liberated, their orgasm genuinely revolutionary. Gin, hormones, insanity? Their retreat into banalities (“such is life”) is a salve for the bitter reality of a loneliness deepened by sex. They are too young to settle for “complacency.” It matters that the condom is “pretty.” In the morning, the narrator has to deal with an equally vulnerable young man, with sex in the daylight. But the protagonist listens to that “one song on repeat” even when drunk because it makes them question the difference between “lust” and a moment of human “perfection” in genuine happiness. Disillusionment is raw and fully realized in this piece.

Ideologically, I want to prefer Lisbeth’s fierce yet casual fulfillment, but I know she is a comic book heroine. This protagonist, in contrast, fills me with genuine grief, like the countless other figures in fiction and reality who have inherited this self-harming and pain-inflicting discourse of desire. A colleague of mine, an accomplished novelist, once told me that “sex is hard to get right” in a novel. The precocity of this writer inspires.
POSTPARTUM

Sophie Meyers

For her, 2001
was all sawdust in sunlight-
A dreamscape new home.

She’d shift the bibs and towels
from drawer to drawer,
sometimes folded, sometimes crumpled.

She’d dance alone in 11/8 time,
a ribbon in the wind,
snapping back every last odd beat.

She’d line dusty lilies
on the sill to salute
nature’s symmetry.

And windex windows
to see the trees
without smudges.

But she tallied off minutes
like soured strawberries-
overripe upon delivery.

WAKE

Hailey Shoemaker
ROCK HARD ASS

S t e p h a n i e  C l e m e n t

This is the Day

M a d d i e  C r i g l o w

On March 25th, Brenda Smith’s ex-boyfriend won the lottery. She discovered this information while watching the 11 o’clock news. Sitting in front of her television eating microwavable macaroni and cheese, Brenda dropped her fork upon seeing the familiar face of Bradley Winthrop.

“How does it feel to be Powerball Champion, Bradley?”

“It feels pretty great, Nancy,” Bradley said, beaming for the camera. “Just pretty great! You’re a millionaire!”

“I’m still just a regular guy, Nancy.” Bradley winked, sending Nancy into a fit of giggles. Brenda’s eyes narrowed in fury.

“Aren’t you a charmer. Can you tell us about what your life was like before you won the lottery?”

“Well Nancy, not so great. I was unemployed. I was lacking direction.” He paused, clearing his throat and looking straight at the camera. “I was stuck in a dead end relationship.”

Horrified, Brenda let out an animal shriek and threw her plate of macaroni and cheese at the television screen. She watched as soggy noodles dripped down Bradley and Nancy’s smiling faces.

“And now you’re a millionaire! Thank you, Bradley, for sharing your story.”

When the camera cut away to another news story, Brenda’s thoughts were still focused on Bradley. Dead end relationship? Just one month ago he had sat on his knees, begging to get back together. She scoffed and watched as the last of the noodles dripped to a pile on the floor. She got up to grab a broom.

Sweeping the first few noodles into a dustpan, Brenda stopped herself.
Her ex-boyfriend was a millionaire, yet here she was cleaning up macaroni from the ground. What mistake had led her to this moment? She had dumped Bradley. She was supposed to win. She dropped her broom in defiance. Tonight she would do something exciting, too. Brenda slipped on her shoes and grabbed her wallet from the kitchen table. She gave herself a final glance in the mirror and walked out the door, ready to meet the night with open arms.

Without a car, Brenda decided the first act of business would be to hail a cab. She had never done it before, but she had watched enough television to know how it was done. She walked towards the edge of the sidewalk and lifted her arm high for the cabs to see. She waited five minutes before realizing that no car had driven down her street, much less a cab. She would have to call an Uber. Letting her location be known, Brenda waited a few seconds before seeing a picture of Glenn, the seemingly friendly driver of a Subaru Outback, appear on her phone screen.

When Brenda saw a silver Subaru driving towards her on the empty street, her stomach filled with butterflies. Glenn pulled over and rolled down the window.

“Brenda?” Glenn asked. He looked about fifty and wore a hat meant for golfing tournaments.

“That’s me!” Brenda said, opening the backseat door and sitting down.

“Where to?” Glenn asked, turning back to her from the driver’s seat. Brenda paused. She hadn’t thought of a destination.

“Do you know of any good places to have a night on the town?” she asked.

“Hmm,” he muttered, thinking. “Have you heard of Zoo Lights?”

“The Christmas show at the zoo?”

“Rats! I forgot it was only for Christmas,” Glenn said, shaking his head. “It’s a great program to see if you ever get the chance. They decorate all the animal’s cages with lights and you get to walk around at night.”

“That sounds like a lot of fun.”

“It is,” he said, reminiscing. “Well, that was all I had.”

“Can you take me downtown?” There had to be something exciting going on downtown, she thought.

“Sure, thing,” he said, turning up the radio and pulling back into the street.

Listening to Glenn whistle along to the radio, Brenda gazed out the window at the fluorescent lit world outside. Each gas station, fast food joint, and bar had an opportunity awaiting her inside, she thought. She imagined walking into a gas station to buy a snack and stumbling upon a kindred spirit at the cash register. In another scenario, she would walk into a bar to find a billiards competition. Entering on a whim, she would shock everyone with a win after having only played billiards once. In both scenarios, Bradley would stumble upon her, having gone out to celebrate his newfound millions. Much to his dismay, he would discover that Brenda had gained more—true happiness.

“We’re just about in downtown,” Glenn said, interrupting her dreams.

“We can pull over at that bar,” she said, pointing towards the building.

“Roger’s Tavern?”

“Yes, exactly.”

Alright,” he said, driving at a slow pace towards the end of the street. He pulled over. “Have a good one.”
Outside, Brenda felt cold rain drops on her skin. She walked towards the tavern and suppressed the regret that she hadn’t worn a raincoat.

Inside, she saw a lone bartender staring at his cell phone. She surveyed the rest of the bar to find only a small group of men playing billiards in the corner. It didn’t look like a competition, but she thought they were as good a group as any to meet and befriend. She eavesdropped on their conversation, listening for an opportunity to insert herself. All she could hear was masculine laughter and the occasional talk of “pussy.”

Inching closer, she found the men all smelled like cigarettes.

“Can I have a light?” Brenda asked, addressing an older man in a denim shirt.

“Sure,” he mumbled, taking out a lighter from his shirt pocket. “Do you have a cigarette?”

She paused. She thought that was what she had asked for. The man interpreted her silence and gave her one out of his back pocket. She put it in her mouth and let him light it. She inhaled and suppressed a cough.

“You a smoker?” he smirked. The cough Brenda suppressed grew inside her, leaving her unable to open her mouth. Still, she didn’t want to seem inexperienced. She nodded yes.

“You’re pretty cute,” the man said, inching closer. His breath smelled like whiskey.

“Thanks,” Brenda replied, immediately erupting into a coughing fit. She leaned her arm on the pool table, trying not to fall over and make a scene.

“Hey lady,” the bartender yelled, looking up from his phone. “Put out your cigarette!”

She tried to respond, but couldn’t stop coughing. She raised her finger in an effort to communicate that she was listening.

“Don’t make me come over there.” The bartender was angry. “Put out that cigarette or get out!”

Still coughing but able to catch some breathes, Brenda looked up at the man in the denim shirt. He’d backed away from her, puzzled. Whatever attraction he had experienced earlier had faded. She felt that the best course of action would be to leave the tavern. She attempted to clear her throat and made her way to the door.

Outside, Brenda dropped the cigarette on the ground and dug into it with her heal. Normally she wouldn’t litter, but this small act of destruction felt cathartic. She was beginning to think the night was a failure. She continued down the empty sidewalk, searching for any source of light other than the occasional street lamp. Walking towards the bridge to the east side of town, she noticed the fluorescent glow of a gas station quickie mart in the distance. She smiled, feeling like this was her final chance.

Walking inside, she met the eyes of the cashier. He was a pimple faced young man with dyed orange hair. He couldn’t have been older than seventeen. Brenda’s heart sank.

“We’re closing in ten,” the cashier said.

“I’ll only be a minute,” Brenda said, standing near the entrance to wait for his approval. He nodded.

She walked towards the snack aisle. Glancing over the selection of chips, she noticed a small shelf dedicated to gossip magazines and paperback books. Maybe tonight she could find solace in literature, she thought. Looking closer, she realized they were all romance novels. She grabbed a bag of tortilla chips and walked towards the register.

“That’ll be $1.70,” the cashier said, scanning her bag of chips.

Retrieving her wallet from her back pocket, Brenda felt a deep sense of defeat. She looked up at the cashier, handing him the money. As he opened to cash register to get her change, she noticed an advertisement for the Oregon lottery on his uniform.

“Wait!” Brenda said, nearly shouting. The cashier looked stunned. She smiled defiantly. “One lottery ticket please.”
UEVERYDAY

Kiri Bolles

DAVID’S GOT THE BLUES

Nish Chhabra
When I finally invite him over for dinner, my mother and I shift in our seats and rearrange our peas with our forks, fixed in tight-lipped tension. Dividing his steak into sections, he stares at the knife’s motion as it cuts through tendons and coaxes fatty blood onto his plate.

Silence eats holes in our hands until the kettle screams on the stove and I explain to my mother as she tends to her tea that he’s not from around here—but her hollow core is not interested in the words he can’t understand and she doesn’t care for the lost look carved into his eye sockets.

I know she’s jealous of the way he looks at me and traces shapes on my hand under the table—she can tell by his touch that he’s gentle with my body and she hates when I have what she doesn’t.

The food goes cold and our mouths go silent and he murmurs merci, madame as he awkwardly stands to go—
My fingers sink
Into your skin.
Welcomed and warmed.

My hands tingle;
Every part of you
Resonates selflessness;
Presses secrets into my palms.

Your kinetic stillness
Is born after a millennia
Of crushing defeats,
Micro miracles.

The un-time of you pulls,
But my own world beckons;
I delicately uproot myself.
The moon illuminates a macabre meetup
As we tread on silent souls
The click of a Bic echoes through the tombs
Candles flicker casting shadows on gravestones
Blood spills from the fingers of thirteen
Chanting becomes a sonic salute
To the spirits who have succumbed
And those who we are beckoning to come prey

CRAIGSLIST COVEN

Daniella Boasberg

GOOD DOG

Sophia Munic
Sometimes I think of emptiness, of water and the gorges it cuts between stone-sliced bone dry riverbeds.

Sometimes I think of lightning strikes, of feverish wildfires and their skeletal sunsets, of kindness.

Sometimes I think of sandpaper callouses, of leaf piles and snowmen and the soft voice of my father.

Time has never stood still.
COMIC EXCERPT

Lauren Hecker

YOU WENT OUT WITH MY GIRLFRIEND AND TOLD HER YOU COULD GO OUT WITH MY BROTHER?

WHY DO I NEED YOUR PERMISSION?

BECAUSE HE'S MY BUTLER!

HAAAAAHAHAHA!

OH S***.

HEY! WE'VE BEEN WATCHING TV FOR A FEW DAYS NOW!

WOULD WE GET BACK TO WORK?

HAAAAHAAA!

IT'S IN YOUR POCKET?

I'LL TEACH YOU TO MAKE ME LAUGH!

HAAAAHAAA HAAAAHAAA!

Yeah, I guess so... have you had enough yet?