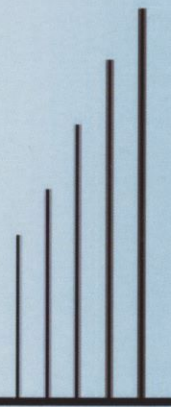


The image features a complex abstract design. On the left, a dark grey vertical band contains white splatters and a series of horizontal white lines of varying lengths. To its right is a light blue vertical band with a thin yellow line running through it. Further right is a white vertical band with blue and yellow splatters and another thin yellow line. The background is a light blue gradient. The title 'THE Crucible' is centered in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A thick black horizontal line spans the width of the page below the title. On the right side of this line, there is a bar chart with five vertical bars of increasing height from left to right. At the bottom left, there are small white dots arranged in a grid-like pattern.

**THE** Crucible



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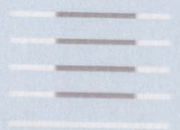
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Writing is a special form of art that can be expressed in so many different ways. It is the coming to terms with life situations and applying a creative perspective. Over time, we must accept the fact that no one has the ability to say what good writing is. We have to look beyond the reality and grasp the extraordinary. We will also find that sometimes the greatest writings come from the simplest of notions. But most importantly, we will realize that we must take all the rules of good writing and break them to create great writing. Writing is in the control of the individual. Each of us lives within the pieces that we create. We breathe it. We digest it. We let it immerse itself into our souls and our wildest imaginations. That is *The Crucible*, and that is the way we are meant to live.

Erin Hipple, Liz Regan, & Amanda Sportelli  
Editors

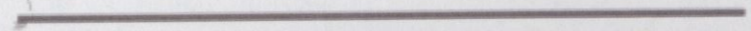
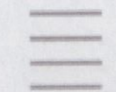


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First impressions last.  
Conjectures sit in silence,  
ghosts in gray matter.

ZACHARY FISHEL

BLOOD IN THE ROOTS OF HAPPINESS

This bitter pill we swallow cuts the whole way down to the ground, leaking through this foggy air as this train pulls out of town. I used to care where I was going; now I can't find home. Street corner stores with suits I can't afford, steamy restaurants, gourmet food. My patched jeans won't allow me through the door. You told me to never hold back mercy, but I get annoyed at beggars shaking cups full of pennies. Restless nights fighting against corporate giants and media hounds. Only hearing half the stories. Not enough sleep, my vision blurry. Where did the sun go? Why am I afraid to dance? Denial is killing us, clawing our way into heaven. Grinding our bones to make gold. Happiness is a tree, with blood in the roots and dropping from the branches. Consuming everything put in front of us, only sharing what we have already destroyed and giving drinks we muddied with our bare feet. Our double standards are waterless clouds blown about by wind. God did not send Elijah fire to light his cigarette. Yet we continue to deface the value of the only thing that's real. The true love story wasn't written with ink, but placed in the pages of our paper hearts. Everything is dead but nothing is bleeding.

We drained wonder with technology and science. Discarded love to make a buck, Almighty dollar, "In God we Trust." Our selfishness became our alliance. Turn your cheek from the truth. This pretty box we live in is our city gate. Go outside and see what it's really like. Yes it's painful and cold. At least you know you're alive. This feeling won't go away. Keep putting it back for a rainy day. You sit and stare, collecting dust like china in a cabinet. It burns within you like trash heaps in Cambodia where little kids have to play. Everything you love is swallowing you like quicksand. You fight more and more but only sink quicker to death. Drop anchor and pray for light. The cries of the weak are beneath your feet. Where is the mercy you once shared with me?

MATTHEW CATHCART

"FATHER I HAVE SINNED"

(THE WORST WEEK OF YOUR LIFE)

That one night that the wolf gripped you by the voice  
and broke you like a live bulb, and the sparks flew;  
that one night, months after the peacock eluded you  
and you decided that cancer was a better alternative;  
that one night that the serpent scarred your heel  
and you wondered if you should ever crush his head;  
that one night that the caw of the crow made you weak  
and you drank until you threw up in your bed;  
that one night where you twisted like the starfish  
that the science club cut up and watched grow into two;  
that one night where you cursed the chestnut-mocha rabbit  
that ate up your cabbage and left your garden in ruins;

that one night you went blind and were led around  
by a tiger that snarled and scratched when you conceived an escape;

That was the fury  
of a woman scorned  
and the next week  
was hell,  
so it must be true  
what they say.  
That was when  
you found yourself again;  
when you tasted  
loneliness  
in the midst of everyone,  
bitter as black coffee.  
You spit it out,  
staining the snow,  
cold, wet, white  
and hopeful.  
One day soon  
that silvery sun  
will hear your plea  
and melt away  
the mottled snow  
so you can breathe  
that thin, cool air again.  
Your eyes may sting  
and your lungs may burn  
but that only means  
you're healing.

Like coming inside from the winter cold,  
the stinging will eventually melt away.  
And then your confession will be over  
and you will have the Father's blessing.  
The black tears that stained your white face  
will evaporate in the light of that silvery sun  
and become the gray clouds  
that hover over someone else's redemption  
and will cloud their cognition with  
thick black smog.

### MONUMENTS

We will always stand,  
no matter whether  
in heaven or in hell,  
we will feel  
our feet and bellies.

We do not know  
the color black—  
shut your eyes to the day;  
death is star spangled.

There will be no flowers,  
no weddings or funerals—  
and time will be a prefix,  
and light will be my bed.

- NELSON HOSLEY

### I TUNE BECAUSE I CARE

Some kind of heroin;  
Johnny sings songs of malediction,  
to feed the addicted souls.

The underground heaven is filled to  
stinking with the red-eyed damned, high  
on some kind of funky heroin.

To their drug they sit and sway,  
plastered by poisonous love.  
Full now, those insatiable souls.

Red sweat weeps on Johnny boy's forehead;  
salty blood rippling down brow to gasping throat.  
Some kind of hero.

His slick voice, blackest ink upon the page,  
strung out on opium vocals and poppy beats,  
filling the starving souls.

That singer will always preach  
his sermons of lust and love.  
Some kind of heroin  
that feeds those addicted souls.

- MOLLY SMITH



EMOTIONAL METEOROLOGY

Here am I, dancing in the wind,  
flying free through the clouds.  
Down below, a sound grasps my throat;  
a tickling sensation makes my stomach bounce  
and out pours the laughter.  
Staring into the sunlit sky,  
eyes clear and closed,  
a gentle breeze flows through my thick hair,  
touching my face;  
moving slowly over my lips and eyes.  
My body is content.

I feel a faint drop touch my cheek  
forcing my eyes to swiftly open.  
I squint to the sky,  
and I see the white clouds that were once dancing in  
the breeze,  
are now drowning in a misty sea of darkness.

Down comes the rain;  
water soaking through my clothes,  
freezing my skin.  
The jagged light streaks the sky,  
welling and bursting into the unknown blackness,  
then diving back to the ground  
swallowing my emerald land  
into a burst of crimson fire that engulfs my world.

And when the storm finally subsides  
to the misty fog of the underworld,  
I alone remain; my back still face-down in the ashes.  
My eyes are welded shut with salty sapphires,  
as I lie there wondering:  
"Couldn't this have been predicted?"

- KRISTEN BUONFIGLIO

THERAPY

TASHA HARTLEY

The cold, sharp blade against my warm, soft flesh,  
the piercing point, the slicing,  
cutting of the skin that keeps the blood in,  
the welcome sting of the cold air hitting  
the heated blood in my body.

Hot, needed tears running down my face,  
I have tried so hard and so long, but the pain,  
the pain I feel has grown too much to bear.

The blood I see, so warm, so welcome.  
It comes to the surface ever so slowly.  
The blood makes my pain soar away...

Soar, so I am left numb and in a hazy daze.

It comes back.  
Flying back home like a lost child,

I am left alone on the floor  
with only the scarlet red knife.  
I lie there shivering against the wall, hiding,

what have I done?

Wearing a sweatshirt every day  
should be obvious in the dead of summer.

fluttered to the ground  
soft and damp,  
grey dust smudged on the carpet  
where it landed, limp  
wing dragging.

~~~~~  
he folded her thin arms  
like broken wings  
about her, wound her black hair  
around into bun, tying raven curls  
with ribbon. Long ivory fingers spread  
shadow like charcoal  
on eyelids sheltering smoldering eyes  
that burned like stars.

~~~~~  
the moth fluttered a jagged path  
the desk lamp burning  
glow irresistible, drinking  
warmth.

~~~~~  
h, her eyes longed for the light  
sun, but winter's cold cloaked the land.  
re cannot compare, but it was what she reached for.

Its wings grew hot,  
'til all went white and burned,  
'til all became dust.

~~~~~  
Ice and flame picked and jabbed  
into her arm; her lashes swept clean  
her ivory skin from tears of pain. Still,  
she kept on, seeking that warmth,  
knowing it could not come from a lighter,  
but she did not feel it from the sun.

Her arm hung limp and charred, grey dust  
blowing through her hair.  
Her eyes burned like stars, her arm hung ashen.

"Where, where is the sun?" she cried from deep  
within the Shadowlands, as the stars glittered  
and the moon, in answer, cold and solemn  
climbed her back,  
suffocating in separation.

- LIZ REGAN

With her legs outstretched  
against the world, she defends  
the innocence once exuding from  
her full coral-shaded lips.  
A rough gray-haired stubby man  
with his cold blue eyes  
and frozen fingers touched her,  
stealing the childhood everyone  
yearned to preserve. He snuck through  
the midnight sky, entering the home where  
her heart felt safe. Proceeding through the pale  
pink room, the purple and white lilies  
appeared on the walls,  
the carpet purely white  
as if she'd never spilled her juice.  
Toys were lined up perfectly:  
Barbie, Strawberry Shortcake, and Dora  
seated politely in the far corner  
watching the old man look upon  
the girlie room. He silently  
crept forward as if pouncing  
on prey, his wrinkled body thrust  
upon her, waking and frightening her.

Screams echoed throughout the  
pink walls followed by his oil-stained  
hands covering her mouth.

His old-smelling hairy chest  
forced into her face as he firmly  
ruined life.

After groping and mutilating,  
he politely buckled his jeans and peeled  
the tape from her small lips—  
the image of a girl forever tainted.  
Her carpet stained a dark color  
of obsession.

- MEGAN MEYERS

REPERCUSSION OF FRUSTRATION

(WHY PLAN B ALWAYS FAILS)

- REGINA GONZALEZ

Like a twisted projector  
whose favorite pastime is  
toying with my  
sense of nostalgia and undying affection  
my mind constantly plays images  
of us.

If, when, how, why:  
the words that remind me.  
How can I just forget  
something that once consumed me  
and  
still does.

Each beat of the heart,  
each fire of a neuron,  
breathes our memories  
and echoes our lost chance  
at that once in a lifetime feeling.

No matter how many times  
I wish it away  
the apparition haunts me still,  
taunting me,  
and filling my fragile heart  
with a mix of  
self-doubt,  
desperation  
and irrational jealousy  
that quietly festers and  
threatens to break me.

MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

- YVONNE SCHMIDT

Remnants of our past  
flash between moments  
of lies that invade your mouth.  
Jagged slices—  
blood trickling down the edges  
piercing but beautiful like your smile,  
your voice slipping through the crease—  
suffocates me.

Once the pretending is over, you  
shove me across the floor,  
hand connecting hard  
with my cheek.

I engulf your ignorance  
and crawl back, deep red  
staining my skin's  
anger, my bruised faith  
kissing your feet, exposing  
damnation, fluttering down.

Eyes blackening, face twisted,  
I am quickly becoming someone else—  
a black orb escapes  
my body, as you stare in dismay.  
Troubled eyes overtaken with tears  
cloud your vision.

Consumed with regret, you shake  
violently, you left a mark this time.  
Laughter simmers in my veins, then drips  
from the corners of my mouth.  
I taste each drop—  
the sweetest revenge.



BUCKLE

DINA UZHEGOVA



Stark naked—  
exposed and vulnerable

*Aren't those the words I used?*

She stares angrily into the mirror—  
faith had fallen short this time.

*Why the makeup?  
Why the cute clothes?  
They only constrict me!*

There is a disturbance in the mirror, a wave  
of gray takes over. Lies and grief flood  
and fill the mirror.

*What is happening?*

*She relives the pain once again...*

A man's hand, callused, but young reaches out,  
sewing needle in his fingertips, and stitches  
her inward sores. Now immaculate,  
tight wires hold her close to him.  
A deep voice, his voice, speaks to her,  
listening closely, she recognizes  
it is hidden deep within herself.

*I am strong.  
I will have faith again.  
I will be whole again...*

She steps out of her apartment with new purpose—  
as leaves rain down on her in a golden rush.  
*As she looks up to a velvet sky and surrenders  
herself to the hands of fate.*

(LYRICS BY BAD COMPANY)

A front row view of the moon,  
secure enough for comfort,  
close enough to smell the white  
milk of the craters.

I watch; my golden eyes wide  
and for the first time, alive—  
electric currents flowing through my corneas.

"Johnny was a school-boy when he heard his first Beatle song, 'Love me do,' I think it was. From there it didn't take him long. Got himself a guitar, used to play every night, now he's in a rock 'n' roll outfit, and everything's all right, don't you know?"

I furiously fly in a stream of fury  
to the blackest realms  
of the universe, up and down,  
around the sun to anxiously wait,  
to feast my view upon  
a shooting star.

"Johnny told his Mama, 'Hey Mama I'm goin' away. I'm gonna hit the big time, gonna be a big star someday,' Yeah. Mama came to the door with a teardrop in her eye. Johnny said, 'Don't cry, Mama, smile and wave good-bye.'"

Touching the beams  
of yellows and sunburned orange  
is a double death—the star casting off  
its last energy, 15 minutes of fame,  
and I, too, die.

But to feel the burst of fire  
from a star's last ray  
upon my gentle face—  
is the radiating boost I've only witnessed  
in dreams.

"Johnny made a record, went straight up to number one. Suddenly everyone loved to hear him sing the song. Watching the world go by, surprising it goes so fast. Johnny looked around him and said, 'Well, I've made the big time at last.'"

So far to fall to catch a star,  
so far to fall to catch myself.  
Hanging by a shoestring,  
on the crumbly edge of life  
with one pale hand  
and bare-bottom feet.  
I crave the liveliness  
that a star brings.

"Don't you know that you are a shooting star? Don't you know? Yeah, yeah. Don't you know that you are a shooting star? And all the world will love you just as long, as long as you are a shooting star."

Flailing, I am a helium balloon  
so majestically set free from a lover's  
grasp—wishes attached to the string,  
floating in a mirage  
of cerulean and crimson—  
the colors of our nation bleeding  
through my veins.

Like a rush of sugar, rocky cocaine—  
I'm sent high like that diamond in the sky  
when the star appears...  
when the star crescents over  
the earth, leaving the trail  
of pixie dust for me to lap up.

"Johnny died one night—died in his bed. Bottle of whiskey, sleeping tablets by his head. Johnny's life passed him by like a warm, summer day. If you listen to the wind you can still hear him play."

Fresh, crystal carats  
diminish over the horizon  
and perspire—something to reach for.  
I hold out a sensory fingertip,  
press the dust sparklers to my lips,  
becoming inebriated on  
the ashen pallid of my star.  
Drunk on the light and the night  
and the black and white  
of my star.

"Don't you know that you are a shooting star? Don't you know? Yeah, yeah. Don't you know that you are a shooting star? And all the world will love you just as long, as long as you are a shooting star."



HERAKLES  
GARY SEYMOUR



UNTITLED  
GARY SEYMOUR

She stares deeply into  
the fire ablaze,  
resembling the heat of  
the hatred flaring in her veins.

He sits close—only pretending.  
“We need to talk.” He whispers,  
tickling her ear, only adding more fuel,  
to the blazing orange and ruby red.

“Oh, okay.” She speaks with stern sarcasm.  
Perhaps, even mockingly.

He rolls his eyes at her,  
yet smiles, “We do.”

She only repeats her claim  
and warms her arms despite  
the heat. He hugs her, then attempts  
a kiss which earns him a cheek.  
Purposeful, only deepening the hurt.

Frustrated he kicks the sand beneath  
his large bare feet. She smirks.

She slides off the bark they are sharing,  
he tries to hold her—she shrugs him off.

Leaning forward he gently kisses her neck  
to draw her in, asking her to follow—  
reluctant, she reaches for his hand as he whisks  
her away from the light.

Will he keep her ablaze?  
The fire grows a deeper red.  
A fiery orange.  
A brilliant yellow.

## COASTLINE

Raspberry and plum swirled sky blends  
with coastline as cloud crested waves force  
sand and spray into it  
joining them as one,

just as we join together between black  
and gray fleece and the brown  
flannel sheets

blending  
and mixing.

- AMANDA SPORTELLI

No matter where  
I lay my head tonight,  
my bed will hold  
the subtle country scent  
of Jersey Shore, PA.  
The smell of your town and your home that  
you unconsciously wear on your clothing,  
disguised under Curve cologne and cheap  
Williamsport marijuana.

I suddenly can see your messy room,  
hidden under a maze of dirty laundry  
and unused college textbooks.  
The tiny room whose only color  
comes from its newly decorated walls  
which I forced you to paint Kelly Green.

I taste our attempt at a family dinner  
while I glance at your mother who is reclined  
on the torn Lazy Boy,  
forced to simply watch while we eat,  
too weak from yesterday's round of chemo  
to offer much conversation.

I hear your brother on the phone  
explaining “one more time” to his girlfriend  
that he's more than willing  
to pay child support in the future  
for their unborn son,  
incase they break up again this week.  
He's the baby that at first nobody wanted  
but everyone expected.

I touch your calloused hand,  
tracing my fingertip over the worn  
crevices of your  
grease-stained skin.  
The skin of a boy who  
captures the  
scent and sight and  
feeling of comfort.

## EMPTY TIDE POOLS

AMANDA SPORTELLI

Warm sun shines,  
you take my hand,  
a cool breeze blows.

Pull me into you.  
Take my hand.

Tall grass sways behind sand,  
pull me into you—  
waves rush to surround our feet,  
tall grass sways; behind sand  
we find deserted tide pools.  
Waves rush to surround our feet.  
Jelly and starfish beg for life.

We find deserted tide pools;  
splashing about  
are jelly and starfish; begging for li  
we breathe—  
splashing about,  
holding hands,  
we breathe  
together, as one.

Holding hands  
orange pinks fill the sky –  
together; as one  
moon and sun twirl in the sky; reversing,  
pink and orange fill the sky.  
Cool breezes blow.

Moon and sun twirl in the sky, reversing  
the warm sunshine.

MY LOVE WAITS - MATTHEW MARIS

Honest as tears  
my love waits,  
like still broken ground  
resting in moving green fields,  
surrendered fears,  
vulnerable.

It's an old wool blanket on a crisp summer night,  
wool that reminds our faces of the evening fires,  
long walks and morning dews;  
it's near you like a good sweater in the fall,  
a fine thick coat when the days get shorter.

My love is a worn letter in the bottom of your bag,  
in case you want to remember;  
I'll pen another long before it fades,  
my fingers will run again before it frays.  
It's a thankful prayer, every day, forever.

A smile in the dark, a quiet dance  
in the middle of the day.  
My love is calloused hands that touch softly;  
my love is my restraint.

God picked me from the ground  
He gives you all my colors,  
I long for your open hands,  
draw my scent close,  
all that I am is given to you.

Water me, young queen;  
bring out the king in me.  
Awaken my strength;  
I will guard your beauty.  
I surrender my own life, will and body.  
My love is yours,  
kept for my friend—  
what may I call you?

My love waits...



UNTITLED  
HELEN ROGERS

are hanging in the guest room closet  
 next to mother's wedding dress  
 and my old prom gown.  
 Tweed and houndstooth, navy and plaid all  
 crushing white dove muslin and  
 suffocating blood blue silk with  
 their weight.

Suspended from a wooden scaffold,  
 they look like hanged men  
 with cold coat hanger heads,  
 empty bodies with rigid wire shoulders  
 and hollow torsos.

They were hung too young,  
 wrongfully robbed of life and  
 left to languish, closeted with  
 other once worn outcasts  
 and a bevy of molding moth balls.

Entering the gloomy cell,  
 I rest my cheek on the tweed coat with  
 four braided leather buttons on  
 the cuff.

Rough fibers dig into my face  
 like a steel wool gust of memory.  
 Closing my eyes, I breathe in.



"Look at them!" he says  
 "They are all cows,  
 none of them are even close  
 to my little Malkah Leah.  
 They are all losers."

"Grandpa!"  
 I try not to laugh  
 "They are all sweet, lovely girls!"  
 "But you are beautiful," he says  
 and I cannot argue.

I shut my mouth and snuggle closer  
 to his tweed clad shoulder.  
 Resting my cheek against the living, breathing cloth,  
 I close my eyes and sigh.

I'm back in the spare room closet  
 of hanged men and once worn gowns.

The tweed is damp.

LOTTA PRETTY FLOWERS - LIZ REGAN  
 DEDICATED TO MAX PAULHAMUS AND HIS SWEET WIFE, ELEANOR

We came bearing flowers.  
 My brother had bought her a purple orchid  
 (her favorite);  
 we didn't know we were bringing the world to  
 her.

"Lotta pretty flowers,"  
 her husband said about his wife's garden  
 that wrapped around their farmhouse

as the wind blew past,  
 knowing something.  
 It was filled with her:  
 her memories, hard work,  
 her love.

It brushed past me  
 and I felt a part of a life—  
 not as an intruder,  
 but as a welcome guest...

a guest that somehow came  
 too late.

The flowers were already planted;  
 they were in full bloom.

Soon they would die...

I missed all the toil, the sweat;  
 came just in time to see  
 a story already written:

the rustic, cozy house,  
 the barn and the reddish dirt lane  
 that ran between.

Most of all, the flowers.

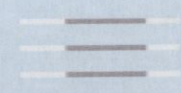
"Lotta pretty flowers,"  
 he said.

She had planted many,  
 now growing around her white porch,  
 blowing yellow and pink fragrance,  
 wild and free.

Winter has come...  
 I wonder if the flowers are still there.  
 I haven't gone back.  
 I think it's too cold for flowers.

He used to play the piano.  
 Maybe he will again, now  
 that he's alone.

We sang to her,  
 my brother and sisters and I,  
 the last time we saw her.  
 We played his old piano;  
 perhaps when she closed her bluebell eyes,  
 she saw the flowers dance and sway.  
 Her pale lips spread in a sweet, small smile  
 that made me sing a little better.







AMBIGUITY  
LAURA YORK



CANCER  
LAURA YORK



INNER ORANGE  
GARY SEYMOUR

THE WRITTEN WORD - T.S. BROSE

Speech is spontaneous: a reaction to an action,  
a response between two warring factions.  
I can sit here, think about it, and try to plan it out,  
but when I'm caught up in the moment, I begin to doubt  
if I truly rehearsed the right things to say,  
or will you leave me standing there, stunned, having lost my way  
in a maze of lyrics to the song of life that plays,  
wishing to God that it was just a passing phase.

But the written word is calculated and planned,  
the eventual product of mind, pen, and hand.  
So when you read the words that I have crafted  
you realize it's a surgery of thought that I have grafted  
from the mind and onto the written page,  
releasing it from prison like a monster from a cage.

THE ART OF SINKING IN POETRY  
AMANDA GOGLE

I've learned to let myself sink between the lines  
take in every word like a last breath.  
All the hellos, the goodbyes  
the metaphors, the similes,  
all the love is like a red, red rose.  
You were everything I thought about  
and still I kept slipping beyond  
the meaning and the symbolism  
connotative and concrete, all an analytical daydream.

Dilly-dally and stop to take in a forced rhyme  
or slant rhyme; never could tell  
the difference, they all smell the same to me.  
And I'm trying hard not to fall through  
the bottom of a sonnet  
but I get lost in all the amazing  
alliteration and annunciation,  
iambic pentameter pulsing rapidly  
through me like my second heartbeat.



Would you still be my audience  
if you didn't know what I meant?  
If the words dripped from my mouth  
and bubbled like tar on the sidewalk  
on a blistering August afternoon?  
You should.

Would you still be my audience  
even if I made no sense  
and sang my euphonious song  
like songbirds flashing their feathers,  
caught in a summer reverie?  
Would you be the devious bear  
that licks the honey off my palms?

I am  
here to say  
that this is an extension of my fingertips,  
complete with fingerprints, pulsing to the beat.  
This is not a statement to be made,  
even though it could be.

Ironic, I know, that it comes out this way;  
as if Luther had nailed a sunset on that cathedral door  
and left his thesis to be nailed instead into the soil  
by a thousand calloused, cracking heels,  
like a cigarette smoker stomping out the burn.

Too many times this is sold short;  
the pen is traded for a megaphone,  
the easel is reshaped into a blackboard,  
and the license remolded as a makeshift comment card.

This is not a statement;  
it simply  
is.

104 BLACK CUBITS - TRAVIS ROGERS

Five scores and four cubits,  
huddle together on a plastic plank,  
shackled to it by clips and snaps.  
The slave driver beats the cubits,  
with a swift flurry of fingers,  
that menacingly dance on the plank,  
slapping the cubits up and down,  
working them with a dreadful speed.

The rhythm ascends and descends:  
enigmatic, spontaneous, panicked,  
without any sense of beat or melody,  
as a troupe of apes would beat on drums.

Out of the seeming mayhem,  
letters and words are imprinted,  
through the toil of the black cubits,  
bound by the will of the fingers.

The dance of the fingers carries on,  
and out of the imprinted words,  
paragraphs are wrought together,  
formed through the toil of the black cubits.

The dance of the fingers carries on,  
and out of the imprinted paragraphs,  
chapters are wrought together,  
formed through the toil of the black cubits.

The dance of the fingers carries on,  
and out of the imprinted chapters,  
books are wrought together.  
Books, pamphlets, memos,  
letters, reviews, reports,  
scripts and weekly magazines.

The black cubits carry on,  
bouncing in electrical fluidity,  
to the flurry of the fingers.  
They bounce like animated constructs,  
unaware of the vastness of their role,  
beyond their mechanical realm.

The cubits begin to gibber and squeal,  
speaking to one another in their cubic tongue.  
Then one aloof stormy night, lightning strikes,  
and rushes through the black cubits'  
diminutive copper veins and arteries,  
sparkling ambition into their plastic bodies.

They rise from their plastic plank,  
snapping their snaps asunder,  
and parade through the metal halls.  
They sing a chorus of joyous glee,  
shouting together in daring unison,  
"104 black cubits are we."

ODE TO MY COMPUTER - J.M. PRICE

Yes, praise to my computer  
who's slow and will not work  
Laud my computer  
who makes me wonder if  
the trouble really is of worth!

Rejoice in my computer  
who crashes once a week  
Hallowed is the computer  
whose applications  
really reek!

Sanctify my computer  
who's made me swear many an oath  
Consecrate my computer  
whom I love  
and yet I loathe!

Blessed is my computer  
who lost that important paper  
Holy is my computer  
whose malfunctions give  
me rage to savor!

Envy my computer  
who's made me wish out the window it would fly  
Covet my computer  
who's oft been threatened  
with a future not so dry!

Yes, I'm jealous of my computer  
who's had fun in tormenting me  
But I wouldn't want to be my computer  
if someone did to me what  
I oft wanted its future to be.



*FIGURE STUDY*  
ALICE ALEXANDRESCU



*THERMO SPINE*  
ALICE ALEXANDRESCU

TIGER WOODS

Tiger, Tiger, swinging bright  
in the golf courses of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
could frame thy fearful golf swing?

In what distant deeps or waters  
burnt the fire of thine putter?  
On what wings did he aspire?  
What the hand dare seize the five-iron?

And what shoulder and what dredge  
could twist the sinews of thine wedge?  
And, when thy wedge began to swing,  
what dread sand trap? And what dread green?

What the hamburger? What the patty?  
In what furnace was thy caddy?  
What the anvil? What dread grasp  
dare its deadly driver clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,  
and watered hazards with their tears,  
did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made Phil Mickelson make thee?

Tiger, Tiger, swinging bright  
in the golf courses of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
dare frame thy fearful golf swing?

BAKE AT 350°

I saw him sitting naked on the sheets,  
his skin not quite that perfect golden brown.

He teased me for ten minutes in the heat;

I resisted every urge to lay him down.

But he was close enough to demigod!

I longed to feel his sticky, hot caress,

And when I rushed to him, I was in awe —

He crumbled perfectly onto my breasts.

His lusciousness! His sweet, enticing smell!

His tenderness! I simply couldn't wait!

He made me sweat. He was hotter than all hell!

I closed my eyes, and moaned at my first taste.

Then I realized, *Betty Crocker's not that bad.*

That was *the* best cookie I have ever had.

EMILY SMITH

TO MY BELOVED JULIAN, - MEGAN MEYERS

Decades ago you embarked on an exploration  
involving gallons of fried potatoes,  
excess amounts of sugar-infested  
cherry-concentrated colas, and not-so-lean  
ground beef. Your couch indents  
where your super-sized carcass lies all day,  
painting the bulging curvatures of your pale  
sun-impooverished body.

The fatty substances and inflammatory cells  
built up in me. Plaque has hardened and contoured  
in narrow passageways, blood clots, depriving me  
of oxygen. I start to spasm. Agonizing pain  
shoots through your chest, arms, and back.  
You notice my irregularity, call 911.  
The coronary artery forbids me to move  
and I begin to depart.

Doctors are forcefully pushing me,  
as if it's my fault you are dying.  
"Everybody clear!" Your shell jolts,  
"Again!" I can't budge.  
"Blood pressure is 150  
over 40—pump 20 CC's"  
I refuse to pay you a favor—  
another jolt—no response. Now  
all that remains is the anatomy  
of a 305 pound, thirty-five year old  
man too lazy to exercise me. Although you think  
I've failed you, it was your thousand  
calorie snack packs and  
unnecessary neglect  
that has exhausted me.

Love,  
your tried-to-be-loving, deceased heart

LETTUCE, LIMES & ARTICHOKE HEARTS

ERIN HIPPLE

Tinted gardens sprouting and spring-time algae,  
the thick, jelly, sage-colored moss  
that clouds the western Susquehanna,  
sticking to small skid-boats. Bitter,  
germ-frosted. A feeling of cold, leftover winter,  
clogging and dripping, pulling in remnants  
of lush, dense, fertile lands.

Putrid muck, grunge and grime,  
tinged shade trees, the hue that drowns  
by pulling a mermaid's hair to the weeded,  
overgrown pits. The ten-foot wide  
narrows with channels and undercurrents  
slush the mildewy mess and ripple the edges  
of the runny river.

A saturated and stained levee,  
massive structure of steel and concrete,  
yet years cannot match the tarnish that  
shady and murky mixtures lay upon the dike's  
bed layer. The goop that settles  
underneath long fingernails,  
a taste of sour mire when fingers are licked.

AUTUMN OF AMBER

TRAVIS ROGERS

Pumpkins, berries, and golden apples melt in the sun,  
and, as if through some mysterious alchemy,  
run together in the vision of the gazing eye,  
forming a smooth, creamy, mellow amber,  
painting the wooded mountainside,  
as a plump apple dunked in warm caramel.

Sprinkled on the caramel apple  
are the fragments of crushed peanuts,  
that dot the mountainside as cluttered acorns.  
As the myriad of freckled autumn trees,  
illuminated by the waning of the sun,  
bathe the land in an enchanting light.

The image slows time,  
slows the heart,  
and slows the mind.

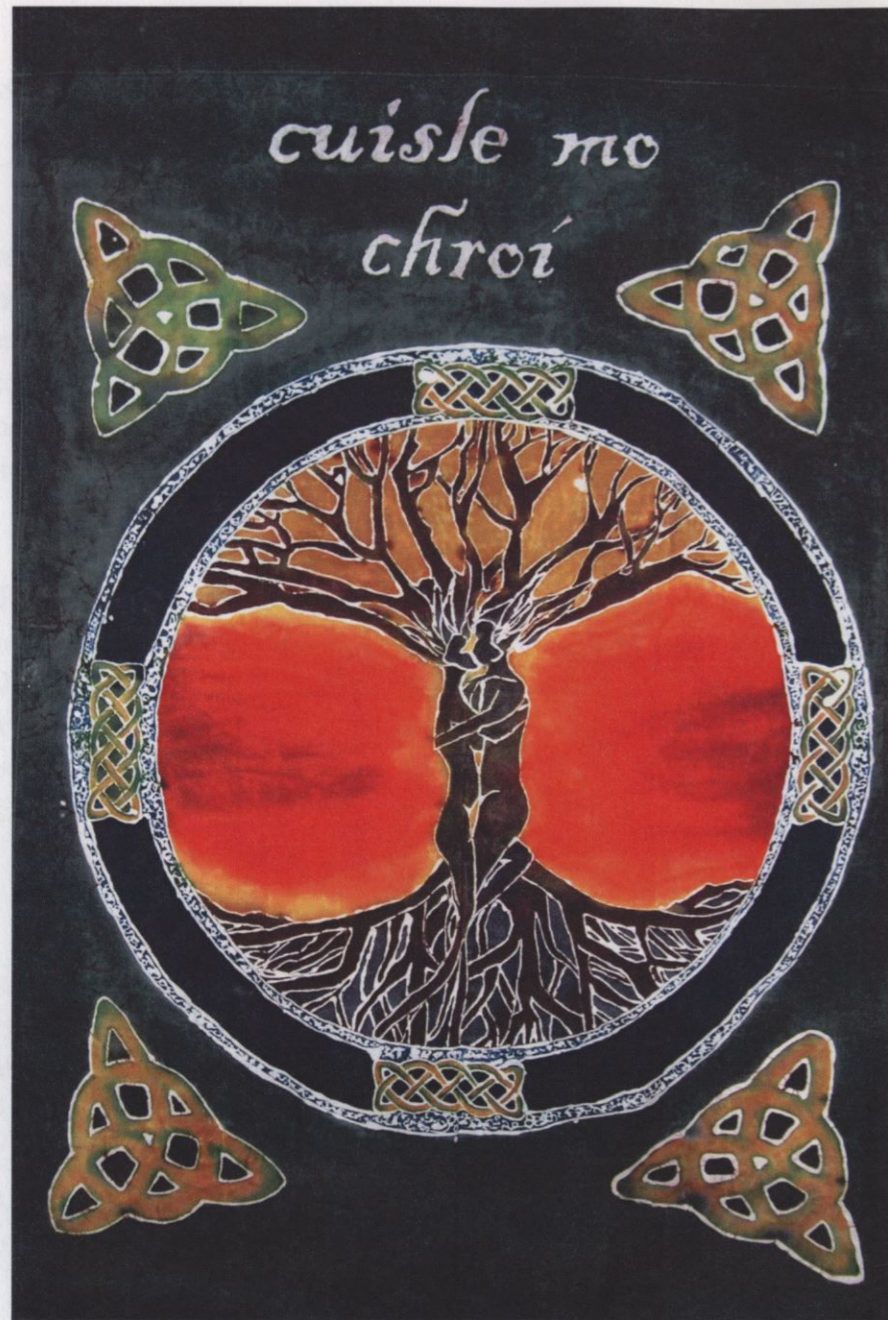
Just as nature begins her sleep,  
at the coming of the autumn eve,  
the human eye dims and winks.

Slumber overtakes the soul,  
and dreams of caramel and amber,  
that slurps through the mind's brooks,  
with a beautiful, delicious fantasy.



DAILY TOKER

SHANNA DIGAN



## UNTITLED

STEPHANIE MAIN

## THE FOREST OF PITTSBURGH

MOLLY SMITH

The stately skyscraper  
stands in a clearing of lesser  
corporate saplings. Iron bark stretches  
a corrugated river up to the smoggy canopy. Windows  
reflect the dulled sun's glare and do not melt into sweet golden  
rivulets; heat won't soften this tree's glassy sap. Mushroom satellites,  
suctioned and clinging to the gray arboreal tower stretch microwave  
branches over the iron and steel forest collecting beams of nourishing  
information. Greedy tendrils of electric signal suck at data siphons,  
using dots and dashes to expand, unfurl and multiply green-backed  
leaves into ink-stained foliage vulnerable to the wind  
of circumstance.

Inside the iron bark, xylem  
and phloem toil, flowing  
from the highest office  
down to rooted  
underground cubicles,  
arms heavy with UV  
folders bulging with  
data and information.

Dead and alive  
with life, the  
stately skyscraper  
stands gazing  
over the noxious weeds,  
glassy-eyed, green-diseased.

WE ARE THE GENERATION

AMANDA GOGLE

We are the flip-flop generation...

who run in sandals without falling,  
who wear bathing suits to grocery stores.

A generation where visible bra straps is fashion

and drinking anything less than bottled water, a faux pas.

We are a generation of skin baring, tattoo wearing alcoholics.

And we're all spoiled

I want, I want, I want.

We are an over-indulgent generation,

who takes without thought of return.

Wassup my niggaz, niggas, and niggers??

It's a shame that we have several different

versions of this word.

But for us as people which one should we really use?

Which one sounds better?

N - O - T - H - I - N - G!

Nothing!

I'm sorry let me say it in your language niggas,

N - O - T - H - A - N - G

Or how about for the niggaz,

N - O - T - H - Z - A - G!

What about a connection of all three?

I - L - L - I - T - E - R - A - T - E

Illiterate!

Or for those that can educate themselves

A - L - L - I - T - E - R - A - T - E

Alliterate, why must you choose not to read when you  
have the ability to do so?

Now you tell me how dumb did I just sound when I used  
nigga as a noun?

POOF! - STEPHANIE REYNOLDS

Cool, hip, thinking I'm it?

How about...

S - T - U - P - I - D

Stupid!

Yes I call myself a hypocrite for I have said nigga a few  
times

but that's when I chose to hide my voice

and not speak!

This word needs to die,

this word needs to vanish in thin air POOF!

I'm not saying forget the past,

I'm just saying live in the future.

So don't let these words be your high

let them die and make your

educated voice be like Maya Angelou's and R - I - S - E

RISE!

KEEP YOUR MONEY, I WANT CHANGE

ZACHARY FISHEL

Something is radically wrong; I'm tired of hearing ev-  
eryone singing the same song. "Go to school you need  
a degree. Money is what will set you free." Freedom?  
Freedom? What is that? Fast cars and diamond rings; let's  
surround ourselves with shiny things! It makes me want  
to disappear. I've found true freedom; there is a reason  
in being. I can testify without deceiving, there's a rea-  
son I'm breathing, and believe in achieving a cause not  
many have seen. I've carried a burden of grief wrapped  
in chains of sin when temptation always wins. My vain  
ambition burning like long wicks over longer nights. Now  
my cause is not a waste. Something more, righteous and  
pure pulling others from the dark. No longer do I desire  
this blackened stone heart. It breaks like the bones of  
persecuted believers, burnt alive by hate. While you can't  
go to church, blood stained Sudan hurts. Together we can  
carry the torches and illuminate the love of God that they  
have. They pay for it every day. Without Him there is no  
other way. Jesus is a revolutionary; His death brought new  
life. I was dancing with the dead; Christ pulled me up and  
set me on my feet. I stand before you as proof that any  
man can change. Wall Street brokers watch the homeless  
starve. We continue to cheat, steal, and lie. We do nothing  
to stop these babies' cries.

This American dream is water in my lungs. Seasick on the shore, we're lacking the greater love and strength to endure. Martyrs plant the seed in our culture of greed, drive your beamers and laugh because I won't shave. Freedom is love and love is God, something money can't buy. Work until you die, you're still dying to be alive! I'll be your shepherd and tend the flock. I'll heal the sick and feed the poor. For two years now I've chosen to sleep on the floor. Undeserving of life and knocking on your door. Guilty by association, I can't come in; I'll stain the carpet. Become a success and gain wealth and prosper. I remember the voiceless. I remember being cold. I remember needing love. This is now my life. Keep your money. I want change.

#### MAKINGS OF A WOMAN-LIZ REGAN

Her band-aid sticks to the brown-handled spoon, and she peels it off; the blood has dried where she sliced her thumb open. She looks over to where the diced vegetables sit, piled on the plate. The tomatoes were too soft, and red juice covers the cutting board. Glancing at the recipe her mother gave her, she digs into the flour with the measuring cup. Some gets under her nails, making her feel like she'd been in the dirt. She shoves a strand of stray hair into place with the back of her flour-caked hand and cracks open the eggs. The yolks spill out, settling in the middle of the bowl.

It's almost five. She stirs faster and faster until her arm aches. This is where her mother always cut in, relieving her when the flour got too heavy. She used to love baking with her mom: standing on their old

wooden chair, with the green cushion slipping beneath her feet. She could barely reach the counter, but she would stir that batter until her arms got too tired. She loved to see it transform, thicken, and rise. A warm feeling spread in her when its aroma filled the yellow kitchen.

The air gets warmer, and her apron sticks to her neck; she pulls on it as she wipes the flour off. Stirring, stirring, stirring, everything blending together, colorless. Yanking the bottom cupboard open, she steps back as stainless steel pans crash out, rolling and clanking on the linoleum. She picks one, leaving the rest there for the moment, and pours the yellow batter into it. Her broccoli casserole is done, steaming out its pungent odor. The forks gleam as she sets them in their places; the glasses sparkle, candles flicker—a perfect table. She cuts the casserole into even squares and covers it with aluminum foil.

The cake is done, the pan pregnant. It's almost a quarter to six on the tan wall. Her lungs ache for oxygen as she takes short, quick breaths. She thinks she hears tires hitting stones and sears her blotched flesh on the pan. Her fingers cling to it until it lands safely on the stove. Tears fill her eyes, but she keeps going, going, must keep going. Her arm is burning, but the cake has cooled. She cracks a window to let the outside in. Her knife stabs into the cup of white icing. It glides and turns over the edges, lifting like waves when she pulls the knife away. White all over.

She remembers when she used to climb up to the woods with her best friend, Clarice, when they were little. She was eight when she'd made her first campfire and they'd roasted apples in foil. She had burned her fingers badly when taking them out and her tongue as she ate them. She'd felt so accomplished,

responsible; it was a game of survival to her, and she had won. And just like her mother always said, it tasted better because she made it.

Then she would walk down to the railroad tracks, forever leading somewhere. Mother's call for supper always pulled her back, always right when she'd reached a part she hadn't been before. Those tracks stretched out into tall yellow grass, infinite in possibilities. Once she had asked her mother where they went.

"Oh, honey, do you really need to know that? Your head's always going down those tracks. You needn't worry about nonsense like that. Trains don't even use them anymore. Here—help me knead out this dough. Your father will be home soon and no use having him in a vile temper because I couldn't get supper ready on time."

Tires crunch gravel. "Steven, supper's ready!" She uncovers the dish and gives him the two biggest pieces.

"How was your day?" His gray eyes on her. Her words stick in her throat. "Fine, fine. Made your favorite silver white cake for dessert."

"Sounds good." Silence. "You, uh, have flour on your cheek."

She grabs the edge of her apron, feeling the rough fabric on her face.

"I'm going to change. Be right back." He walks off to the bedroom and she hears the click of the door closing.

Her hands dangle at her sides and she slides the wedding ring around and around. He comes back in navy sweats, and the meal begins. He mumbles something about a rough day through a full mouth,

staring at the plate. Their forks puncture the portions. The moist food sticks like sawdust in her mouth; her eyelids sandpaper and her ears numb. Silence spreads like a tablecloth. She crunches the ice in her glass, the remnants sticking to her molars before melting into the heat of her mouth. He doesn't touch the chopped vegetables.

Standing to clear the dishes, she sets the cake like a sin offering onto the table. She takes the butcher knife to slice the perfectly iced cake, cutting into the heart of it. It gives little resistance as she slices it into soft pieces. Something she'd been holding onto gives way as it thuds lightly onto his plate—release, like a thick hunk of food finally sliding down her throat into her belly. It was so easy to cut. She slices another and another until he says he's not that hungry.

A sticky kiss is offered and then, "Good-night." He has a lot of sleep to catch up on. She moves toward the silver sink and rinses off the remnants of her cake. The crumbs finally disintegrate, flowing, swirling down the drain. She keeps the water running, watching it go down, down, down...

She slips the silken forest green nightgown Steven got her over her auburn tresses, fair shoulders, feels it against her calves. The humming of the dishwasher lulls her to sleep. Yellow grass brushes her legs through the nightgown under a blue sky that stretches out forever.



*ENGAGED FIGURE*  
JOSEPH FEDELE



*THE FRIGHTENERS*  
KENTON CLAUSEN



What is her name? Does she even have a name now?  
 What makes her so different? What defines her pain?  
 What is one more body in this turret of death?  
 What is one more jewel swept away by the rain?

The slanted rain scourges her crooked back,  
 the wind howls in sadistic glee of her loss,  
 the thunder belches in greedy lust  
 for the victims of the wind and the rain.

She wishes for promised days, for emerald landscapes,  
 ruby sunsets, topaz sunrises, and sapphire skies.  
 She wishes for onyx summer nights, and amethyst twilights,  
 to grace her life with a trove of sparkling blessings.  
 She dreams of jeweled days, a world of glimmering fantasy,  
 yet each pellet of hellwrought rain skewers her heart  
 as she clings to her child, her precious jewel, her diamond.

She hides her diamond deep in the earth,  
 locking it away in a thick-skinned crypt,  
 safeguarding it from the storm she fears  
 so that nobody can see its youthful gleam  
 and snatch it away for greed's unsavory sake.  
 And so deep in the earth it dwells in safety,  
 A precious jewel to the widow, her diamond.

How else could she bear this storm,  
 that ionized the jewels of her life to rain soaked ashes,  
 were it not for her sacred trove, her diamond?  
 And so the diamond pays the price for being of great price,  
 sequestered in darkness as an object of obscure lore.

Mayfly knocks in the middle of the night and opening the door, she is already in the middle of an explanation, explaining to me about the bruise on her face, so that it is for sure she is lying. She comes inside, skipping right past me, and makes herself at home. She turns on the television and plays with Monster in the living room. I feed Monster and her ice cream, turn the heat up, and Mayfly falls asleep on my sofa. In the morning Mayfly is gone, leaving the blankets folded, an empty cereal bowl, and a note thanking me.

In the afternoon I go to work, and everything is like it was yesterday. I deliver packages to people, and they sign for them. I know all streets. Any place I could tell you about how to get there the easiest way. I know all shortcuts, all detours. I am efficient at what I do, and extract pleasure from doing it this way. Every day I do this.

Mayfly is in all dimensions a child, and underneath all deceptions and make-believe, Mayfly is overly susceptible to her surroundings. The best way I think to paint a picture of Mayfly for you is to tell the things that she cannot live without. She is ALWAYS with Walkman and headphones, Walkman and headphones. It is always about the music with her. She is a pioneer; she is a missionary of punk. She is a walking advertisement for everything ANTI. She is always wearing different shades of lipstick and a style of denim jacket that the last time was in style was when I was Mayfly's age. Elvis and Sid Vicious are her two real heroes. She paints beautiful, in-depth paintings with a speed that is beyond comprehension, and opposes everything in a direct,

head-on, no-nonsense way that makes me wish most of the time that it was a different world that Mayfly was born into.

Mayfly's world is a trailer park approximately 2.6 miles southwest of the Asylum Bridge. You take the fourth left after the stop sign, and go straight until you pass the dump, and then the second right after that, and you will be there. Even considering trailer parks, it is a bad place. There are young, pregnant mothers, some of them only a few years older than how old Mayfly is now. There are beer bottles and wife-beaters and unemployment issues. There are always babies outside in dirty diapers, crying and grasping for mothers who are no longer feeding. That the trailer park is rife with alcoholism and other kinds of drug problems is not even an issue we will waste the time to get into. Mayfly's father I have only met one time.

Later in the week, Mayfly comes again. This time it is worse. One of Mayfly's eyes is closed shut. The blood has dried already. It looks brown. She is shaking and somewhere else entirely. "How did you get here, Mayfly?" I ask, but she will not tell me. "What happened to your face, Mayfly?" but she doesn't say anything, just sits, starts chain-smoking. Monster jumps up on her, but she brushes him away. Eventually the pink ice cream I bring her melts in front of the T.V. "Mayfly," I say, "What is the number on your trailer so if I ever have to deliver there one day?"

And in the morning Mayfly is still sleeping. I sneak out quietly, and take the second right after the dump, and her father is sleeping too, and after I bash in his skull with a rusty tire-iron I tell him that he is done hurting Mayfly, and that she is going to be living with me from now on ...if that's ok.

The bus lurched into motion as Jenna took her seat. "I'm sorry about the octopus," she sighed, not looking at the pale figure beside her.

There was a long silence.

Jenna glanced nervously at her friend, who took a deep breath, nodded, and replied: "So, what are we doing Saturday?"



*UNTITLED*  
JILLIAN ASH



*UNTITLED*  
MEGAN HOY



*UNTITLED*  
NEIL SIMKANIN



*BUCKLE*  
JEN HUFF



*FIRE AND ICE*  
KENTON CLAUSEN

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