

Picking Up

The Crucible

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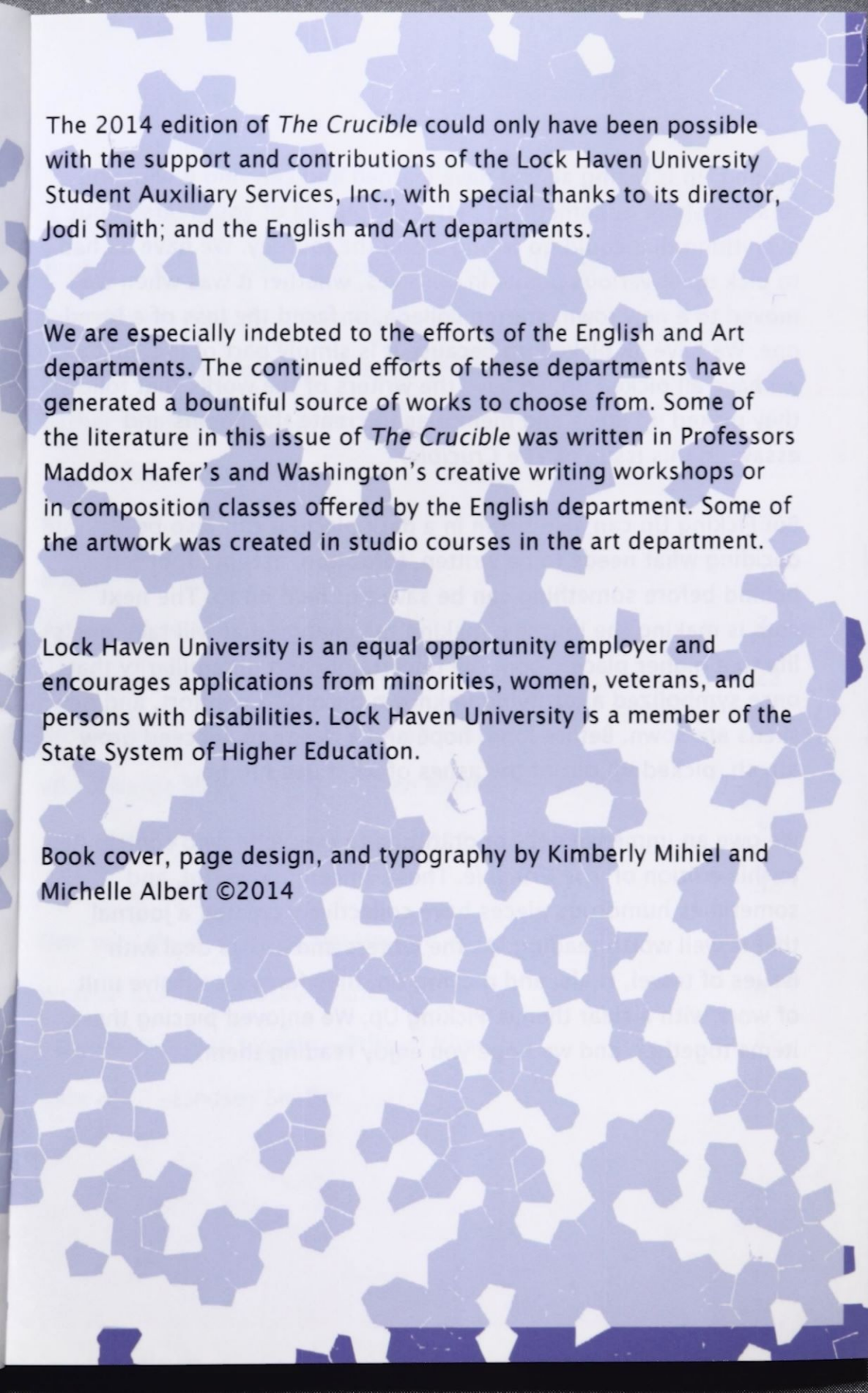
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Preface

Picking Up is taking all you have learned and carrying it with you to somewhere or something better despite all of your fears about everything that could go wrong along the journey. We have all had to pick up at various points in our lives, whether it was when we moved to a new town, started college, or faced the loss of a loved one. We have all picked up because it is simply part of life. Just as we have all picked up, so have the writers of the works that follow—they picked up ideas and memories to create the poems and essays in this issue of *The Crucible*.

But Picking Up can also begin in a dark place; it can also be deciding what needs to be written, forgotten, accepted, or left behind before something can be saved or held on to. The next step is making the journey, making the change that will take one's life to a higher place. Soon, the uncertainty and unfamiliarity that once symbolized a terrifying unknown become a comfort, and new seeds are sown. Before long, hope and a desire to succeed grow afresh, picked up out of the ashes of what used to be.

We owe an immense debt of gratitude to everyone who contributed to this edition of *The Crucible*. These sincere, powerful, and sometimes humorous pieces have collectively created a journal that is well worth reading. As the writers and artists deal with issues of travel, trials, and moving on, they form a cohesive unit of work with a clear theme: Picking Up. We enjoyed piecing these items together, and we hope you enjoy reading them.

Table of Contents

Literature

A Lifetime of Unity—Kaitlynn Keiper	1
Brooding in a Moment of Frustration—Laila Longer	4
Pen+Paper+Passion=Poem—Laila Longer	6
Daily Work at a Moroccan Butcher Shop—Brittani Kline	8
Father of the Year—Kelly McIlwee	10
Alyssa—Aron Agerton	12
Birdy—Kyle Brett	17
Burial—Kyle Brett	20
Adventurers—Alyssa Turner	21
A Subject of Sleep—Taylor Potts	22
Brotherhood of Area Codes—Sarah Eckrich	24
When Nerds Strike Back—Meghan Mausteller	27
Ode to a Ratty T-Shirt—Alyssa Turner	36
Reset—Kyle Brett	38
One with the Cows—Sidney Harteis	39
Worms' Buffet—Lindsey Shaffer	43
City Life in Seven Months—Brittani Kline	45
Gate A 37—Lindsey Shaffer	48

Table of Contents

Fine Art

- The Smokey—Bridget Laudenslager
Pine—Kimberly Mihiel
Good Morning—Natalie Chambers
Never Look Back—Bethany Hemma
Migration Series: Lambent Flux—Jessica Cherry
The Hand—Michelle Albert
Four Trees—Michelle Albert
From Dusk to Death—Jace Keller
All of the Light—Bethany Hemma
Untitled—Kristina Angeloni
Sci-Fi Fly—Kim Mihiel
Curious—Bridget Laudenslager
Untitled—Yuqi Zhao
Butterfly—Ginny McDannell
Renegade—Courtney Beitz
Owl—Kim Mihiel
Found—Courtney Beitz
Winter's Song—Courtney Beitz
Untitled—Kristina Angeloni
Hope and Vigor—Cody Shaub
Reflection—Michelle Albert
Chest—Natalie Chambers
Say What One More Time—Jay Brooks
Bones—Ginny McDannell
Motion—Mike Alvarez
The Only Exception—Courtney Beitz
Speed of Light—Michelle Albert
Reflection Two—Kim Mihiel
Bacon—Jay Brooks

A Lifetime of Unity

Kaitlynn Keiper

Small waves lap at the tiny pebbles that make up the shoreline. A minute gap in the trees serves as our boat launch. Wandering branches and underbrush push and shove their way down to the water's edge, all competing for the pond's nutrients. From this miniscule gap, the lake broadens out in front of us, pockmarked with islands, tree stumps, and lily pads that form little reprieves for the frogs and insects that call this place home.

Scanning the pond, I take in the view of the rippling waters being pushed to and fro by the ever-present wind. The tree stumps cluster together like small metropolises where the frogs and infantile fish compete for food and shelter. Great fields of marshy swampland consume the section of the pond to our right. Tall, willowy grasses rise out of the water, the tallest maybe eight feet high, hiding the boogeymen of the lake: leeches, mosquitos, and snakes. They wait for anyone foolish enough to get caught in their plots of unmentionable horrors.

Each of us shouldering half the weight of our old aluminum canoe, my boyfriend and I make our way down to the water. Like a duck shedding water, I drop the canoe just as I drop all my worries and concerns about the previous week. In silent time, we set it upright and load up our gear: fishing rods, oars, life vests, and various sorts of tackle. I tuck my camera and cell phone safely in a plastic bag and wrap the bag in a towel so as not to hear it clang against the bottom of the metal boat. Any sudden metallic noises will scare the fish away and we'll be left sitting alone in the glaring sunlight.

A swift breeze is blowing, carrying the scent of wet wood, moss, and mud. The sun beats down onto the ever-moving waves, reflecting into our eyes. The water sparkles like a fresh snow before footprints and animals can ruin its pristine surface. Squinting against the light, I remove my shoes and climb into the boat, shifting as much of my weight as I can forward. The crickets seem to cry out in protest against this departure from land, telling us to come back and stay where the ground is solid beneath our feet.

With a grin, Mitch kicks off his shoes and wades into the murky lake water and pulls with as much force as he can muster. He drags the canoe with me in it further into the lake until it floats of its own accord. He holds the boat steady while I shuffle around arranging each oar and rod until everything is in its proper place before we set out towards our destination. "Well, c'mon then, get in."

I laugh at him as he splashes and stumbles before hauling himself up into the canoe, rocking it side to side while he squirms into the bottom of the boat. Almost as soon as we are free-floating, the wind catches the side of the canoe and pushes us down towards the reeds. We leave the crickets behind and are being forced towards the tall water grass where the unknown insects and monsters of the pond dwell.

Anxiety sets in as the boat picks up speed.

Continued at www.lhup.edu/crucible/2014/unity.html#2



The Smokey
Bridget Laudenslager



Pine
Kimberly Mihie!

Brooding in a Moment of Frustration
Laila Longer

Life is a barrage
of binary code:
ones and zeros,
hits and misses,
freezing and glitches —
as opaque as a laptop case.

Sometimes I wish I could
mold my way to that shape,
a Mac —
no worries, no thoughts,
a drone with no wants,
future determined by a human.

The lifeblood in his nimble fingers
tapping away on my keyboard
will suffer more trials than I,
ninety-five years versus
my five —
just a crash.
And then nothing.



Good Morning
Natalie Chambers

Pen+Paper+Passion=Poem

Laila Longer

You lie there like a temptress,
beckoning my brain
and my body to divulge
every trickle of distaste and admiration
I carry for the world around.

I reach for you,
ever delighted conveyor
of my dreaded demons,
most regretted mistakes,
and crippling sorrows.

I press you to the page,
your black juices oozing,
into a bold stain like
the permanent aging
of a woman who
has surrendered her pride
to a man.

I become you
as I guide you
with tender motions,
weaving, elegant, shining strokes
on a page once pale and virgin
to your touch.

With great urgency,
I force you on
until you are triumphant

in the moment
when words
become fragments
of some great truth
hidden so deeply within
that only a joining
between a long, thin shaft
and an untainted, bleached plane
can release it.



Never Look Back
Bethany Hemma

Daily Work at a Moroccan Butcher Shop
Brittani Kline

Disgust. Disbelief. Dishonor.
In Marrakech,
I play with the slaughtered,
loading these three dead carcasses:
Hearts. Intestines. Brains.
It takes two to lift bones and a bull head
as heavy as my heart that sinks.

Rotten, sour stench,
strong enough to stain
my nose forever,
thick and sticky like a
humid summer rain.
Wooden barrels full of
saffron and cumin,
tables of incense and potpourri,
send pleasant scents into the air while
hashish burns in the streets,
but nothing is pungent enough
to smother the scent of dead life.

An uncontrollable donkey
is ushered through winding
narrow cobblestone alleys
of the souk. Bucking wild and free
at every corner, he turns
like an untamed Arabian horse.

Muslim. Laughter. Embarrassment.
Children gaze from behind parents'
backs with eyes as wide as

the wheels on this unstable
wagon, wobbling
at every crack. Female almond eyes
peer at me from behind
hijabs that hide their smirks.

I arrive at the butcher shop,
unloading guts once more,
and never look back
at the closing freezer door.

Scrubbing. Soaking. Sulking.
Water and soap will never
remove these stains.

In a process of healing,
I drink rum & cokes
till I hit the mosaic
tiled floor with innocent
blood on my boots.



Migration Series: Lumbent Flux
Jessica Cherry

Father of the Year
Kelly McIlwee

Pill bottles, Jack bottles, and dirty needles cover your bedroom floor.

Trophies earned when you graduated from hiding behind cars, sniffing exhaust, to a better way of drowning your self-pity. Your mother doesn't need her cancer medicine as much as you do anyway.

A needle punctures skin; you exhale with eyes closed. You never learned to love anything with a heartbeat. The life that you helped create is a distant thought that lies untouched in the corner of your mind.

The innocent infant's shrill cries bring you crashing back to reality. You forgot to feed her, but to hell with that — you need a shot!

Instead, you reach for your favorite brand of white powder, shooting into your raw nostrils, straight to the brain.

One day, she'll be old enough to ask, "Daddy, what's the white powder on your nose?" "I was out shoveling snow."

It won't be long before the soft pink carpet is decorated with cigarette burns and dirty needles. Eyes closed, you're never fully there to put them out.

Just tell her you can't help it; your daddy never loved you either.



The Hand
Michelle Albert



Four Trees
Michelle Albert

Alyssa
Aron Agerton

She came back.

But she's sick.

She's still her, but her flesh
is grey as the stone slabs
that should stand above her sleeping head,
her eyes as empty as my promise to protect her.
Blue veins web her cataract eyes
with dead blood and flecks of ichor
splashed in the tiny cracks only a love would

She moans

so loud I suffocate my ears.
It's her pangs of hunger
trying to escape, manifesting in a gargled cacophony
of the gobbets of flesh
still lodged in her constricted throat.

When I can feed her,
her moans transform to docile purrs,
not of thanks, but
simple
primal
satiation.

She used to try and wander
the shambling exodus
they all seem to be on,
following the hunger's lead.

The snap of the first leash
sounded like
my heartstring,
the first twinge of truth,
my sanity.

hen I tried rope,
it cut into my hand as
it jerked across
my still-live skin.
She smelled my vitae upon the chord,
and through it as though it was my flesh,
my blood a teasing treat for her to snack on.
I got her a chain then-
cold iron.
A shackle for my love.
I hope that my nightly wept tears
do not rust the cool metal.

y depression is making her lonely,
restless, even more so than usual.
I found her a kitty:
a little ginger thing,
patches of fur missing here and there.
It looked as though it had been
turned to its ancient ancestor,
wild and untamed.

She cuddled the thing-
looked as though she loved it-
until her wretched maw opened,
the breathless stench creeping upon the air.
The cat let out one last feeble meow
before my love sunk into her
with rotted teeth and lips peeled back
above her black tinted gums.

's all my fault, of course.
When she asked me with those
pleadingly blue eyes to make the drive to Clearfield,
her childhood home,
the place of her birth,
the place where each of her parents
had already become one of them,
one of the shambling mirrors.

But they were fresh,

so fresh that death
had not filled the house
with its grave-stench.
Her father had clenched his hands upon her

shoulders,

as she was too frantic,
too panicked to be cautious.
He would have ripped into her neck,
had she not turned in horror.
Instead, he bit into her arm,
a violin wail emanating

from her.

My hammer had whistled in a deep baritone,
then sank into a once-jolly old man,
his skull splitting with a wet crunch.
I followed it up with another deep whistle,
as I spotted her mother,
still wearing her Sunday best.

As I look at her now,

I remember all those moments
in a empty slideshow
of someone else's past,
and surely someone else's future.

I realize, in this
still and quiet moment,
that I cannot watch her suffer
as this tortured, lonesome creature.

I raise my naked trembling hand
to her snapping, loving mouth.
She nips at it like she used to,
but the pinch is deeper,
drawing out the blood
pumped from a broken heart.

It takes a few minutes,
maybe an hour.

I didn't count.

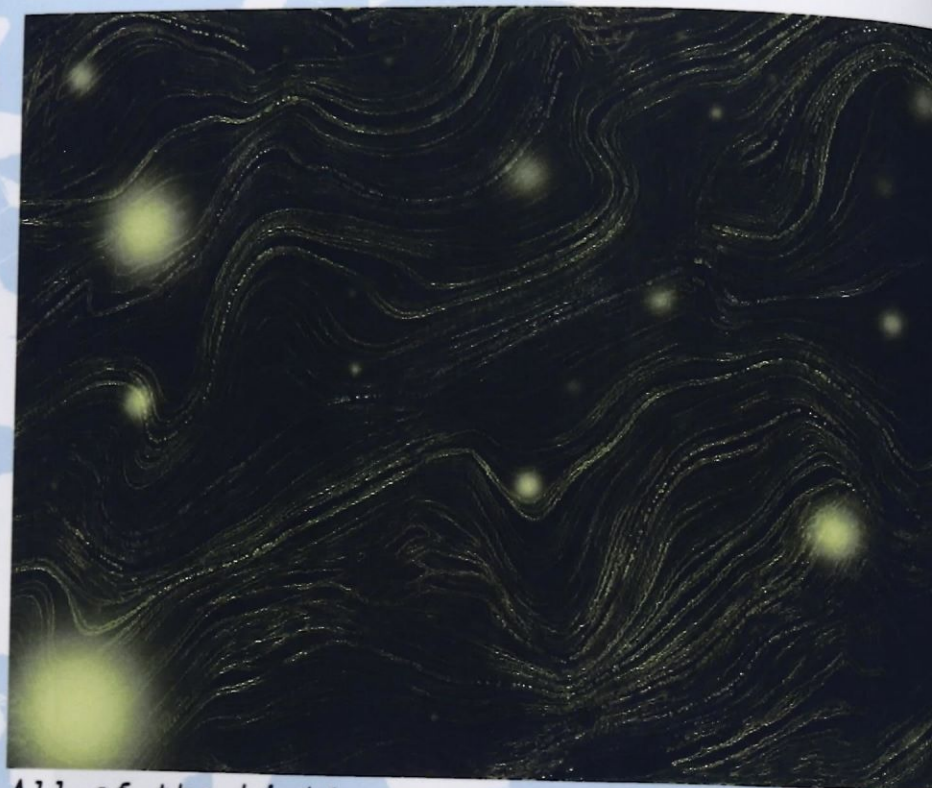
The fever hits me like a club in the back,
starting in my spine, crawling up
to the back of my skull, where it
sits. It lives there.

I feel it
squirming around.

And then I feel
hungry.



From Dusk Till Death
Jace Keller



All of the Light
Bethany Hemma



Untitled
Kristina Angeloni

Birdy
Kyle Brett

I played the rifleman as he
hunched over his baby-blue can of cheap beer
while sucking on a generic cigarette burning down to the filter
behind me.

Shoot the damn sparrows,
the dying voice commanded out from yellowed teeth
and cancerous sores.

Like a good soldier,
I obeyed without question.
With my trusty BB rifle in hand,
I eliminated the foraging feathered fiends plink by plink.
Silver spheres of misspent youth found their mark
in the breasts of innocent avian mothers.

With every explosion of feathers,
the shell of the man behind me
filled his lungs and expelled laughs
hugged by grey smoke.

After the mission was completed,
the yard fell eerily silent
as we trampled through blood and seeds to collect
trophies from the fallen.
He hung the small brown birds
like Christmas ornaments on a sapling,
laughing as he decorated the memorial.

The flood rose and took
the monument from the yard the next morning.
We're going to need a bigger tree.
He handed me my rifle;
it was already loaded.



Sci-Fi Fly
Kim Mihiel



Curious
Bridget Laudenslager

Burial
Kyle Brett

For a minute, the Susquehanna
morphed into the Ganges as I set fire
to your picture, the only body to grieve over,
the only body that came back to us.

You were wearing your yellowed Hawaiian shirt,
smoke dancing from your nostrils,
looking toward the fire that slowly consumes you.
I watch as your picture curls and blackens
as those hungry flames, orange and red, lap at your face.
Your improvised ashes take to the wind.
I forget (resist?) to let you go and scorch my fingers,
then rub the ash on my face as to smell you forever.

Muffled prayers sneak past chapped lips,
and I offer a deep bow as you dance into the sun.
Your cremation complete,
I watch as a heron dives and washes in the water.
Is it a tribute to your passing, a natural blessing,
on the day the Susquehanna became the Ganges?

Adventurers
Alyssa Turner

This place is reserved
for rainy summer afternoons
and bored adventurers.

Bulbs, ornaments, and blow
up Santa reside next to
Tom the Turkey and Easter

Bunny, who are debating
politics. Little Chicks lounge
on strips of plastic grass,

gossiping about Piglet and Eeyore.
A disgruntled Teddy Bear
lies haphazardly on top

of Barbie's roof. Good thing
she has homeowner's insurance.
Polly Pocket has hijacked the Tonka

Truck and ran away to the giant
pumpkin with Ken. Unfortunately,
it's a whirlwind romance.

Footsteps gently climb the stairs
to this attic, this graveyard. Small hands
cradle forgotten dolls, dusty blocks,

small cars with three wheels,
a splintery baseball bat. Suddenly,
their world comes alive once again.

Toys and decorations alike rejoice.
The adventurers are here.

A Subject of Sleep
Taylor Potts

I didn't hear you get up this morning,
but by the time you came back, you were dead.
Lackluster eyes stared out from the hollow mask of bones,
cheeks turned gaunt, sculpted by the ravaging effects of sleep,
while shoulders slumped and broken by the cruel tension
are childishly wound tighter and tighter by anxiety.
You shuffle in without a sound and,
like a specter dragging the weight of time,
climb onto the clouds of creaking college-issued comfort,
and I wonder— but dare not ask—
how the first day of student teaching went.



Untitled
Yuqi Zhao



Butterfly
Ginny McDannell

Brotherhood of Area Codes
Sarah Eckrich

Hot flashing lights,
drug-fueled nights,
violent fights;
the ties that bind—
these ties that blind.

Kandy kids,
dandy kids!
In outer-space-land, these kids.

LSD (n): took you from we,
took we from me.

Cruisin' the streets,
blasting "our" beats,
moving our feet,
waiting to meet
the man
with a plan.

We dropped . We dropped out.
in

We lived in the sin we couldn't live without.

Gyrate, spiral down low as you go,
falling, calling me as feet meat meet-miss concrete.
Then we're seeing stars from atop the bars,
searching for Mars from in our cars—
sailing, wailing, judgments failing until,
Crash bash
splash.

like a rash,
his disease,
his plague,
leaves us in a daze,
but bonds us in ways
endless days won't change.

We grew up in smog
that clogged our lungs.
And when you were young

you were like me,
with ideas for something more,
beyond this slob-ish bore of a
storybook region, dark fairytale.
To no avail you sought to fine-tune
time and manner, to escape the clatter
without forgetting diverse roots.

You never backed down, and I never
quit trying, never dismayed by friends
and family dying, trying to escape the mundane,
the malaise. Those who broke free, they
know just what I mean, preaching
spirits high and tempers un-leaven —
fraternity is the seven one seven.



Renegade
Courtney Beitz

When Nerds Strike Back

Meghan Mausteller

In high school I was not cool. At five foot five inches tall, one hundred thirty-five pounds, I was every teenager's nightmare of social awkwardness: a glasses-wearing bag of nerd. It was not as if I was so super-awkward that I was a friendless outcast through high school. I had a steady group of kids with whom I hung out, but it was more that our tiny group was only a step up from social ostracism and probably the last group of kids with whom you would want to be associated. And we, as well as everyone else in the school, were totally aware of it. We were the nerds, and not the cool nerds you see on Instagram and Facebook all the time, black-rimmed glasses perched on the ends of their noses and a filter hiding their minor blemishes, but the nose-in-a-book, computer-loving, pocket-protector-wearing type of nerds that you thought only existed in '80s movies. It was social stereotype hell.

However, for a bunch of kids who really only fit in with each other, we were happy with who we were, as weird and eccentric as that may have been. We enjoyed ourselves by spending enrichment periods exchanging corny jokes with math teachers, discussing our favorite poems with English teachers, and doing extra credit experiments with the physics teacher. Of course, not everyone looked at us in the same way we viewed ourselves. After all, we were the nerds, the lowest of the low, and if a high school has one stereotypical clique, it has them all, and each group was pitted against one another in an endless turf war that constantly dominated the school with tiny battles. They could not be classified as full-blown battles that would put World War II to shame, but petty little things, like which group found its members on the list of homecoming court, but as veterans of Vietnam will tell you, war changes people. Being stereotyped for so long and making enemies purely because one person likes books and the other prefers football can turn even the most dedicated nerd into a bomb waiting to explode teen angst across the whitewashed

hallways. For although high school cliques are like a socially acceptable security blanket, it is not always a familiar source of comfort to be given the same character traits as a one-dimensional character in a novel. Humans, unfortunately, have more depth than that. Our personalities expand beyond one single, defining trait, giving us a depth that only the most experienced of authors can accurately replicate. Defying these constricting stereotypes may take only a split-second of courage, but can change how the tiny world of high school looks at a student for the rest of his or her educational career.

As someone who willingly conformed to the stereotype of "nerd" for many years, my favorite part of the school year was never homecoming or winter holiday, but the last week in January when we received information about choosing classes for the upcoming school year. This was my Christmas, the part of school that I looked forward to more than anything. So when I walked into homeroom one bitter winter morning and saw those recognizable pink and yellow papers on Mrs. McCarroll's desk, I was a little girl who recognized the shape of a long desired doll box under the Christmas tree. I could hardly contain my excitement.

It seemed as if the Pledge of Allegiance and morning announcements lasted an eternity that day, and McCarroll refused to hand the papers out before the morning routine was finished as if she could sense that those papers on my desk would distract me from hearing about the taco bowl offered in the cafeteria that day, as if the taco bowl mattered to me at all. But finally, when Cat Varley announced "That's Tribal Vision for today. Stay class Leighton," and the chorus of the latest pop song blasted through the crackling speakers as the credits scrolled up the television screen, Mrs. McCarroll stood up from behind her desk and began dispensing the papers. Like a discarded rose petal, the pale pink piece of paper fluttered onto my desk: my name, age, and birthdate stamped across the top in bold, black letters, and the list of every class Leighton Area High School had to offer in two columns below my biographical information. A few seconds later, a thick

yellow book was dropped unceremoniously on top of the pink paper, my religious text, the encyclopedia of the classes.

Never in my life had I paid less attention to a lesson in school than I did that morning in Contemporary American History. I love discussions of Cold War America as much as the next girl, but on that particular morning, I ignored Mr. Feifel's ramblings about the stress people felt to conform, and instead silently leafed through the yellow book, reading the descriptions of each and every class. Starring classes I was eligible for and circling those that I needed in order to graduate, by the end of the eighty-minute class period I had completed my dream schedule for senior year. The only problem was that on my pink course selection paper, the creative writing class I was dying to take was listed as a whole credit, but in the book it was worth only half that. One tiny discrepancy away from the perfect senior schedule, I floated out of first block feeling confident and pleased with the choices I had made.

The remainder of the day dragged on, crawling to one forty-five when the juniors would be dismissed from their fourth block classes to the auditorium. At one forty-five on the dot, Mr. Tkach's gruff voice boomed into classrooms, his repetition annoyingly obvious as I waited for him to finish his sentence before I was allowed to leave Psychology. "At this time, juniors will be dismissed to the auditorium; juniors to the auditorium. Thank you." My moment had finally come. Butterflies danced down my arms as my mind and body worked together to realize that the moment I had been looking forward to all day, all year, had finally arrived; we were about to select our classes.

Usually, I would not describe myself as someone who pushes and shoves, but as I barreled down the social sciences hallway, I used my elbows to their best advantage, maneuvering my way to the head of the class. The moment I stepped into the cool, maroon auditorium, the anticipation I had felt throughout the day crescendoed to a forte, and the butterflies moved from my arms to cover my body with their ticklish feet. The stage, where I knew in mere minutes Mrs. Costenbader, the guidance counselor,

would stand, was bold in its spotlighted glory. I walked down the slim, carpeted aisles and sat down in the front row, middle section, center seat. I was like a seasoned baseball fan who had found herself sitting right behind home plate; a better seat was nonexistent.

My classmates slowly and loudly filled the plastic seats around me, until, finally, the entire class of 2013 was sitting in the auditorium. Mrs. Costenbader walked up to the front of the stage and began her attempts to quiet my classmates. "Good afternoon, Juniors!" Her weak attempt at peppiness was greeted with some mumbled "good afternoons," but was ignored by the majority. "GOOD AFTERNOON, JUNIORS!"

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Costenbader."

"Now that's better. Let's begin discussing your schedules for senior year, shall we?" She burst forth from her holding stall, attention directed forward by blinders on her eyes and a jockey urging her forward from her back. Like a prize-winning racehorse she had one goal in mind and knew the means it took to achieve it. For the next half hour, I had no way of interjecting my question through Mrs. Costenbader's endless stream of information, and the more agitated I became awaiting my opportunity to ask my question, the straighter I sat, the higher I held my chin, and the more I huffed while the boys behind me talked the whole time.

I like to think of myself as an extremely patient person, but I have almost no tolerance for rudeness, so when Tyler Moyer and his friends became obnoxious in their constant discussions, I felt no reason not to turn around and tell them to shut up. Of course, Moyer was one of those boys, a slacker, a low life with no regard for rules and who laughed when he was criticized, which is precisely what he did to my great annoyance. After all, why should he listen to someone such as me? Someone so low on the social totem pole that I was lucky if he, as one of the "cool kids," even knew my name. In my state of agitation, I ignored his laughter, but was mildly pleased with my ability to at least attempt to stand up for what I thought was right, an accomplishment for a girl who hardly even dared to speak her mind on a piece of literature in English class.

And then, it happened. Mrs. Costenbader ended her speech and said the words I had been waiting to hear all day, "Are there any questions?" My hand shot up like a bullet, flying so fast the hair of the girl next to me blew in the breeze.

This should have been the highlight of my day, except at that exact moment I heard a falsetto voice behind me call, "Ooh, Mrs. Costenbader, which AP class do you think would look most impressive on my resume?" And that was the final straw. I mean, what sort of foolish thing is it to make fun of someone for being an intelligent, well-rounded student? Idiot.

Abandoning my hard-earned reputation as an intelligent, sweet, and quiet girl, I turned around and looked Tyler Moyer in the eyes for the second time in the day and shouted, "Oh shut up, you idiot. At least I can get INTO an AP class!" Moyer's jaw hit the floor and his eyes became saucers. A gloating smirk sneaked across my mouth as I faced forward just in time to see Mrs. Costenbader turn toward me, eyebrows raised to her hairline, and ask if I had any pressing questions.

My blood froze in my veins, face blanched to the color of untouched paper. "The—the creative writing class," I stammered. Mrs. Costenbader's eyes bore into mine as I stumbled through my question. "My pink sheet says it's a full credit, but the book says it's half so I don't know—"

"Ah!" she cut me off, "excellent question..."

A half. My perfect schedule was a half-credit short of requirements. The bubbling excitement I felt under my skin all day slowly began deflating, and I felt my body sink lower into my chair. "And Miss Mausteller," my eyes flashed upward and met Mrs. Costenbader's again, "see me after the assembly."

A steel-toed boot appeared from nowhere and suddenly stomped on my slowly deflating balloon, pressure forcing the air outward, causing it to pop violently underfoot. The auditorium was silent as one hundred and forty-six teenagers stopped breathing simultaneously. I could hear their voices, a chorus in my head, "Meghan? Perfect Meghan, top-ten-percent-yearbook-

editor-captain-of-the-debate-team-Meghan is in trouble.”

The stillness in the room was sliced open, like a knife making the first incision into a cold, blue body in autopsy by a chuckle in my right ear. “Yes,” the voice hissed. Tyler Moyer’s over-inflated personality leaked from his mouth as his every high school dream came true in a single minute. I was in trouble.

Continued at www.lhup.edu/crucible/2014/nerds.html#2



Owl
Kim Mihiel



Found
Courtney Beitz



Winter's Song
Courtney Beitz

Ode to a Ratty T-Shirt
Alyssa Turner

Oh you, you piece of shit.
I try and I try to get rid of you,
but there you are, adorning him.

Every Friday, after the laundry,
there you are, folded next to
clean socks, crisp shirts and

respectable pleated pants.
Before the end of the day, you decorate his
body like lights on a sad Christmas tree:

haphazardly placed, half burned out,
dangling loosely. His little hairs peep out from the
great beyond of the armpit, through

the giant hole to see what excitement
the night holds. Angst. Angst and grief.
You are my only nemesis.

But I cannot be the cause of
your demise. I'll allow you to
live your days, numbered as they are,

because I know you exist not for me,
but for him. His happiness, his comfort,
his pleasure. And that is why you are also
my favorite t-shirt.



Untitled
Kristina Angeloni



Hope and Vigor
Cody Shaub

Reset
Kyle Brett

Nine months I read to you, (did you even listen?)
deep in that just-too-narrow womb,
waiting and watching for that fraternal label of a

brother bonded in blood.

But we were distanced by the river of age.

Your birth came early, and I cradled your fragile
infant body blotched white and pink

in my own short awkward arms.

My big brother arms which

only now I begin to grow into.

We are man and man, and

I am the clothes you outgrew

too quickly, the marks on the wall

long faded and repainted.

Now I want to

reset the game that time

wickedly played on us and transport back

this time, no longer a young boy grasping

to become a man,

but a brother bonded in blood,

reading to you in that far-too-narrow womb.

One With the Cows

Sydney Harteis

As I arrive at my grandparents' farm, I put my car in park, open the door, and eagerly place my feet on the gravel. With each step, the small rocks crackle underneath my weight as I make my way to the back porch. The field that sits behind the driveway whispers a soothing "shhhhhhh" as the breeze moves the lanky weeds to and fro, like a mother softly coaxing her baby to sleep. The breeze continues along and causes the vacant swings on the old, wooden swing set to creep back and forth, as if holding invisible riders. I am reminded of the many times as a young girl that I sat on those swings, trying to touch my toes to the sky. I peer to the right of the house at the log pile and see a pair of fluorescent yellow eyes staring back at me; stray cats always found the farm a suitable and hospitable abode. I think, "Nothing has changed."

As I walk to the front door, I make eye contact with the statue of a duck that sits tranquilly in the garden that he calls his home. I smirk as I recall the many times as a young girl I had dressed the duck in baby clothes, his stern face showing utmost displeasure. As I continue on my journey, I come face to face with the old, blue back door. I begin to turn the handle to make my entrance. I do not knock, an action that my grandparents deem unnecessary, as I am always welcome in the small, white house that sits atop the hill. The familiar creaking of the old door meets my ears and reminds me that my grandfather, after my eighteen years of existence, still seems to have forgotten to oil the hinges.

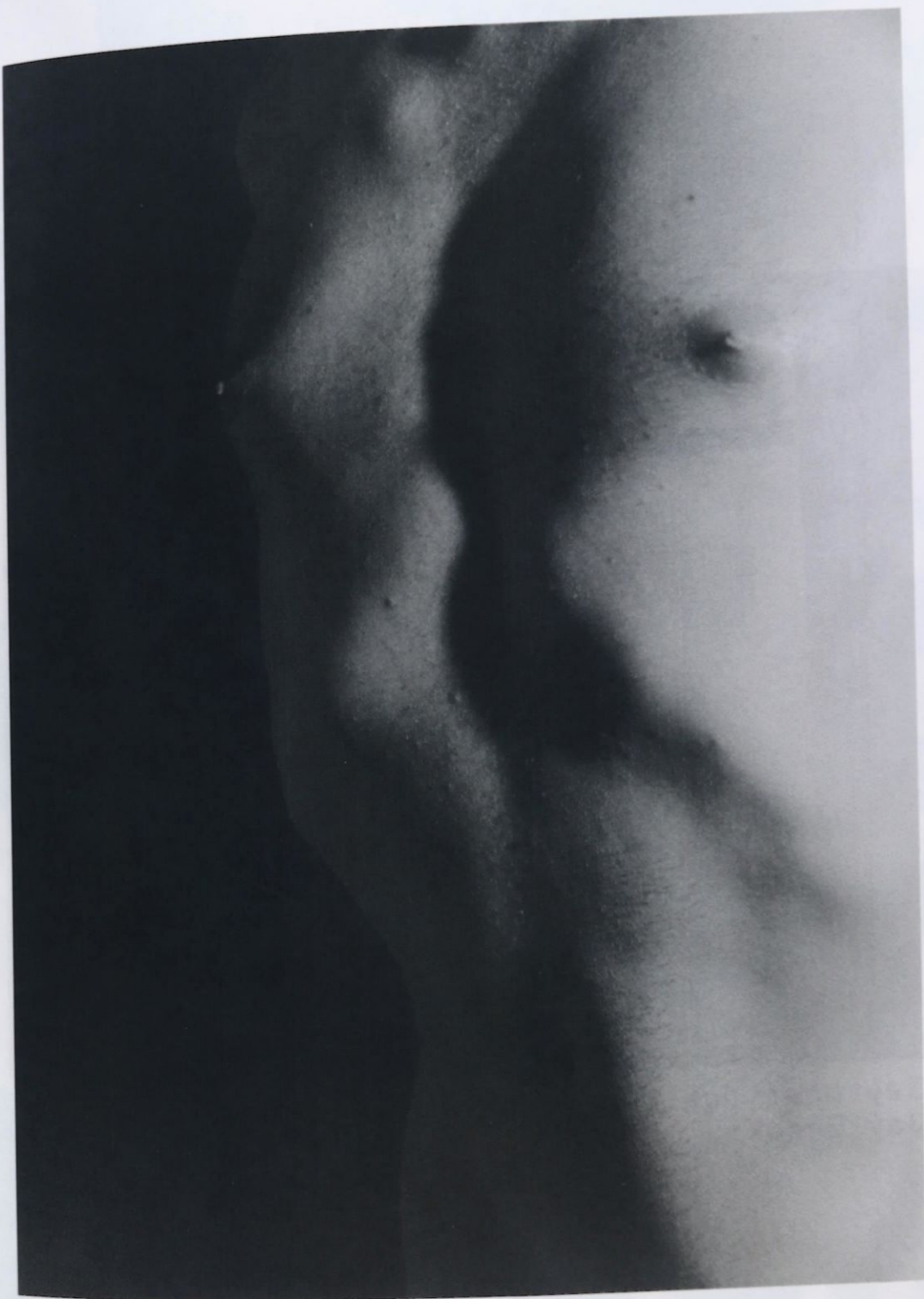
The creaking noise also reminds me that I am about to enter a place that floods me with powerful memories and emotions. I step through the doorway and take in the atmosphere. The familiar scent of potpourri that I am accustomed to does not waft up to my nostrils; instead, the contemporary smell of fresh paint lingers around the small entryway causing me to slowly lose my sense of familiarity. This small change in scent, a miniscule difference that would go unnoticed by most visitors, brings forth in my mind

the diminutive detail that I seemed to have forgotten on my short journey from my car to the house: this farm is not the same as it was eight years ago. Although the personal connection remains, the farm itself has changed significantly. Due to the passing of my grandmother and the burning down of the barn, the bond that I feel with the farm has become frayed and torn; however, the memories that I keep with me continue to hold the bond together, though it is fragile.

Continued at www.lhup.edu/crucible/2014/cows.html#2



Reflection
Michelle Albert



Chest
Natalie Chambers



Say What One More Time
Jay Brooks

Worms' Buffet
Lindsey Shaffer

Plucked flowers and hot tears
play no role now when the only
motions that matter are guests
crawling through her limbs, filling
mouths with toes and long bodies
with cheek and tongue, feasting
on the vessel of the soul
that never was.

And you're interrupting
their dinner with your feet
on their sky, wasting your time.

So don't cry up,
and don't kneel down
here. Your only audience
lies six feet beneath as
a casket of worms,
and they don't much care.
They'll go on eating as you
scream your regrets.

Kiss a cold, stiff stone while
new lovers feed on her flesh.



Bones
Ginny McDannell

City Life in Seven Months Brittani Kline

Park Avenue melts in a summer haze. All the buildings transform with warm coloring; each give their own interpretation of the sun. Every window blinds you with glares as bright as a star before it explodes.

A sunset of skyscrapers:

bright red, orange, and yellow blur all the lines.

You choke on the thick air you share with every other sardine being cooked in this boiling pot. Beads of sweat drip from your brow and forehead as if you've completed an hour of hot yoga at the gym. Sliding out of stilettos that have acquired puddles

at the sole, you squeeze into the last available spot on the train — anything to not suffocate in a subway station with only two fans like a crematory about to burn those who remain.

Bustling down Christopher Street in gray light

and drizzling rain, you cram hands into pockets and peek up at surroundings then back down again towards the ground, never catching an eye to share a common

glance. How the city changes colors so quickly,

you'll never know. The skyline always mirrors the heavens reflecting robin's egg blues, fiery oranges, or funeral greys.

Today, buildings are a gray-blue, a color that is fading and dying.

Listening to Adele, you shuffle feet over cracked sidewalks and puddles

like a gypsy — no specific place to go. Garbage gathers like lily pads occupying puddles when they find their place in the street.

Hobos seek shelter under newspaper or cardboard

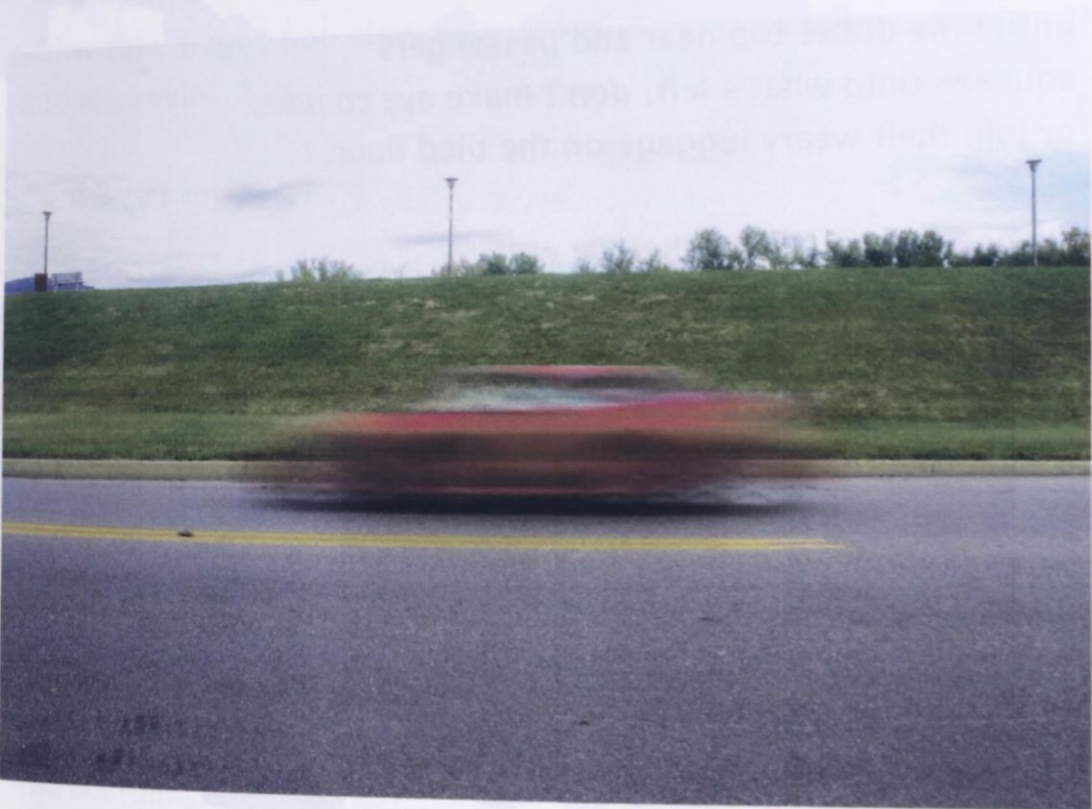
like mice hiding from alley cats.

You lose yourself inside yourself,

walking indifferent to all.

You tell yourself it's not too bad,
not so bad at all.

Snow falls as Italian men, mustached
and gold chained, sit on large
coffee colored leather couches. They exchange
stories from their pasts and argue over details
of older days while they puff on oversized
Cubans. The grins on their chubby faces wrinkle,
showing time. On the other side of the cigar
shop window you wait for the shuttle home,
peering into their world
as bright and warm as a campfire.
An icicle surrounds you, dark and cold
on Washington Street. Standing, you wait,
freezing to the bone.



Motion
Michael Alvarez

Gate A 37
Lindsey Shaffer

I've nothing to do but watch,
and there's a rhythm to it.
Families and businessmen, wanderers and
guitarists slide in, settle down for the hour,
always leaving an empty space that relates
unfamiliarity between one another
Why do we do that?
until time draws too near and passengers
squeeze onto what's left, *don't make eye contact*,
or join their weary luggage on the tiled floor.

Silence fuses us. Together we wait
in a stillness amidst the moving bustle.
We wait, our quiet isolation connecting dots
in a limbo between destinations. Here,
we all breathe, but we do not speak.

Skinny blonde with greasy hair, watercolor eyes:
distracted, composed, beautifully awkward
and alone, idly texting on her phone.
Though she seems to have no one;
the message never sends. Blue icebergs
float up again. *How long has -*
She caught me staring.

These lights are too bright.
Ah damn, I've scuffed my shoes.

Torn khakis and hiking boots
to my left feign absorption in a magazine,
bored because he's already traversed these scenes.

Empty pockets, blistered feet, contented soul.
He's ready to return home
until the next stir of inner winds
fly him to distant, foreign land.

But where will she sleep?
The girl with the heavy
eyes, drowning beneath those liquid stones.
*How long has it been since she changed
her shirt? White v-neck revealing
whiter skin, fragile porcelain adorned with
turquoise veins. She -*

Oh, where's my passport?

The briefcase down the row just landed
his first job abroad, his first time away
from his wife and son. I hear the
midnight call from his hotel in Milan.
His hands shake with longing and
uncertainty, regret and possibility,
as he listens to the faucet
dripping,
dripping.

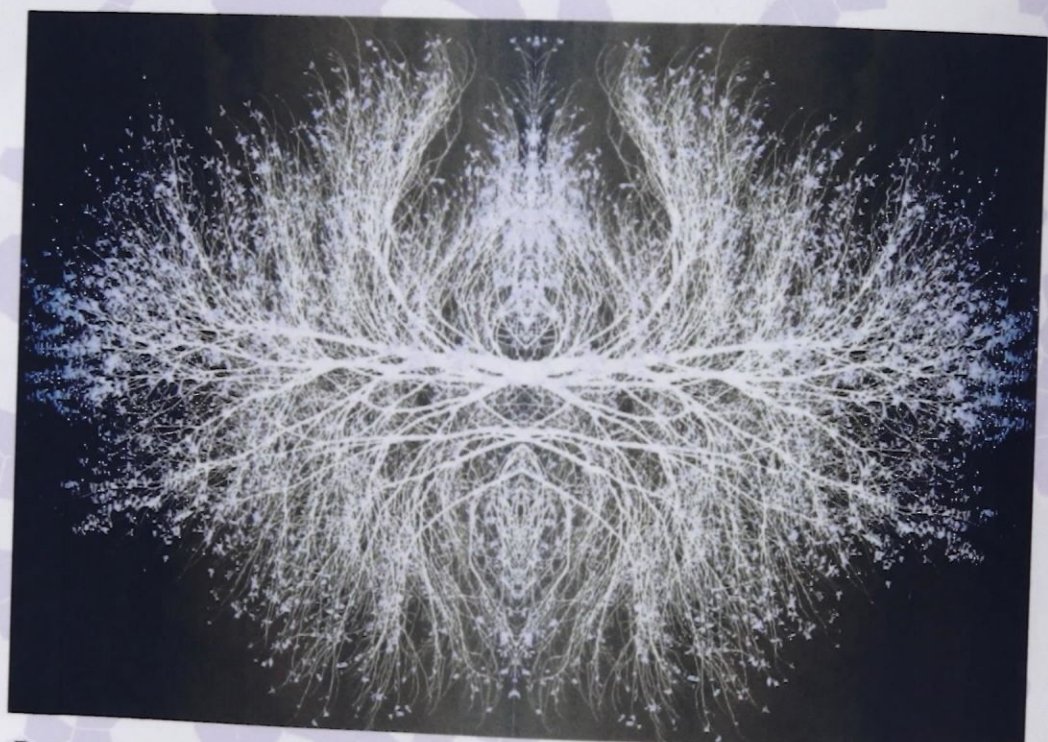
The boarding attendant calls
and we all rise. Never before -
and I will never again - know these faces.
I've flown in, and within an hour I'm gone.
Within our hour, I'm a stranger, a lover
in an unacknowledged intimacy
between all passengers waiting at Gate A 37.



The Only Exception
Courtney Beitz



Speed of Light
Michelle Albert



Reflection Two
Kimberly Mihiel



Bacon
Jay Brooks

Author Biographies

Aron Agerton recently graduated with an Interdisciplinary Studies degree in English and Theater, Aron Agerton had spent the majority of his time at Lock Haven University working on his poetry and prose writing. He currently lives in Mechanicsburg, PA and works as a roving troubadour and carpenter.

Kyle Brett graduated in Spring 2013 with a major in English and is currently attending graduate school.

Sarah Eckrich is an English major, collegiate journalist, and writing tutor. "Brotherhood of Area Codes" was inspired by Sarah's hometown, Carlisle, PA. More specifically, it is about an unspoken bond shared by many in the millennial generation who grew up in the 717 area code. Sarah hopes her writing can inspire others, especially those from impoverished or troubled pasts, to draw inspiration from their respective struggles.

Sydney Harteis is a Health Science major at Lock Haven University and plans to graduate in May of 2017. She then plans to attend graduate school to become a physician's assistant, and she hopes to someday specialize in the field of cardiology.

Kaitlynn Keiper is a first year biology and chemistry major.

Brittani Autumn Kline is a native of Lock Haven, Pennsylvania and has been attending classes on LHU's main campus since the fall of 2008. Majoring in English with a writing concentration, and foreign language with a concentration in Spanish, Brittani intends to graduate in December 2015. The poems selected were written in Professor Maddox-Hafer's poetry workshop. "Daily Work at a Moroccan Butcher Shop" was inspired by an incident forced onto Brittani and a fellow contestant on America's Next Top Model Cycle 16, by production. "City Life in Seven Months" was inspired by her time spent living in Hoboken, NJ and working as a model in New York City.

Laila Longer is a junior majoring in international studies and minoring in English. She has been writing since she was in middle school and continued throughout high school and into college. Both of her pieces were written as part of a portfolio project for Professor Maddox-Haffer's poetry workshop in Fall 2012.

Meghan Mausteller is a freshman double majoring in Communications in the Journalism track, and English in the Creative writing track. She will be graduating in 2018. "When Nerds Strike Back" was written as a descriptive essay for her composition class. It was meant to show a time when she had been stereotyped or judged and how she reacted to the situation. The incident described in her essay was inspired by an interaction that occurred between a classmate and herself during course scheduling her junior year of high school.

Kelly McIlwee is an English major with a concentration in Writing, set for graduation in May 2014. "Father of the Year" was written about her former best friend's boyfriend, who is a drug addict, after she found out that her friend was pregnant with his baby. This poem was essentially an outlet for the aggression she felt toward him when Kelly saw what being in a toxic relationship had done to her friend, and what Kelly feared it would do to their child.

Taylor Potts is a Secondary Education English graduate who spends most of her time either sleeping in or scrolling through Pinterest looking for things to pin into various underutilized boards. "A Subject of Sleep" was written from the perspective of her caring and amazing roommate who, day after day, would see Taylor zombie-shuffle in from teaching and would not say a word until after the recovery process had begun. Getting up at 5 a.m. is hard on a college student, and every time Taylor came home, she imagined that this is exactly what her roommate must have been thinking about her.

Lindsey Shaffer has graduated with a double major in English and Spanish and a double minor in International Studies and Women and Gender Studies.

Alyssa Turner is an alumna of Lock Haven University. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in Literature. During college, she participated in the Lock Haven English Club and found Shakespeare to be her most rewarding subject. Unfortunately, while having an in-depth understanding of Hamlet may make for interesting dinner party conversation, it does not necessarily help you land a secure job.

Artist Biographies

Michelle Albert is a junior Graphic Design major at LHU. Her primary focus is print design and she also enjoys digital photography and experimenting with other art mediums. She is inspired every day by art, fashion, and music. She aspires to become a graphic designer for Nascar.

Michael Alvarez was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is a senior at Lock Haven University studying Graphic and Online Design. He is inspired by urban areas (Philadelphia culture), music, and fashion. He aspires to own his own business. He could see himself entering the photography, fashion, or tattoo business. He aspires to be his own boss.

Kristina Angeloni is a senior majoring in art. Her inspirations come from her enjoyment of experimenting with color, texture, and pattern.

Courtney Beitz is an junior art major with a specialization in Graphic and Online Design. She has owned her own photography business since her Junior year of high school and has a passion for developing webpages.

Jay Brooks is a art major who tends to find beauty in architecture, especially in the forgotten dark places that no-one usually sees or expects to see in photography.

Natalie Chambers is a senior studio arts major specializing in photography and printmaking. She enjoys long walks on the beach and reading.

Jessica Cherry is a senior in the B.F.A program with a concentration in two dimensional art. She leaves her art work open for interpretation so that the viewer can create their own story.

Bethany Hemma is a junior art major. She is inspired by family and friends. Her aspirations and goals include the continuation of her photography, electronic art, and traveling.

Jace Keller is a senior working toward his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a specialization in online and graphic design. He likes to design logos and other sports-related graphics.

Bridget Laudenslager is currently a junior art major concentrating in Graphic Design. Her inspiration is the world around her, "You just have to take time to look."

Ginny McDannell, from Gettysburg, is currently a junior art major concentrating in Graphic Design. She is also the board member for Public Relations in the University Players theatre group. Her favorite art to create is computer graphic arts.

Kimberly Mihiel is a senior art major with a concentration in Graphic Design. She is the president of the Fine Art Society and one of the design editors of *The Crucible*. She enjoys working with patterns and shapes as well as abstract photography. She will be graduating in Fall 2014.

Cody Shaub is a senior art major with a concentration in two-dimensional works. He has always enjoyed art. He especially enjoys learning and inventing new ways to make more art for others and himself to enjoy.

Yuqi Zhao is a student from China going into her junior year at Lock Haven University. She plans to graduate in Fall 2015. She loves painting, especially linear style work. Art has been part of her life since she was 15 years old.